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SUPERCAR
VALHALLA: FULL STORY INSIDE

AN INDEPENDENT ASTON MARTIN MAGAZINE

VANTAGE

ISSUE 35 | AUTUMN 2021

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DB5 TRINITY

We drive Vantage Saloon, Convertible and Shooting Brake



Inside...

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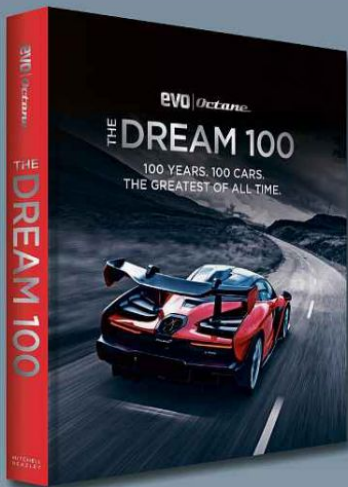
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Viewpoint

All good things...



IF YOU'RE A REGULAR READER you'll know that this is my opportunity to bid you a warm welcome to the latest issue of *Vantage*.

When we launched this magazine back in 2013 we secretly wondered if there would come a time when we simply ran out of things to write about. Once you've had a chance to sit down and read it, I hope you'll agree that this issue proves we needn't have worried, for the unfolding story of Aston Martin

remains as riveting and unpredictable as ever.

Sadly it's a story we won't be able to share with you, for it is my sad duty to announce that this issue of *Vantage* will be the last. At least in its present quarterly format.

None of you will need reminding how tough the last 18 months or so have been for families and businesses up and down the UK and across the world. Mercifully it would seem the darkest days are behind us, but while *Vantage* was able to weather the successive waves of C-19, the lasting effects of suppressed sales due to the ongoing pandemic have led to some very tough decisions being taken.

Vantage has always enjoyed the support of a loyal band of subscribers, but the magazine's commercial viability also relies upon newsstand sales, the majority of which come from major travel points. With air travel effectively grounded since last March and the shift to working from home reducing footfall in railway stations, trading conditions have been brutal.

Needless to say, we are profoundly saddened by the decision, but much like Aston Martin's ability to bounce back from countless near-disasters, we very much hope *Vantage* will channel that survival instinct and reappear in some form.

Whether you've been a reader since the beginning or have just picked up a copy for the first time, we thank you for your support and enthusiasm for a magazine that has been our immense pleasure to produce. Likewise, I'd like to extend our gratitude to our hard-working contributors, the ever-helpful souls at Aston Martin, and the brilliant specialists and generous owners who have been so supportive in providing us with wonderful cars to drive and given us such great tales to tell. We literally couldn't have done it without you.

Richard Meaden Editor

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Bulletin

News, analysis and events

Valhalla v2

WORDS RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY AML

'SON OF VALKYRIE' IS REWORKED AS
A HYBRID, 937BHP, £700,000
MID-ENGINE HYPERCAR



NOTHING EXPRESSES the rapid and far-reaching changes that have taken place at Aston Martin since Tobias Moers' arrival better than Valhalla. First announced as a concept in 2019, the dramatic 'Son of Valkyrie' was planned to be a continuation of the close technical partnership between Aston and Red Bull Advanced Technologies.

With plenty of input from Adrian Newey and a bespoke, clean-sheet, turbocharged 3-litre V6 supplemented by hybrid electric, it was to command an asking price of £1.2 million and be built in limited numbers. Then events overtook it: the impact of Aston's troubled IPO, strained finances, a new cadre of investors, the formation of a factory Aston Martin F1 team and a new management team led

by Moers resulted in a rethink. And Valhalla v2 is a very different machine.

Gone is the bespoke V6 (on the grounds of the costs required to overcome problematic Euro 7 emissions compliance), replaced by an AMG-sourced flat-plane-crank twin-turbocharged V8 that can be found in the flagship AMG GT Black Series.

A new intake system and other detail changes will lift peak power from 720 to 740bhp, while a top-exit exhaust system will hopefully give an Aston-appropriate soundtrack. The new 150kW/400V hybrid system employs a pair of electric motors, one on the rear axle just behind the mid-mounted V8 and another at the front, combining to produce 201bhp and endowing the Valhalla with a total of

Below

Reworked Valhalla blends some of the original 2019 concept with elements of the mid-engined Vanquish Concept and Valkyrie, but with a more clearly identifiable Aston grille





937bhp. That's big power, but still 49bhp less than that produced by the conceptually similar Ferrari SF90 - Valhalla's most obvious rival - even though the Aston is considerably more money.

The complexities of the all-wheel-drive system that these motors facilitate could fill a book, but suffice to say that, in much the same manner as the Ferrari, Valhalla uses the front axle motor for drive in EV mode - which has a range of eight miles and a maximum speed of 80mph - but splits electric power across front and rear axles as needed when supplementing the V8 ICE's output.

Significantly, Valhalla will use an all-new eight-speed DCT twin-clutch transmission (a first for Aston), which has been designed for the marque's hybrid future. As such it does without a reverse gear (Valhalla uses the front axle electric motor to reverse), and can even select two gears at once to keep the V8 and electric motors in their relative sweet-spots. There's also an electronic limited-slip differential (e-diff) to enhance traction and stability in low, medium and high-speed corners.

As with the original Valhalla concept, the new design is built around a bespoke carbonfibre tub. Target dry weight is 1550kg, which suggests it should be usefully lighter than the hefty SF90. Aerodynamic performance is critical to the overall package but, as with the Valkyrie, Valhalla aggressively harnesses the air flowing beneath the car in order to preserve a pure upper surface. Huge underfloor venturi tunnels channel air either

side of the passenger compartment, while an active front splitter and rear wing adjust automatically to maintain aero balance across all speed ranges. At 150mph some 600kg of downforce presses the Valhalla into the road or track surface.

The suspension borrows heavily from motorsport thinking, with pushrod front suspension and inboard dampers to reduce unsprung weight. An extreme Track mode will stiffen and lower the car beyond the point of road usability (much like the McLaren P1) to maximise mechanical and aerodynamic grip. The production-spec wheels are 20in in diameter at the front and 21in at the rear, and wrapped in Michelin Pilot Sport Cup tyres.

As you'd expect, Valhalla promises massive performance. Aston projects a 0-62mph time of 2.5sec, a top speed of 217mph and a targeted record-breaking Nürburgring lap time of 6min 30sec. Clearly Moers means business, which is no surprise given Valhalla is the torch-bearer for his 'Project Horizon' road map for the brand.

Stylistically, the new Valhalla is a softer, sexier and just plain better-looking machine than the original concept, while still presenting as a purposeful and highly advanced supercar. There are clear hints of both Valkyrie and Vanquish Concept, which combine very successfully with elements of the original design. Perhaps most importantly, it genuinely looks like an Aston, something the jaw-dropping but freakishly functional Valkyrie is arguably too extreme to manage.

Clockwise from bottom left

Valhalla features forward-hinged dihedral doors; rear wing will adjust automatically to maintain aero balance; exhaust will be tuned to give an appropriate Aston Martin character; centre-lock wheels frame huge carbon-ceramic brakes



'ASTON PROJECTS 0-62MPH IN 2.5SEC, A TOP SPEED OF 217MPH AND A RECORD- BREAKING 'RING LAP TIME OF 6MIN 30SEC'

Specifics of the new design include a prominent roof scoop, forward-hinged dihedral doors, swooping rear deck and one-piece rear wing. A new treatment for the front, rear and flanks brings the softness and curves from the Vanquish Concept for what promises to be a shared design DNA between the two models.

Aston's trademark grille has been stretched to create a wraparound effect, and larger, rounder, matrix LED headlights give the new design a more handsome face. While still colossal by class standards the rear diffuser has been toned down, illustrating the difference between the immaturity of the 2019 design and the poised-for-production status of this more evolved design.

Aston is yet to share details of the interior design, but we've been told to expect a 'pared-back cockpit design with ergonomics unashamedly focused around the driver'. What we do know is that there will be more space inside than in the extremely cosy Valkyrie, and that there will be dual-zone air-conditioning, a rear-view camera and CarPlay/Android Auto to ensure connectivity with the full range of mobile devices.

Aston is working to a tight deadline, with the second half of 2023 targeted as the timing for earliest deliveries. Between now and then will be an intensive period of engineering followed by exhaustive test and development. Aston Martin F1 drivers Sebastian Vettel, Lance Stroll and Nico Hülkenberg will be part of that process, doubtless driving virtual versions of Valhalla on the F1 team's simulator to accelerate chassis set-up when physical prototypes are up and running.

Pricing? Well, at £580,000 plus local taxes (so almost £700,000 in the UK) it is around half the original concept's proposed price, but this still makes it significantly more expensive than Ferrari's SF90. Build numbers? Aston remains somewhat coy, but has suggested a figure of 1000 cars spread across a two-year build period.

Mid-engined cars remain as-yet unexplored territory for Aston Martin, so it remains to be seen how buyers respond. Based on what we know and can see, Valhalla is a compelling machine. One that's more rooted in production reality than its predecessor and armed with the firepower to fight Ferrari. Exciting times. 🏁



Pastures new

THREE KEY PLAYERS MOVE TO NEW ROLES OUTSIDE AML

WORDS RICHARD MEADEN

IMAGES TONY BAKER/GUS GREGORY/MAX EAREY

THERE HAVE been three significant departures from AML in the past few months, with Miles Nürnbergberger (director of design), Matt Becker (chief engineer, vehicle attribute engineering) and David King (vice president and chief special operations officer) all leaving Gaydon for pastures new. None was available for comment as we went to press, but as all three have been featured in *Vantage* many times over the years it seemed appropriate to mark their exits and acknowledge their contributions.

Of the trio, King (above right) was by far the longest serving, having joined Aston Martin back in 1995. A hugely experienced engineer, he was key to the development of many of Aston's most successful series production models, right back to the DB7 Vantage. He was also instrumental in the marque's motorsport activities, including the production-based N24 programmes at the Nürburgring, and the company's wider activities at Le Mans and in the GT3/GT4 categories with Aston Martin Racing.

Latterly, King headed the Special Vehicle Operations team at Wellesbourne, where all of Aston's special series cars were built. These include the Vulcan, GT8, GT12 and V600, numerous Zagatos and, most recently, the V12 Speedster and glorious

one-off Victor. With the Valkyrie hypercar (development prototypes of which were also built at Wellesbourne) poised for production, he departs to set up US EV brand Fisker Inc's UK operation, and leaves behind him a remarkable body of work.

Miles Nürnbergberger (above left), who joined Aston in 2008 and headed the design department from 2018, vacates one of the most coveted roles in the industry. Few brands place such emphasis on style, fewer still have such rich heritage to draw on, and no other is facing such a dynamic period of change and reinvention.

It was Nürnbergberger who designed the fabulous One-77 – a car that only seems to get more beautiful as time passes – and was rewarded with the challenge of replacing the timeless but closely related Callum/Fisker/Reichman designs of the original Bez-era Vantage, DB9 and DBS.

The results were striking and very much delivered on the necessity for a range of cars with shared DNA but distinct identities, although, perhaps inevitably, the shock of change attracted criticism along with the plaudits.

Nürnbergberger's portfolio also encompasses Valkyrie, DBX and now-shelved ultra-luxury Lagonda EV concepts. Indeed, it's fair to say that no previous Aston Martin

designer has had to translate and evolve the marque's design language across such a wide spectrum of cars. He leaves to head the design of Renault Group's Dacia and Lada brands.

The departure that will be most keenly felt is that of Matt Becker (centre). Having joined Aston from Lotus back in 2014, Becker was the man responsible for defining the dynamic fingerprint of the new Palmer-era models. His deft touch, clear thinking and empowering approach are reflected in a range of cars designed for very different roles and objectives, but united by a honed sporting edge. You won't find two more different models than the F1 Edition Vantage and DBX, yet not only are they both exceptionally good cars, both feel very much like Astons. Together they represent some of his most impressive work to date.

The forthcoming Valhalla and Vanquish supercars would surely have benefited from Becker's as-yet untapped knowledge of mid-engined cars gained over almost two decades at Lotus. McLaren clearly thinks so, which is where he'll be starting work in early 2022.

The *Vantage* team is sad to see him, Nürnbergberger and King go, but wishes all three well in their future endeavours.



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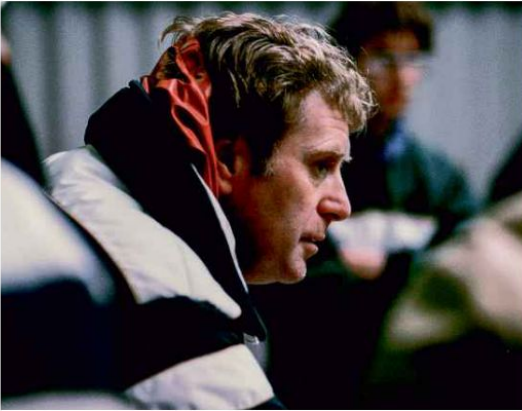
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Richard Williams

10 JUNE 1945 - 12 AUGUST 2021

RICHARD STEWART WILLIAMS, who has died at the age of 75 after a long illness borne with great dignity, was one of the best-known figures in the Aston Martin world.

His Aston connection began in 1960 when, as a 15-year-old school leaver, he secured an apprenticeship at the Feltham works, quickly gravitating towards the engine build shop. After transferring to Newport Pagnell, he met film star Peter Sellers, who offered him a job looking after his fleet of cars, including a number of Asters, which Richard did for the next six years.

In 1968 he felt confident enough to set up his own workshop as RS Williams underneath a railway arch in Brixton, to restore, race and sell Asters. This was born a business that would go on to become one of the most respected in the Aston world.

After years of success in historic racing, Richard was invited to run the Nimrod Group C car for Viscount Downe, finishing third in the World Sportscar Championship in 1982. In the late '80s he was chosen as team manager for Aston Martin's factory-backed assault on the Championship with the AMR1, though a lack of funds forced a withdrawal at the end of the 1990 season. RS Williams went on to build the 'Sanction 2' DB4 GT Zagatos, and in more recent times built the engines for the DB4 GT and DB5 Continuation cars.

He worked with passion and drive right up until his retirement in 2015, and the company he created will remain in family ownership with no change of personnel. A statement said: 'We are committed to honouring Richard's memory by continuing in our "pursuit of perfection" with the company he loved.'

The funeral will be held at 12 noon on Friday 10 September at St Andrews Church, Cobham, to be followed by a reception at the Brooklands Museum, Weybridge, at around 1pm, where Asters of all ages will be welcome to form a tribute. Email jacqueline@rswilliams.co.uk if you'd like to attend.

Richard leaves his wife Carol and daughters Jacqueline, Helen, Lizzie and Susie.



Rex Woodgate

2 JULY 1926 - 15 JUNE 2021

IT IS NOT a stretch to say that, without Rex Woodgate, Aston Martin would not exist today.

Born in Cricklewood, London, Rex was immersed in motor cars from an early age, having visited Brooklands and met Prince Bira. The lure of cars continued after the war, and at Prescott in 1947 he met Stirling Moss and became one of Moss's first mechanics, the two forming a lifelong friendship.

He had a stint at HWM and with an F2 Alta team, including a spell as a driver, but it was working on Reg Parnell's Ferrari that led to Rex meeting John Wyer and in 1955 joining Aston Martin. He starting working on DB35s before moving on to DBR2s, heading out to the States in 1958 to run a DBR2 for Elisha Walker's team. With driver George Constantine, they enjoyed two years of huge success. The image of him (above) receiving the trophy for Mechanic of the Year is clear testament to the respect and affection in which he was held.

Wyer later asked him to represent Aston Martin in North America, which led to the setting up of the Aston business there. For many years Rex was known as 'Mr Aston Martin in America'. The 1960s were a very successful period but the 1970s were more challenging. Rex helped to innovate the emissions-friendly carburettor V8 and later the Volante, and also played a key role in bringing wealthy backers to rescue the company after its collapse in 1974.

Rex returned to the UK in 1978 to work on product refinement at Newport Pagnell but he left in 1982 to set up race prep and restoration specialist Rex J Woodgate Automotive, which is now at Silverstone and run by his son Chris.

He owned and raced one of the ex-Sebring DB4 GTs for many years, both in the US and the UK, and was an elected member of the BRDC for his achievements with Aston Martin motorsport. In 2016 Rex bought a 2006 V8 Vantage for his personal enjoyment at the wonderful age of 90.

He is survived by his wife Joyce and sons Neil and Chris.

A SELECTION OF 'COLLECTOR GRADE' ASTON MARTINS FOR SALE:



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This exquisite DB5 Shooting Brake is one of just 12 examples, converted by renowned coach builders, Harold Radford & Sons. Chassis DB5/2047/R was manufactured at the Newport Pagnell factory in 1965 as a saloon and finished in California Sage over Red

hides, the livery it wears today, prior to delivery to Harold Radford for the factory commissioned shooting brake conversion.

Returning to the factory following the Radford conversion, this car was then completed with a Vantage specification engine, the only one of the twelve cars built to have been delivered in such specifications.

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1965 DB5 Vantage

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1971 DBR2 recreation ex John Etheridge

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MONTEREY CAR WEEK RETURNS, BRINGING OUT THE BIG SPENDERS AND A SELECTION OF STUNNING ASTON MARTINS

WORDS CHRIS BIETZK

PHOTOGRAPHY RM SOTHEBY'S/RASY RAN; GOODING & CO/ CRAIG RENWICK

ANY LINGERING DOUBTS about the resilience of the top end of the market in the Covid era were put to bed during Monterey Car Week: between them, RM Sotheby's, Gooding & Co, Bonhams, Mecum and Russo & Steele sold \$347m worth of cars. For context, that is a 37 per cent increase on the total from the 2019 Car Week auctions, and is more in line with the average haul achieved between 2013 and 2018 (\$363m).

Some cars came to the block with no reserve, and perhaps some bidders came to Monterey in high spirits and with cash to burn after a year of being stuck at home, but the overall sell-through rate of 80 per cent – 21 per cent up on 2019 – can largely be attributed to the fact that the catalogues were thinner this time, and the cars notably better. In all, 28 Astons were offered, several of them very special.

Back in 2015, RM Sotheby's auctioned a portion of the collection built by Texan businessman and good egg Paul Andrews. Among the lots were a Ferrari 400 Superamerica SWB Cabriolet, a Bertone-bodied DB2/4 Drophead Coupé, and the outrageous 1955 Lincoln Indianapolis by Boano. If he could part with those, many wondered, what on earth was he keeping? The answer was revealed in Monterey, where RM was tasked with finding new

Clockwise from left
The eagle-eyed will spot that this DB4 GT Zagato sits on 16in wheels – but for your \$9.52m you get the original 15in Borrani's, too; Peony red DB4 GT Lightweight made \$3.855m; the late Rush drummer Neil Peart with his much-loved 1964 DB5

homes for the cars that gave Paul so much pleasure until he passed away in February at the age of 78.

All seven of his Aston Martins were sold, and we envy in particular the buyer of DB4GT/0168/L, one of the original five factory DB4 GT Lightweights. There's no illustrious competition history to help justify the \$3.855m paid, but the fact that former AMOC North America chairman Charlie Turner owned the car twice should tell you it's a treat to drive – and indeed it was often Paul's choice for rallies such as the Copperstate 1000.

His 1965 DB5 Convertible, one of 39 left-hand-drive examples made, was valued by RM at \$1.8-2.25m, but some very determined bidders pushed the price almost \$1m north of the top estimate, with the hammer falling at \$3.195m. Frankly that was a shock, but after the events of the past 18 months we won't criticise anybody for seizing the day. And even at over \$3m the Convertible looked positively affordable next to the 'crown jewel' of the Andrews Collection, DB4GT/0190/L – the penultimate DB4 GT Zagato built.

The car was ordered by a Commander James Murray, a US Navy attaché, who requested that distinctive wide-pattern grille, plus a body made from heavier-than-standard aluminium, for robustness, and glass windows in the doors. The car was delivered in July of 1962; it is unclear whether Murray knew that it was actually complete by May, and that works racer Roy Salvadori ran in the engine for him at Brands Hatch that month...

The club races entered by subsequent owners did the car no harm, and it retains its original (though now updated) engine. It brought \$9.52m, making it the third-most expensive lot of Car Week. The priciest, by nearly \$10m, was a McLaren F1 sold for \$20.465m by the folks at Gooding & Co, who, too, had a collection to disperse in Monterey: the 'Silver Surfers' that belonged to the late, great Neil Peart.

Rush's virtuoso drummer had Maseratis, a Miura, an E-type, a '63 Corvette Split-Window, a Cobra and a DB5, all but one of them silver. The Aston was his first classic and the car that he had dreamed of owning as a boy. Given that he might have found it the most difficult of all to part with, maybe it's fitting that it is the only Silver Surfer that failed to sell. If you're interested, it's still with Gooding & Co, asking \$700,000.

The advantage of selling your Classic Aston Martin



The above images of Aston Martin models are just some of the client cars brokered by allastonmartin.com

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Desirables

More Aston-related goodies – including a quite wonderful model of one of the greats



1:8-scale DB4 GT Zagato model by Amalgam

£11,935 | amalgamcollection.com

The model is still in development, obviously, but this is sadly the last chance we'll have to bring you news of Amalgam's latest project: a perfect likeness of 1 VEV as driven by Roy Salvadori in the 1961 Tourist Trophy at Goodwood. When the prototype is complete it will represent 5000 man-hours of painstaking work.

Fender Tone Master Super Reverb guitar amp

£1299 | fender.com

The valve-powered Super Reverb was a favourite of Stevie Ray Vaughan and chiropractors everywhere. This new digital version gets as near as dammit to the sound of the original, but weighs almost half as much (36lb), and thanks to a power attenuator you can use it at home without getting an ASBO.



AMR zip-up hoodie by Hackett

£225 | hackett.com

Part of Hackett's growing Aston Marlin Racing range, perfect for those autumn days when the weather can't seem to make up its mind, with sweatshirt-style arms but a warm, quilted body.

Lounge Chair by Callum

£POA | callumdesigns.com

In 2019 Ian Callum set about refining the V12 Vanquish (which he penned back at the turn of the century), and more recently he has been tinkering with another much-loved design: the Eames Lounge Chair. Callum's version of the 1956 classic is built around an exposed carbonfibre spine, and features sculpted upholstery that calls to mind the driver's seat of a supercar.





**Playmobil Goldfinger
DB5 model**

£69.95 | 007store.com

Now available to preorder, Playmobil's Bond car comes with four figurines: 007 himself, Auric Goldfinger, Oddjob, and a nameless henchman whose only purpose in life is to be ejected from the passenger seat of the DB5.

**Girard-Perregaux
1966 WW.TC**

£10,300 | girard-perregaux.com

The partnership between Aston and Girard-Perregaux was cemented by the flashy Tourbillon with Three Flying Bridges, but the Swiss watchmaker can do old-fashioned elegance, too, as evidenced by this wonderfully restrained 40mm world timer.



Best in Class by John Ketchell

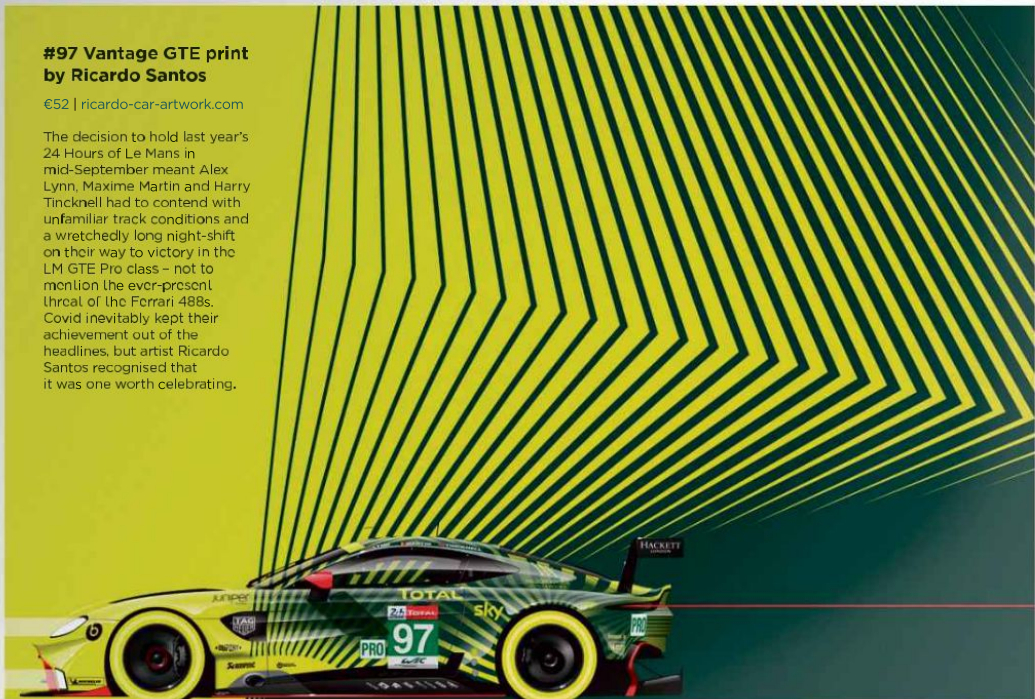
£3950 | historiccarart.net

Maserati's decision to sit out Le Mans in 1956 meant that the services of one Stirling Moss became available to Aston Martin, and the team jumped at the chance to pair him with Peter Collins in a DB3S that pushed the race-winning (and much more powerful) Jaguar D-type all the way to the finish.

**#97 Vantage GTE print
by Ricardo Santos**

€52 | ricardo-car-artwork.com

The decision to hold last year's 24 Hours of Le Mans in mid-September meant Alex Lynn, Maxime Martin and Harry Tincknell had to contend with unfamiliar track conditions and a wretchedly long night-shift on their way to victory in the LM GTE Pro class – not to mention the ever-present threat of the Ferrari 488s. Covid inevitably kept their achievement out of the headlines, but artist Ricardo Santos recognised that it was one worth celebrating.



Ricardo.

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Your view

email us eds@vantagemag.co.uk
write to us Vantage Magazine
 Editorial, Dennis Publishing,
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Left and below
 DB2 Drophead was once registered to DB himself; V8 still bears the mark of one of the men who built it

Spyder man

In the enjoyable feature on the Touring-bodied Spyders, I was surprised to see my friend Steve Hill, a very knowledgeable Ferrari collector, being accredited as owner of chassis 1163, the third car. Steve tells me that he showed the car at Quail Lodge in about 2013 while also showing his 288 GTO. He confirmed that 1163 was – and I believe still is – owned by J Taylor Crandall, though Steve oversaw some of the mechanical work being done on the car and put many test miles on it.
Clem Simmons, Canada

Spyder fan

I very much enjoyed Mike Monk's piece on the Touring-bodied DB2/4 MkII Spyders (issue 33). I used to see 1161 (2 KMF) quite frequently in the second half of the 1960s. It was then owned by Peter Wicksted, who was, at that time, a TV outside broadcast cameraman. He brought the car to several AROC events.

