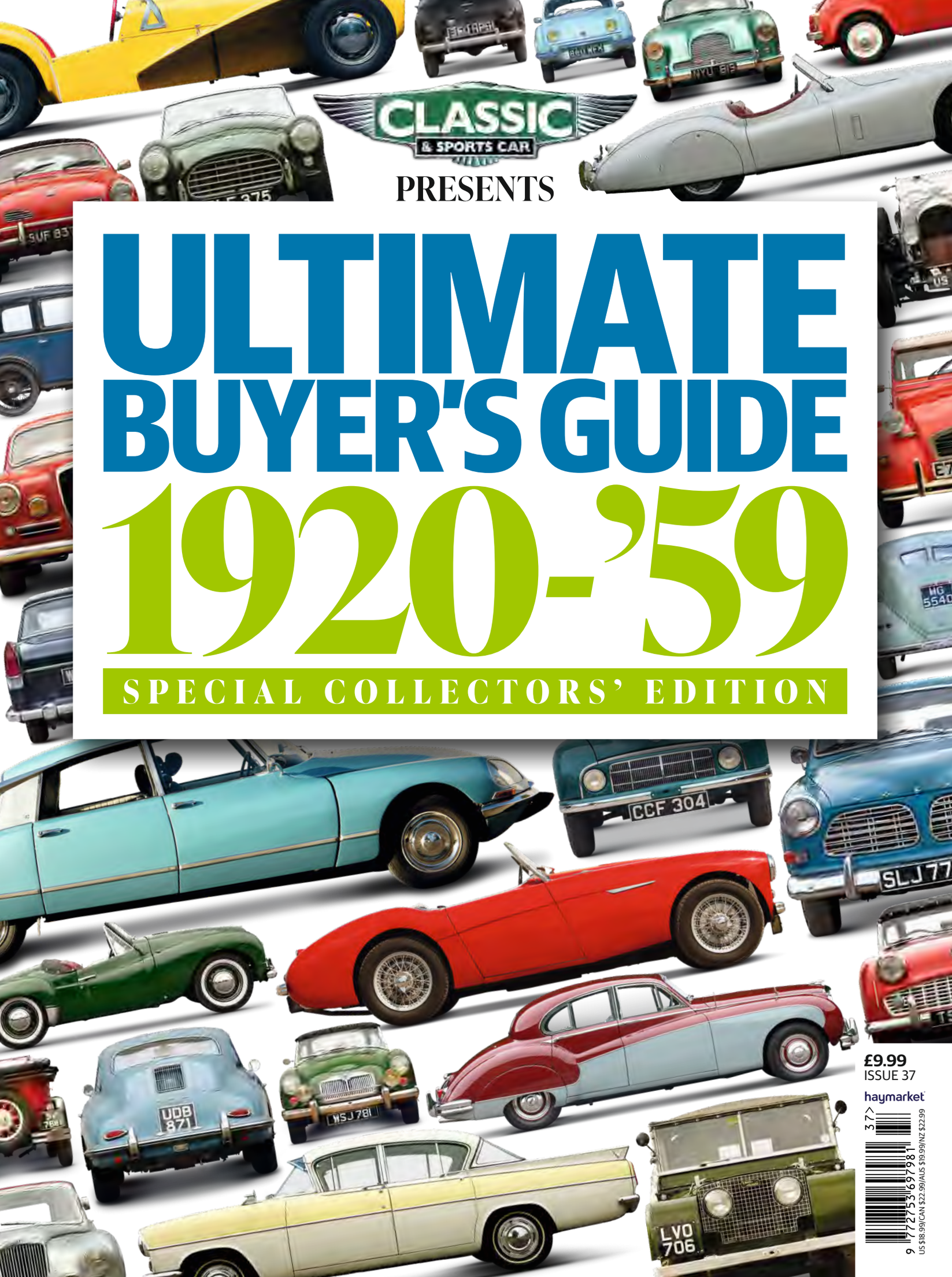

PRESENTS

ULTIMATE BUYER'S GUIDE

1920-'59

SPECIAL COLLECTORS' EDITION

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Discover more about James and Bec's *build story.*



Welcome

The market for cars built before the 1960s has taken a beating in recent years. That's not exactly brilliant news if, like me, you own a car from this golden era of automotive production, but on the other hand, if you are in the market for a new addition to your classic fleet, there's never been a better time to invest, because surely they can't remain this affordable for ever.

This was the period when our cars developed from little more than carriages that had swapped their horses for internal-combustion engines into the shapes we recognise today, with exponential growth in terms of performance, comfort and convenience. And there is no greater illustration of that evolution than turning from our guide to the Ford Model A (p68) to that for the Citroën DS (p52) – a reflection of the past juxtaposed against a glimpse of the future.