I remember once encountering him when my late lamented friend Brian Joscelyne and I travelled to Brands Hatch to watch the BOAC 500 race. The date was April 7, 1968 and it was Peter who passed on the news, which he had heard through his headphones, of the tragic death of Jim Clark. Clark would have taken part in the Brands event, but was bound by contractual obligations to race for Lotus in the relatively minor F2 event at Hockenheim.

I always did admire Touring's designs. I was one of the few (I think) who admired the DBSC, the proposed successor to the DB6 – even more so when, at an AROC Area 11 meeting near Brentwood, the then owner of the RHD example, Michael Eilman-Brown, handed me the keys and invited me to take it for a drive. What trust! What a car!
Adrian M Feather

What's in a name?

I've been lucky enough to have owned a 1973 Aston Martin V8 for near enough the last 30 years. I do most of the maintenance work myself and thus am very familiar with all aspects of the car. I therefore know that if you stick your head into the driver's footwell and look upwards, you can see the underside of the right-hand heater blower and its mounting panel.

Scratched into the paint of the mounting panel is the name 'Bob Clarke'. It was therefore with great pleasure that I saw the man photographed as part of the Bulldog team in issue 34. My car predates AML's policy of applying a plate with the name of the engine builder, but having Bob's name on the car is just as good.
John Reynolds

DB2 Dropheads at the double

I read with great interest your cover story on 70 years of Vantage (issue 32). My attention was centred in particular on the ex-Prince Bertil DB2 Drophead. It's wonderful to see her returned to her original baby blue colour, three-piece front grille and the chromed front and rear strips.

Since 2004 I have owned and enjoyed another historic DB2 Drophead, chassis LML/50/10, the first 'prototype' demonstration drophead, originally owned by David Brown Tractors Ltd and later by David Brown himself. Apparently George, DB's chauffeur, drove 'the old man' to the South of France in her on a number of occasions.

Both cars share a lot of details, including subsequent changes to the original configuration. For example, both cars had the gear lever moved to the car floor early on, although instead of the Vantage engine fitted to the Bertil car, my car was fitted with a 3-litre engine in 1953 as soon as they were developed, and which she still carries today.

After detailed restorations, both Dropheads were shown at the Hampton Court Concours d'Elegance, Prince Bertil's car in 2018, my car last September. Real brothers in arms...
José Romão de Sousa, Porto, Portugal

SS engine confusion

Your very interesting article on six of the best Vantage models (issue 32) mentions that the SS (Special Series) engine was available on DB4 from 'chassis 251 onwards', which would mean from the very first Series 2 cars. This doesn't fit with my 1996 copy of the AROC Members' Register, which mentions DB4/839/L (a Series 4 car) as the first one to have left the factory with the SS engine.

I happen to own DB4/839/L and the large data file that came with the car confirms that it left the factory with the engine 370/976/SS on 13 April 1962. My concern is not with the particular case of my DB4. My fear is to see wrong data published by a high-level publication such as *Vantage*, because it could then be repeated by others and become a 'new truth'. I would be most grateful if you could clarify this.
Michel Strebelle, Brussels

You are quite right, Michel, and we are happy to put the record straight. Tim Cottingham, Registrar of the Aston Martin Heritage Trust, tells us: 'The SS engine did not become available until the Series 4 DB4 – standard fit on the Vantage, optional on the saloon. The first regular saloon to get the SS engine as an option was DB4/839/L; the first Vantage was DB4/951/R, registered January 1962.'



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After a tricky start to the season,
Aston Martin has shown it can compete
with the top teams in F1, and it's that
man Vettel leading the charge

TURNING THE CORNER

WORDS ACAM COOPER | PHOTOGRAPHY ASTON MARTIN F1





Above and right
Monaco saw the first encouraging signs for Aston Martin. Vettel and the team strategists combining to achieve a well-earned fifth. In the next race in Azerbaijan, Vettel went better still, scoring the new team's first podium finish

The Aston Martin Formula 1 team endured a difficult start to the 2021 season as it struggled to maintain the sort of form that it showed under its previous Racing Point identity. However, more recently some charging performances from Sebastian Vettel on days when opportunities opened up have indicated that there is some momentum behind Lawrence Stroll's ambitious plan to one day challenge for the World Championship.

Those races also demonstrated that the decision to hire Vettel, a man who knows how to win titles but was struggling for form in his latter days at Ferrari, was a wise one. Any questions about the 34-year-old German's motivation have been answered, and it's evident that he is also helping the team to raise its game.

As previously recounted in *Vantage*, the team was handicapped more than its immediate rivals by changes to the regulations over the winter. A package of downforce cuts, focused mainly on the floor area, impacted teams traditionally running low-rake aerodynamic packages more than those with a jacked-up rear. The teams hit hardest, Mercedes and Aston Martin, both lost performance relative to last year.

Regaining it amid an FIA freeze on mechanical development, and with the need to focus aerodynamic R&D efforts on the new rules package for 2022, has been a major challenge. Mercedes had the resources to quickly regain its winning form, but nevertheless it has been obvious that its title rival Red Bull Racing is in a much stronger position than last year.

For Aston the recovery has been harder, essentially because it doesn't have the strength in depth of the works Mercedes outfit. However, the team has made steady progress, and it has been able to post good results that not only logged vital points but gave everyone in the camp a welcome boost.

The first positive sign came in round five in Monaco, a track where ultimate aerodynamic performance has less influence. From eighth on the grid, Vettel put in a charging drive to finish fifth, helped by great strategy calls on the pit wall. At the very next race in Azerbaijan, a street track that combines tight corners with long straights – with no fast sweepers that test the aerodynamics – Vettel again grabbed his chance. Helped by a high attrition rate, he finished second to claim the team's first podium of the year.

That race looked like one of those once-a-year events when the top guys hit trouble and the podium opens up for



less fancied runners. However, a few weeks later in Hungary it happened again, this time thanks to rain that triggered mayhem at the first corner and saw an early red flag. After the restart, Vettel spent the race sitting on the tail of the race-leading Alpine of Esteban Ocon, unable to find a way past. He crossed the line in second, with the Mercedes of Lewis Hamilton closing fast, to log his and Aston's second podium finish of 2021. His obvious frustration at coming so close indicated just how motivated he is.

'I really tried hard,' he said after the flag. 'And I'm a little bit down, because I pushed the whole race, and just couldn't get close enough to pass. So a bit of a shame. Of course it's in the DNA, you race for wins. I didn't leave anything unturned. I really tried to tell myself go, go, go and attack, attack and try.'

Alas subsequently his car failed scrutineering due to the lack of the mandatory one-litre fuel sample, and late in the evening he was disqualified. The team remained convinced that there was enough fuel in the tank, even if the FIA could not find it. An appeal process was launched but subsequently dropped, so the disqualification stood.

The lost 18 points are a huge blow for Aston in its fight for fifth place in the constructors' World Championship. Without that result heading into the August summer break the team lay in seventh place on 48, behind main rivals Alpine (77) and AlphaTauri (68).

Nevertheless the Hungarian performance showed that driver and team are capable of putting everything together, even with a car that isn't as competitive as its predecessor. The pieces are falling into place.

'I think we expected more to start with,' Vettel told *Vantage* before the Budapest race. 'Then I think I took a little while and we didn't have things coming our way, so that combination maybe was a bit poor in the first races.'

'And after that I think we got more and more in the groove. We obviously didn't have great race results the last couple of races, but I think overall it feels a lot more comfortable than it was in the beginning.'

'So we see it's very tight in the midfield and if everything goes normal we are just at the back of that pack, around the back. And if we overperform we are right in the

In Azerbaijan, Vettel again grabbed his chance, finishing second to claim the team's first podium of the year'



middle or sometimes even in the front, like in Baku.'

Halfway into his first season in the camp, Vettel feels fully integrated: 'There is always more somehow, but I think the spirit is great and the team is great. Obviously in terms of tools, the car is what it is, and we try to make the most out of it.'

There's no doubt that Vettel's presence has lifted the team a notch. His young partner Lance Stroll is a quick driver, as were Sergio Perez, Esteban Ocon, Nico Hülkenberg and others who raced for the Silverstone outfit in its Force India/Racing Point guise. But there's no substitute for the experience and know-how that comes with a driver of Vettel's calibre.

'Seb brings a mentality with him that he had when he won all those races and World Championships,' says Aston team principal Otmar Szafnauer. 'He leaves no stone unturned for performance, and the methodology of how he goes about his weekend and what he's asked of us. And that applies to both sides of the garage. Lance and his team have learned from Seb, and it's lifted us.'

It's all about details, the marginal gains that help ultimately to find performance on track. 'All sorts of little things,' says Szafnauer. 'Like at the very beginning, he had a lot of experience of engine drivability at other teams, so that went into the feedback of the drivability of the Mercedes. And they've improved that significantly. And if we have better drivability, the drivers tend to get more confidence, they go quicker.'

'Ergonomics: he made the steering wheel better, so it's easier to handle. Those are just two small examples of what

'Seb brings a mentality with him that he had when he won all those races and World Championships'

he brought, but there's also how we analyse and evaluate elements of every corner and the data that we use, and how that data is overlaid with feedback from the driver to be able to work overnight and improve the car. So all that stuff.' His very presence, and the fact that he has faith in Lawrence Stroll's ambition, make the difference.

'Seb's brilliant,' says Szafnauer. 'He came to us with the notion of wanting to enjoy racing again. I talk to him often. And I think he's enjoying racing again, which is great.'

'Everybody's behind him. And he's done a great job with the team that he has and the mechanics here, and people at the factory. Not so much at the factory because of Covid, but he's visited there a few times. And he's just a genuine individual and a down-to-earth person. And everybody likes that.'

Right, from the top
After a promising start to the season, Lance Stroll has been largely outside the points positions in recent races, while Vettel has come to the fore. Another podium, this time in Hungary, was however overturned on a fuel regs technicality



Vettel's presence hasn't just helped to motivate the current staff members. He's also been key in helping the team with its ongoing recruitment drive as it expands from being a midfield contender that used to have to count every penny to one day being able to match the biggest players on the grid in terms of resources.

In recent weeks there has been a succession of announcements of key hirings as Aston bolsters its management team. Among those coming in are Mark White (ex-Honda UK, operations director), Luca Farbatto (ex-Alfa Romeo F1, engineering director) and Andrew Alessi (ex-Red Bull F1, head of technical operations).

However the headline signing was Dan Fallowes, erstwhile head of aerodynamics at Red Bull and in effect right-hand man of the great Adrian Newey. He will join as technical director, while the former holder of that title, team veteran Andrew Green, becomes chief technical officer. With aerodynamics such an important measure of performance, hiring Newey's understudy is a real signal of intent by Aston Martin, even if his Red Bull contractual situation means an extended 'gardening leave' before he can take up his new job.

It works both ways. Vettel's presence is a sign to top people at other teams that Aston will be a good place to be, and their hiring helps to convince the former champion that his boss Stroll really does mean business.

'Obviously I'm not signing people,' says Vettel. 'But I think the objective of the team is very clear, and I think the excitement is very high. So obviously it will take some time, but I think Lawrence is very ambitious and very determined to succeed.'

The management-level hirings may get the attention, but the headcount is expanding at all levels. 'At 550 employees it's a sprinkling of everywhere that we have to hire in,' says Szafnauer. 'We have to hire like-minded individuals, quite a few of them, probably another 200 until we are right-sized. But it's in all areas – in areas of performance, in areas of manufacturing, in the operations areas to make sure we are efficient, and now with the financial regulations even in areas where we can understand and plan for the financial regulations a bit better.'

It's those FIA financial regulations, and the way they will rein-in the big-spending top three teams in the coming years, that have encouraged Lawrence Stroll's ambitions. Next year the budget cap drops from \$145m to \$140m, and it falls further to \$135m in 2023 – and that's the number Aston is aiming at as it expands. At that stage, in theory, it will be a level playing field in terms of resources with the likes of Mercedes, Red Bull and Ferrari.

'We are working hard on next year and we will do our best to win the world title next year,' says Szafnauer. 'But if you look historically it does take time to put the infrastructure in place, the people in place to be able to challenge for a World Championship.'

'If I remember right, even Mercedes, who bought Brawn [at the end of of 2009] who were World Champions, it took them another four years to win.'

'So it's just what it takes when you have the goal, the ambition, the objectives and the funding to put the infrastructure in place as well as the correct people and then challenge for the World Championship.' It still feels like a bold assertion, but at least the pieces that are starting to fall into place could just make it happen. 🏆

Earning its stripes

WORDS RICHARD MEADEN | PHOTOGRAPHY ASTON PARROT

The Vantage F1 Edition is much more than the usual limited edition fare. It marks the Vantage's transformation into a genuinely great driver's car





Above and right
Aero changes, plus tweaks to the suspension, bigger wheels and tyres and an extra 24bhp for the biturbo V8 engine have all combined to produce a tangibly better car on the road, as well as a quicker one on track

Forget the F1 Edition nomenclature. Yes, this is a civilian-spec Formula 1 Safety Car, but it is so much more than merely a stickers-and-stripes special edition. And it needs to be, for it's no secret that the AM6 Vantage has been something of a problem child for Aston Martin.

Divisive styling and punchy pricing compared with the outgoing model posed significant challenges at launch, but the greater problem was a conflicted character and a shortfall in all-round capability compared with that perennial class benchmark, the Porsche 911.

The good news (great news, actually) is that the F1 Edition addresses the character and capability issues, transforming the Vantage from a car that confounded those who buy with head or heart into a machine that connects on an emotional level and truly delivers dynamically.

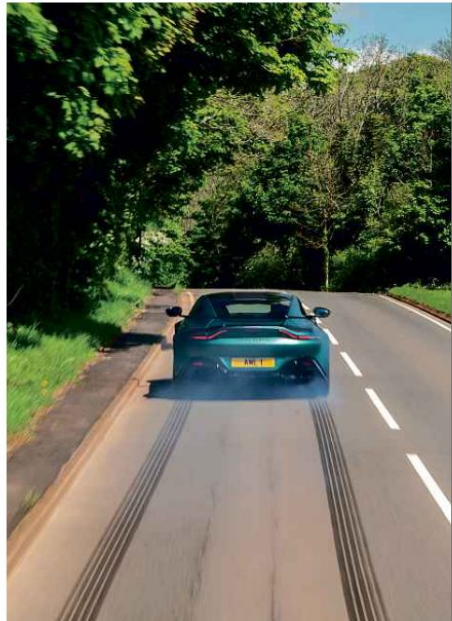
The turnaround was hard-won, with a comprehensive suite of improvements encompassing powertrain, chassis and aerodynamics. The empirical target set by CEO Tobias Moers was a Vantage that was 15sec faster around the Nürburgring Nordschleife. The clever bit was his insistence on the development team being precluded from finding the time by fitting track-biased tyres, as is common practice when simply chasing lap times. The F1 Edition's performance gains would be real; measurable against the clock, but also tangible and deployable on the road.

We'll get to the all-important oily bits in a minute, but first the styling. The colour palette is limited to black, white or green and in a choice of satin or gloss finish (we'll have

'It transforms the Vantage into a machine that connects on an emotional level and truly delivers dynamically'

it in glossy green, thanks), and the functional aerodynamic additions help to make sense of the more controversial elements of the basic Vantage's design, while bigger wheels do their bit to bulk out the arches. Unfortunately the vinyl stripes have a decidedly aftermarket vibe. If they have to be there at all then they should be painted on rather than stuck on, as graphics have no place on a car of this class and price. Likewise the front splitter, dive planes, side-skirts and rear wing would be infinitely nicer in satin carbon rather than cheap-looking gloss black plastic. More expensive too, admittedly, but at £142,000 you shouldn't have such obvious clues to cost-cutting.

Scratch beneath the visual changes and there's plenty to discover. For starters there's more power, up to 527bhp from 503. There's a broader spread of torque, too, though the peak of 505lb ft remains unchanged. With increased performance being firmly in Moers' crosshairs, there's no





Above and right
Dramatic-looking rear aerofoil helps give a significant increase in downforce. Colours are limited to Jet Black, Lunar White and Racing Green (pictured), while there's a liberal sprinkling of F1 Edition badges

manual option with the F1 Edition, as this would require a torque limit in the lower gears. The eight-speed auto also means an e-diff rather than the less configurable mechanical diff that comes with the stick-shift.

Wheel size is up by an inch from 20 to 21in and all four are wrapped in Pirelli tyres tailored for the F1 Edition. In an effort to achieve greater response and consistency of feel there's a stiffer front structure and a more rigid steering column, which has been pinned to remove the compliance engineered into the original Vantage column.

Front spring rates remain unchanged, but the bump-stops provide more support, with a 30 per cent increase in low-speed damping to help traction. A 10 per cent increase in rear spring rate and a 20 per cent boost to compression damping controls vertical movement and maintains a greater and more consistent contact patch between tyres and tarmac.

The regular Vantage never lacked grip, but it could be spiky when it let go (especially in the wet), so while the F1 Edition does gain a little in outright grip from the bigger boots, the more valuable win is in making that grip available over a broader window, and smoothing the transition from grip to slip when the limit is exceeded.

The aero kit also makes a valuable contribution to the F1 Edition's performance, turning around the standard car's aero balance, which settled with a small amount of front lift and a modest 40kg of downforce at the rear, to a positive 60kg at the front and 150kg at the rear. It's hardly drive-on-the-ceiling levels of downforce, but it's enough to improve front and rear-end grip at higher speeds, which in turn boosts stability and driver confidence.

'The aero kit is enough to improve front and rear-end grip at higher speeds, which in turn boosts stability'

Last of the major changes is that aforementioned modest yet useful bump in power and the broader spread of peak torque. This comes with some welcome changes to the gearbox, which now upshifts more cleanly rather than mimicking the punch of a manual shift, and predicts engine revs under hard braking so it's less likely to refuse a downshift. The result is a car that retains the core strengths of the regular Vantage but brings even sharper responses together with much increased finesse and control.

Things begin familiarly enough, the biturbo 4-litre V8 starting with a thump and a crackle from the exhausts. It's a bit thuggish, but it does raise a smile and herald a special driving experience. Some cars feel spot-on almost from the moment their wheels start turning. The F1 Edition is one of them. It's actually more from the moment the steering wheel turns that you notice a general uplift in connection and a much more intuitive feel and rate of response. It's all subtle



Specification

ENGINE V8, 3982cc, twin-turbo **MAX POWER** 527bhp @ 6000rpm **MAX TORQUE** 505lb ft @ 2000-5000rpm **TRANSMISSION** Eight-speed automatic with a paddleshift, rear-wheel drive, e-Diff, torque vectoring **SUSPENSION** Front: double wishbones, coil springs, telescopic adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar. Rear: multi-link, coil springs, telescopic adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar **STEERING** Rack-and-pinion, electrically assisted **BRAKES** Vented discs, 410mm front, 360mm rear, ABS, EBD **WHEELS** 9 x 21in front, 11 x 21in rear **TYRES** 255/35 ZR21 front, 295/30 ZR21 rear, Pirelli P Zero **WEIGHT** 1530kg (dry) **POWER TO WEIGHT** 350bhp/ton **0-62MPH** 3.6sec (claimed) **TOP SPEED** 195mph (claimed) **PRICE** £142,000



stuff, but each and every one of the detail changes feels as though it compliments the other for an amplified overall effect.

On an interesting road the effects are deeply impressive. The Vantage always had a responsive front end, but it never seemed to find harmony with the rear. Consequently if you began to lean into the front-end grip you'd have a slightly uneasy feeling that the tail couldn't quite keep up with it. Throw in some bumps and, while the nose remained pinned to the road, the tail had too much vertical movement.

By contrast, the F1 Edition is calmer and more controlled, with cleaner and more consistent responses. This new all-of-a-piece feel really does unlock some of the latent brilliance that existed in the regular car but couldn't be reliably tapped. The steering is super-sharp, but with enough linearity of response that you can commit to one input rather than nibbling your way through corners.

With this confidence in your trajectory, you can then focus on your throttle inputs, which means squeezing as much of the V8's abundant torque into the tarmac as the rear tyres will manage. It's a fabulous sensation, the combination of considerable and sustained lateral g joined by a gathering sense of longitudinal propulsion as the corner opens out. And because the rear end feels more controlled you can do this with confidence.

Ultimately this makes the Vantage a much more enjoyable car. One you get with much more readily and feel encouraged to exploit and explore. The amount of effort and energy you put into your driving is often a gauge

of how much fun you're having, in which case the fact that the F1 Edition encourages you to use the gearshift paddles rather than leaving it to do the gearshifts for you suggests that this is a car that knows how to engage its driver. For the first time since its introduction, this is a Vantage you can really hustle.

Just as importantly, the dynamic changes seem to empower the F1 Edition to work better, both as a sporting GT and as an all-out sports car. In practice this means that, although the suspension is firmer, the increased control actually brings greater refinement and sophistication to the ride quality. It's never going to be plush on a lumpy road, but it's far from uncouth and is arguably smoother than the regular model.

Where does it sit compared with the Porsche 911? Well, accepting the fact that it's that an entirely different character, the gap has definitely closed, though there's still a long way to go before the Vantage has the focus and steely capabilities to be considered a GT3 rival. But as a road car the F1 Edition is both hugely entertaining and impressively capable. There's certainly no other front-engined car that comes close to its blend of performance, agility and exploitability for the money.

Of course, the F1 Edition being so good begs the question of whether the regular Vantage should benefit from the improvements. It makes sense to have a hierarchy in the Vantage range, but Aston needs to be building and selling the very best cars it can right now. That's a conundrum for Aston to solve. For now, though, let's just enjoy the fact that the Vantage has matured into a great driver's car. 📌

Above
New 21in wheels fill the arches nicely, while front splitter, dive planes, side-skirts and rear wing bring a road-racer vibe to the Vantage

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V8 Volante 1979



Imperial Burgundy with black interior. Automatic Gearbox. 34,454 miles from new with fully stamped original service book. One of the first 85 cars produced and known to R S Williams for over 28yrs. A wonderful car with excellent provenance, the first owner was the Duke of Westminster and subsequently personally owned by Richard Williams.

V8 Vantage Fliptail 1978



Orchard Green with Magnolia piped Green, this example has been loved and used for the last 32yrs by its previous owner and is now heading for a full RS Williams restoration to the ultimate RSW specification. RS Williams currently maintains 7 of the 23 Fliptail Vantages produced. Picture shown of similar car in the original specification of sales car.

DBS Vantage 1971



Gunmetal Grey with black Vaumol hide. In 2006 a six-year restoration was started by an Aston specialist, finished in 2012. The current fastidious owner who felt the work did not represent the quality he desired and commissioned Pugsley & Lewis to complete a further full body-off restoration from May 2013 to June 2016 costing over £350,000. Only 745 miles completed since.

V8 Vantage X-Pack 1987



Sold new via HWM Walton to Mr D Scot of Woking in January 1988. Stunning LHD X-Pack in Sunburst Yellow with Yellow and Pepper Red leather piped dark Red. Unique specification and full body-off restoration by Aston Martin Works at a cost of £350,000 in 2012. 150 miles covered since.

V8 Vantage X-Pack 1989



York Red with Magnolia leather piped dark red. 2 owners from new. 14 MOT's on file from 1992 - 2012 when car was exported to Kuwait. Currently under-going full RS Williams restoration to the ultimate RSWW specification.

DB5 1965



Fabulous DB5 in original Dubonnet and black Connolly hide (as per build-sheet) with lovely patina. Complete ownership history from new (8 owners). Maintenance, service and restoration history from the past 30yrs. RS Williams maintained last 19yrs. Expenditure in excess of £180k including engine upgrade to 4.2ltr in August 2002 (approx 29,000 miles ago).

DB4 Series IV 1962



A magnificent DB4 Series IV benefiting from a complete RS Williams body-off restoration costing in excess of £350,000. Two year restoration from October 2017 completed in October 2019 with only 600 miles covered since. California Sage with Fawn interior. Original SS engine upgrade to 4.7ltr. Superb in every way.

DB5 1965



Silver Birch with red interior (as per build-sheet, 1 of only approx 124 or so DB5's to be 'true' Silver Birch cars). Full bare metal re-spray and re-trim carried out in 2003. 4.2ltr RS Williams engine upgrade completed in 2008. RS Williams maintained last 15yrs. Invoices showing expenditure in excess of £155,000. Limited mileage over the last 4 years.

DB6 1966



Black Pearl with fawn. RS Williams restoration in 2009 including engine rebuild to 4.7ltr. Maintained by RS Williams for many years.

DB4 Vantage 1963



Dubonnet and dark grey. First registered on 26th February 1963, this fabulous DB4 Vantage is undergoing a full restoration to the ultimate RS Williams specification.

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Time machine

WORDS JOHN SIMISTER | PHOTOGRAPHY MATTHEW HOWELL

Half a century after he last saw it, we reunite legendary Formula 1 designer John Barnard with the Aston he bought as a teenager



This is a tale of four Johns, if you include the one telling it. Its thread begins in early 2019 when I saw a fine-looking Aston Martin DB2/4, freshly painted in metallic grey, nearing completion of its restoration at Feltham-era Aston specialist Four Ashes Garage. Owner John Martin, there that day to do some work on his car and hurry the process along because he wanted to enter it in the Mille Miglia, told me that the Aston had a Ford Zodiac engine when he bought it, but it now had a correct 2.9-litre LB6. That Ford engine had been fitted long ago by one of the Aston's earlier owners, John Barnard. Yes, the John Barnard who designed the cars that brought victory first to McLaren, then to Ferrari, in the Formula 1 World Championship.

This was a most magnificent coincidence. I had recently read about this 1955 DB2/4, and seen a period picture, in Nick Skeens' rather good biography of Barnard, *The Perfect Car*. Barnard bought it in 1965 when he was just 19 years old and taking the first steps to his own style of engineering wizardry, or stark logic as he would see it. The engine blew up soon afterwards so, shocked at the cost of replacement parts from Aston Martin, he installed a 283ci Chevrolet V8 with a pair of four-barrel Carter carburettors to live it up. Then the reality of rising petrol prices bit, and the V8 was ousted by the less-dipsomaniac Zodiac motor.

Later, the DB2/4 was sold to a friend but it wasn't to be Barnard's last Aston. Very much later, in 2019, I contacted John Barnard via the PR company that had promoted the book and asked him if he would like to meet his old car again, and have a go in it. Yes, he said, he would.

BEFORE THAT COULD happen, there was a restoration to finish. John Martin had bought the Aston for £85,000, after an auction house had told the previous owner of 40 years that the original £65,000 asking price wasn't enough, and planned straight away to get it back to the way its maker had intended it to be. 'Chris Adams at Four Ashes Garage collected it on 21 September 2014,' John Martin recalls, 'and said it would be finished by April 2016.'

Restorations seldom conform to an intended timetable, including this one. However, PCD 480 was stripped down by June 2015, and its palette of past colours was revealed. Below the silver top coat were yellow, green, red and the silver-grey that John Barnard had applied, itself a change from the metallic blue in which the DB2/4 had left Feltham. 'The chassis was in good fettle,' says JM, 'with just a few sections to be replaced. The body wasn't so good.'

Blasting revealed holes around the front grille aperture, bigger ones in a lower front corner, some dents and plentiful pop-riveting around the front wheelarches and the right-hand rear one. So there was plenty of aluminium welding to do. Plenty of mechanical work, too: 'Every mechanical part was replaced or renovated,' says JM, wincing slightly at the cost. This, of course, included a rebuilt David Brown gearbox to replace the Ford unit that had gone with the interloping engine, and a correct engine built around a new block containing a new crankshaft, pistons and connecting rods.

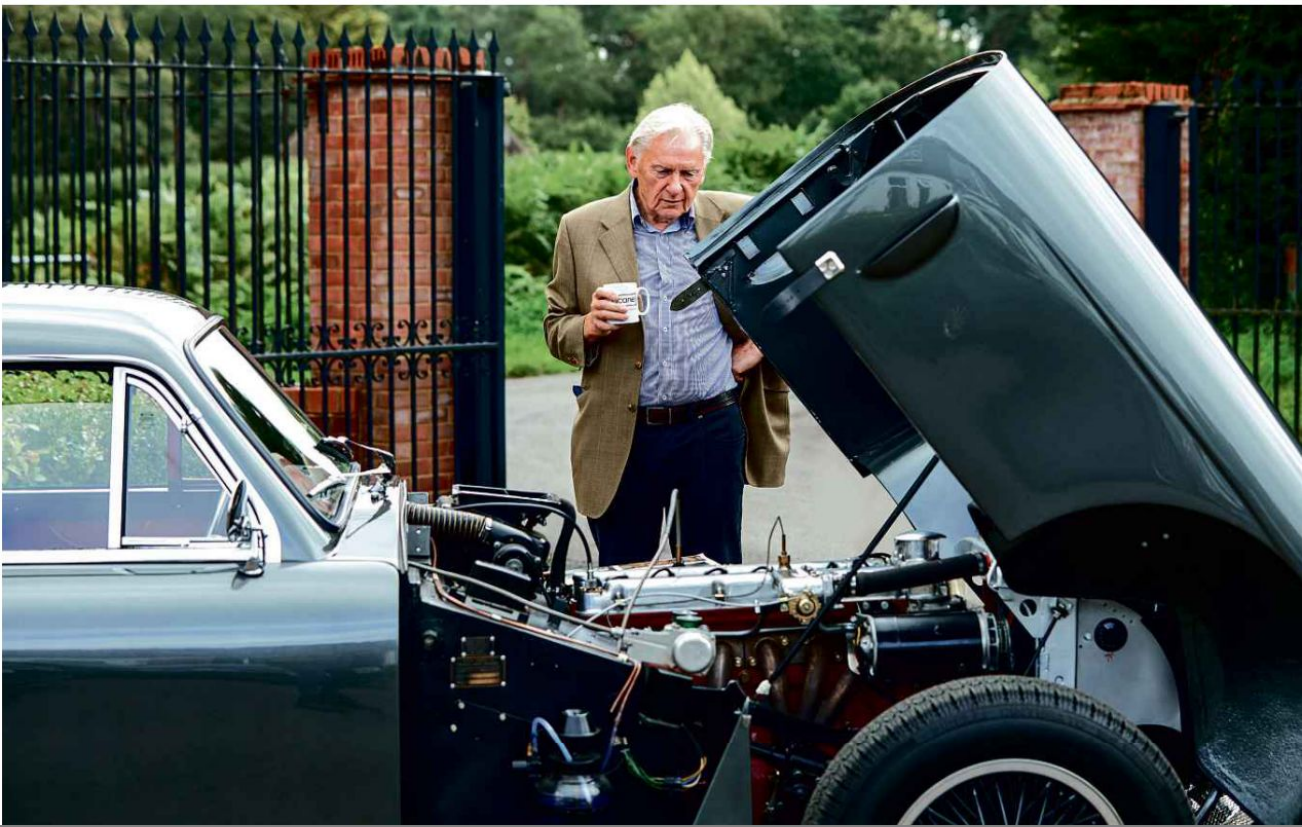
This engine got the benefit of all the latest knowledge, plus a specification that includes three new, Spanish-made

'Barnard bought it in 1965 when he was just 19 years old. The engine blew up soon afterwards, so he installed a Chevrolet V8'

Below and right

The Aston (below) as it was in John Barnard's ownership in the mid-1960s and (right) freshly restored today, under the bonnet a period-correct 2.9-litre LB6 straight-six







Above and left John Barnard back behind the wheel after more than 50 years. Restoration snapshots (left) show Zodiac engine still in situ (bottom left), scruffy but sound chassis; tired but complete dashboard; refurbished chassis; new engine block with the 'cheeses' that carry the main bearings; and the refettled bodyshell



'I made the gear lever and a roller-bearing linkage. This car got me started on working out engineering solutions' - John Barnard

Weber DCOEs in place of the original pair of SUs. These, however, are not allowed by the Mille Miglia eligibility scrutineers, so JM is having a set of perfect replica sandcast DCO3s, as used in period, made by 'three blokes in the Midlands - two in their eighties, one in his seventies'.

After six years at Four Ashes, PCD 480 looked magnificent and was close to being finished. But it wasn't quite there, so JM entrusted the last few fettle jobs to Aston restoration specialist Chicane at Bramshill, south of Reading, run by our fourth John: John Watson. Not the one who raced John Barnard's McLarens, but it's a delicious coincidence. It was at Chicane that I met the Aston and its owner in July this year, just before the latter's departure to Seoul on an extended business trip that, sad to say, meant he wouldn't meet his car's famous former owner.

JOHN MARTIN IS sitting in the beautifully re-upholstered driving seat, all red leather and perfect pleats, contemplating the handbrake. It used to be on the right, but it has been moved to make room for the removable roll cage that JM specified for the Mille Miglia, the Tour Auto and, especially, the Le Mans Classic, all of which he plans to enter. Now it's next to the transmission tunnel and too far forward to reach easily. One for the to-do list.

Otherwise, barring a few fixable snags typical of a deep restoration in its final stages, he's happy. Very happy. I would be, too: PCD 480 looks magnificent in its flawless Magnetic Silver, a modern Aston colour, and quite the road racer with its lack of bumpers and the mesh grille that JM made himself. He has the bumpers and original slatted grille back at home and might yet fit them. Decisions...

There are various updates: modern clear-lens headlights albeit with a period-looking tripod bulb mask, an electric

fan to supplement the original four-bladed, DB4-size Turrino wire wheels with alloy rims, a modern electric fuel pump, a heated windscreen, a compact and lightweight battery, a brake servo, a meaty stainless steel exhaust system with a pair of pipes exiting right rather than two widely spaced ones. Plus a modern take on interior embellishment, the original walnut finish for the instrument panel now remade in glossy black-lacquered wood with door cappings to match. What will John Barnard think of that?

IT'S 10 AUGUST, the planets have aligned and John Barnard has arrived at Chicane. I'm trying to read this objective, empirical, logical man's first impressions. The fact of the acquaintance with an old flame is sinking in as he compares what he's seeing with what he remembers.

The Turrino wheels are shod with new facsimile Pirelli Cinturatos. Did this car wear Cinturatos back in the day? 'Yes, I think it did,' he muses. 'What's happened to the Alfin brake drums? And I don't remember those little air outlets on the side of the bonnet.' That's where the trafficators used to be. 'Ah, yes, very neat.'

We walk round to the front. 'When I put the Chevy engine in, I was worried that there wouldn't be enough cooling air. So I unpicked all the grille slats and repositioned them to allow more air through and direct it where it was most useful. It was my first venture into aerodynamics.'

So, tell us more about the Chevrolet engine transplant. 'I paid £480 for the car, which matched the number plate. The letters stand for "pitch circle diameter". Not long after I bought it, the engine blew up. The middle section of a con-rod came out through the side of the block, with the big-end still on the crankshaft. It was still running and had



oil pressure so I drove it home. There was quite a lot of oil on the A40, though.

I went to Aston Martin at Newport Pagnell to see about buying a new block, but they wanted £250, which was a lot of money in those days. Then I saw a 3-litre block advertised in Birmingham. I bought it and discovered it was a 2.6, but the seller wouldn't take it back. I suppose I could have changed the liners, but the Chevy was more appealing. It was mated to a Borg-Warner T10 gearbox.

I learned a lot of stuff. I made the gear lever and a roller-bearing linkage, I worked out the clutch ratio for the pedal, and it all worked really well. This car got me started on working out engineering solutions.'

It was also E-type-baitingly quick, but ferociously thirsty. So, as fuel prices rose, out came the V8, set aside for a Formula 5000 engine project that JB never quite finished while he was working at Lola, and in went a 2553cc straight-six engine and associated gearbox from a Ford Zodiac MkIII. 'It had almost as much power as the Aston engine and it was quite a lot lighter, so now the Aston handled better than it did originally.'

Meanwhile, JB had also attended to the cosmetics. 'I resprayed it in Rolls-Royce Shell Grey [that archaeologically buried first silver]. A bloke in a van shouted out of the window, "Nice paint job! Where did you get that done?" "Did it myself," I replied. I was quite proud of that.' JB refelted the inside of the roof, twice because the first attempt shrank, and his mother retrimmed the seats in new leather.

The stage was set for many memorable drives. There was a clash in the dark with a girl (unhurt) on an unlit moped (which he fixed), leading to skilled panel-beating of the left sill by an under-the-arches artisan in Harrow. There was a skirmish with a stone wall in Devon when a tractor appeared around a blind bend, and there are memories of the DB2/4 tracking straight and true at high

'John recalls the DB2/4 tracking straight and true at high speeds on a trip to Edinburgh up the A1'

speeds on a trip to Edinburgh up the A1.

Then, in 1969 as he started work at Lola, JB sold the DB2/4 and bought a DB4 for £750 in need of new engine bearings. Later it needed a new piston too, one having holed itself after another attempt at breaking the time record from Lola's Huntingdon base to home in Wembley. 'I got it down to 59 minutes,' he remembers fondly.

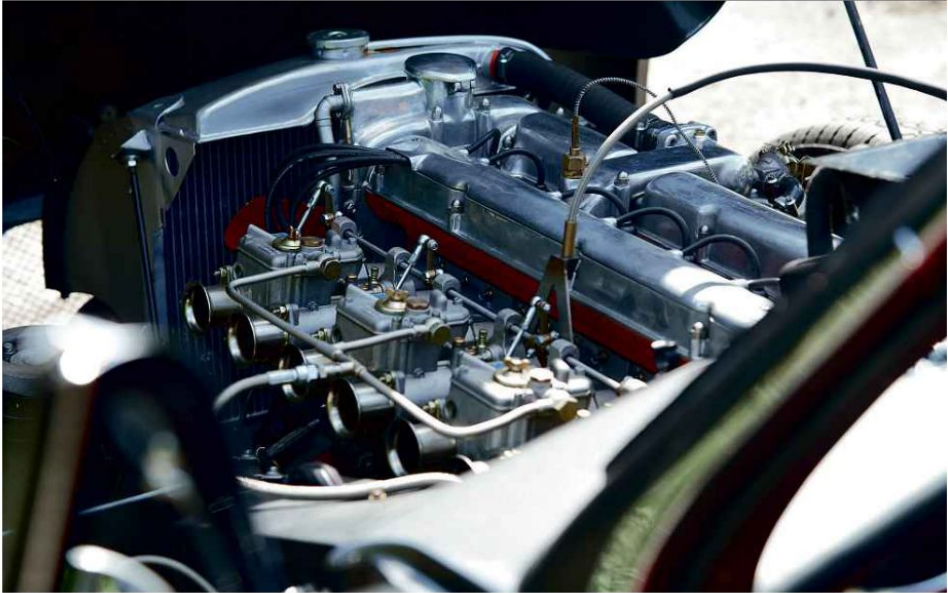
'IT SEEMS VERY short of legroom,' says PCD 480's erstwhile owner. 'And I don't remember the handbrake being there. You get used to modern cars, but the more I'm in it, the more the driving position is coming back to me.'

Included in the preparation for the Aston's imminent competition career is a rather fierce clutch. JB starts the engine, eases the gear lever into (unsynchronised) first, engages the clutch and stalls. We had been expecting this, and the second attempt is successful.

'I don't like the long throw of the brake pedal,' he observes at the first junction. It shouldn't be like that. Another for the to-do list. Now we're motoring along a main road. 'We're doing 45,' says JB, 'but it feels like 75.' The recalibration process is still under way. 'The steering seems all right,' he says, 'but maybe it could do with a nip-up [of the steering box adjustment]. And the ride, it isn't

Specification

ENGINE In-line 6-cylinder, 2922cc, iron block and head, DOHC **MAX POWER** c200bhp @ 5500rpm **MAX TORQUE** n/a
TRANSMISSION Four-speed manual, rear-wheel drive
SUSPENSION Front: trailing links, coil springs, lever-arm dampers, anti-roll bar. Rear: live axle, parallel radius arms, Panhard rod, coil springs, lever-arm dampers **STEERING** Worm and roller, unassisted **BRAKES** Drums **TYRES** 185 VR16 **WEIGHT** c1300kg **0-60MPH** Approx 9sec **TOP SPEED** Approx 125mph





bad actually. Shame he's lost the old Alfin drums, though.'

It's hot in here, the controls are clearly effortful, and quite a lot of human energy is being expended. 'When you drive these old cars, you realise that the guys who used to race them must have had arms like tree trunks. Imagine doing an endurance race. Good luck to John Martin on the Mille Miglia.'

'The engine feels pretty good. It's a bit different with Webers on it. I don't remember there being as much noise in here, but that might be the exhaust.' And, indeed, the six open carburettor throats.

Is the muscle memory coming back? 'Yes, it is. I'm getting used to it again. And I think I'm getting used to this clutch.' We're manoeuvring now, and the Aston stalls again. 'Oh,' says John Barnard.

The rev-counter goes anti-clockwise on a scale that ends at 6000rpm, but so gutsy is this engine from about 2500 that there's barely a need to venture beyond 4500. There's quite a lot of shudder and shake over broken surfaces, giving the Aston a vintage feel, but on smooth roads it handles in a very friendly way with a tendency to understeer.

The front suspension is rather odd, with obvious positive camber and trailing-link geometry that not only encourages nose-dive under braking but also takes away stabilising castor. JB says he can't understand why anyone would design suspension like that, wonders why they couldn't have used wishbones instead, and then points to a crack in the paint between the right-hand sill and the rear wing. 'The body is flexing,' says the man who designed the first carbonfibre monocoque structure to race in a Grand Prix.

But is he glad to have met again the car he bought 56 years ago? I do believe he is. 'It's hard to remember all the details,' he says, 'but it's taking me back a long way.' 🍷

What John Barnard did next

IN THE YEARS after owning his DB2/4, John Barnard revolutionised the way Formula 1 cars were designed. As well as major innovations, such as pioneering the 'Coke-bottle' shape still seen in today's F1 cars, the use of carbonfibre structures and bringing aerospace standards to racing-car design (McLaren) and pioneering the sequential paddle-shift gearbox (Ferrari), he has come up with carbonfibre brake discs and wishbones, titanium suspension uprights, the dashboard within a steering wheel and multiple small but significant refinements. No other racing car creator has had as big an influence on both the macro and the micro of Formula 1 engineering.

His longest and best-known career segments were at McLaren (1973-76, then with Ron Dennis from 1980 to 1986), and Ferrari (1987-89, and again 1993-96), but his insistence on running the operation from the UK wasn't entirely popular with the men at Maranello. He also worked with Lola, Vel's Parnelli Jones and Chaparral in the US, and Benetton. He has had his own design consultancy, and nowadays does the structural engineering for carbonfibre furniture shaped by Terence Woodgate.

'A carbon chaise-longue is next,' he says.

And that third Aston Martin? It was a DB6 Mk2 Volante. 'I owned it from '94 or '95 until 2010. Given what has happened to the values since then, I probably should have kept it.'

Our thanks to

John Martin, John Barnard, and John Watson at Chicane. PCD 480 will soon be enjoying a new life on some of the world's premier motoring events, including the Mille Miglia and Classic Le Mans



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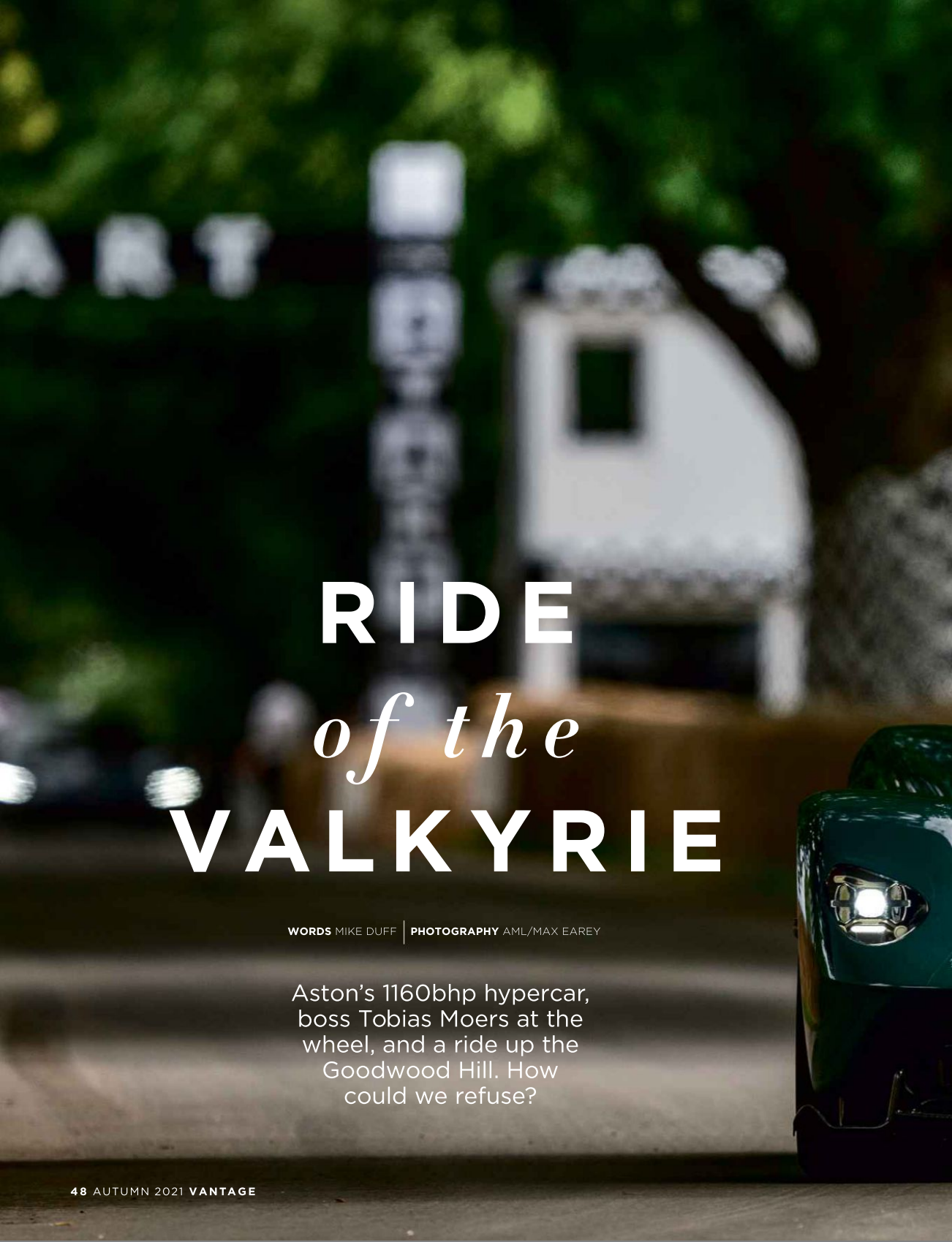
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RIDE *of the* VALKYRIE

WORDS MIKE DUFF | PHOTOGRAPHY AML/MAX EAREY

Aston's 1160bhp hypercar, boss Tobias Moers at the wheel, and a ride up the Goodwood Hill. How could we refuse?

FIRST RIDE | VALKYRIE



It's hard to review any car from the passenger seat, something that hasn't stopped many motoring journalists from trying to do so over the years. Usually such invitations are dead-batted by all but those with the most pressing need to fill editorial space. Yet sometimes, very rarely, the offer is special enough to make accepting it worthwhile. Like the chance to have a first experience of the Aston Martin Valkyrie at the Goodwood Festival of Speed, with none other than company CEO Tobias Moers in the driver's seat.

The plan has already taken a couple of knocks when I arrive at Goodwood on the Saturday morning. The Valkyrie publicly failed on the the 1.16-mile course the day before, and Moers has unsurprisingly opted out of the day's first Supercar Run so that former works driver (and now official high-performance tester) Darren Turner can confirm the car's health before the boss has a turn. Also, as befits the British summer, it is raining. As I watch from Aston's hospitality while Turner battles the Valkyrie off the start line, I glance at Moers, getting the strong sense that he's not sorry to see somebody else experiencing





the combination of 1160bhp, cold tyres and rear-wheel drive on a sodden surface.

The Valkyrie proves its fitness by completing the course. So three hours later I'm in the crowded Supercar Paddock trying to work out the most dignified way to gain entry. 'There isn't really one,' Turner reckons as he guides me in. 'Just stand on the seat with both feet and then slide yourself in.'

Having done this, I find myself sitting in a cockpit that feels more bathtub than sports car. The passenger footwell is offset towards the centre, and the raised-knee seating position seems likely to empty the change from my pockets in short order. Headroom is impressively good; even wearing a helmet, there will be reasonable space when the roof-hinged door is closed. But shoulder space is minimal, and if Moers is going to have elbow room for the squared-off steering wheel I will need to pretty much sit on my left arm. A small price to pay for such an experience.

The view forwards is verging on the bizarre. In addition to its narrow windscreen, the production Valkyrie is going to have five screens in its cockpit: two for the cameras that look down each flank, another 'virtual mirror' on the windscreen rail, a digital dashboard in the steering wheel and a touchscreen interface on the dashboard. The prototype at Goodwood adds a data-logger to report on the health of the V12 Cosworth engine,

'The cockpit feels more bathtub than sports car. The view forwards is verging on the bizarre'

Above and left

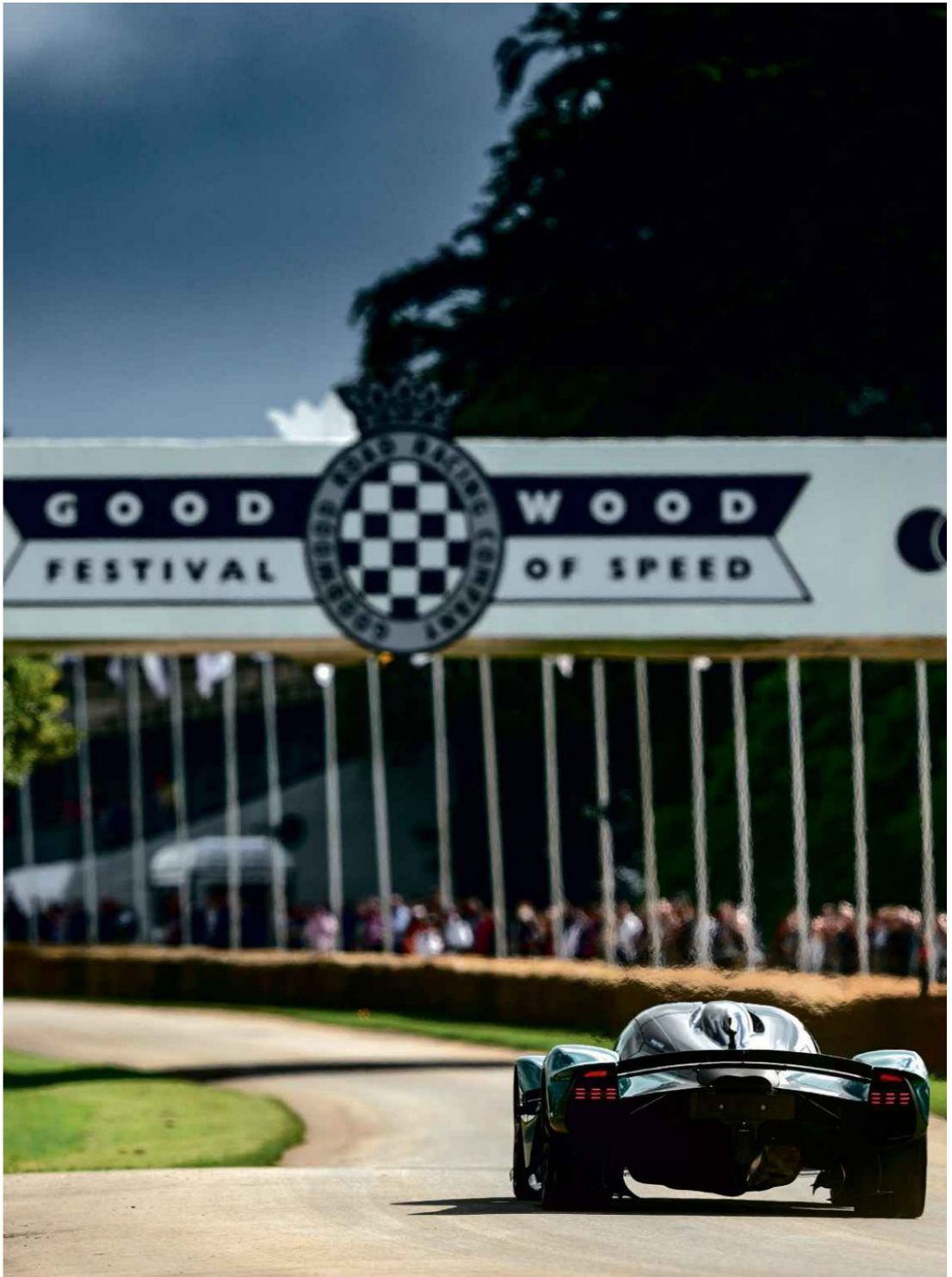
The Valkyrie hadn't been running perfectly at the Festival of Speed, but if Aston CEO Tobias Moers had any pre-flight nerves he was hiding them well as our man Duff strapped himself in for the run up the Goodwood hill climb

and there's also a GoPro camera suckered to the inside of the screen. It's genuinely hard to see out from my side.