For this, the final edition in our four-part *Ultimate Buyer's Guide* series, in-house expert Malcolm McKay has gone back through the monthly advice he delivers to *Classic & Sports Car* readers and updated our curated selection with the latest prices and extra information, in his ongoing mission to ensure that your classic car dream doesn't turn into a nightmare. If you missed the earlier issues, focusing on cars of the 1960s, the 1970s & '80s, and modern classics from 1990 and beyond, you can find them at **magsdirect.co.uk/classic-sports-car-presents**

ALASTAIR CLEMENTS
Editor in chief, *Classic & Sports Car*



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ISSUE 37

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AC ACE & ACECA

Light, lively and stunning-looking, these desirable siblings are soaring in value

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



The Ace began life as one of those sports-racing 'Specials' that Britain was so good at building in the 1950s. John Tojeiro designed the light, tubular chassis while Lionel Leonard styled the body, first seen on the Cooper-MG he built for Cliff Davis in '51 and later on Davis' Tojeiro chassis. Davis and fellow Tojeiro owner Vin Davison showed the latter's car to AC in mid-'53: the company desperately needed a new model, and this ultra-light roadster was the perfect complement to its ageing 'six'.

AC quickly struck a deal with Tojeiro and Alan Turner refined the styling to the definitive Ace. Intriguingly, Leonard offered his bodies in glassfibre in July 1954, but the ads soon disappeared; did AC have a quiet word?

Designed by John Weller in 1919, AC's super-smooth all-alloy, overhead-cam 'six' was made for 43 years and kept the firm alive, through two changes of ownership and into the 1960s, by which time it was more acceptable for a low-volume car to use a tuned proprietary unit. For ultimate performance, it was joined by the pricey Bristol 'six', then a cheaper Ford option.

The Ace spawned the fastback-bodied Aceca, one of the first hatchbacks, *à la* Aston DB2/4; it was superbly built and much more expensive than the Ace, a contrast to values now. A full-width moulded glassfibre bulkhead – very new technology then – provided insulation and the differential was rubber-mounted.

With prices rocketing, it's easy to get carried away, but originality and drivability are key. Our featured car is a good example. Purists will look askance at its cutaway body behind the driver's seat, bonnet louvres, 15in wheels, later front bumpers and steering wheel, rearranged instruments, column indicator switch and lofty hood. But it sold very well because it looks 'right', it drives magnificently and many of the changes could have been made in period.

Look out for body distortion and damage, notably around the overrider tubes, and for cracks behind the doors from weak outriggers. Watch for ripples in the wings and check for rot in all chassis outriggers; around the pedalbox; in the lower body and sill tubes (look in the boot); and in the horizontal tube above the diff, including damper mounts. On Acecas, inspect the doors and tailgate for wood rot and weak hinge mounts, and failed window winders.



Check for smooth changes and silent operation; there is no synchromesh on first with any of the gearboxes. Overdrive is a highly desirable extra



Independent rear suspension was rare on British cars in the '50s: worn bushes give rear-end steering. ENV diffs can usually be rebuilt without problems





John Tojeiro's shape for the pretty Ace was a clear tribute to Giovanni Michelotti's original Ferrari 166MM *barchetta* body





All-independent suspension gave the Ace, in the view of road testers, markedly superior handling to the lower-priced competition. Just as well because, on paper alone, the TR2 and Healey were as quick as the AC-engined version. The Aceca was much heavier, but its superior aerodynamics showed in maximum-speed tests



Engines are superb when properly set up and maintained, but can be expensive to sort if neglected: £10-15k to rebuild an AC, £15-20k for a Bristol, so inspect carefully. Poor starting/running and smoky motors are likely worn; good ones have 55-60psi oil pressure at 3000rpm (more on an AC, as here), 25-30psi at tickover when warm



Al-fin drum brakes work well if sorted, but they can snatch when cold and pull when wet. Front discs were optional from '57, though they are not essential



Michelin Xs on 16in rims were original spec and still available. Some cars are on 15in wires (as here), but they lower gearing and don't fill the arches as well



Suspension should be greased every 500-1000 miles front and rear, without fail, or it will wear rapidly. Sloppy handling means it needs an overhaul



High-quality leather (plus walnut and Wilton on Acecas) was a noted feature, with lots of adjustment, but Ace seats are quite upright; a new hood is c£500

"It's more of a delicate instrument than the Cobra – it's so responsive and on open, sweeping roads in nice weather it feels perfect"



All-independent suspension set-up gives Aces and Acecas remarkable handling poise

Before you buy

Check that what you are buying is what it claims to be. An 'AE' chassis number means an AC engine, 'AEX' being left-hand drive. Early AC 'sixes' are 85bhp UMB/UMC with white-metal bearings; shells came with the 90bhp CL-series (from AEX59); 102bhp with the CLB in 1958. 'BE' or 'BEX' means a Bristol unit: 105bhp with the Aceca-only 100B; 125bhp with the 100D and 128bhp with the 100D2. 'RS' means a Ford 'six', ranging from stock 85bhp to 170bhp with an alloy head and triple Webers. These cars had a stiffer front spring and dampers to cope with the heavier, cast-iron unit.

Non-standard engines – even Cobra-spec V8s – devalue Aces, but converting an Aceca into an Ace can increase its value; Aceca chassis numbers were AE/BE 499-822. There are a few cloned cars: check with the AC Owners' Club to be sure before buying. Look for a chassis number on the right-hand engine mount, one of the boot/bonnet hinge mounts, and the door-hinge mounts (behind the leather), as well as on the chassis plate itself.

Both AC and Ford engines are flexible, with lots of low-down torque; the Bristol unit is much livelier, needing to be rowed along to give its best. The Bristol's peak torque is developed at 4500rpm; even the standard Zephyr 'six' had more at 2000rpm and it must have been significantly higher on tuned models, but figures were never quoted.

Sloppy steering results from a tired steering box, but is also caused by wear in the six track-rod ends and central fulcrum bush: all need to be in perfect order. Rack and pinion has been retro-fitted on some cars, but is ineligible for certain competition events. A good Ace or Aceca has sublime handling.

OWNING ONE



David Hescroff has owned numerous ACs: "I bought my Ace Bristol in 1988 from Dick Bostock, who had acquired it from Betty Haig; she'd bought it from Ken Rudd and competed in it for four years. I'm not mechanical – I get my pleasures from driving my cars. We have done the Mille Miglia retrospective, the Coppa d'Italia, plus the Ollon-Villars and Loton Park hillclimbs, and my nephew races it now.

"It's more of a delicate instrument than the Cobra; it's so responsive it's delightful. On open, sweeping roads in nice weather, it feels perfect. I had overdrive fitted 15 years ago, but otherwise it has only ever been serviced; it has never been restored. The AC engine has low-down power and is lovely for touring, whereas the Bristol thrives on revs – and sounds terrific."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1953 Ace launched at Earls Court show
1954 Manufacture of Ace begins; prototype Aceca built
1955 Power up to 90bhp; Aceca enters production
1956 Rubber-bushed wishbones; Bristol engine option introduced with 125bhp; first Aceca Bristol constructed
1957 Short boot instead of long type
1959 Moss transmission replaced by TR gears in an AC casing
1960 Last production AC-engined Ace built
1961 First Ruddspeed 2.6 (Zephyr engine) built, 120-170bhp options, smaller grille
1962 Final Aceca 2.6 produced (eight built)
1963 Last (special order) Ace AC (223 built), Aceca Bristol (174), Aceca AC (152) and Ace 2.6 (37)
1964 Final two Ace Bristols (464 built)

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1954-'64/1058
Construction tubular steel two-rail chassis, aluminium body over thin steel-tube frame
Engine all-alloy, sohc 1991cc 'six', triple 1¼in SUs, ohv 1971cc 'six', triple Solexes, or iron-block, iron/alloy-head ohv 2553cc 'six', triple 1½in or 1¾in SUs, or triple Webers
Max power 85bhp @ 4500rpm to 170bhp @ 5800rpm **Max torque** 105lb ft @ 2750rpm to 133lb ft @ 2000rpm
Transmission four-speed manual with optional overdrive, RWD
Suspension independent, by transverse leaf spring, lower wishbones, telescopic dampers f/r
Steering Bishop Cam
Brakes Al-fin drums; optional front discs
Length 12ft 8in (3860mm)
Width 4ft 11in (1500mm)
Height 4ft 1in (1245mm)
Wheelbase 7ft 6in (2285mm)
Weight 1736-1960lb (789-891kg)
0-60mph 13.4-7.4 secs
Top speed 103-129mph **Mpg** 15-30
Price new £1651-2378 (1956)

CLUB

AC Owners' Club acownersclub.co.uk

SPECIALISTS

AC Heritage acheritage.com
Classic Autos classiccarworks.co.uk
Jonathan Bradburn Historic Cars jbradburn.co.uk
SLJ Hackett sljhackett.co.uk
AC6 ac-6.co.uk **Redline Engineering** redlineclassiccars.co.uk
Blakeney Motorsport blakeneymotorsport.com

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
Ace (AC)	£100,000/175k/275k
Ace Bristol, 2.6	£120,000/200k/300k
Aceca	£30,000/80,000/120k

OUR VERDICT

Aces are now recognised for the wonderful sports cars they are, and are valued accordingly, but don't pay full whack for a non-original example or one with a worn engine, because they will be expensive to rectify. Acecas look like very good value in comparison, but again check the car's provenance and talk to AC Owners' Club registrars before buying; then enjoy a great sporting drive.

FOR
Best-handling sports car of its day; solid investment potential; weaknesses are now well known; excellent club support

AGAINST
Engines are costly to rebuild; heavier Aceca is more complex to restore, but beautifully built; there are much cheaper '50s roadsters



ALTERNATIVES



LANCIA AURELIA B20 GT/B24 SPIDER
1953-'58, 3329 built
As exclusive as ACs and beautifully built, these Lancias are complex to restore but benefit from wider parts sharing and thus lower prices in some areas. De Dion rear set-up gives similar sophistication. **Price now** £30-750,000



JAGUAR XK120-150
1948-'61, 30,364 built
XKs were cheaper new than the Ace/Aceca and remain so, despite superior pace; but the ACs win on ultimate handling over the heavier XK. Popularity makes for cheaper parts and better availability. **Price now** £14-200,000

ALVIS TD21-TF21

The last, elegant flourish of a great British marque makes a splendid gentleman's express

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



The TD-TF range is a throwback to a gentler, more civilised era. That doesn't mean they are slow or uncomfortable – quite the opposite. But the way they were created, with a separate chassis, coachbuilt wood, steel and aluminium bodyshell and luxurious cabin full of Connolly hide and burr walnut, was no longer viable in an age of mass-production steel monocoques. These cars were built by Park Ward, alongside special Rolls-Royces and Bentleys: no wonder their finish was outstanding. But even those great names were embracing new methods to survive whereas Alvis – finding itself acquired by Rover in 1965, with a 15-year-old chassis and a body that was 10 – had nowhere to go. An all-new car was too costly to develop and, if its saloons were to be volume-built, they would compete too closely with Rover.