At Moers' instruction I've put in foam earplugs before the engine starts, and the reason is soon obvious. The naturally aspirated V12 cranks without drama, to the relief of the anxious-looking technician who has been talking the boss through the starting procedure. It fires into a high-pitched, uneven idle, loud even with another 10,000rpm still to go. Buzzing vibration through the back of the seat makes it obvious that the engine is mounted directly to the back of the carbonfibre monocoque.

Conversation is impossible with the motor running, but the Valkyrie's low-speed manners are impressive. Moers manoeuvres it out of its gazebo garage in the Supercar Paddock without any complaint or juddering – the car uses the hybrid powertrain's electric motor at low speeds. It also has enough steering lock to negotiate the narrow passage between craning spectators and the turnaround at the bottom of the Duke of Richmond's driveway.

Waiting for the start gives the chance to sit with the engine off and the doors open, and to get what is essentially a pre-flight briefing as Moers is talked around the various functions. The prototype is running without active aero and in its softest, highest Urban setting. It is also running with the switchable traction control fully on,





'It is the savage scream of the engine and the high-frequency vibration that creates the most visceral excitement'

Above and right
Valkyrie cockpit has no fewer than five screens; this prototype also adds a data-logger so that technicians can keep an eye on the health of the V12 engine. Duff and Moers thrilled – and relieved – to have made it to the top of the hill without incident

although it is soon apparent that this can only do so much to calm the savage engine.

The Vantage F1 Edition that is ahead blasts away from the start in a cloud of tyre smoke and with a jaunty amount of opposite lock applied. Moers takes a more prudent approach, getting the Valkyrie rolling and then feeding the accelerator in. The noise from behind the cabin grows both loud and angry as he does so, and the car begins to vibrate with the unmistakable sensation of wheelspin as the cold Pilot Sport Cup 2s start to battle the greasy surface. This continues all the way through first gear, and the rear is still shimmying after the two brutally fast shifts that take us to the braking point for the first corner.

There's the sensation of the Valkyrie pitching slightly as it slows, and rolling under lateral loadings – suspension is definitely soft in Urban. Moers blends the accelerator back in gradually, but on the long, straightish stretch that follows past Goodwood House he unleashes it, the Valkyrie hooks up – aerodynamic downforce helping improve traction – and I get my first, brief dose of what full acceleration feels like. The longitudinal loadings are predictably ferocious, but it is the savage scream of the engine – most reminiscent of an early '90s F1 Ferrari V12 – and the high-frequency vibration that creates the most visceral excitement. I watch the data-logger's tachometer to see a couple of trips to the high-9s; Moers is still leaving something on the table.

Moers picks a prudent braking point for Molecomb, scene of most of the crashes at the Festival of Speed. The first bit of the turn is

handled without drama, but as he gets back on the accelerator there's a flare of revs from behind, the unmistakable sensation of oversteer, and corrective lock is being hastily applied.

With the slippery conditions proven, he takes an understandably cautious approach to the rest of the hill climb course, working the engine in the lower gears to please the crowd but without running risks. The Valkyrie isn't being timed so there is nothing to win. But a huge amount to potentially lose.

There's a sense of elation when we reach the turnaround paddock at the top and stop after a blemish-free run, Moers laughing as he removes his helmet. His summary?

'It's an unbelievable car,' he says. 'If you drive it at somewhere like Silverstone you can push much harder. You can't do that here of course. Traction is an issue, it's true – you felt that – but handling is amazing. I never thought it would be so easy, I expected a really tricky thing to drive, but it's smooth even if it oversteers. There's no snap in the car.'

The Valkyrie's long-postponed arrival means it is being launched pretty much as its parents are getting divorced. Lawrence Stroll's takeover of Aston Martin brought the company its own Formula 1 team, the rebranded Racing Point, a move that has effectively ended the technical collaboration with Red Bull Advanced Technologies that led to the Valkyrie, brainchild or RBR's Adrian Newey. Yet it's hard to believe that, even with the delays, the tight-fitting cabin, the need to wear earplugs and the seven-figure price tag, the Valkyrie won't prove to be a high-water mark for the hypercar. 🏁



ASTON MARTIN

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V A L K
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ASTON MARTIN

VALKYRIE EVOLUTIONS

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WORDS RICHARD MEADEN | PHOTOGRAPHY AML

The Valkyrie family grows with the announcement of Spider and track-only AMR Pro versions



With the long-awaited and oft-delayed first customer deliveries of the Valkyrie finally looming large, Aston Martin has revealed two more derivatives of its epoch-making hypercar: the open-top Valkyrie Spider and the track-only Valkyrie AMR Pro.

Given the extreme nature of the regular Valkyrie, which has already pushed the limits of what is possible in a roadgoing machine, both new variants will set new benchmarks in their own respective niches, the Spider immediately raising the bar for open-cockpit road cars, the AMR Pro giving Aston customers the opportunity to experience a car with the performance of a modern-day Le Mans winner.

Though it has only just been announced, a Spider version of the Valkyrie was always in the plan. Thus all the myriad detail changes were considered in parallel with the coupé – vital forward thinking in a car as complex and uncompromising as the Valkyrie.

The most obvious changes centre upon the removable roof panel. Given the car's performance and dependence upon aerodynamic downforce the Spider was never going to be fully decapitated in the manner of a speedster, but the lift-out panel is sure to intensify the driving experience and give greater exposure to

the 6.5-litre V12 revving to its 11,100rpm red line.

The removable panel has required a redesign of the coupé's gullwing doors, which were hinged from the fixed roof structure. On the Spider the doors hinge from the base of the A-pillars, tilting forwards and upwards. With the panel fixed in place, a portion of it also hinges upwards to further aid ingress and egress.

The hybrid powertrain and chassis remain unchanged in essence, though specifics of the active suspension and aero set-up will inevitably have been optimised for roof-off running. Performance is unlikely to be changed significantly from the coupé, making this the most extreme open-air car money can buy.

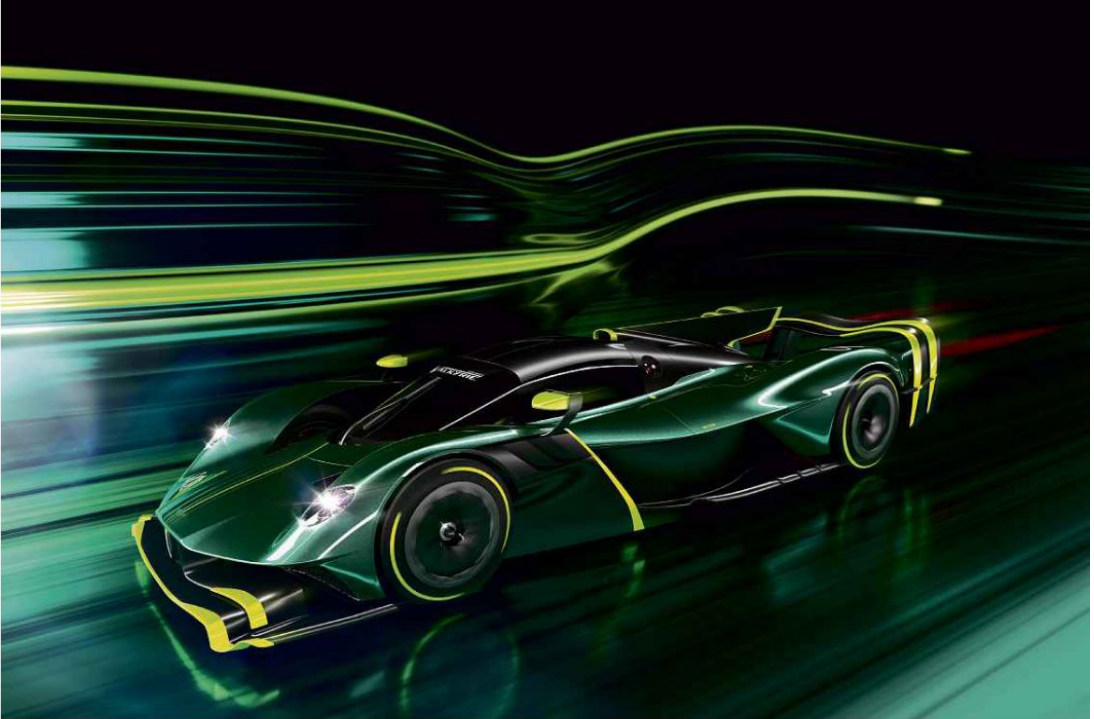
Full details are yet to be revealed, but build numbers are expected to be significantly fewer than the run of 150 coupés. Pricing is also yet to be announced, but we would expect the Spider asking price to be somewhere in the region of £2.5-3 million. Deliveries are scheduled to begin towards the end of 2022.

The announcement of the Valkyrie AMR Pro is bitter-sweet, for it is the product of Aston Martin's withdrawal from the World Endurance Championship's new Hypercar class. To be fair to Aston, while the original concept for the category seemed ideally suited to the Valkyrie, as the rules became more clearly defined there seemed little point in building a car that had to be extensively hobbled compared with the road car.

Below and right
Valkyrie Spider with its removable roof panel removed and (right) renderings of AMR Pro, which has a dramatically extended wheelbase and a completely new aerodynamic package



‘A Spider version of the Valkyrie was always in the plan. It will be the most extreme open-air car money can buy’





Instead what we get with the AMR Pro is a track-only Valkyrie built without the limitations of performance-limiting regulations. As you'd expect, it's a truly spectacular machine, though one that's far removed from the original Valkyrie AMR Pro concept revealed at the Geneva motor show in 2018.

That was very much a design that sought to squeeze the most performance it could from a road-legal car. This new definitive version is an extreme evolution, based upon a design conceived and developed by Red Bull Advanced Technologies and project engineering partner Multimatic.

It barely seems possible that the 'regular' Valkyrie could be made to look tame, yet the AMR Pro does just that thanks to a dramatically extended wheelbase and a completely new aerodynamic package. The car uses a unique version of the Valkyrie chassis, which is 380mm longer in wheelbase and 96mm wider in track at the front; 115mm at the rear. The aggressive aerodynamic package, which includes a twin-plane front splitter, huge raised full-width rear wing, and even larger venturi tunnels and rear diffuser, extends to an additional 266mm in length and generates extraordinary levels of downforce. Comfortably delivering twice the amount of downforce of the Valkyrie road car, the Valkyrie AMR Pro will pull more than 3g through corners.

Purists will enjoy the fact that, in order to save

'Aston Martin will provide extensive driver training and a series of Valkyrie-only track events'

weight and complexity, the AMR Pro powertrain does without the battery-electric hybrid system, relying instead upon a modified version of the naturally aspirated 1000bhp 6.5-litre V12. Additional weight savings have been made with the adoption of lighter carbonfibre bodywork, carbonfibre suspension wishbones and Perspex glazing, though no overall weight figure has been revealed.

Projected performance is predictably mind-blowing. Free from the constraints of racing regulation, the AMR Pro goes beyond the capabilities of the cancelled race car. Proof of this is Aston Martin's target lap time around the 8.5-mile Le Mans 24 Hours circuit of just 3min 20sec. For context, the fastest lap of last year's Le Mans 24 Hours race was 3:19.76, set by

Toyota's victorious factory-entered LMP1 car...

With Aston's focus now firmly on winning the Formula 1 World Championship, and its road cars following the Project Horizon road map towards full electrification, it's unlikely we will see the marque pursue another serious effort to secure an outright Le Mans win. And while it's a great shame that we will never have the chance to see this incredible machine tackle the greatest endurance race of them all, it does mean a select group of AMR Pro customers can look forward to exploring a realm of performance that was previously the exclusive preserve of professional racing drivers.

In order to prepare them for the challenge, Aston Martin will provide extensive driver training, along with invitations to attend a series of international Valkyrie-only track events. The keenest will doubtless have also spent the winter developing their skills on one of Aston's £57k Curv AMR-CO1 simulators.

Back in 2018 Aston Martin said it would build 25 AMR Pros, but this number has now been increased to 40 cars, plus a further two development prototypes. Pricing has not been announced, but it's hard to imagine this most extreme Valkyrie will leave much change from £3 million. As with the Roadster, first deliveries are scheduled for the end of 2022. And if you're one of the customers rumoured to have bought a coupé, Roadster *and* AMR Pro, *Vantage* salutes you! 🏆



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Immaculate collection

WORDS PETER TOMALIN | PHOTOGRAPHY MATTHEW HOWELL

How would you like your DB5 Vantage: Saloon, Convertible or Shooting Brake? Or, if you've got a cool £4m sitting around, you could buy all three. We drive them – and fantasise about that Lottery win

It's not often that a DB5 Vantage coupé in gleaming Silver Birch is the least remarkable car in a group of three, but in this exalted company the coupé – or Saloon in period Aston parlance – is very much the common or garden variety, as a glance at the build numbers will confirm. The silver car is one of only 60 DB5 Vantage coupés built in period, but that's positively commonplace compared with the Convertible, of which just five (or possibly six) were made to Vantage spec.

Five? Pfft. If you want real exclusivity you need to direct your attention to the DB5 Vantage Shooting Brake. Specifically, the car you see here. The one and only 'Brake that was equipped with the more powerful Vantage engine in period.

These tiny numbers explain the one very large number attached to these three cars should you wish to buy them as a set. As currently offered by Hatfield-based specialist Nicholas Mee & Co, the 'DB5 Vantage Icons Collection' has a £4 million price tag attached. That's a lot of money, but then if you tot up the values of the three cars individually (coupé probably knocking on £750,000, Convertible possibly £1.5 million, Shooting Brake... well, we're into really rarefied air here) then it doesn't seem that astronomical.

And they genuinely are a 'collection', in as much as they were brought together over the last decade or so by one individual, a Yorkshire-based enthusiast of means who entrusted each in turn to Otley-based Aston specialist Adrian Johnson for a full restoration. Which explains why the colours complement each other so well, in addition to each shade being wholly appropriate for each individual model. Silver

'Just five (or possibly six) Convertibles were made to Vantage specification'







Birch is the obvious choice for a DB5 coupé, but Caribbean Pearl is perfect for the glamorous Convertible and California Sage suits the Shooting Brake right down to the ground. Together, they look simply dazzling.

But even so, four million? Nick Mee sees it like this: 'If you set out to collect all three Vantage models, you might find a coupé; you'd probably struggle to find a Convertible, and if you want a DB5 Vantage Shooting Brake, well, this is the only one.'

'We believe the cars have value as a collection, so that's how we're presenting them – it would be nice if they stayed together. There are some very wealthy individuals out there who are looking to invest large sums of money and hopefully get some pleasure from it at the same time.'

'You can never underestimate the value of the Vantage name. And it's not just the extra power, it's the low numbers, too. Even James Bond's DB5 wasn't a Vantage...'

LAUNCHED IN JULY 1963, the DB5 was distinguished from late versions of the DB4 chiefly by the introduction of a 4-litre version of the all-alloy Marek straight-six in place of the 3.7 and the option of a five-speed ZF gearbox (quite a novelty at the time) that quickly became standard equipment instead of the David Brown four-speeder. Power in standard form with triple SU carburettors was quoted as 282bhp. Choose the Vantage option and you got triple Weber 45DCOE's and a claimed 314bhp.

The coupé here was originally painted Black Pearl and had a very active early life racing and hillclimbing; period photos show it with mildly flared wheelarches; other pics show that it had a silver roof for a while – and now it's fully silver and considerably better than new after its restoration by Adrian Johnson and his team.

A Convertible version – not yet called a Volante at this stage – joined the DB5 range soon after the launch of the Saloon but was always a rare machine. A grand total of 123 were sold, of which a mere handful had the Vantage engine, our car being one of that select group.

The car that intrigues the most, though, is the Shooting Brake, a real unicorn among Astons. The model came about because David Brown himself needed space to carry his sporting paraphernalia – he was a keen polo player and huntsman – and so asked the factory at Newport

Left and right

The Convertible version of the DB5 was launched in the same year as the coupé but it was a much rarer machine – only 123 were built, of which a mere handful had the Vantage engine. This example looks sensational in Caribbean Pearl over magnolia hides

'Silver Birch is the obvious choice for a coupé, but Caribbean Pearl is perfect for the Convertible'



*'In the coupé you focus on the
business of making swift progress
with economy of effort'*







Pagnell to create a DB5 'Brake' for his own personal use. When customers and business associates saw the result, a number decided they'd like one, too. But the factory was already at full stretch building Saloons and Convertibles, so Brown did a deal with Hammersmith-based Harold Radford Ltd to body the estate version. It was advertised as 'The World's Fastest Dual Purpose Vehicle'.

Each 'Brake' began its life as a completed coupé, which meant extensive reworking of the upper structure and body – basically everything from the A-pillars backwards. The work added a daunting 50 per cent to the already formidable price of the coupé, which probably explains why only 12 were built. And this particular example, as we know, was the only one of those 12 with the rortier, Weber-equipped Vantage engine.

KUK 500D was commissioned by dealer Cyril Williams of Wolverhampton and delivered to a hotel in Pembrokeshire in 1966. By coincidence, while it was supplied in Caribbean Pearl, the pre-conversion donor Saloon had been painted California Sage – the colour the 'brake wears today. Originally it had an auto gearbox, but long-term owner Roy Smith converted it to a ZF manual in the early 1990s. It's a lovely thought that in its early life it might have been used to collect hotel guests and their luggage from the local train station. Which would, of course, have made it a station wagon as well as a shooting brake.

It's an elegant conversion in the metal. The lines might not be quite as easy on the eye as those of the coupé and Convertible, but there's something undeniably cool about the Shooting Brake, that combination of performance and utility. It's a genuinely practical machine, too. There's more headroom for rear-seat passengers than in a coupé, and opening the single-piece tailgate reveals a decent load area for weekend luggage – or a brace of Purdeys and a spaniel or two. Flip the rear seat-backs down and there's even more.

An endearing touch is the pair of dinky windscreen wipers on the rear screen. Not all DB5 'brakes' had them, and they do look a little Heath Robinson, but I don't doubt that they served a function since the tailgate was bound to be a magnet for muck. Not that this 'Brake' is likely to see much use in filthy weather conditions these days...

Left and right

Key difference with the Vantage version was the fitment of triple Weber carburetors in place of the standard car's SUs, lifting the stated power output from 282 to 314bhp, though both figures were probably more than a touch optimistic. Only 65 coupés had the option







‘The Shooting Brake is the real star here. To slip behind the wheel is a genuine privilege’



HAPPILY, FOR THE DAY OF OUR SHOOT, we're blessed with high clouds and the odd burst of sunshine. Time to slip into the driver's seats of this remarkable trio of DB5s and start daydreaming about that Lotto win.

Now, the driving element of this feature was always going to be limited in scope. In terms of dynamics, we knew that each car would feel broadly similar to the next, and, much as we love the DB5, back-to-back in-depth road tests of all three variants would hardly make for compelling copy.

On a pragmatic level, Nick Mee was understandably anxious about exposing £4 million worth of mint-condition Astons to the risk of stone chips (or worse) in the cut and thrust of modern traffic. What's more, since their completion the cars have barely been driven, and, as with many nut-and-bolt restorations that have then been salted away in dehumidified storage, would benefit from a thorough shakedown and fine-tuning of both their powertrains and their chassis. When Mee & Co find a buyer (or buyers), that's what they will get before they're delivered to their new home (or homes).

Wherever they finish up, let's hope they're used and enjoyed. Because, as with cars of any age, they will be all the better for regular exercise. This much was confirmed by the fact that the sweetest to drive of the three was the Convertible – the only one to have covered a meaningful mileage since restoration (and even then we're talking hundreds rather than thousands of miles).

So where the Saloon and Shooting Brake fluffed and coughed a bit, the Convertible ran sweet as a nut, pulled with real vigour, and sounded as purposeful and classy as a Weberfed Marek straight-six Aston always should. It really is a wonderful engine in this form – its outputs swelling as the rich, brassy soundtrack reaches its crescendo – and it works beautifully with the sweet-shifting five-speed ZF manual gearbox that's fitted to all three cars.

Unassisted steering is no great hardship on period-correct tyres, and the disc brakes are more than adequate for this sort of work; only in the suspension department does a period-authentic DB5 really betray its age, as crumbling, pot-holed tarmac sends thumps and shivers through the body.

Unsurprisingly, this is exaggerated in the Convertible, which inevitably – and palpably –

Left and right

Each Shooting Brake started life as a coupé; conversion was by coachbuilder Harold Radford. One useful plus for rear-seat passengers was improved headroom compared with the coupé. Seat-backs could be folded flat for load-carrying

*'Can you think of a cooler car to
transport family and hampers
to the Goodwood Revival?'*





'You can forgive a car the odd wobble when it looks as gorgeous as a DB5 Vantage Convertible'

has the least stiff structure, though the payoff for having no roof is that the sounds of shudders and shakes are carried away in your slipstream. And let's be honest, you can forgive a car the odd wobble when it looks as gorgeous as this.

And then you come to the DB5 coupé, probably the most iconic Aston of them all, and even if we've become a little jaded by constant references to you-know-who, there's no question that in Silver Birch over black hide, it really does look a million dollars (in fact quite a few dollars more when it's a Vantage).

Being enclosed within the cockpit focuses the mind – initially on the sublime combination of shapes and materials that make a DB Aston of this period so special, then, once you're on the move, on the business of making swift progress with economy of effort; slicing the gear lever around its well-oiled gate; nudging the nose into turns with a rock of the shoulders; keeping the throttles clear and the straight-six singing.

The Shooting Brake is the real star here, though. I've never sat in one before – not many have – so to slip behind the wheel is a genuine privilege. Just one small problem. Where the DB5 saloon has a recessed panel in the roof-lining above the front seats to allow extra headroom, the 'Brake does not. Consequently I'm brushing the headlining with the top of my head. Anyone more than 6ft might find it a bit tight in here.

Otherwise it's all good. The view forward – of the classic Aston dash, its painted metal face inset with those timeless Smiths dials, the long bonnet with its raised wing-tops beyond – is comfortingly familiar. The view in the mirror is anything but. Right at the rear of the cabin are two downward protuberances where the tailgate hinges are cased-in, but otherwise the view of the road behind is so uninterrupted that you'd be forgiven for thinking you'd driven off with the tailgate open.

There was only a little additional weight in the 'Brake compared with the coupé, and the chassis was completely unchanged, so it's no surprise that the driving experience is essentially the same, although retaining the coupé's springs and dampers would have limited the loads that could have been transported without serious implications for the handling. Unladen, as it is today, it simply drives like the coupé, but with the added novelty of that remarkable view every time you glance over your left shoulder or in the mirror. Can you think of a cooler car to transport your family and hampers to the Goodwood Revival?

So there you have it: the Saloon as your daily driver, the Convertible for high days and holidays, and the 'Brake for shooting parties, paddock picnics, and trips to the recycling centre. DB5: the model range that does it all. ♣

Thanks to Nicholas Mee & Co, nicholasmee.co.uk



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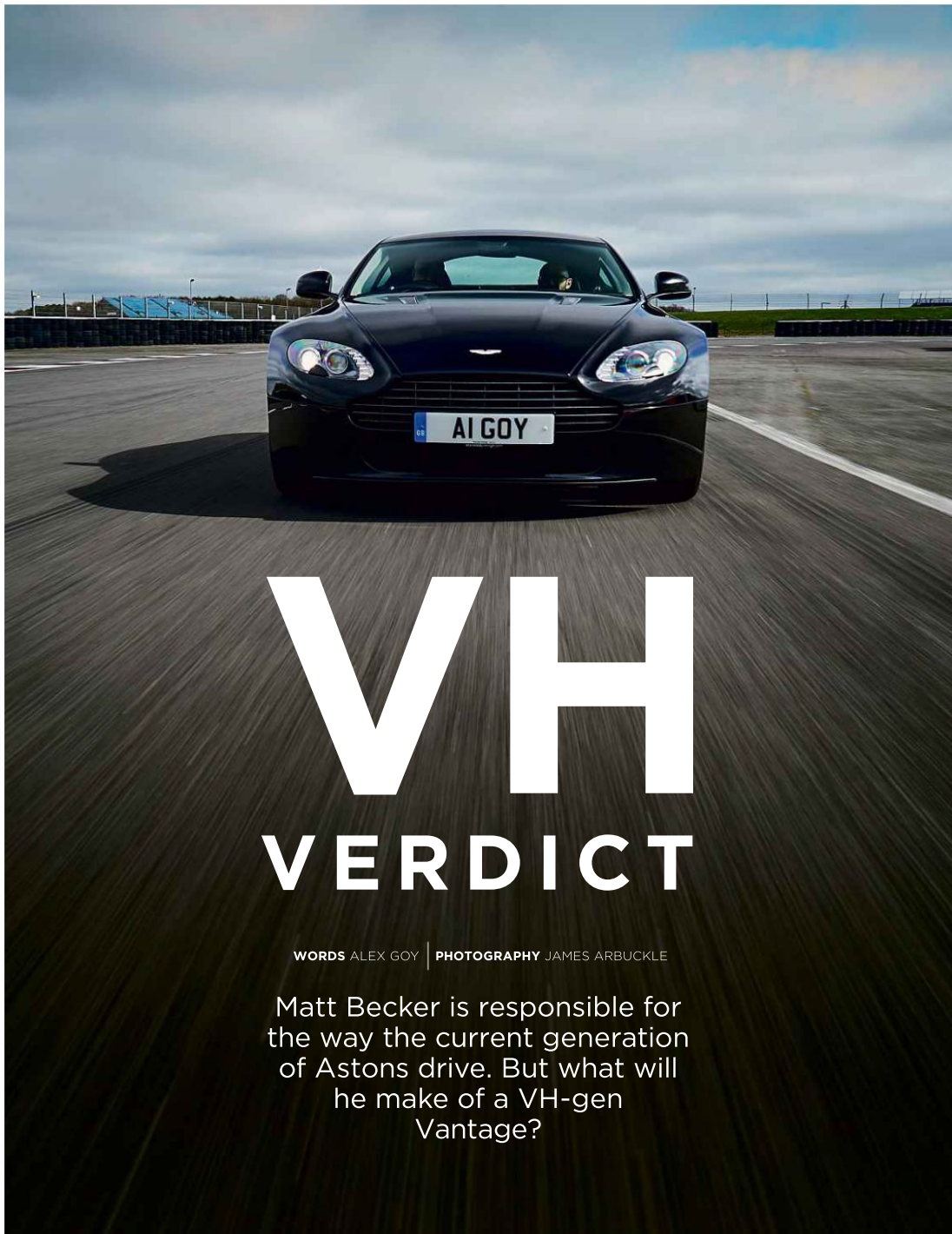


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VH VERDICT

WORDS ALEX GOY | PHOTOGRAPHY JAMES ARBUCKLE

Matt Becker is responsible for the way the current generation of Astons drive. But what will he make of a VH-gen Vantage?