After Alvis became part of British Leyland in 1968, the firm decided, unusually, to transfer all car production records and parts stock to a private company, Red Triangle. It remains a key source of components and expertise. Thanks to this forethought and owners' continued respect for the exceptional durability of Alvis cars, the TD-TF range has an amazing survival rate. Of 1565 built (including the TC 108/G), more than 60% are known to survive – including an amazing 90% of the run-out TF.

Prices are gently rising and good convertibles have been fetching big money for several years, in recognition of their quality and usability. The well-made, fully lined hood should be checked carefully, because it is costly to rebuild to original spec. And cost of restoration is the main issue when buying, as with any car made laboriously by hand: it can be rebuilt the same way, though the process is inevitably expensive.

Inspect for corrosion in the front wings around the headlights; the front and rear wheelarches; chassis around front suspension mountings; side and rear outriggers; scuttle and wooden A-posts; sills and floors; rear wings where the saloon roof joins; rear crossmember and around the silencer; and the boot floor.

The long, heavy doors tended to droop on TDs – many have been panelled in aluminium instead of steel to alleviate this problem. Cars from the Series II on have all-aluminium doors, plus later models also have stronger engines, better brakes and increased rear headroom.



Quality burr walnut with its paper-thin panel gaps looks fabulous, but there is plenty to restore if you buy one with poor woodwork, so haggle on the price



Borg-Warner automatics bring relaxed cruising; change-up point can be varied. Five-speed ZF manual is more popular now and long-lived, but parts are pricey





While many prefer the looks of early models, closest to the original Graber design, later cars are the best developed





As well built as a Rolls-Royce or Bentley, thanks to the skilled craftsmen at Park Ward, an Alvis tends to have an interesting effect on observers: they admire its gracious lines and respect its excellence and exclusivity, but without the envy or sarcasm that the products of a more ostentatious marque can often induce



Simple and durable, the Alvis straight-six responds well to regular maintenance and is capable of high mileages. The much-improved 1959 head has individual ports, not siamesed, so is not a simple swap. The earlier engine has a poorer water pump and oil filter. Thrashing down motorways has a detrimental effect on overall engine life



Connolly leather seats can easily be restored to perfection by specialists if needed, yet there is a lot of hide to pay for if the interior is badly worn



Driven off the back of the dynamo, the ZF power assistance transformed the car; without it, the steering is heavy and slow. A rebuild is costly, though



Regular greasing keeps the front set-up supple; neglect brings on rapid wear, so check for servicing signs. Early TDs had overworked drums; discs are far better



All of the brightwork is available but at a price, especially where the parts are exclusive to Alvis or, in cases such as the rear lights, to a few other exotics



To the manor born: Alvis with picturesque backdrop of Lower Slaughter, Glos

Before you buy

A good Alvis is a magnificent touring car, relaxed at speed with a near-silent engine, but don't expect sports-car handling. Spirited driving can unsettle it and considerable understeer will soon put you off. Treat it with respect, though, and the car should feel comfortable and handle predictably, with no untoward clonks or waywardness – which may result from worn suspension bushes.

Performance from the engine isn't sparkling – though a manual TF should be lively – but it should be super-smooth and quiet. Driven with decorum, they go on for ever, but hard driving brings down engine life and may precipitate valve-seat recession, too.

The first TD21s had Austin-Healey manual gearboxes that were unrefined and proved unpopular, though it was improved when overdrive was specified. The ZF all-synchromesh five-speed was a huge advance, giving a much more modern feel. ZF 'boxes were well made and durable, but are commensurately costly to overhaul. Borg-Warner autos aren't too expensive to rebuild.

The drum brakes that were fitted to the first examples were barely adequate, and the front-disc arrangement on later TDs was not popular. So Alvis fitted an excellent all-disc set-up from 1962 that shares its calipers with contemporary Jaguars, among others.

Alvis generally over-engineered its cars, but they were built to expect frequent maintenance, especially the greasing of the suspension and so on, now often neglected: when buying, ask about the car's maintenance schedule. Worn suspension and other parts are all replaceable, but can seriously detract from the pleasure of driving a car and its reliability until all have been changed.

OWNING ONE



"I was looking for a Daimler originally," recalls former Daimler apprentice **Roger Pulham**, "but then I tried an Alvis and liked it. I bought a TE and started rebuilding it, then this car came up in 1990. It had been stored for many years and I think the 28,000 miles it shows may be genuine. The body was poor, with holes where the roof joins the rear wings, so it had a bare-metal respray at Hightone Restorations. I'm competitive and started doing concours as well as organising club runs.

"I really enjoy using the car as much as possible – except for the fuel consumption, which is about 15mpg on average – and I could drive it all day long. I had the brakes uprated by Coopercraft, using the upgrade it designed for Jaguars. The biggest distance we've covered in a day was about 390 miles, to a show and back."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1955 TC 108/G with Graber-designed body shown at Paris and Earls Court, with Willowbrook to build cars for the UK, Graber for Europe
1958 TD21 launched: body by Park Ward
1959 Revised cylinder head and carbs; front disc brakes added
1960 Larger sidelights, overdrive optional
1962 TD21 Series II with disc brakes all round, built-in foglamps; five-speed ZF gearbox added
1963 TE21 with stacked twin headlights
1965 Alvis bought by Rover (then independent)
1966 TF21 (Series IV) with triple carbs
1967 Last TF built; Alvis car division closed

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1955-'67/1565 (including TC/108G)
Construction steel chassis, steel/aluminium body on wooden frame
Engine all-iron, ohv 2993cc 'six', twin/triple SU carburettors
Max power 104bhp @ 4000rpm to 150bhp @ 4750rpm
Max torque 152lb ft @ 2500rpm to 185lb ft @ 3750rpm
Transmission four/five-speed manual or three-speed automatic, RWD; optional overdrive on four-speed
Suspension: front independent, by double wishbones, coil springs, anti-roll bar **rear** live axle, semi-elliptic leaf springs; telescopic dampers f/r
Steering Burman-Douglas recirculating ball; ZF power assistance optional from '64
Brakes Lockheed drums on TD, optional front discs with servo; Dunlop discs f/r from Series II
Length 15ft 8½in (4790mm)
Width 5ft 6in (1675mm)
Height 4ft 11in-5ft (1500-1525mm)
Wheelbase 9ft 3½in (2830mm)
Weight 3248lb (1476kg)
0-60mph 16.6-10.5 secs
Top speed 102-115mph **Mpg** 14-20
Price new £2827 (TD, 1959)

CLUB

Alvis Owner Club alvisoc.org

SPECIALISTS

Red Triangle redtriangle.co.uk **Earley Engineering** earleyengineering.co.uk
Chris Prince chrisprince.co.uk
Fisher Restoration fisherrestoration.co.uk
MCI 01254 260999 **Tim Walker Restorations** timwalkerrestorations.co.uk

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
TD21 saloon	£5000/15,000/25,000
TD21 dhc	£n/a/27,500/60,000
TE/TF21 saloon	£7500/20,000/35,000
TE/TF21 dhc	£n/a/35,000/100,000

OUR VERDICT

If you are looking for a quiet, distinctive, traditional and high-quality carriage that is a pleasure to drive over long journeys, then look no further – but beware of poorly restored examples or rough project cars that could prove hideously costly to put right again. The overall condition of an Alvis is far more important than the model or specification, because they can all be uprated to TF spec or higher.

FOR
Exceptional quality; refined and relaxed in modern traffic; good parts availability; inspires respect and not envy

AGAINST
Construction makes restoration expensive; exclusivity means high cost for some parts; hefty fuel consumption



ALTERNATIVES



BRISTOL 406
1958-'61, 292 built
With its pre-war, BMW-derived 'six' at full 2216cc stretch, the 406 could barely keep up with the TD and was far costlier. An eccentric choice for lovers of exclusivity, and satisfying to drive. **Price now** £4-40,000



MERCEDES 220S/SE COUPÉ/CABRIOLET
1956-'59, 7345 built
UK Purchase Tax put the 220 at Bristol prices, but elsewhere it was closer to the Alvis, with a Teutonic take on quality and comfort. Refined and capable, but rot and rarity are its main challenges. **Price now** £22-150,000

ASTON MARTIN DB2-MkIII

The early David Brown Astons make great drivers' cars, and have rocketed in value over recent years

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



It's easy to forget today that the DB2 was a sophisticated car when it was new in 1950. A true 'grand tourer' before the term came into common usage, it comfortably housed two adults plus copious luggage. Coil springs featured all round, and it was one of the earliest vehicles with two-speed self-parking windscreen wipers and washers as standard from the DB2/4 of 1953 onwards.

Gear and tractor magnate David Brown had responded to an advert in *The Times* in late 1946 for a sports car firm – and bought Aston Martin for £20,000. For that he got a few tools, the Atom prototype and the services of engineer Claude Hill. Having designed the superb chassis for the 1948 Two Litre Sports, and its four-cylinder engine, Hill then left when Brown purchased Lagonda for its smooth straight-six.

Frank Feeley devised the DB2 for Le Mans, based on Hill's chassis. Primarily a racer, it would be progressively lightened with a drilled chassis and thinner alloy shell for competition; that body, too, evolved to house the classic DB grille and higher lamps in a smoother nose.

The Autocar wrote in 1953: 'The Aston Martin is an expensive car designed to cater for the connoisseur of sports cars who is not limited by financial considerations... [It is] a car that any enthusiastic and experienced driver will be pleased to drive regardless of distance.'

DB2 bodies were made in-house, DB2/4 Mk1s by Mulliner, and later models by Tickford. The Mulliner cars have cast-aluminium sills, scuttles and door-shut faces, while the rest are steel – and they rust. Check the bonnet frame, especially by the chassis; front suspension alloy turrets (which also crack); lower wing supports on MkII and MkIII; front bulkhead; chassis cruciform under the gearbox and main rails; door bottoms and window regulators; sill panels and door-shut posts (except Mk1s); rear suspension mounting brackets and trailing links; rear wheelarches; and petrol tank.