The VH2 Vantage is Aston Martin's biggest-selling model of all time. A more elegant, bespoke alternative to the Porsche 911, the cheaper, entry-level Vantage made Aston Martin more accessible to more people.

Its design was overseen by Henrik Fisker's team (after Ian Callum had worked some magic), and the fact that there are more than a few out there is a good thing, because it means more people can enjoy it. It may be knocking on 20 years old, but its shape has aged well, managing to stand out where others look a little dated.

What about as a whole package, though? And while thousands of owners will tell all who ask how wonderful their pride and joy is, what does Aston Martin's chief engineer, Matt Becker, reckon? *Vantage* decided to find out, not by presenting him with a perfectly preserved garage queen, but by tossing him the Emotion Control Unit to a 46,000-mile 2011-spec daily driver...

My daily driver, in fact. I've had it since 2019 and, despite having driven more than a few over the years under the auspices of 'work', I've always been mildly terrified that I'd bought a pup. And judging it now, the man who developed the ultimate versions of the car? 'When I arrived in 2015 my first involvement with this car was actually on GT12,' Becker tells me. If you're going to have a first crack at a VH

Vantage, perhaps the most hardcore V12 is a good place to start. Becker arrived halfway through that car's development, which meant much of the work was signed off before he could make his mark. The GT8 that followed, however, was all Becker.

His association with VH architecture wasn't purely at the end of its run, however; but in his former life at Lotus during its most embryonic stages. The original Vanquish used a platform that informed VH, and Lotus consulted on it with a young Becker involved in testing. Becker was involved from carbonfibre cradle to aluminium grave, so few people are better placed to judge how well a VH Vantage has fared.

He's honest about the platform's advantages: it's light, stiff, and cheap to manufacture. However, it's not hugely space-efficient. Anyone who's tried to squeeze themselves in the rear seats of a Rapide can attest to that, though in a Vantage, a car designed for fun and squishy bags, it's not as big a deal. Also, thanks to voids in the structure, it has a tendency to be noisy – something Becker says can be limited with end-caps or filling the spaces, but that can rather undo the 'light' side of things.

So, to the Vantage then. What's good? What's bad? And is mine a dog? 'Whenever I drive one of these, one of the critical things is reading the rear. It always feels like it's never had enough rear lateral stiffness. So, if you push at the tyre contact patch, you push at the front and you

Above and right

Becker takes to the Stowe Circuit at Silverstone in writer Alex Goy's own V8 Vantage 4.7 and explores how the VH-generation car behaves at the limit. 'I'll try and leave you with some tyres' he tells Goy

push at the rear, and I generally always want about 30 per cent more rear lateral stiffness than in the front, because when you drive a car everything reacts around the rear. So even when you slide that around, you feel like it rolls onto the rear and you have to wait for the information from the rear of the car... They have a double wishbone rear, not multi-link, which has benefits – it's relatively cheap to develop and manufacture – but it does have a limitation on stiffness.'

However, you can go too stiff, as Becker elaborates: 'I'm glad that you said yours didn't have sports suspension on it, because either I'd got it wrong before when I'd driven a sports suspension car, or I was right and I really didn't like it. Because on the sports suspension car, it always feels like the rear is pinned down. This one feels like it moves together nicely.' He goes on to demonstrate, many times, just how easy it is to get a 4.7-litre car on standard springs to go sideways around AML's Silverstone test track, adding 'I'll try and leave you with some tyres' more than once. My rears are still legal but when/if it comes time to move it on, writing 'never tracked' in the ad would be a lie.

He continues: 'From what I've driven on the track, it feels nicely balanced and it was quite progressive. If you want to slide the car around, it doesn't suddenly just go away from you, it's quite easy to do. I think they did a good job on it.'

Regular springs are a winner then. What about the powerplant? The naturally aspirated



'If you want to slide it around, it doesn't suddenly just go away from you. They did a good job on it'





engine is deader than a dead thing at Aston Martin, replaced with emissions-friendly, torque-heavy turbocharged motors. Does the old car stir Becker's soul, or is it as antiquated as the smooshed up dinosaurs that power it? 'I still think older cars sound better. The V8 sounds nice. I drove a V12 Vantage not so long ago and I'd forgotten how magic that thing sounds.'

Turbo engines give so much more torque that it's no surprise they've been adopted as a performance car staple. More grunt from a smaller, more efficient engine is a winner from the off. 'It's interesting when you go back to the older engines, the lack of torque they have, the lack of immediacy,' Becker says. 'The instant performance [turbocharged engines] give you is where you notice a big difference against the old V8. But the charm with that is almost like a comparison between a 911 GT3 and a 911 Turbo. I remember driving a GT3 about three years ago, and when you hop in them you think: "Oh, are you going to get going?" Because you have to wind the thing up. But that's a part of driving, isn't it? Driving's about connecting and engaging with not just the chassis, but with the engine as well... With a naturally aspirated engine you're missing all the torque in the middle, but actually that's part of the charm of driving a car.'

We can call that an even split for efficiency versus character. The gearbox question, however, is cut and dried for Becker: 'Six-speed is the best,' he says. The VH Vantage came with a few different 'boxes over its life. The six-speed

'Driving's about connecting and engaging with not just the chassis, but with the engine as well'

manual fitted to mine is one; there was also the option of a 'Sportshift' automated manual, while a seven-speed dogleg manual appeared towards the end of the car's life. Becker doesn't have much time for the Sportshift, though recognises its importance in the line-up – people wanted an auto, and that was what Aston Martin could do at the time. The seven-speed, while a neat thing to have, wasn't quite as slick as the six-speed.

This leaves a few questions. First: what does he make of my Vantage?

'You've got the right suspension on it. You've got a stick in the middle of the car, and you've got the right engine in it as well. So, you obviously did your homework.' No 'but it's a bit rough' noises are made, which is a relief. 'I think it's actually quite a comfortable, characterful car. Would I want more response out of it from steering? Yes. That's where it's

lacking. Because it rolls quite a lot.' That's been built in from the factory though, not something that can be fixed with a visit to a specialist, so we're good thus far.

Could it be more focused? 'If you do it in the right way, not like the [optional Aston Martin] sports suspension was done, you can make it sharper by adding more spring rate and more damping, but just adding the damping in the right places, not going too far in spring rates. I don't think the sports spring rates were the problem; it was the way it was damped.' Some fresh tyres would help as well.

When it comes to power, lack of immediate torque aside, Becker would leave it. With approval given, sighs of relief are quietly exhaled, and that emergency bottle of 'shame scotch' may live to erase a future mistake.

If you're Matt Becker, you've driven everything worth driving. And in plenty of cases were the one that made it worth driving in the first place. How would he build his own VH Vantage? 'I probably would go for a manual V12, because it's got a manual, it's quite engaging, and it's chuffing fast. They're angry things.' He wouldn't have it stock though. 'I'd probably take the GT8 chassis and put it in there... I'd take that philosophy and theory and put it onto a manual V12 Vantage.'

So there you are. Given the luxury of choice, the man at the top would go for something rather spectacular. For us mere mortals, though, a 4.7-litre manual with the regular suspension will do very nicely. 🍷



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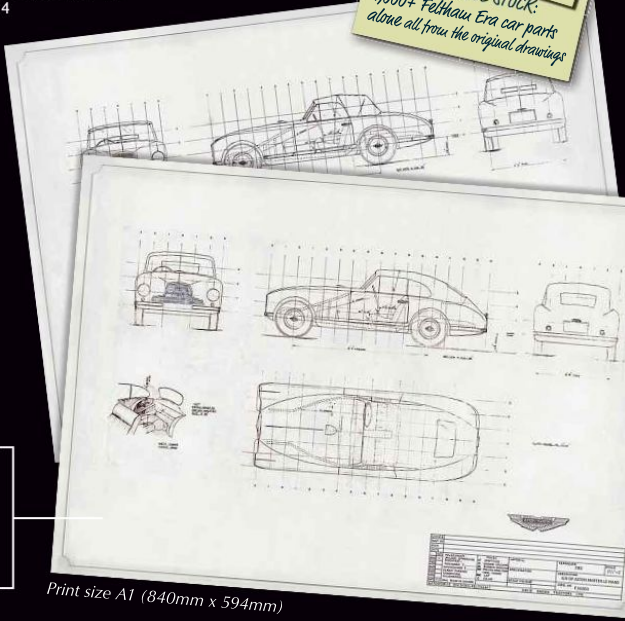
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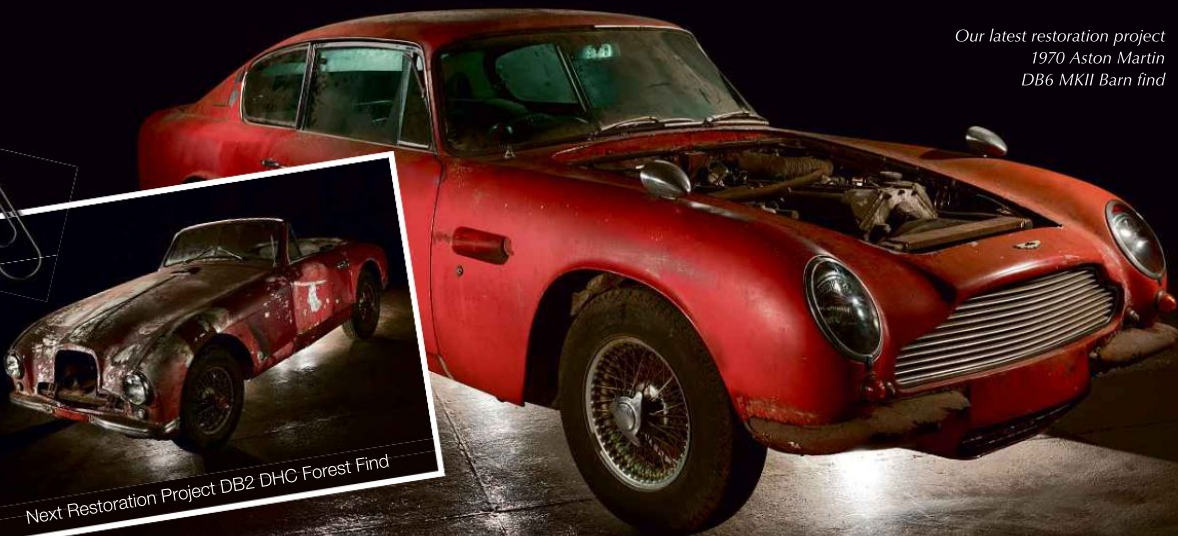


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Light show

WORDS JOHN SIMISTER | PHOTOGRAPHY AMY SHORE/CMC

The body panels are on, the wiring is in, and the engine is back together – Bulldog's restoration enters the home straight

‘The doors go on today,’ says Nigel Woodward, head of Classic Motor Cars of Bridgnorth where the Bulldog is undergoing the most painstaking of resurrections. It’s not the first time the powered gullwing doors have been on during the Bulldog’s time at CMC. There was the first fit when the doors had been repaired, de-rippled and painted in primer, and the second after any necessary adjustments and corrections had been made. Now, resplendent in their final colour coat, comes their final fit.

As Nigel takes me into the workshop where the Bulldog half-hides under a multicoloured spider’s web of wiring awaiting a home and final taping-up, I see that the rear-hinged tail section, also in its final finish, is already attached so its alignment with the doors can be checked. It will have to come off again before the engine and gearbox can go in. Before that happens – and in the next few days as I write on 27 July – the other outer panels will join the tubular chassis, the new glazing from Pilkington will be bonded into position and the Bulldog will look, from the outside at least, almost complete. Photographs will be taken, with the results you see on these pages.

Electrics wizard Craig Brush is wrestling with the air-conditioning, wiring and dashboard entrails all around. ‘It’s from a 1970s Cadillac,’ he says. ‘I’ve got the diagram here, but the connections for the vacuum pump are different.’ This is the original pump, its function to power the various moving flaps as the slider controls in their very US-looking console are operated. Those sliders have detents in their action, but during the Bulldog’s original build two of the depressions were filled in to make them inoperative, and the corresponding labels expunged. One of them was for the ‘eco’ setting, presumably deemed off-message for a 200mph supercar with a large glass area and the potential for much heat-soak.

Meanwhile, Craig has already got the LED instruments working. ‘Most of the cables had dropped off the back, and there are no markings. I emailed the manufacturer in Mexico but got no reply, so we’ve had to figure it out for ourselves.’

Back at the nose, Nigel points out the giant heater blower motor and the two original hydraulic door lift pumps. ‘They’re like something off a forklift, and not short of power,’ he says. ‘They were leaking all over the place before we rebuilt them,’ adds Craig. Then there’s the bank of new cooling fans, the rebuilt radiator with new military-

Below and right
Painted panels are fitted for the first time. Going clockwise from right: reassembled V8 with one of the twin turbos visible just beneath the cylinder head; installing the digital instruments and wiring loom, and the new twin-plate clutch



spec screw-on hose fittings, and the new pair of electric water pumps. These replace the single engine-powered one, creating much-needed space in the congested engine bay.

Also in the nose is a new pump – so many pumps – to raise the ride height by up to two inches, by pumping up the spring platforms of the new Protech adjustable coilovers. ‘Now it will be able to run at the designed ride height,’ Nigel explains, ‘while still being able to negotiate speed bumps. It’s been sitting too high for years.’ Then he gets Craig to demonstrate the five Cibíe Iode headlights and their drop-down cover, still skeletal pending the panelwork. ‘We’ve had to do some clever electronics for the headlamp flash,’ Nigel says. ‘The cover used to take a while to drop, by which time the flashing moment had passed. Now it’s quick enough for a usable flash function.’

We look inside the cabin again, where Nigel points to the handbrake. ‘We’ve re-engineered the linkage from the back of the cockpit rearwards,’ he tells me. ‘It used to have cables, but now it’s hydraulic, which will be more reliable and have a better action.’

‘We’ve improved the gearshift, too. Originally the engine had an exhaust manifold from a car with US emissions equipment, on which there was a pipe at the bottom for exhaust recirculation. On the Bulldog this pipe was repurposed to hold the back of the gear linkage. Now there’s a new bracket with two spherical bearings. When Stirling Moss drove it back in the day, he said it was a great car but the gearshift was horrible. That might have been because the exhaust heat was making the linkage bind. It should be much better now.’

Next stop, aft of the cabin. There are three mounting lugs for the top of each spring/damper unit but only two are used, as you would expect. What’s going on? ‘We’ve moved the pivot point back to give more clearance for the engine – and now we can use the front brackets to mount the spare-wheel carrier.’ Very neat.

Also very neat will be the packaging for the pair of not-yet-fitted intercoolers that the Bulldog originally lacked. They will sit just behind the doors and ahead of a pair of slim dry-cell batteries – ‘better than the single heavy one that used to sit right in the tail,’ Nigel points out – and will be fed liquid coolant circulated from a tank by a pair of electric pumps. ‘And we’ll use the space where the old battery was for two oil coolers, one for the engine, one for the transmission. It will double the transmission’s oil capacity.’

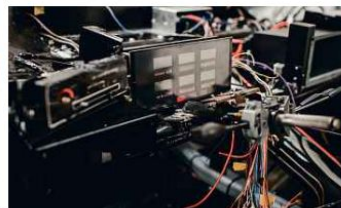
All the suspension has been checked for full articulation without touching anything it shouldn’t, and it has been laser-aligned. The front suspension includes fabricated lower arms, upper wishbones ‘possibly from a Jaguar XJ6’, and uprights probably from a Towns-era V8. At the Bulldog-bespoke rear, CMC has beefed-up the wheel bearings. ‘They were trying to use a new idea back then, a single-row bearing, but that’s asking an awful lot of the bearing. So we’ve changed to two-row bearings which are much more stable.’

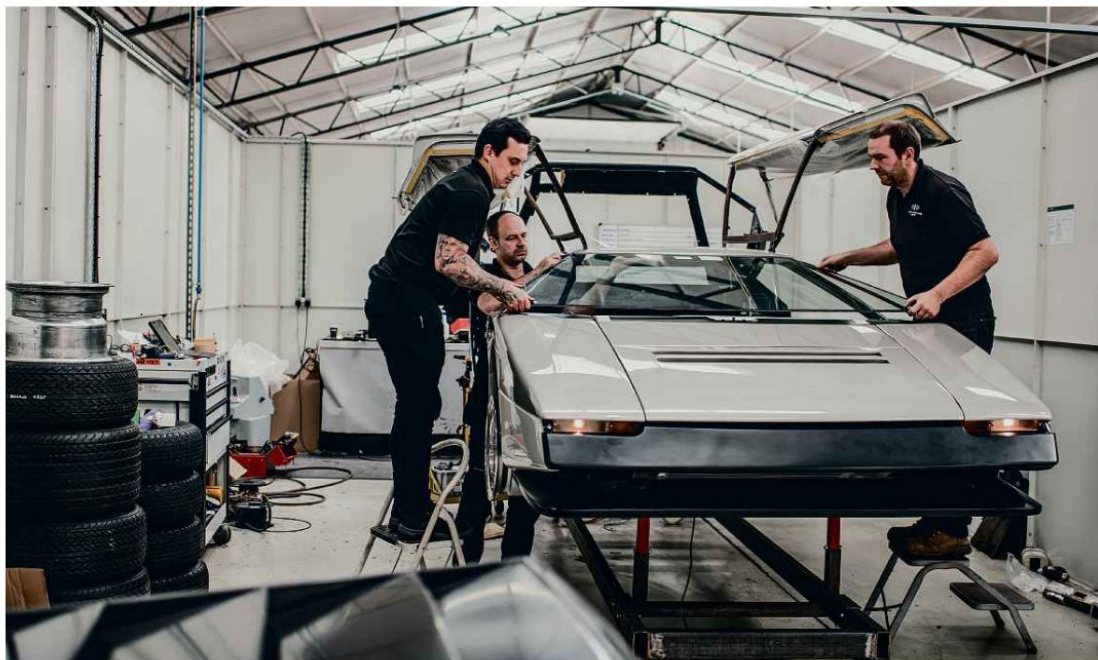
The new replica wheels have arrived, and Nigel shows me the scuffing and ovaling of the Compomotive-made old ones’ stud holes. ‘It’s as if it had been driven with the wheel nuts loose,’ he says. The new wheels have steel inserts for the stud holes, just in case. AP Racing doesn’t make the original design of brake discs any more, so they too have been replicated by CMC’s secret army of bespoke suppliers.

And – a major step forward for the project – the 700bhp



‘AP Racing doesn’t make the original design of brake discs any more, so they too have been replicated by CMC’s secret army of bespoke suppliers’





V8 engine is back at CMC and being built up. The original aluminium block, which was a little corroded at the base of the iron cylinder liners as is usual with these V8s, has been rescued and strengthened. 'There has been an enormous amount of precautionary engineering,' Nigel reveals. 'It has a new steel crankshaft, Omega pistons and Arrow con-rods, which are lighter and stronger. We've done a lot to get rid of rotating mass.

'We have designed a new and unique "girdle" for the bottom end, which fits between the block and the sump. When we took the engine apart we saw that the bottom of the block had spread. Was it over-revved or was this just the result of 700bhp? Either way, we don't want that happening. New billet main-bearing caps will bolt through this girdle.

'At the top of the block we'll replace the original cast valley plate with a new one machined from billet, and the heads will be sealed to the block with Wills rings as well as a head gasket.' Wills rings have been used for many years in high-stress applications; they are hollow steel rings filled with argon at around 1000psi.

The flywheel and clutch are new, designed to take a pair of smaller-diameter clutch plates instead of a single large one. This will both increase the clutch's torque capacity and reduce its rotational inertia, which will speed the gearchange and reduce the loads on the synchromesh.

And talking of unwanted loadings, CMC noticed that the centre line of the bellhousing didn't line up with that of the crankshaft. Possibly to accommodate the misalignment, the crankshaft was missing the spigot bush into which the gearbox input shaft normally fits. The resulting noise and vibration hardly bears thinking about.

'So we made a big aluminium tool to line up the gearbox centre with the crankshaft,' says Nigel. 'We'll only use it once but it had to be done. And that was followed by a lot of remedial work on the bellhousing.'

So, what is the plan from here? CMC wants to get every one of the Bulldog's parameters set as accurately as possible before final assembly and the first test run take place, so there are no tripwires and the Bulldog stands the best chance of working properly straight out of the box. 'The rough plan is to finish assembling the car by the end of next month [August as I write], set it up and de-snag it, and run it at a military air base in the UK.

'I'll drive it first, up to reasonable speeds, then Darren Turner will take it as fast as we can in the UK.' After that, assuming it all works properly, will come the 200mph run that the Bulldog never quite achieved in period.

'The venue hasn't been decided yet. In 1980 the idea was to go to Volkswagen's test track at Wolfsburg with its 8km straight, so that's a possibility. So is Nardo in southern Italy, an 13km bowl. And by the time we're there we'll be into winter, so it will be cooler. That's a good thing.'

The Bulldog is inevitably moving further away from its original specification as the restoration progresses, but with every change it stands a greater chance of fulfilling its creators' dreams thanks to modern technology and knowledge unavailable in 1980. 'We're making prototype parts to replace prototype parts in a prototype car,' Nigel observes, 'so there may be some interesting problems. Who knows?'

One thing is certain, though. In its glass-smooth silvery gold over a very fine pearlescent white, the Bulldog at full chat is going to look fantastic.

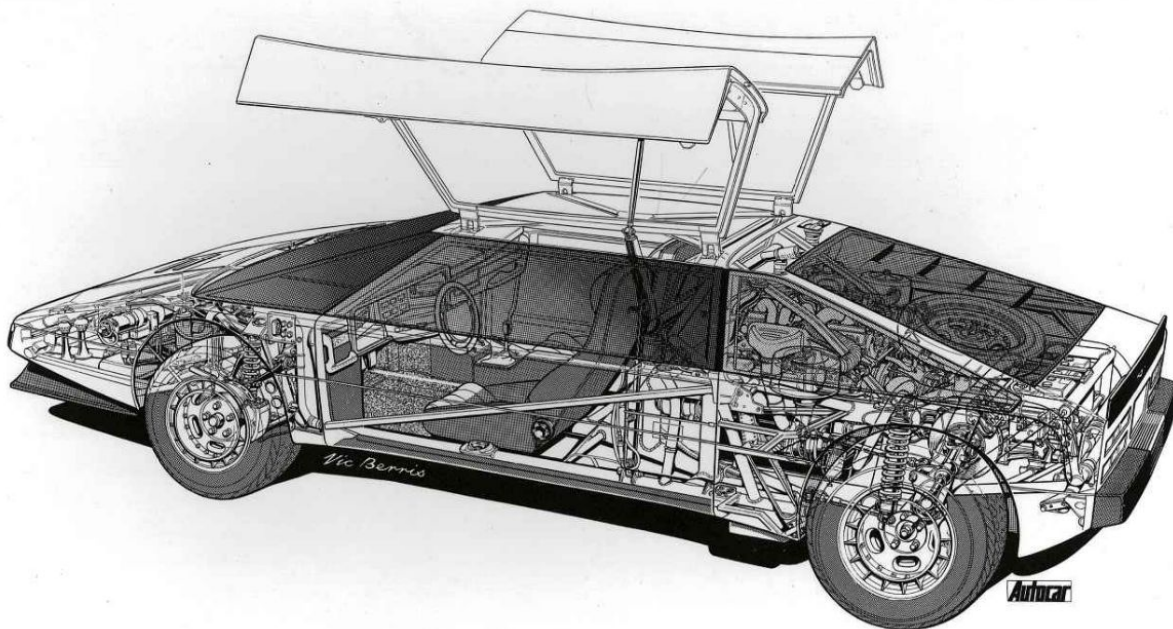
Above and right
Lifting the vast front windscreen, made by Pilkington, into position before it is bonded into place. Right: 1980 and the motoring press puts the Bulldog through its paces at MIRA



Proof of concept

WORDS KEITH MARTIN | PHOTOGRAPHY ROGER STOWERS/KEITH MARTIN ARCHIVE

Original Bulldog project leader Keith Martin recalls the earliest road tests of Aston Martin's pioneering supercar



It was the spring of 1980. Bulldog was a fully functioning road car and the team was rightly proud, having designed and built most of it in our special projects workshop at Newport Pagnell, with help from others in the company when the pressure was on. Even the initial 'big bits' had been extensively re-worked.

Just a few days after the launch on 27 March, it was due to be tested by *Autocar*, *Car*, *Motor* and *Road & Track* magazines. We'd only had time to do a shakedown run at MIRA, in the rain, to make sure everything worked and the car was safe. The first test was at Mallory Park circuit, organised at the last minute because of permit problems with MIRA. Paul Frère of *Road & Track*, being based outside the UK, did not have a MIRA track permit, and *Car* magazine was not welcome there because of its cavalier use of pre-release pictures of new cars.

For insurance reasons I had to be present in the passenger seat for the Mallory Park tests. After I'd driven AML chairman Alan Curtis around for a few laps, Paul Frère got to grips with the car and was soon exploring the limits of its handling and braking, this with the car virtually untested in its finished state. I was relieved at how well the car was standing up to this treatment. Mel Nicholls for *Car* magazine then had a few laps and seemed to be favourably impressed. We then loaded up and went over to MIRA, where *Motor* and *Autocar* were waiting.

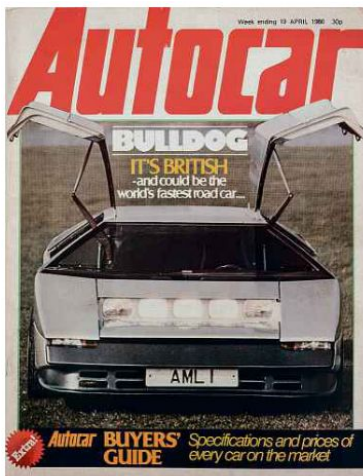
Motor won the coin toss and consequently got the lion's share of the driving, spending over an hour speeding round the high-speed banking and the more twisty handling circuit. We had to curtail *Autocar's* session as some electrical wires began smoking (too near an exhaust) and a few other teething troubles started to worry us. Fortunately the very experienced John Miles was still able to gain a lot of information from his shorter session and said 'not to worry'.