Designed at Lagonda by Willie Watson for WO Bentley, the twin-cam 'six' was advanced but complex, with a cast-iron, wet-liner block fitted with three cast-alloy 'cheeses' bolted in to hold the crankshaft bearings. It is fragile and costly to sort if worn or neglected, so look for proof of unstinting care from a leading firm. Happily, high values mean that specialists have been able to invest in manufacture of original-type and uprated components in many areas.



The interior was all handmade, which means that it can be restored as original by trimmers if required, but buying one that has already been done is cheaper

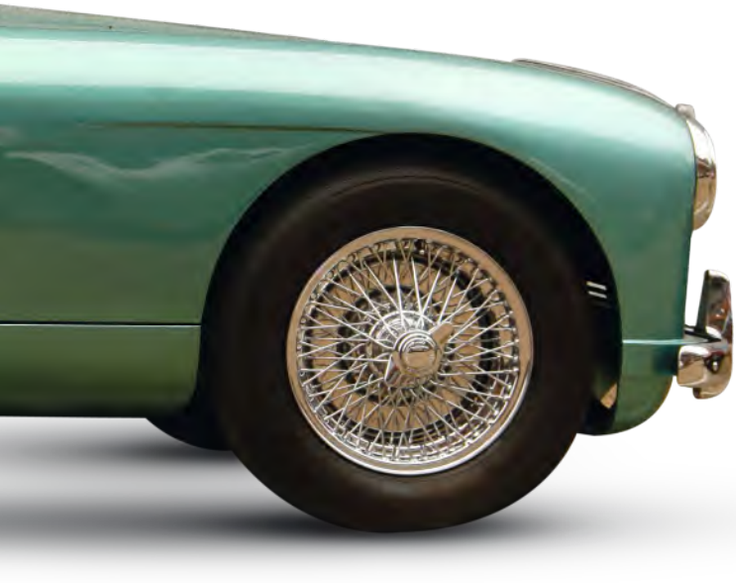


The three-synchro David Brown 'box was good for its day, and can be rebuilt. Some cars had a column change; o/d or five-speed conversions are available





Distinctive grille design made its debut on the DB2 and was progressively softened towards the now-familiar DB outline





Smiths instruments in dash centre on DB2 and 2/4; binnacle that aped grille shape came in with MkIII. Drive one today and you are going back to the early '50s – and must allow for that – but it should not feel harsh, uncomfortable, unpredictable or unduly heavy. If it does, then work is needed and the vendor should adjust the price



The DB MkIII engine is stronger but all are rapidly wrecked by lack of maintenance or inexperienced care. Examine the history, check oil pressure, look for indications of head-gasket leaks (emulsion in the oil filler cap; oil in the water; weeping/staining on the block), cracks in the block (rust staining) and unwanted noises from within



Condition of the cooling system is vital: corrosion can damage heads, crack inlet manifolds and clog rads. Look for swift warm-up, cool running and no leaks



DB2/4s had 6.00 H16 crossply tyres on 60-spoke wires. Radials make it heavy to manoeuvre; some rub the arches and hasten steering wear – new gears help



Trailing-arm suspension needs regular lubrication to avoid seizure (front axle should be filled with oil); kits improve handling and compatibility with radials



Salisbury 3HA back axle (to 2/4 MkII) can be weak: check for leaks/rumbling/whining/clunks; 4HA parts are stronger, but an axle swap is needed to fit them

"While I abhor the American fad to chrome everything, I did polish all the aluminium parts – but that's raw elbow grease"



Practical DB2/4 was one of the first hatchbacks, with two rear seats and a folding backrest

Before you buy

The key to any good Aston Martin is its engine, so check both its service history and current condition. Oil pressure on a pre-MkIII should be 85psi cold, 50psi at 2500rpm hot, with tickover pressure often low. DB MkIIIs should be a little higher, with 25psi minimum at tickover. Inspect for any coolant leaks from the built-in water pump via a hole behind the coil (unless that is blocked, in which case it may get into the oil), and from the liner weep holes on a MkIII.

The DB2 was the first Aston Martin to use the 'Vantage' name, for an engine boosted from 105 to 125bhp by bigger carburettors, compression raised from 6.5:1 to 8.2:1, and revised cam timing; it became standard for the DB2/4. The 2.9-litre came next with larger bores and 140bhp, or 165bhp with bigger valves – for the first time without replaceable seats, making unleaded petrol more of an issue. Further mods were offered up to 180bhp with triple SUs and (rarely) 195bhp with triple Webers on the MkIII.

Modifying an old engine requires an experienced marque specialist: a new block is needed for 200bhp-plus, with careful attention to oil pressure and leakage; 2.6s need a block/sump-flange strengthening plate. You can't enlarge a 2.6-litre to 2.9 spec, although you can buy new liners that take it up to 2747cc. But the most important thing is to use the highest-quality components: you only want to rebuild the motor once.