Later, Miles kindly presented Steve Hallam and myself with framed prints of Vic Berris's cutaway drawing. Mine still hangs in my office. Steve and I also got a congratulatory note from Mike Loasby, who came up with the original concept, which was kind of him.

We certainly couldn't complain about the publicity for Aston Martin that Bulldog generated. We had some filming sessions for the BBC with Noel Edmonds, then fronting the *Top Gear* programme. Noel, incidentally, invited me to have a drive in his GT40, which we started by towing it with his wife's Volvo estate before I set off alone around the country lanes. A most interesting experience, in some ways similar to pedalling Bulldog.

Steve H took the car to the *Blue Peter* studios for an appearance on live TV, and we were invited to make a demonstration run at the Birmingham Superprix and to open the Aston Martin Owners' Club meeting at Silverstone with Stirling Moss. On that occasion, Steve

'Paul Frère got to grips with the car and was soon exploring the limits of its handling and braking, this with the car virtually untested in its finished state'



Anne Albon

Clockwise from top left

Wonderful cutaway by Vic Berris appeared in *Autocar*, which was one of the four magazines to test the car in April 1980; Noel Edmonds drove it for *Top Gear* on the telly; high-speed runs were on MIRA's banked circuit; Stirling Moss is talked through the Bulldog by project chief Keith Martin

and I sneaked in some testing in the morning, setting up dampers, etc, before the crowds arrived. Then a real pinch-yourself moment when Stirling asked me to show him round for a lap before he took over for a couple of faster laps. The first time I saw Stirling Moss at Silverstone I was in short trousers and he was driving the Vanwall. Now he was asking me to show him how to drive a car, at Silverstone! Later on, Alan Curtis drove a few laps with Sir David Brown in the passenger seat. Tony Brooks also came by and asked some interesting questions about the car. Truly a day of Aston Martin living legends!

There was another with long links to Aston Martin: Roy Salvadori. I had the pleasure of his company for a day at Goodwood for a filming project about Aston Martin's racing history. We did many laps together in Bulldog, both of us taking turns to drive with the other as passenger. I'd have thought the last place he needed showing round was Goodwood. I found Roy to be a real gentleman and greatly enjoyed chatting with him. Incidentally, he thought the car was a lot of fun.

For several months we had to tie in an intensive development and test programme with the publicity schedule. Many well-known personalities came to see the car or were driven in it; a few being allowed to drive it. They came from the royal family, government, industry

and the media worlds. Most testing was done at MIRA and Steve Hallam or I usually drove the car there and back on the road. On one of these visits, we reached 172mph or thereabouts on one of MIRA's short straights. We knew we had much more to go, though, as we were just getting into top gear!

Our sessions in the wind tunnel resulted in Bulldog being aerodynamically stable with a front axle lift of only about 210lb (95kg) at 200mph and none at the rear. (As a matter of interest the first GT40s developed a lift of over half the weight of the car at 200mph, and were notably unstable at about 150mph, a speed we had already greatly exceeded in Bulldog with no problem).

Steve had predicted the need for a rear anti-roll bar and we had duly designed and fitted one. This reduced understeer but Bulldog remained a neutral-handling car with a touch of understeer when pressing hard – ideal for a road car. In fact in all the times I drove the car I don't recall a single hairy moment in the handling department. The only other significant changes were to move the oil coolers to the front of the car and completely redesign the exhaust system. After some failures and forensic analysis it was clear that the turbochargers were getting too hot. We moved them about 2ft further away from the engine and after that there were no more failures.



Specification (launch spec)

ENGINE V8, 5340cc, twin turbochargers, Bosch mechanical fuel injection **MAX POWER** c650bhp @ 6500rpm **MAX TORQUE** c550lb ft @ 4500rpm
TRANSMISSION Five-speed manual gearbox and transaxle, rear-wheel drive, LSD **SUSPENSION** Front: double wishbones, coil springs, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar. Rear: de Dion tube, trailing arms, Loasby link, coil springs, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar **STEERING** Rack-and-pinion, unassisted
BRAKES Vented discs, 296mm front and rear, four-piston calipers **WHEELS** 8.5 x 15in front, 11 x 15in rear **TYRES** 225/50 VR15 front, 345/35 VR15 rear, Pirelli P7
WEIGHT 1575kg **POWER TO WEIGHT** 420bhp/ton **0-60MPH** c4.5sec (est) **TOP SPEED** 200mph+

Unfortunately an economic recession was having its effect and the company had the unpleasant task of issuing redundancies. Sadly four of the Bulldog team (John Ceaser, Jim Corrie, Bob Clarke and Mike Duff) had to be included. Peter Collins and Steve Hallam were back on general development work, which left me without a team. At one stage I worked on Bulldog alone, then eventually even this had to stop, but I was still hankering after the high-speed run to 'consummate' the car at over 200mph.

By now (Christmas 1980) Victor Gauntlett was in charge and Alan Curtis had said goodbye. I was sorry to see Alan go, as it was his enthusiasm that got Bulldog started. Fortunately after a while the experimental department had some spare capacity and David Morgan set some of the fitters back on the car. We had a good look at the engine with ideas coming from David and our new engine designer from Cosworth, Alistair Lyle. In brief these included new modified Cosworth forged pistons, fettling of heads and inlet ports, higher-lift camshafts, new modified turbocharger innards and new injection intake manifolds. Arthur Wilson set up the engine on the test bed and almost immediately was getting over 700bhp at 6000rpm. It was looking good!

With the engine back in the car, we managed to have a few more test runs at MIRA. I usually drove, with Arthur Wilson as the observer, calmly recording 25 separate temperatures and other data as we flew around the high-speed circuit. The car being left-hand drive meant that he was up near the top of the banking – brave man!

By now Bulldog was going really well. On one occasion (29 May, 1981) we twice pulled over 191mph, verified from both the on-board Cranfield microwave speed measurer and the rev-counter, which was known to be spot-on. Just as significant to me was the fact that the car was

quite happy chugging home down the M1 at 70mph and could easily be driven in traffic.

By May 1981 I felt the car was ready for its maximum speed run. Pirelli had kindly loaned us some special tyres, balanced, buffed and X-rayed, and I had installed a taller diff ratio to give a theoretical maximum of 237mph, but obviously we needed somewhere to test. Norman Dewis of Jaguar helpfully sent me a file of information about the Nardo test track in southern Italy and I was in contact with the VW test track at Wolfsburg in Germany. Nardo was a slightly banked eight-mile bowl circuit and Wolfsburg had a five-mile straight with a high-speed banked entry. Either would be suitable for our needs.

It was not to be, however. Victor and managing director John Symonds were in deep negotiations with one of the Saudi princes, who was offering a tempting sum to purchase the car. I asked Steve Hallam to demonstrate it to him as I couldn't bring myself to do it. I might have been tempted to draw attention to the car's faults! Eventually the deal was done and on 27 January 1982 he drove the car away from the factory, no road tax, no number plates. Naturally I was saddened but understood the need to raise some cash and at least the car was in the best form it had ever been in.

Finally, I am truly delighted that the new owner of the car has commissioned a complete nut-and-bolt rebuild, and what a fantastic job Nigel Woodward and his team at Classic Motor Cars are doing. I have transcribed all my old notes into over 60,000 words of reports in the hope that these may help explain some of our design decisions and testing history. Mostly, though, it has enabled me to re-live the privilege I had in heading a great team in building a superb motor car – and still be writing about it over 40 years on. How lucky is that? 🐾

Above
 Bulldog as it was presented to the world in March 1980. Nine months of development and public relations duties followed



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WORDS RICHARD MEADEN | PHOTOGRAPHY JORDAN LEWIS/HAGERTY



THE DREAM

McKeel Hagerty has built a multi-billion-dollar business around classic car insurance. To unwind he likes nothing better than driving his DB4

You may not have heard of McKeel Hagerty, but if you own a classic car the chances are you'll be familiar with the business that bears his family name. Founded almost four decades ago by his parents in Traverse City, Michigan, Hagerty Insurance has grown under McKeel's leadership from a provincial insurance provider offering specialist cover to Michigan's boating community into the world's largest insurer of classic vehicles.

Hagerty's ascendance from humble beginnings to insurance powerhouse is straight from the American Dream, and an example of how hard work and smart moves can create multi-billion-dollar business success. The really interesting thing, at least if care about your cars, is that the business is founded on a deep and genuine love of cars and driving. A love that starts with the man whose name is above the door.

'I grew up in a car family,' says McKeel, 53. 'I had two older sisters and each of us, when we became young teenagers, went out with our father to find a cool vintage car that we could restore with him in the garage. Those cars would become our daily drivers, but they would also be special to us. My eldest sister got a Corvair





Lakewood station wagon. Middle sister got a 1968 Porsche 356 B Roadster.'

So what was young McKeel's first car? Probably not what you're thinking... 'When I was a kid I always dreamed of owning an Aston Martin and for the most clichéd reason, which is that I wanted to be James Bond. Every time there'd be a 007 movie on the television, I just dreamed about it, and how awesome it would be to find an Aston Martin somewhere. But of course this was pre-internet, so it was hard to find anything. Plus there weren't a lot of old Astons in the Midwestern part of the United States, so my first car was actually a '67 Porsche 911 S.

'Obviously this was pretty cool, too. I got the holy grail of early air-cooled 911s at 13, paid \$500 for it. Restored it with my dad. Drove it through high school. Drove it through college. Eventually it needed a real restoration by somebody who knew what they were doing. I still own it today and it's up there on the top of my favourite cars. Nevertheless I always kept this dream of owning an Aston Martin.'

It would be decades before that dream finally became reality, a slow-burn seduction that will doubtless be all-too-familiar to many of you: 'As I came into the Hagerty business I started travelling globally, and my fascination with Aston Martin really grew. I loved it. There was something romantic about it. I liked the cars. I had a chance to drive a DB4 – a red Series 3, which I loved – and this was followed by drives in numerous cars from different eras.'

The bug had bitten. The Bond fantasies suggest Hagerty's first Aston would be a DB5, but with so many appealing cars in the back catalogue the choice was never going to be that

'WHEN I WAS A KID I ALWAYS DREAMED OF OWNING AN ASTON MARTIN'

Above and left
Hagerty's DB4 is a Series 2 car, discovered in a poor state and since fully restored – though not without a few trials and tribulations along the way. Colour is Black Pearl



straightforward. Then, as is often the case with classics, rather than McKeel finding the right old Aston, an old Aston found McKeel.

'You're always trying to find the car that nobody else has picked over before. Through a connection in California, I found that there was this non-original but very complete DB4 that had known history. It was a 1960 Series 2, with all the bits and pieces still with it, but very, very, very worn-out. Not a barn find – in fact it was actually in a really proper dealership in Southern California – but had obviously been ragged on, if you know what I mean. Oh, and it was painted like a dune buggy – gold flake – and the original red interior had been painted black with that vinyl paint you could get in those days. It was full of cobwebs, non-running and really in need of restoration.'

And so began the realisation of a dream. Or at least it should have been, but instead turned into a nightmare. One that tested Hagerty's patience to the limit and so nearly ended with the DB4 never being completed. McKeel picks up the tortuous tale: 'The reason it was four years is the guy who started the restoration got in financial trouble. The whole project stalled when the car was all in pieces: body at the paint shop, engine at the machine shop, parts scattered all over the place.'

'I lost a substantial percentage of the parts in that process. I lost the wheels. I lost a bunch of trim pieces, all sorts of stuff. Just a tragedy, really. And I was already quite far into paying for the restoration. But fortunately the engine was fine. So were the body, seats and some other things. It was 2015 before I managed to collect all the bits

together and send it to Kevin Kay Restorations, who is one of the very best and based in California.

'He had a lot of the parts I needed in inventory because he had bought a lot of old car parts and had been stockpiling them for years. Amazingly he had almost everything we needed.' Almost...

'There were only a couple of options in a DB4,' continues Hagerty, 'which was interior and exterior colours, high-ratio or low-ratio rear end, and whether it had an AM radio. Well, mine was ordered with the high-ratio rear end and the AM radio. Except the radio had disappeared in the debacle with the original restorer.'

'The most annoying thing that I've ever had to do in my life is find and pay for an original Motorola radio for a 1960 Aston Martin DB4 Series 2. \$15,000 for an AM radio! I'm like, "You've got to be kidding me". But, well, the car wouldn't be complete without one, so it was just a case of having it. So I bought one and put it in there and, well, it's never been turned on. Of course my kids all say, "Does that work?" I'm like, "Don't talk to me about the radio!"'

Clearly originality is important to Hagerty, but not to a slavish extent. So, while Kevin Kay's nut-and-bolt restoration was executed to the highest standards, McKeel was keen that the end result be a reflection of his taste, and built with his intended uses very much in mind.

'I've returned the interior to the original red Connolly leather, but I did change the exterior colour. This car was delivered new in San Francisco in Desert White. It's not an attractive colour combination to me. I think it's kind of garish. So I changed the body colour to Black Pearl, which

Above and right

Visually standard, the '4 has a 4.2-litre six with triple SU carburettors, all the better for touring at high altitudes, as Hagerty has done on several occasions: this car gets driven as well as shown



'IT WAS FULL OF
COBWEBS, NON-
RUNNING AND
REALLY IN NEED
OF RESTORATION'





was a 1960 colour. I think the combination of dark metallic grey with the red interior is just stunning.'

For some people the process of restoration is a beginning and end in itself, the resulting car deemed too precious and perfect to use. Not for McKeel Hagerty, who loves to use his cars as their makers intended.

'I showed it at the Pebble Beach Concours in 2017. It's not a GT or a Zagato so I didn't expect to win, even though Kevin did a flawless restoration. I showed it at Amelia Island, too, where it won Best in Class, but what I've really been doing and enjoying is driving it in tours, which was always my intention. I'm not a big show guy. My view is you spend hundreds of thousands of dollars restoring something. Well, why not show it off in its perfection and then go out and get a few stone-chips and start having fun? It's a car and I'm going to enjoy it.'

And enjoy it he has, with many happy thousands of miles covered since the restoration was completed: 'The high-speed rear end is just the best, as it can make highway speeds in the United States and not be oversteering the car. A lot of sports cars from the '50s and '60s find running 80mph for a couple of hours kind of tough, but the DB4 just sits there.

'I went to 4.2-litre with the engine build, and I put the three-carburettor set-up on it. I didn't want to go too far, but that's pretty much the standard spec if you want to stay sensible but have a useful increase in performance. One of the events in the United States that I really like is called the Colorado Grand. It's a thousand-mile tour through the mountains. And you're up at 10, 11, 12,000 feet. With that bigger displacement and the triple carbs it does very well.'

Does the Hagerty collection extend to other Astons? 'No.

It's interesting, because I have thought about it. You know, the "Okay, if I were to own another one, what would it be?" question. I should say that the '50s and '60s are my favourite era, so certainly, if you have a DB4 I don't think you'd own a DB5. No offence to my James Bond dreams, but I think the 4's just a better-proportioned car. My inclination would actually be to get a more modern Aston. I think they're one of the coolest, modern-looking, high performance cars you could own.'

As for the DB4, it seems Hagerty has plenty of plans to continue enjoying it once Covid travel restrictions begin to ease: 'We have really harsh winters here in Northern Michigan. It's like living in the mountains, so an SUV is essential come winter. The Aston is such a jewel. It's my car for springtime and autumn, as I tend to enjoy convertible cars in summer to make the most of the hot weather.

'I'm hoping to do the Colorado Grand again with it this year. My vision for this car really was to be my kind of global touring car because tours are all a little bit different, right? Sometimes you have to carry your own luggage. Sometimes there's a luggage truck. What I love about the Aston is it's a proper GT car. You're not in some tiny two-seater convertible with no space and getting rained on. Obviously, with travel pretty much shut down, I'm not bringing it to Europe this year, but my goal is to do that. Maybe do the Scottish Malts or something like that.'

Something tells us if Hagerty does head to the Highlands he'll be diverting off the A82 for a quick foray to Loch Etive. He might have resisted buying a silver DB5, but driving the road to Skyfall in his beloved Black Pearl DB4 would surely square the circle for the young lad from Michigan with dreams of being Bond. 🎯

Above
Hagerty is planning more tours with the DB4, including the Scottish Malts - when travel restrictions allow again



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WORDS PETER TOMLIN | PHOTOGRAPHY ALEX TAPLEY

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54" Fish Sandwich	\$84.99
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Below and right
Tomalin comes to terms with a car that's rather larger than his V8 Vantage and only slightly smaller than his house. Cabin (right) hits all the right notes, as does the DBX's ride/handling balance



Finding myself in reflective mood the other day, I began leafing through issue 1 of *Vantage* from early 2013, Aston Martin's Centenary year. Amongst the celebratory features was a news piece on AML's then-fragile finances (*plus ça change* and all that), which reported that CEO Ulrich Bez was on the verge of securing the investment needed to develop crucial new models. 'Media reports have already suggested that Astons will be switching to Mercedes-AMG V8 and V12 engines in the near future,' it went on, 'and Dr Bez has made no secret of his continuing ambition to build an SUV...'

They were words to strike fear into the hearts of sad old traditionalists (yep, that's me – maybe you too), who felt Astons should always have Aston engines and that an SUV was no more appropriate a vehicle to be badged as an Aston than, say, a gussied-up Japanese hatchback.

Well, we can't say we weren't warned. Fast-forward eight-and-a-half years, and here I am at the wheel of Aston's first SUV and it does indeed have a Mercedes-AMG V8, and I have to admit that it's a seriously impressive machine. But does it feel like an Aston Martin? Is it reasonable to expect it to? Does it actually matter?

In the nearly nine years that we've been producing this magazine, I've been fortunate enough to drive Astons spanning seven decades,





‘Recent Aston interiors have been a mild disappointment, but this feels like a corner has been turned’

everything from early-50s DB2 to current DBS. Among the best of them, common traits are easily identified: they’re invariably handsome, well-proportioned cars with classy interiors and powerful, characterful engines; they may not be the most sophisticated among their peers, but they have an air of quality and individuality that lifts them well above the everyday; they have a strong British (or is that English?) identity. Almost without exception they are front-engined, rear-wheel-drive coupés and convertibles.

It’s a blend of attributes that’s pretty much unique to Aston Martin and it’s why Aston fans love the marque. Major changes to the formula aren’t generally well-received – as Dr Bez discovered with the Cygnet. But Cygnet felt like a whim; DBX is a more calculated sort of gamble. Even back in 2013 it was increasingly apparent that technology-sharing was key to the marque’s survival, as was developing its own SUV to compete for sales with Bentley, Lamborghini and the rest. But the stakes were sure to be high.

How a car looks and feels, and the brand image it projects, have always been important, but they’re going to be increasingly so in the coming years as EV powertrains become homogenised and less of a differentiator. And here, I think, the DBX scores solidly. It’s a whole lot more stylish than a Bentayga or Cullinan, and a lot less in-your-face than a Urus, which feels about right for an Aston Martin. The kicked-up tailgate spoiler looks better on the Vantage, but overall the DBX seems to me to nail the Aston DNA. And if, like me, your enthusiasm for high-performance SUVs is tempered by the sheer vastness of them, the good news is that visually the DBX disguises its bulk very well. Right up until you park it next to a regular car, that is, and then you’re amazed/appalled/impressed (delete as appropriate) by the size of the thing.

At least the payoff for that bulk is that it’s genuinely spacious and airy inside. Five people and their luggage really could travel distances here. And it’s a really cool place to hang out. Most importantly, it both looks and feels like a premium product. Other recent Astons have



Specification

ENGINE V8, 3982cc, twin-turbo **MAX POWER** 542bhp @ 6500rpm **MAX TORQUE** 516lb ft @ 2200-5000rpm **TRANSMISSION** Nine-speed automatic with paddleshift, four-wheel drive, electronic centre and rear differentials, ESC, TC, Hill Descent Control (HDC), Roll-over Stability Control (RSC) **SUSPENSION** Front: double wishbones, air springs, telescopic adaptive dampers. Rear: multi-link, air springs, telescopic adaptive dampers **STEERING** Rack-and-pinion, electrically assisted **BRAKES** Vented discs, 410mm front, 390mm rear, ABS, EBA **WHEELS** 10 x 22in front, 11.5 x 22in rear **TYRES** 285/40 ZR22 front, 325/35 ZR22 rear, Pirelli P Zero **WEIGHT** 2245kg **POWER TO WEIGHT** 246bhp/ton **0-60MPH** 4.3sec (claimed) **TOP SPEED** 181mph (claimed) **PRICE** From £158,000

been a mild disappointment here, but inside the DBX it feels like a corner has been turned. Build feels fist-tight; the elements of wood and satin-finish metal look sculptural; the real metal trim is deliciously cool to the touch (unlike the chromed plastic in the Bentley I drove recently).

DBX derivatives, including hybrids, are coming soon, but for now there's just the one powertrain – the now-familiar AMG-sourced 4-litre biturbo V8, recalibrated for this application with 542bhp at 6500rpm and a very meaty 516lb ft of torque from as little as 2200rpm. It drives all four wheels via a nine-speed auto, with paddle-shifters for when the mood takes you.

I can't deny a lingering pang of sadness that it's not a bespoke Aston engine, but I suspect that few potential DBX customers will care as long as it delivers sufficient performance and refinement. There's no question that it's a characterful engine, and it certainly delivers, both in terms of power and sonics. And now that we know that internal combustion's days are numbered anyway, who makes it doesn't seem quite so important any more. It's a growling, gargling, petrol-fuelled internal combustion engine that has a proper animalistic edge to it on start-up. It already feels like a slightly illicit thrill.

That ample torque is plenty enough to propel even the DBX's substantial mass at a serious

lick, and the chassis has a level of composure that has to be experienced to be believed. Given a wide, reasonably smooth and open road, it's as quick as many sports cars, and on a track it can be flung around with wild abandon, though of course no-one's actually going to do that. After all, if you can afford a DBX, you can probably afford a sports car as well.

The fact that it can sprint between corners and take them at improbable speeds is fun but will be largely irrelevant to the majority of owners the majority of the time. A bit like knowing your SUV has off-roading ability. But it does mean that it feels wieldy and composed, which makes it genuinely enjoyable to drive.

Its natural habitat is the fast A-road or motorway/autoroute. It's almost like a new twist on the old concept of the *grande routière*: the sort of vehicle you can pile the family into for a long haul to distant European destinations, knowing you'll arrive de-stressed. At speed it cruises beautifully, serenely, the gentle rustle of wind around the door pillars the loudest thing, just above the deep, distant hum of the engine, like the turbines in the bowels of a ship. In top gear at an indicated 75mph the engine's barely ticking over at 1500rpm, while an 18.7-gallon tank should mean a range of 400-450 miles.

We didn't go quite that far. We explored the Lincolnshire Wolds and kept driving until we finished up on the coast. I think we imagined

taking a moody shot looking out to sea – something suitably reflective to match the mood of this piece. We found ourselves in Skegness.

It wasn't the ending I'd expected, but then I hadn't expected to like the DBX either. And I wasn't the only one who was impressed; it seemed to get the thumbs-up from pretty much everyone who saw it. One old boy we met on the prom was a particular fan. He had a quick glance inside. Whistled appreciatively. 'Wonderful isn't it?' he murmured. And I had to agree.

So how has the wider world taken to the DBX? It's early days, but the signs are reasonably encouraging. AML's interim results show that in the six months to 30 June 2021 it sold 2901 cars in total and well over half of those (1595) were DBXs. Strongest growth was in China.

So the predictions that were being made eight-and-a-half years ago have largely come to pass. Looking forward the same number of years takes us to 2030 and a new motoring age of hybrids and fully electric vehicles. The DBX, more than any other Aston, feels ready for that. It has its own distinct style, its own ambience, it feels nicely made, and it rides and handles like an Aston should. Plus it still has that badge and all its associations. These things will all survive the transition to electric power.

An Aston SUV with a Mercedes engine? It really shouldn't work. But I'm delighted to confirm that it does. Even in Skegness. 🍷



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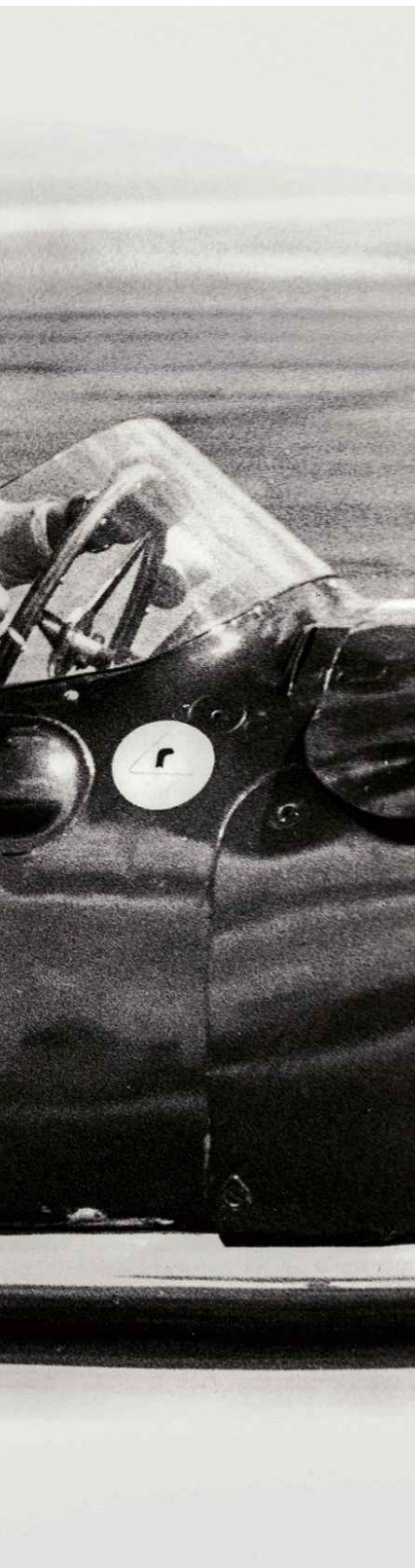
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Neil Corner is a legend of the historic racing scene and has owned and raced some of the greatest Astons. We went to meet him

Heritage racer

WORDS STEPHEN ARCHER | PHOTOGRAPHY CORNER ARCHIVE/TIM ANDREW

We take historic racing for granted these days, but there was a time when old racing cars were just that: yesterday's cars, superseded by new machinery; uncompetitive and largely unwanted. So how did historic racing begin and who was behind it? One of the prime movers, one of the handful of people who established historic racing in the 1960s and '70s, was Neil Corner.

Anyone who attended Silverstone or Brands in that era will have seen Neil winning races at the wheel of some of the all-time greats – including some of the most celebrated Astons. In some cases he was able to demonstrate their full potential years after they officially retired from racing. As I personally witnessed many of his triumphs from the 1960s onwards, it was a pleasure to catch up with him at his home in his native Yorkshire.

Neil may have hung up his helmet some time ago, but even in his 80s he's as dynamic and forthright as ever. His is also a voice of authority: he didn't just race the cars but, as an engineer, he understood them better than most. This expertise has been one of his great assets, the other being that he was a very, very good driver.

His first Aston was a DB4, bought for him by his father in 1961. Frederick Corner had founded the family business just after the war, making office and industrial furniture – a successful business that Neil inherited and kept growing until selling it in 2013. 'The DB4 had the number 1 FUP, a Durham number that I still have,' Neil tells me. 'It was a lovely colour: Dubonnet, with a grey interior. There was something special about the DB4 that wasn't there in the DB5 that I had afterwards; the DB4 was a bit more elegant.'

These were fundamentally road cars, though; Neil's first proper racing car was the much-historied DB35/6, perhaps best known by its registration, 62 EMU. Second at Le Mans twice,



‘The DBR1 had the worst gearbox of any car I’ve driven – if you missed a gear it was a nightmare’



it’s still active today as a 66-year-old historic racing car, but Neil bought it when it was only eight years old – and somewhat by chance. ‘I was driving down to London through Newark, and I saw the DB3S in a garage forecourt window,’ he tells me. ‘I took it to Silverstone to race it, came first and realised that I could drive. I did a 1.06 on the old Club circuit.’ And all recalled without the aid of any notes!

After half a dozen races, in 1966 Neil seized the chance to acquire a DBR1, which he bought with fellow racer Chris Stewart. ‘We did the deal at The Green Man near Silverstone; the seller got a racing Lotus Elan and £500 and we got the DBR1 and a truckload of spares.’ For the record, the R1 in question was the Le Mans winning car and this was just seven years after that victory!

The timing was perfect because the historic racing scene was beginning to crystallise and develop a following of its own. The VSCC (Vintage Sports Car Club) had planted the seed in the early ‘60s by allowing 1950s F1 cars to race with the pre-war machines. As the decade went on, more and more post-war historic cars could be seen in action, usually with sports cars and F1 cars sharing the same grid.

The pivotal moment, though, came in 1970 when Anthony (now Lord) Bamford sponsored the new Historic Car Championship, which ran for a number of years, cementing historic racing

in the public consciousness and laying the ground for what we see today.

One of Neil’s best races in the DBR1 was at the Crystal Palace AMOC Jubilee meeting in 1970 where he was pipped by Brian Joscelyne in a Birdcage Maserati. ‘The DBR1 wasn’t particularly good at Crystal Palace,’ Neil confides. ‘It was geared for 160mph and at Crystal Palace you need gearing for a top speed of about 110mph.’

There was a celebratory parade at the meeting, and Neil was asked to chauffeur ex-Aston works driver Jack Fairman in the DBR1. ‘I had him in my car and I remember him saying to me, “You know boy, I’ve still got my licence if you need a co-driver.”’ He sounded serious too!

Neil rated the DBR1, but not everything about it. ‘It had the worst gearbox of any car I’ve ever driven and I spoke both to Tony Brooks and Moss who said: “You’re absolutely right, around the Nürburgring it wasn’t a very easy change, considering David Brown made gearboxes!”’

‘It had a short gear-lever and, if you missed a gear, then the only way you could sort it out was to go into top and then come down through the ‘box. Tony Brooks said the same to me: if you missed a gear it was a nightmare.’

In 1967 Neil bought not one but two DBR4s. The R4 was Aston Martin’s late-1950s Formula 1 car, a superb machine in many ways but whose delayed introduction meant it was outpaced by



Left and above
DP215 reunited with its original engine, and Neil (on the right) with son Nigel. Above: a young Nigel with Freda Corner supporting Neil at a race meeting in the early '70s. Below: Neil showed the winning potential of the DBR4 with a succession of first places in historic racing; DB35 (bottom) was his first serious racing car. Opposite, bottom left: Le Mans-winning DBR1

the new breed of rear-engined cars. One of these, chassis /4, would give Neil a remarkable race record – once he'd teased out its full potential.

Over the years he's owned some of the all-time greats, be they Ferraris, Jaguar D-types or Maserati 250Fs. As an engineer he's always had a keen understanding of what a car is capable of. The 250F, for example, was always popular in historic racing, but there was little that could be done to make them faster. The appeal of the DBR4 was that it had good disc brakes and 15in wheels could be fitted, which allowed for better tyres. It could also be fitted with the very good Maserati gearbox, which was far easier to live with than David Brown's transaxle.

'It's got a 3-litre engine,' says Neil, 'which means you don't have to rev it hard and it'll be reliable. I never revved my DBR4 above 5000rpm, not once, and nobody could touch it. I calculated that with 15-inch Dunlop R7s, discs and the 3-litre engine, no one was going to beat me.'

From 1968 to 1973, Neil had 30 wins, two seconds and one third, plus 11 lap records. He had also worked out a way to run the DBR4 on methanol, which increased power. In fact his only DNF was due to a carburettor fire that, being a methanol fire, was invisible.

The DBR4 was sold to Alain de Cadenet in 1973, and other great Astons came and went. A DB4 GT Zagato passed through his hands briefly in 1970, when in order to buy a Type 57S Bugatti

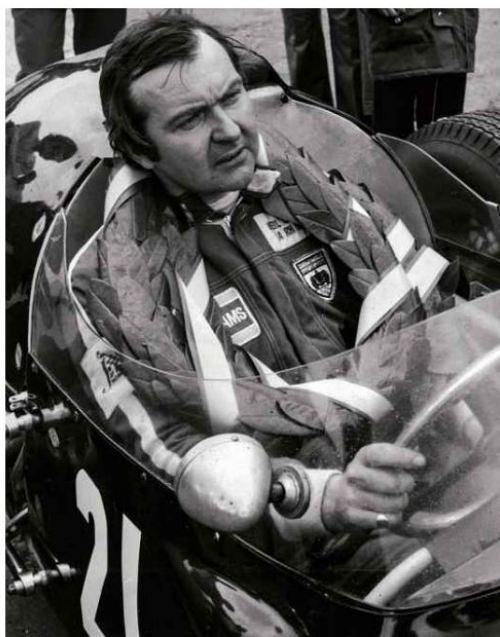
he had to buy the Aston too: £50,000 for the pair. He could not justify keeping both so the Zagato, with just 1200 miles and the tools still in their wax paper, was sold the next day.

One legendary Aston that stayed rather longer was the Le Mans racer, DP215. Neil's admiration for the Project cars had begun back in the 1960s, when he was just starting out racing and had the chance to drive the sister car DP214.

It was the quickest thing he had driven up to that point. 'I thought, God, if I pull this gear-lever back it's going to take off. It was a serious car.' Bruce McLaren once said that DP214 was the best-handling car he ever drove, and Neil echoes those thoughts. 'I'm telling you right now, DP215 is the best front-engine GT car I've ever driven,' he says. 'I never raced it but I did a few races in DP214 in 1966/7.'

Neil had tried to buy DP214 in the 1990s but in 2002 the stars aligned when Phil Collins' manager, Tony Smith, agreed to swap DP215 for Neil's ex-Phil Hill F1 Ferrari Dino. DP215 had been superbly rebuilt by Nigel Dawes 25 years previously but there remained two issues to resolve: the gearbox and the engine.

The car had started out with a DBR1 transaxle but that was replaced by the works in period with a DBR2 gearbox. Both had been lost over time and the car came with a ZF five-speed in it. With the incredible talent of Crosthwaite and Gardiner, a new DBR2 gearbox was created for





Stephen Archer

'I'm telling you right now, DP215 is the best front-engine GT car I've ever driven'

the car using original David Brown drawings.

The engine was trickier. The original had been separated from the car in the 1960s, though Dawes had inserted the identical, period, dry-sump engine from the Indy Cooper Aston. In years gone by that might not have been an issue, but the market today expects historic cars to have their original engines.

'I think the worst thing that could happen to the car market was when matching numbers came on the scene,' says Neil. 'I've had three GTOs, a D-type, the DBR1, the DB3S, and LM and P3 Ferraris. I never once looked at an engine number on any of the cars that I bought. I knew where they'd come from and that's all that mattered. It's nice to have an original car with an original number, but if the GTO had been campaigned seriously, they just swapped engines.'

In 2019, thanks to Aston collector Simon Draper, the original engine was re-installed in the car and DP215 was restored to its full technical glory – just as it had been when it achieved 198mph on the Mulsanne, at the time the highest speed recorded at Le Mans by a front-engine car.

'I did not drive it at racing speeds but I did drive it at Silverstone for a demonstration and it was massively quick,' says Neil. 'Ted Cutting did a great job on the design and it was far better made than the Ferraris.'

After 17 years of hugely pleasurable motoring and road events in DP215, the time came to let it go. It went to auction in Monterey in 2019, achieved a record price and now resides in a very good collection alongside other great racing cars. Neil was very sad to see it go but he is a firm believer that we are custodians, not owners. As custodian of DP215 he had returned it to its best condition since 1963.

Great cars have truly been a family affair; his wife Freda is a great enthusiast and participant in many events, and son Nigel was a very successful driver until retiring from racing shortly after a serious accident at Goodwood in 2000.

Despite significant successes, Neil's modesty extends to his exploits on track. Asked to reflect on his historic racing heyday, he says: 'People didn't realise, but I raced hard yet never took anything for granted. I won a lot of races easily without even having to worry about it. But some of the best races were where I came second.'

Neil Corner has always managed to do the best for – and with – each car that he has owned. It is a remarkable lifetime of achievements, and though he is now an octogenarian, his energy is undiminished. Today he still enjoys some very fine cars, including Fangio's Monaco-winning Maserati 250F. He also enjoys himself in his fabulous engineering workshop, doing what he enjoys most now: 'Making things.' **V**

Above and right
After 17 years as 'custodian' of DP215, Neil eventually sold it in 2019; today he still enjoys his collection of classics – and spending time in the workshop at his Yorkshire home



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ENGLAND EXPECTS

WORDS PETER TOMALIN | PHOTOGRAPHY ALEX TAPLEY

Richards of England has its sights firmly set on joining the ranks of the world's top Aston Martin restorers. We take a look inside



Above and right
Paul Richards and a DBS that has been returned to its original Brico fuel injection thanks to modern engine management; Jack Langley uses the English wheel in the body shop. Right: the main workshop and below, from left, Ash Markham polishing panels in the paint shop, Jack Langley in the body shop and David Roake in the trim shop

Paul Richards is one very driven individual. As a teenager he seemed destined for a career as a professional golfer until injury struck. Instead, he taught himself the craft of coach-trimming and began to take commissions from local classic car owners – all while still living at home in Lincoln with his parents.

When the business outgrew the family home, he rented a unit on an industrial estate on the edge of town, took on more and more work, and began to recruit. Today his company, Richards of England, employs a team of eight, stretches across five units on the same gated estate, and encompasses full ground-up restorations, mostly Astons. As a mark of how well-regarded its work is, its latest resto was accepted for this year's prestigious Salon Privé at Blenheim Palace.

But here's the thing. Remarkably, neither Paul nor most of his team have a traditional grounding in Aston restorations. Equally remarkably, the boss himself is still only in his early 30s. It was high time we paid a visit.

LINCOLN'S CEDAR PARC ISN'T your average industrial estate. Classic car and motorsport businesses rub shoulders with furniture makers; the units are clad in attractively weathered timber; there's plenty of space and an air of calm.

Inside RoE's main workshop there's a hum of activity as the team go about their work. On the day of our visit in July 2021, the Salon Privé car – a DB5 in gleaming Platinum – is in the final stages of reassembly, while close by is the freshly painted shell of a DBS V8 in Dubonnet Rosso.

As with all the restorations here, that shell was restored in the company's own on-site body shop and sprayed in the adjacent paint shop. Eventually it will be trimmed by Richards' in-house trim department. Apart from the engines, which are rebuilt at Aston Engineering, pretty much everything else is done here. That's fairly unusual for any Aston specialist. For one as young as this – RoE's Aston business has grown from virtually nothing in less than ten years – it's exceptional. So how did it all begin?

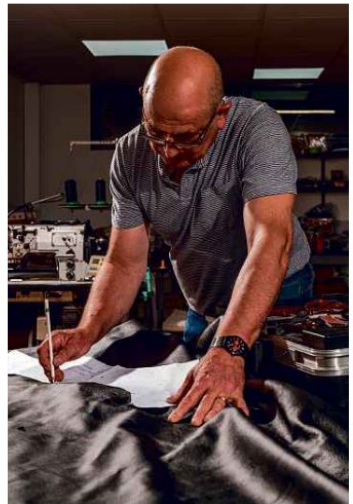
The young Paul Richards had two passions: cars, obviously, and golf. 'I was a scratch golfer at 14 and played for the England under-16 side,' he tells me, 'but I had real trouble with my Achilles and had to stop.'

Struggling to find an apprenticeship straight from school, Paul set up a home workshop in 2006 and began to teach himself the art of trimming. 'I was always into cars and I just liked the look of it. I thought it would be interesting, and the nature of the cars you'd be working on was appealing.

'My dad bought me a secondhand sewing machine, which I had in my bedroom, and I'd just practise the techniques. Then I started advertising and began to pick up a bit of work – I refitted the interiors on a couple of Rolls-Royces for a local wedding company – and took over my parents' garage.' By 2008 things were going so well that he founded Richards Coach Trimmers and took his first unit on the business park.

'In the very beginning it was just me trimming, but then we started taking on mechanical work, which was when Matthew [Purvis, now head mechanic and workshop manager] joined. Around 2012 we did the trim on our first Aston, a DB5, and I pointed out a number of jobs that also needed doing and the owner said he'd be happy

'The Aston business has grown from virtually nothing in less than ten years'





for us to do the work. We stripped the mechanicals down, refurbished the brakes and the underside of the chassis, did some engine bay detail work... And that's where it all really started. I've had a special liking for DBSs ever since.'

The company grew almost organically. Jon Butler, an experienced electrical/mechanical technician, originally visited as a customer who needed an interior for his E-type, liked what he saw and joined the team to do the electrical work.

Eventually the company was rebranded Richards of England to reflect the fact that it was now much more than a coach trimmer. More staff and more units followed, first on the metal fabrication side, then bodywork and paint, then when Paul had to take a step back to focus on running the company, he employed a trimmer too. Today the various workshops cover around 10,000sq ft, and as well as the eight full-time members of the team, the company has its first apprentice, Jack Langley, on secondment from the Heritage Skills Academy at Bicester.

The only member of the team with what might be considered a traditional Aston background is Nigel White, who recently joined on the parts side. 'He worked at the factory and also many years with [Olney-based specialist] Desmond Smail. For the rest of us, it's all come out of our passion and enthusiasm and wanting to learn.

'We always do a lot of research on how things should be done. We've been really fortunate to have a number of cars through the workshops that have been totally original, which we can take a lot of data from. The Dubonnet Rosso DBS V8 was a very original car. You learn so much when you take apart a car that has never been restored or messed with: exactly how they were built, the relationship between the different parts.

'It goes right down to the tiniest screws – there's a lot of screw head profiles that are just

'It's all come out of our passion and enthusiasm and wanting to learn' – Paul Richards

not the same today, so we tend to get them cleaned up and replated to keep the correct look.'

Paul sources many of the restoration projects himself. The DB5, for example, was a UK car that had been exported to the US in 1976 and had remained with the same owner until Paul discovered it two years ago.

'We always try to retain as much as we can,' he says. 'Here the nose section is new but we kept the bonnet. It had quite a few dings, but we were able to repair it. Same with the bootlid, doors, roof, fuel tank – there's a lot that's original.

'The engine block, too, and the ZF gearbox and back axle. We've even managed to get the Armstrong Selectoride dampers working. A lot of people have them rebuilt but then fixed in a medium damping setting; these can be adjusted electrically from the switch on the dashboard to soft, medium or hard.

'It's on original-spec cross-ply Avon tyres. The steering is non-assisted, but if you're on the correct section cross-plies it's fine once you've got a bit of speed up.

'Most people replace the radiator, but we keep the original Manchester-produced outer radiator with its brass plaque so it looks

absolutely as it should, though with a new core for improved cooling. The hoses are the original material – a lot of the reproduction stuff isn't the same now, so we go that bit further to source the correct material.

'We've even managed to get the original headlining material reproduced by one of our trim suppliers – it was a textured vinyl that was no longer available, but now we can offer it as an option on future cars.

'The clients that we've got seem to be quite enthused about all of this. They really want to know just how the car would have been in 1965 or 1971 or whenever.'

None of this, of course, comes cheap. A full restoration takes up to 18 months and costs £250,000-£300,000. Aston Engineering rebuilds the engines; Derby Plating handles all the chrome work, and Bodylines supplies the one-piece nose sections for DB4, 5 and 6, but pretty much everything else is handled in-house.

'Customers really seem to appreciate the fact that we do so much here,' says Paul, 'and from a quality control perspective it's much easier to achieve what we want than if the cars were here, there and everywhere.'

It's nearly all Astons these days, though RoE does restore the occasional E-type Jaguar and classic Bentley. Mostly it's DB4 through to the classic V8s, though they are stretching back to the odd earlier car.

'The DB5 owner is looking to build an Aston collection with us. The next car he's got in mind is a DB MKIII drophead.' So that will take RoE into another Aston era, though they've already dipped their toe in with a DB2/4 and an early '50s Lagonda drophead, which is very much old-school coachbuilding. 'So we're doing a lot of our own ash-work as well now,' says Paul.

It's the DBS, though, that he has a particular affinity with. It was the model that first got him into the Aston world; he's got one of his own, and there are several in the workshops today. A gorgeous 1970 DBS in Azurro light metallic blue is one of around 15 originally supplied with Brico fuel injection. The FI had been ditched long ago for Webers, as happened to nearly all of them. Only two are believed to be running with it now, and this is one of them. 'We managed to source original Brico manifolds and so on, they had been in a box for 25 years. With a modern ECU we've managed to reinstate it all and it now fully functions. In fact it goes really well.'

And what of the future? 'I don't really want to get much bigger than we are. I have a very personal connection with the business – I'm very much on the floor with the guys, and with the clients. I'd love to get back into golf. I just don't seem to have the time...'

Paul is clearly immensely proud of what he and his team have created in a relatively short time. He's also proud of his Lincolnshire roots. 'Lincoln's off the radar for a lot of people. Underrated. But it's very up-and-coming. People are starting to appreciate what it has to offer.'

Word is getting out about Richards of England, too. I wouldn't expect to see very much of Paul on the golf course any time soon. 🏌️

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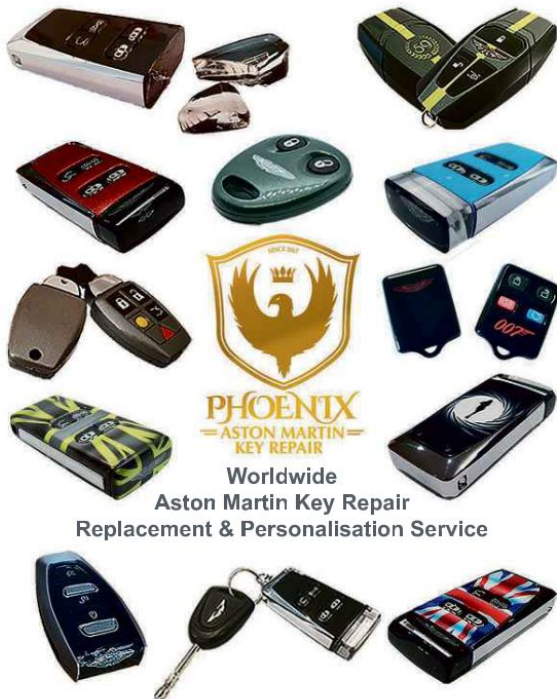
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DB4GT projects

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ALL THE ROAD CARS 1920s-1930s

Sports/Super Sports 1920-1925



SPECIFICATION
Engine 1.5-litre in-line 4
Power 55bhp
Torque n/a
0-60mph n/a
Top speed 90mph

Although the first 'Aston-Martin' had been created in 1915, the Great War meant production didn't actually start until 1920. And because the early years were all about motorsport, it wasn't until 1923 that cars went on sale to the general public. The Sports was advanced for its time, with four-wheel brakes and a fully floating rear axle, and in Super Sports form it got a twin-cam, 16-valve four with a lusty 55bhp. Business was tough, though, and after around 60 cars had been sold, the company went into receivership in 1925.

Second Series/New International/Le Mans 1932-1934



SPECIFICATION
Engine 1495cc, in-line 4
Power 70bhp
Torque n/a
0-60mph n/a
Top speed 85mph

Price reductions, made possible by out-sourcing more components, and continuing motorsport success at Le Mans and elsewhere helped lift sales of what are now known as the Second Series cars. Particularly well received was the Le Mans (above) introduced in 1932. Its high-compression engine pushed power up from 60 to 70bhp. Tourers and saloons were still built but were overshadowed by the sports cars - more than 100 examples were sold of the Le Mans alone. There was also a (much rarer) four-seater version.

Ulster 1934-1936



SPECIFICATION
Engine 1495cc, in-line 4
Power 85bhp
Torque n/a
0-60mph n/a
Top speed 100mph

Most revered of all the early Astons, the Ulster was named in celebration of the Works racers' success in the 1934 Tourist Trophy and was effectively a replica of those factory cars. With power now up to 85bhp from the latest version of the 1.5-litre ohc four, it was enough for Aston to guarantee a 100mph top speed. These cars are distinguished by their sleek body and boat-shaped tail, which houses a horizontally mounted spare wheel. Twenty-one Ulsters were built, all of which are believed to have survived.

First Series/International 1927-1932



SPECIFICATION
Engine 1495cc, in-line 4
Power 56bhp
Torque n/a
0-60mph n/a
Top speed 80mph

With new financial backers, a new factory in Feltham and a new ohc 1.5-litre engine, the era of 'Bertelli' Astons began in 1927. There were sports and competition models, and also a tourer and a saloon, while 1929 saw the introduction of the low-slung, dry-sumped International model (pictured), based on the company's widely successful racing cars of the day. The International was fast and refined but the price was high and sales remained slow. In all, 129 'First Series' cars were produced.

Third Series (MkII) 1934-1936



SPECIFICATION
Engine 1495cc, in-line 4
Power 73bhp
Torque n/a
0-60mph n/a
Top speed 85mph

The MkII was a development of the Second Series, intended to be a more useable yet faster version. A new balanced crankshaft assembly and a few other minor mods to the 1.5-litre engine saw peak power rise to 73bhp, though the top speed for the two-seater remained at 85mph. Short- and long-chassis versions were available with a number of different bodies, including tourer, two-door saloon and drophead coupe. A short chassis with lightweight body was adopted as the Works car and ultimately became the Ulster.

2-litre Speed/Type C 1936-1940



SPECIFICATION
Engine 1949cc, in-line 4
Power 110bhp
Torque n/a
0-60mph n/a
Top speed 95mph

To broaden the appeal of its range, in 1936 Aston introduced a 2-litre engine, based on the 1.5 but with increased bore and stroke and domed pistons. The Speed model was created for the 1936 Le Mans, though in the event the race was cancelled. Some 25 were eventually sold. In 1938 it was decided that eight leftover Speed chassis should be used to create a more 'modern-looking' Aston. The resulting Type C, with rather bulbous bodywork, didn't go down well with enthusiasts and the last one sold at Christmas 1940.

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ALL THE ROAD CARS 1930s-1950s

15/98 1937-1939



SPECIFICATION
Engine 1949cc, in-line 4
Power 98bhp
Torque n/a
0-60mph n/a
Top speed 85mph

Using the new 2-litre engine in wet-sump form, the 15/98 range (15 from the RAC rating, 98 the peak bhp) included saloons and tourers, but they were heavy and hence slow (slow-selling, too: a planned run of 100 cars was slashed to 50). Better was an attractive short-chassis roadster (pictured). There was also a unique 'monoposto' streamlined single-seater designed to go for the 2-litre outer circuit record at Brooklands. The outbreak of war meant it was put into extended storage before its potential could be realised.

DB2 1950-1953



SPECIFICATION
Engine 2580cc, in-line 6
Power 105bhp
Torque n/a
0-60mph 12.4sec
Top speed 116mph

The DB2 was the first officially to wear the initials of Aston's new owner, David Brown. It also featured the marque's first six-cylinder engine - in fact a Lagonda unit designed under WO Bentley and picked up when Brown acquired Lagonda shortly after bagging Aston. This 2.6-litre twin-cam was initially temperamental, but once sorted it endowed the sleek, Frank Feeley-designed DB2 with impressive performance, especially in 125bhp Vantage form from 1951. A total of 411 DB2s were built, including 102 dropheads.

DB MkIII 1957-1959



SPECIFICATION
Engine 2922cc, in-line 6
Power 162bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque n/a
0-60mph 9.3sec
Top speed 120mph

The MkIII (note: not DB3) was effectively the third series of the DB2/4, but Aston dropped the '2/4' bit for its 1957-1959 range of coupés, dropheads and fixed-heads. The lines were smoother and more purposeful, the grille previewing decades of Astons to come, and even in its lowliest tune the LB6 was now making well over 150bhp (up to 190bhp on triple Webbers). The MkIII actually overlapped with the introduction of the DB4 by several months, and total production hit 551. Buying guide, *Vantage* issue 15.

2-litre Sports (DB1) 1948-1950



SPECIFICATION
Engine 1970cc, in-line 4
Power 90bhp
Torque n/a
0-60mph n/a
Top speed 93mph

Retrospectively known as the DB1, the 2-litre Sports was the first production Aston Martin to appear after the Second World War and the first under the ownership of wealthy industrialist David Brown. It was based largely on a pre-war prototype known as the Atom, and it featured refinements such as all-round coil spring suspension as well as a new 2-litre pushrod four-cylinder engine designed by Claude Hill. Lacklustre performance, largely a result of the heavy bodywork, and a high price meant only 14 examples were sold.

DB2/4 1953-1957



SPECIFICATION
Engine 2922cc, in-line 6
Power 140bhp
Torque n/a
0-60mph 10.5sec
Top speed 120mph

The '4' tacked onto the end of the DB2's title denotes the addition of two extra seats. The 2+2 seating was made more habitable by a higher rear roofline, and there was a handy 'hatchback' too. The extra weight slightly took the edge off the performance, so Aston boosted capacity to 2.9 litres in 1954, taking power to 140bhp. The MkII of 1955 incorporated a rear-end restyle, and there was also a rare 'notchback' fixed-head coupé version of the drophead. Around 750 DB2/4s were produced in total. Buying guide, *Vantage* issue 8.