Alperform aluminium cylinder heads, which are based on the factory DB3S racer's item, improve cooling and are suitable for unleaded fuel. Specialists can supply various upgrades, ranging from carbs via five-speed all-synchro gearboxes to all-round discs, brake servos, power steering and more.

OWNING ONE



"I messed about with cars way back, including the legendary Shell Rally in 1955," says **Barrie Robinson**. "I rebuilt a Triumph TR3 in the UK before being seconded to Canada in '68. In 1980, I rekindled my mad car days after restoring an Austin-Healey 3000 BJ8. I had always liked the DB2/4, so I bought – sight unseen – a 165bhp L-spec MkII in poor condition from a garage in California. I started the AM Feltham Club in 2010: by 2014 it had 121 members.

"When it comes to detail, things have to be perfect and original if possible. Each steel part has been powder-coated, including the chassis; every nut and bolt is cadmium-plated. While I abhor the American fad to chrome everything, I did polish all the aluminium parts – but that's raw elbow grease, not a modern process."



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THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1949 Prototype DB2 runs at Le Mans: DB1 chassis, 'saloon' body, 2.6-litre Lagonda 'six'
1950 DB2 introduced at New York show; Drophead Coupé added (102 made); three-part grille replaced by one-piece on car 50
1951 Vantage option, up to 125bhp/149lb ft
1953 DB2/4 (566 built, inc c76 dropheads) replaces DB2 (410 built): 125bhp, 116mph
1954 2922cc 140bhp VB6/J unit standard
1955 DB2/4 MkII (199 built): higher roof, small tailfins, 2in longer; 'Notchback' fhc added (34 made + 16 dhc and two Specials)
1957 DB MkIII (551 produced, inc 84 dhc): front discs (optional on first 100), 162bhp+, DB3S-style grille and binnacle; tall rear lights added after first 100 (MkIIIB)
1958 'Notchback' fhc option (five built); Special Series option: 180/195bhp
1959 Automatic offered; MkIII build ends

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1950-'59/1726
Construction steel chassis, steel/aluminium body **Engine** all-iron (alloy inserts), dohc 2580/2922cc 'six', twin/triple SU or triple Weber carbs (MkIII) **Max power** 105bhp @ 5000rpm to 195bhp @ 5500rpm
Max torque 125lb ft @ 3100rpm to 149lb ft @ 3000rpm (2.6) **Transmission** four-speed manual, RWD; optional overdrive or three-speed auto (MkIII) **Suspension: front** independent, by upper/lower trailing links, anti-roll bar **rear** live axle, radius arms, Panhard rod; coil springs, lever-arm dampers f/r **Steering** Marles cam and roller
Brakes Girling drums (Al-fin optional); front discs on MkIII **Length** 13ft 6½in-14ft 3½in (4130-4360mm) **Width** 5ft 5in (1650mm) **Height** 4ft 5½-6½in (1360-1385mm) **Wheelbase** 8ft 3in (2520mm)
Weight 2480-2690lb (1125-1220kg)
0-60mph 12.6-8.2 secs
Top speed 110-124mph **Mpg** 15-26
Price new £3076/3301 (saloon/dhc, 1956)

CLUB

Aston Martin Owners' Club amoc.org

SPECIALISTS

Davron davronuk.com **Aston Service Dorset** astonservicedorset.com **Aston Martin Works** astonmartinworks.com **Aston Workshop** aston.co.uk **Stamper Aston Martin** stamper-astonmartin.com **RS Williams** rswilliams.co.uk **Aston Engineering** astonengineering.co.uk **Adrian Johnson** adrian-johnson.co.uk

WHAT TO PAY*

	Resto/Average/Show
DB2 saloon	£40,000/125,000/300k
DB2 dhc	£100,000/175,000/350k
DB2/4 saloon	£30,000/80,000/225k
DB2/4 dhc	£100,000/200,000/500k
MkIII saloon	£40,000/150,000/275k
MkIII dhc	£125,000/225,000/500k

*20-25% MORE FOR EARLY, THREE-PART-GRILLE DB2 AND ORIGINAL VANTAGES

OUR VERDICT

Sometimes modified over the years, DB2s are now gaining the recognition they deserve as the cars that started the Aston Martin DB dynasty. Coachbuilt models and dropheads command high prices, while MkIIIs (and early DB2s) are close behind, but there are still good-value 'saloons' to be found if you look thoroughly at how they have been cared for in recent times.

FOR
Excellent parts availability; charming styling; adequate performance for modern roads; first of the DB Astons, eligible for lots of top events

AGAINST
Vastly expensive to restore; arts can be costly; original details often lost over decades



ALTERNATIVES



JAGUAR XK120-150 *1948-'61, 30,364 built*
Fantastic value when it was new, the XK dominated the top-end sports-car market. The Aston is arguably a better all-rounder, but XKs are fast, great value, plus cheaper to maintain and restore. **Price now** £14-200,000



MERCEDES-BENZ 300SL *1952-'63, 3258 built*
Fuel injection, independent suspension and race prowess helped to justify the SL's huge price new, but outside the UK it was on a par with the Aston, which now looks great value in comparison. **Price now** £600,000-4m



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AUSTIN SEVEN

Britain's recession-busting people's car is still a great buy, more than a century after its introduction

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **JAMES MANN**







Built in late 1932, this Box Saloon is to many the archetypal Austin Seven, though almost every component is different from the launch model of 10 years earlier, including a 6in-longer wheelbase allowing more interior space and larger doors

Bringing motoring to the masses as the Model T did in the USA, the Austin Seven had a huge impact in Britain and beyond – and kick-started the UK's dominant post-WW2 motorsport industry.