DB4 1958-1963



SPECIFICATION
Engine 3670cc, in-line 6
Power 240bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 240lb ft @ 4250rpm
0-60mph 9.0sec
Top speed 140mph

The definitive Aston shape was born with the DB4, the work of Italian design house Touring, whose 'Superleggera' construction involved aluminium bodywork wrapped around a steel skeleton frame. The DB4 also introduced a new, Tadek Marek-designed all-alloy twin-cam straight-six, originally in 240bhp 3.7-litre form. In all there were five series of DB4s, each adding subtle refinements to the original formula. Vantage versions saw power rise to 266bhp. Total production: 1210. Buying guide, *Vantage* issue 22.

ALL THE ROAD CARS 1960s-1970s

DB4 GT/GT Zagato 1959-1963



SPECIFICATION (Zagato)
Engine 3670cc, in-line 6
Power 314bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 278lb ft @ 5400rpm
0-60mph 6.1sec
Top speed 154mph

In 1959, Aston introduced the DB4 GT, a lighter, short-wheelbase competition version of the DB4 with a twin-plug 302bhp engine. A number of chassis were also sent to Zagato to be clothed in even lighter aluminium bodywork, while further tuning lifted peak power to 314bhp. These Zagatos today command vast sums at auction. Incredible to tell, then, that the original planned run of 25 was reduced to 20 because of lack of take-up. The unused chassis numbers were eventually recycled in the '90s as the 'Sanction' cars.

DB5 1963-1966



SPECIFICATION
Engine 3995cc, in-line 6
Power 282bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 288lb ft @ 3850rpm
0-60mph 8.0sec
Top speed 145mph

Really another evolution of the DB4 (it would have been Series 6), the DB5 is revered in its own right – and famous above all other Astons – wholly because of its role in the James Bond film franchise. New was the 4-litre engine and the option of a five-speed gearbox, which soon became standard. Regular DB5s had 282bhp, the Vantage 314bhp. The Convertible version was succeeded in 1965 by the ultra-rare 'Short Chassis Volante' model, the first use of the Volante name. Total production: 1023. Buying guide, issue 6.

DBS/DBS V8 1967-1972



SPECIFICATION
Engine 3995cc, in-line 6
Power 282bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 288lb ft @ 3850rpm
0-60mph 8.4sec
Top speed 140mph

The DBS ushered in a whole new look for Aston, its modern lines the work of Englishman William Towns. It was also supposed to introduce Tadek Marek's all-new 5.3-litre V8 engine, but that wasn't ready in time, so the DBS was launched with the familiar straight-six from the DB6 (the two models ran concurrently for three years). The 310bhp V8 was finally available from 1969, but the six-cylinder continued until 1972 as the entry-level Aston. Some 787 six-cylinder DBSs were produced, and 402 V8s. DBS buying guide, issue 2.

Lagonda Rapide 1961-1964



SPECIFICATION
Engine 3995cc, in-line 6
Power 236bhp @ 5000rpm
Torque 265lb ft @ 4000rpm
0-60mph 9.0sec
Top speed 130mph

David Brown had bought Lagonda in 1947, shortly after buying Aston Martin. He wanted it chiefly for its Bentley-designed straight-six engine, but production of the pre-DB Lagonda models continued until 1958. The Lagonda name then vanished for several years, but in 1961 it reappeared on a new four-door saloon based on the DB4 but with the 4-litre engine that would soon power the new DB5. The Rapide (an old Lagonda model name) was fast and capable but the front styling was awkward and only 55 were sold in four years.

DB6 1965-1971



SPECIFICATION
Engine 3995cc, in-line 6
Power 282bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 288lb ft @ 3850rpm
0-60mph 8.4sec
Top speed 150mph

A longer wheelbase and extended roofline – ending in a distinctive cut-off 'Kamm' tail – made the DB6 a decent four-seater, while its slightly heavier build, softer ride and the options of an automatic gearbox and air-con showed that the DB line was now firmly in GT territory. The base engine was carried over from the DB5, though the Vantage now produced a claimed 325bhp. Volante came in 1966. The Mk2, which arrived in July 1969, had flared wheelarches over wider wheels. Total production: 1967. Buying guide, issue 9.

AM V8 1972-1990



SPECIFICATION
Engine 5340cc, V8
Power 310bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 360lb ft @ 3500rpm
0-60mph 5.7sec
Top speed 155mph

If the '60s were Aston's golden era, the '70s saw the glow fade with frequent financial crises. David Brown had sold up, so the DBS V8 became the AM V8, while the mechanical fuel injection system was dropped in favour of four Weber carburettors. Early cars had around 310bhp, but emissions regs saw that figure diminish through the decade. Volante arrived in 1978, electronic fuel injection in 1986. In its various guises, the V8 would soldier on for almost 20 years, in which time 4021 were built. Buying guide, *Vantage* issue 13.

ALL THE ROAD CARS 1970s-1990s

Lagonda (Series 1) 1974-1976



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5340cc, V8
Power 280bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 301lb ft @ 3500rpm
0-60mph 6.2sec
Top speed 149mph

Based on the AM V8 but with a stretched wheelbase, the 1974 Lagonda saloon was the first car since the 1961 Rapide to wear the Lagonda badge, and it was not a success. Most of the blame can be attached to the 1974 oil crisis, which seriously limited the appeal of any V8-powered supersaloon, let alone one that would rarely see mpg in double figures. In fact the Lagonda was an impressive and capable machine, but during the two years of production just seven were sold (though another was later assembled from parts).

Lagonda (Series 2-4) 1978-1990



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5340cc, V8
Power 280bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 301lb ft @ 3000rpm
0-60mph 8.8sec
Top speed 143mph

One of the most extraordinary cars ever to reach production, the William Towns-designed Lagonda caused a sensation when it was unveiled in 1976. Its advanced but troublesome electronics delayed production for almost two years, and the price was stratospherically high, but it eventually found a market in the Middle East and stayed in production for more than a decade, during which 645 were sold. Under the bonnet was the familiar V8, its performance somewhat blunted by the two-ton kerbsweight. Buying guide, issue 10.

Virage 1989-1996



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5340cc, V8
Power 330bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 350lb ft @ 3700rpm
0-60mph 6.0sec
Top speed 155mph

By the mid-'80s the AM V8 was living on borrowed time, and, under the direction of Victor Gauntlett, Aston began work on a replacement. The Virage was largely still based on the V8, but its new body (by John Heffernan and Ken Greenley), an updated 32-valve fuel-injected V8 and other refinements were enough to give Aston new impetus. In 1992 came the Volante version, and also a Works-developed 500bhp 6.3 monster with widened bodywork. Sales of all variants reached 1050. Buying guide, issue 24.

V8 Vantage 1977-1989



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5340cc, V8
Power 375bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque n/a
0-60mph 5.3sec
Top speed 170mph

Often described as 'Britain's first supercar', the Vantage of 1977 was based on the AM V8 but was now a model-line in its own right. With a 375bhp version of the 5.3-litre V8 (later 410bhp) and a top speed of 170mph, it was pitched head-to-head with the Ferrari BB and Lamborghini Countach for the title of world's fastest car. With its blanked-off grille and bonnet scoop, deep air dam and bootlid spoiler, it certainly looked the part. When production ended in 1989, 534 had been built, 192 of them Volantes. Buying guide, issue 25.

V8 Zagato 1986-1989



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5340cc, V8
Power 432bhp @ 6250rpm
Torque 400lb ft @ 5000rpm
0-60mph 4.8sec
Top speed 186mph

Resurrecting the partnership with Italian design house Zagato in the mid-'80s was a masterstroke by Aston's then-boss Victor Gauntlett, especially when all 50 coupés were immediately snapped up at £87,000 a pop (37 Volante convertibles were also built). The '80s Zagato couldn't match the beauty of the '60s original, but its performance was sensational. Based on the V8 Vantage but with even more power and considerably lighter, it broke 5sec to 60mph and was verified at 185.8mph, making it the fastest Aston yet.

Vantage (supercharged) 1993-2000



SPECIFICATION (V600)

Engine 5340cc, V8, twin s/c
Power 600bhp @ 6200rpm
Torque 600lb ft @ 4400rpm
0-60mph 4.6sec
Top speed 190mph+

Works' 6.3-litre V8 had shown the appetite for a faster Virage, and in 1993 came the full-house Vantage, extensively restyled (only roof and doors were carried over) with a twin-supercharged version of the 5.3-litre engine providing 550bhp and 550lb ft – at the time the most powerful production engine in the world. In 1998 came the V600, with an additional 50bhp – enough to propel this near-two-ton monster to a reported 200mph. A final run of 40 'Le Mans' editions brought total production to 279. Buying guide, issue 16.



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1964 ASTON MARTIN DB5

Finished in Silver Birch with black, original left hand drive example with factory air conditioning, restored example, recent suspension upgrade (library image)



1979 ASTON MARTIN V8

Oscar India auto, Vantage air dam and Ronal wheels (library image)



1987 ASTON MARTIN V8 VOLANTE EFI

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1988 ASTON MARTIN V8 VANTAGE VOLANTE

Original '580X', one of 30 automatic examples



1989 ASTON MARTIN V8 VANTAGE

Original '580X', BRG with Fawn, original manual, concours example

ALL THE ROAD CARS 1990s-2000s

DB7 1994-1999



SPECIFICATION

Engine 3228cc, in-line 6, s/c
Power 335bhp @ 5750rpm
Torque 361lb ft @ 3000rpm
0-60mph 5.8sec
Top speed 157mph

Aston couldn't survive building handfuls of handbuilt supercars; a more affordable model was needed. Ford, who had bought a majority share in AML in 1987, knew this and in 1994 launched the Ian Callum-styled DB7 - evoking memories of the 1960s DB cars - with a supercharged 3.2-litre straight-six and a steel monocoque that had its origins at Jaguar. A Volante followed in 1996. Sales of all variants (including the Vantage) eventually topped 7000, making it by far the most numerous Aston at that point. Buying guide, issue 3.

DB7 V12 Vantage 1999-2003



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5935cc, V12
Power 420bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 400lb ft @ 5000rpm
0-60mph 4.9sec
Top speed 185mph

The DB7 was given a major fillip in 1999 with the launch of the Vantage model, its styling beefed up by Ian Callum and with the first appearance of a brand-new 5.9-litre V12 engine that would go on to power the next generation of flagship Aston Martins. With reworked suspension too, the Vantage was a significant step on from the six-cylinder DB7 but cost just a few thousand pounds more - it was no surprise that sales of the standard car dried up and it was quickly phased out. The desirable run-out Vantage GT had 435bhp.

DB9 2004-2016



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5935cc, V12
Power 450bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 420lb ft @ 5000rpm
0-60mph 4.6sec
Top speed 190mph

The DB9 was effectively the successor to the highly successful DB7 Vantage, with the latest version of the 5.9-litre V12, a Touchtronic auto option, and the first appearance of the largely aluminium 'VH' platform, all clothed in another gorgeous Ian Callum body, refined by his successor, Henrik Fisker. It was also the first Aston to be built at Gaydon. Volante arrived in 2005, and in 2008 power grew to 470bhp. For 2013 the car was given a major refresh, now with 510bhp. End-of-line GT version had 540bhp. Buying guide, issue 7.

V8 Coupé 1996-1999



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5340cc, V8
Power 349bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 369lb ft @ 3700rpm
0-60mph 5.9sec
Top speed 155mph+

With the Virage running out of steam in the mid-1990s, Aston Martin relaunched the model as the V8 Coupé - basically a Virage with revised bodywork inspired by the new twin-supercharged Vantage model, including its faired-in headlamps and four round tail-lights. Power was slightly up, the acceleration slightly sharper and the top speed was quoted, not terribly helpfully, as 'over 155mph'. An improvement in almost every way over the Virage, sales were, however, glacially slow. Just 101 Coupés and 63 Volantes were sold.

Vanquish/Vanquish S 2001-2007



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5935cc, V12
Power 460bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 400lb ft @ 5000rpm
0-60mph 4.5sec
Top speed 190mph

While DB7s were rolling out of a new factory at Bloxham, back at Newport Pagnell an all-new flagship model was in development. Launched in summer 2001, the Ian Callum-penned Vanquish had a 460bhp version of the V12 engine and a bonded aluminium platform. The automated paddleshift manual gearbox was criticised initially for its slow responses. This was improved, as was the handling, for the 520bhp Vanquish S launched in 2004. A total of 1502 standard cars and 1086 'S's were sold. Buying guide, issue 5.

V8 Vantage (VH2) 2005-2018



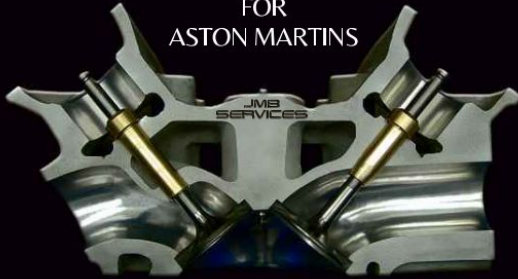
SPECIFICATION (4.3)

Engine 4281cc, V8
Power 380bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque 302lb ft @ 5000rpm
0-60mph 4.8sec
Top speed 175mph

Aston's answer to Porsche's 911 and originally conceived as a mid-engined car. Compact and more overtly sporting than the DB9, the Callum/Fisker-styled V8 Vantage eventually overtook the DB9 to become the biggest seller yet, with more than 22,000 finding homes. Its Jaguar-derived quad-cam V8, originally a 4.3 (4.7 litres and 420bhp from 2008) gave brisk performance and an extrovert soundtrack - best enjoyed in the Roadster, which arrived in 2007. The 'S', with 430bhp, came in 2011. Buying guide, issue 28.



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ALL THE ROAD CARS 2000s-2010s

DBS (VH3) 2007-2012



SPECIFICATION
Engine 5935cc, V12
Power 510bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 420lb ft @ 5750rpm
0-60mph 4.2sec
Top speed 191mph

Resurrecting a name from the late '60s, the DB9-derived DBS replaced the early-noughties Vanquish as the flagship production car in 2007 and gained extra cachet when it was adopted as 007's company car when Daniel Craig debuted as Bond in *Casino Royale*. With power ramped up to 510bhp, aggressive styling and hard-edged dynamics, the DBS was Mr Hyde to the DB9's Dr Jekyll. Early cars were manual only, and a Volante appeared in 2009. In all, 2534 coupés were built, and 845 Volantes. Buying guide, issue 18.

Rapide/Rapide S 2009-2020



SPECIFICATION
Engine 5935cc, V12
Power 470bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 443lb ft @ 5000rpm
0-60mph 5.0sec
Top speed 184mph

With Porsche enjoying success with its Panamera saloon and new markets opening up for luxury cars, it was only a matter of time before Aston spun a four-seater saloon from its VH platform. The Rapide went into production in late 2009, initially at Magna Steyr in Austria. Despite (or perhaps because of) its sports car-like dynamics, sales weren't as strong as Aston hoped, and production moved to Gaydon in late 2012. Relaunched as the Rapide S for 2013 with a deeper new front grille and 550bhp. Buying guide, issue 17.

Cygnets 2010-2013



SPECIFICATION
Engine 1330cc, in-line 4-cyl
Power 97bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 92lb ft @ 4400rpm
0-60mph 11.6sec
Top speed 106mph

Based on the Toyota iQ, the Cygnets was designed to deliver Aston levels of style and opulence in a city car. Extensively rebodied to incorporate familiar Aston design cues and retrimmed in sumptuous leather, but mechanically unchanged, it wasn't without appeal as a city runabout but on the open road it was no performance car. At £30,995, it was also breathtakingly expensive. Ulrich Bez, whose baby it was, hoped it would sell by the thousand, but with just 670 sold it was quietly dropped in 2013. Buying guide, issue 23.

V12 Vantage 2009-2018



SPECIFICATION
Engine 5935cc, V12
Power 510bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 420lb ft @ 5750rpm
0-60mph 4.1sec
Top speed 190mph

Shoehorning the 5.9-litre V12 into the compact Vantage shell created one of Aston Martin's finest drivers' cars. Distinguished by its bonnet vents, the V12V built on the V8's agility and added another level of performance and desirability. Roadster arrived in 2012 (just 101 built) and the 565bhp 'S' in 2013 – with a top speed of 205mph, it was the fastest series-production Aston so far. The total production number for all variants is just over 3000, including the Zagato version, just 63 of which were built. Buying guide, issue 11.

One-77 2010-2012



SPECIFICATION
Engine 7312cc, V12
Power 750bhp @ 7600rpm
Torque 553lb ft @ 6000rpm
0-60mph 3.6sec
Top speed 220mph+

Aston's answer to the Bugatti Veyron and Pagani Zonda hypercars was the One-77, a no-expense-spared, handbuilt, all-carbonfibre rocketship with the world's most powerful naturally aspirated engine (some have recorded an astonishing 772bhp) and an equally gobsmacking £1.15m price-tag. Strictly limited to 77 examples, the last was delivered in August 2012, though Aston retains one for PR work. The few who have been lucky enough to experience the One-77 describe it as challenging, rewarding and utterly thrilling.

Virage (VH1) 2011-2012



SPECIFICATION
Engine 5935cc, V12
Power 490bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 420lb ft @ 5750rpm
0-60mph 4.5sec
Top speed 186mph

Bringing back a name from the 1990s, the 2011 Virage slotted into the range between the DB9 and the DBS – and even avid Aston fans wondered if it wasn't a variant too far. The idea was to sell a more aggressive car than the DB9 (but one that wasn't as extreme as the DBS). All the panels except the roof were subtly restyled, while the V12 gained an extra 20bhp, though the overall feel was still very much GT. Sales were slow and the Virage name was soon dropped, the car effectively becoming the updated DB9 for 2013.

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ALL THE ROAD CARS 2010-present

Vanquish (VH3) 2012-2018



SPECIFICATION (2015MY)
Engine 5935cc, V12
Power 565bhp @ 6650rpm
Torque 465lb ft @ 5500rpm
0-60mph 3.6sec
Top speed 201mph

The original Vanquish was a landmark car, and it was a brave move to resurrect the name for a new series-production flagship. If the new car wasn't quite the same game-changer, the combination of aggressively shaped carbonfibre bodywork, a 565bhp V12, adaptive damping and carbon brakes was still an intoxicating one. A Volante arrived in late 2013, and in late 2014 both versions got a refresh that included an eight-speed gearbox. Upgraded Vanquish S with 592bhp (and similarly potent Zagato derivatives) launched late 2016.

DB11 2016-present



SPECIFICATION
Engine 5204cc, biturbo V12
Power 600bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 516lb ft @ 1500rpm
0-60mph 3.7sec
Top speed 200mph

The first all-new production car of the Andy Palmer era, the DB11 was the most important new Aston since the DB9 – the car it replaced – more than a decade earlier. With a new platform, all-new, twin-turbo 5.2-litre V12, a raft of new electronic systems courtesy of technology partner Daimler, and innovative aerodynamic features, it was the standard-bearer for Aston's so-called Second Century Plan. V8 version was launched late 2017, with the Volante and a new, AMR-branded V12 flagship following in 2018.

DBS Superleggera 2018-present



SPECIFICATION
Engine 5204cc, biturbo V12
Power 715bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 664lb ft @ 1800rpm
0-60mph 3.5sec
Top speed 211mph

The fastest and most powerful series-production Aston yet, the DB11-based DBS Superleggera turns the wick on the twin-turbo V12 right up to 715bhp and adds a beefed-up eight-speed gearbox, carbon-ceramic brakes and a heap more visual drama. More 'super' than 'leggera' at c1700kg, it nevertheless grips and handles like a proper sports-GT and is mind-bendingly rapid in a straight line. Replaced the Vanquish S as the production flagship and is one of the finest super-GTs currently on sale. Volante launched 2019.

Lagonda Taraf 2015-2017



SPECIFICATION
Engine 5935cc, V12
Power 540bhp @ 6650rpm
Torque 465lb ft @ 5500rpm
0-60mph 4.4sec
Top speed 195mph

The Lagonda name hadn't been seen since production of the controversial wedge-shaped saloon ended in 1990, but in 2015 it was back, on a brand new luxury saloon – and one that made more than a few visual nods to its famous forebear. Based on the Rapide S but with a longer wheelbase to make it a full four-seater, the Taraf combined sumptuous accommodation with almost supercar levels of performance, but at a price – with the addition of a few bespoke options, buyers saw little change from £800k.

Vantage (AM6) 2018-present



SPECIFICATION
Engine 3982cc, biturbo V8
Power 503bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 505lb ft @ 2000rpm
0-60mph 3.6sec
Top speed 195mph

Replacing the best-selling Aston of all time was a tough gig, but the all-new Vantage has the hardware and the firepower to make the previous model feel almost tame. With a twin-turbocharged 4-litre 503bhp V8 supplied by Mercedes-AMG and a lightning-quick paddleshift gearbox (now joined by a trad manual), the new car is rabidly quick and super-alert in its responses. This is an out-and-out sports car, and though the looks haven't met with universal acclaim, as a drivers' car it's among the very best. Roadster launched 2020.

DBX 2020-present



SPECIFICATION
Engine 3982cc, biturbo V8
Power 542bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 516lb ft @ 2200rpm
0-60mph 4.3sec
Top speed 181mph

Ten years ago, an Aston Martin-badged SUV would have been almost unthinkable, but so far has the prestige car market moved that AML's future prosperity now depends squarely on the success of this car. The first model to be built at Aston's brand new plant at St Athan in South Wales, the DBX is powered by a tweaked version of the biturbo V8 shared with the Vantage, has a sophisticated four-wheel-drive transmission, and carries up to five in considerable comfort. The best news, though, is that it still drives like an Aston.



It wouldn't have been possible without...

We couldn't close this issue without saying thank you to everyone who has supported and contributed to *Vantage* over the last nine years and 35 issues. So, with apologies for any omissions, our thanks go to:

Sir Gerry Acher, Chris Adams, Dave Adams, Tom Alexander, Tim Andrew, James Arbuckle, Stephen Archer, Keith Artus, Rowan Atkinson, Marc Aylott, Michael Baillie, Tony Baker, John Barker, Ben Barry, David Barzilay, Mike Beake, Matt Becker, Steven Behrens, Andy Bell, Roger Bennington, Ulrich Bez, Chris Bietzk, Robert and Ali Blakemore, André Bloom, Jethro Bovingdon, Dave Brassington, Mark Brayson, Martin Brewer, Adam Brown, David Burgess-Wise, Simon de Burton, Tim Butcher, Ian Callum, Henry Catchpole, Paul Chase-Gardener, Paul Chudecki, Eric Clark, Chris Clougher, John Colley, Robert Cook, Tim Cottingham, Bruce Cox, Bob Creese, Gavin Culshaw, Alan Curtis, Clive Dickinson, Johan Dillen, Nick Dimpleby, Mark Dixon, Mark Donoghue, Jim Douglas, Bob Dover, Simon Draper, Peter Dron, Martyn Drye, Rodger

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1966 Aston Martin DB5

Finished in Deep Navy blue with fresh black hide interior. Just out from a £20,000 cosmetic upgrade with much of the interior trim having been replaced. This has included new Wilton carpet throughout, a repainted dash fascia with all new leather to the top of the dash and dash roll. It has also been treated to a complete new headlining and a new rear parcel shelf. New Chrome wire wheels are fitted with Avon Turbospeed radial tyres. Combined with the Harvey Bailey handling kit and a degree of negative camber, the road holding is now superb. Owned by the current owner for nearly 30 years and during his ownership, maintenance of the car has been entrusted to Davron Engineering. It has not been a cosseted garage queen but has been regularly used and impeccably maintained throughout. The five speed ZF manual transmission has a smooth operation and is working perfectly. This particular DB5 is a joy to drive largely due to its superb road holding and with the recent cosmetic improvements is certainly not overpriced and well worth viewing at **£595,000**



1997 Aston Martin Virage (Wide Bodied) Volante

Finished in Oxford Blue with Cream hide interior piped in blue with best quality Wilton carpet throughout, complimented with high gloss Walnut veneered dash and door cappings and a mileage of only 22,000 miles from new. It is fitted with freshly refurbished OZ wide alloy wheels and is fitted with a dark blue mohair electric soft top. The car has a comprehensive service history and all of the service stamps are from officially appointed Aston Martin agents. Until recently it has remained unused since 2017 and was in need of recommissioning, all of which was undertaken by R.S. Williams in January this year and amounted to just over £21,000. Within the history file are detailed invoices that correspond with the service stamps. Only 233 Virage Volante's were ever produced but this car is much rarer with the 6.3 cosmetic upgrade carried out when new by "Works Service". This is a great opportunity to acquire a low mileage, low ownership rare motor car with excellent provenance at what we consider is below market price. Not to be missed at **£89,950**



1966 Aston Martin DB6 Vantage

Finished in Deep Ocean blue with Oatmeal hide interior and has been the subject of a Body-off restoration by David Baker who was the last owner. From the detailed history file it appears that he embarked on a protracted but very detailed rebuild of the car, largely by Panelrama in Northamptonshire for body and chassis works with innumerable parts being supplied by Jonathan Wardle and a complete engine rebuild by Ray Buckley who was a well-respected Aston engine builder at the time. The extent to which this car was restored can be seen in the pictures on our website. David Baker kept the car until 2010 when it was purchased by its present owner who due to work commitments is based largely overseas. Hence during his ownership the car has covered less than 4,000 miles and remains in superb condition throughout. Prior to his purchase he had the car fully appraised by Bill Goodall of Newlands Motors who is a fully qualified engineer with years of Aston Experience. His excellent report also forms part of the history file. If you have been searching for a DB6 Vantage that is ready to be enjoyed, please come and view this car **£359,950**



1971 Aston Martin DBS V8

Is in truly outstanding condition having been the subject of continuous maintenance and improvement by the four previous owners. Finished in Signal Red with contrasting Cream hide interior with bespoke Walnut dash and door cappings. This is undoubtedly one of the best of this model we have had the pleasure of offering in recent months. We have owned this car on 3 previous occasions in the past and all 3 purchasers have been diligent in attending to the maintenance of the car and meticulous records have been kept. Earlier corrosion problems associated with this model of Aston Martin have all been professionally eradicated and during the period that we have been associated with this fine example, further works have included a back to metal repaint and a complete re-trim of the interior. The car is superb to drive, mechanically outstanding and cosmetically beautiful and is likely to be purchased by the first person to respond to this advertisement. The very comprehensive history file that accompanies is further testament to the exemplary manner in which this car has been looked after. Please feel free to ask any specific questions you may have. We anticipate that this Aston should prove to be a sound investment at **£145,000**

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