Keen to make driving more affordable, manufacturers were turning out often precarious, sometimes downright dangerous cyclecars after WW1. Sir Herbert Austin's great achievement was to make a 'real car in miniature'. With steel and aluminium construction, a proper body with space for four, reasonable weather equipment, four braked wheels, a four-cylinder engine, supple suspension all round and electric lighting, the Seven was a revelation. The downside, especially today, is that this was achieved by making the car tiny. People really were smaller back then, and were used to being huddled together when necessary, so the Seven's small size was no obstacle to sales. When buying today, it's vital to be sure that you and your family will fit, and be comfortable.

The Seven sold in unprecedented numbers, and was to form the genesis of huge motor manufacturers: both BMW and Nissan started with Seven-derived cars. Sevens were also built in France by Rosengart and the USA by Bantam. Special-bodied versions formed the foundation of Swallow, the company that became Jaguar.

The Seven was the first mass-market car with what we now consider to be conventional controls – a central gearlever, and clutch/brake/throttle pedals left-to-right. That at least makes it easier for today's owner to acclimatise, though the sharp clutch, crash gearbox and limited braking take a lot of practice to master. If you relish the challenge, great – but if you dread it, go for as late a car as possible, because they are significantly easier to drive.

A wide range of bodies was developed: four-seat tourer, two-seat sports, two/four-seat cabriolet, four-seat saloon, two-seat coupé, van and more. Because of the simple construction, multiple detail changes were made each year: if you care about originality (most owners over the past century have not), then *Original Austin Seven* by Rinsey Mills is compulsory reading before inspecting a prospective purchase. Many owners have built Specials from decrepit Sevens – they can be fun, but check carefully that they are properly made and registered.

TROUBLE SPOTS

ROT & CRACKS Wood frames rot at the ends and joints, door posts and 'screen top support. Steel bodies rust at the base of the front bulkhead, stress points (especially the rear corners), door bottoms, front wing supports, running-board joints, sunroofs and drain channels. Aluminium bodies crack at the rear of the door sills. Chassis can rot around rear spring/extension mounts

ENGINE These units are not long-lasting, so look for smoke and oil leaks, non-original parts, and worn carb and distributor drives

GEARBOX/CLUTCH Suffer from wear and abuse: check for excessive noise and leaks

TORQUE TUBE Watch out for end float in the propshaft, which can destroy the crownwheel and pinion

STEERING ARM Look for cracks: cars used for competition should have the arm braced

SUSPENSION Rock the front wheels to check for wear in the kingpins

Everything needs to be set up perfectly if Seven driving is to be a pleasant experience. A small amount of wear or maladjustment, whether it is to the engine, brakes, steering, suspension or transmission, has a much greater impact than it does on most cars. But get it right and, given its limitations, a Seven is a delight to drive







Simple and effective, the 747cc engine underwent steady improvement through production, boosting power in standard form by 65%, from 10.5bhp to 17bhp. But carburettor wear and sloppy timing can lose a lot of that: frequent maintenance and careful set-up make a big difference. Parts to rebuild them are still readily available



This early four-speed 'box still had no synchromesh, so double-declutching is vital. Wear makes itself known noisily, and smooth gearchanges take practice



Look for cracks in the steering arm, and for worn or seized kingpins and brakes. Also worn wheel bearings, oil or grease on the brake linings and buckled wheels



Almost every car will have had a retrim, so ensure you are happy with the work or budget for improvement. Pneumatic seat cushions are very comfortable



Inspect the body at its extremities, such as the rear lower corners, for cracking caused by flexing (which is normal) and for corrosion, especially on steel shells



In standard form the Seven tackles life at a sedate pace, but a sorted car can still be great fun to drive and will feel remarkably nimble

Before you buy

Austin Sevens were very low-geared, so you can expect to do most of your driving in top and third ratios in a four-speed car, or top and second in a three-speed. Within the limitations of its capacity and output, the compact engine should feel flexible and untemperamental. Sluggish performance may simply be down to incorrect timing or a worn carburettor, but if it's reluctant to start or excessively smoky and leaky, it's time for a rebuild. Parts are readily available, and Seven specialists and clubs know where to get bearings re-metalled.

Engine life was always limited and many cars have had motor swaps over the years, so check what is fitted to the example you are looking at. Changes were frequent; for example, the starter motor moved from above the 'box to the offside of the engine in September 1931, requiring a new crankcase.

Early crash gearboxes were stronger than later synchromesh ones. Attaching the linings directly to the flywheel made the clutch very sharp; a Borg & Beck lined friction plate from August 1936 softened things considerably.

The brakes on Sevens are often worse than they should be due to stretched cables, worn componentry and brake shoes that have been contaminated with oil and grease. Generally, the heavier the bodywork fitted, the weaker the brakes will feel, until a rod-operated Girling set-up was fitted in 1938.

It is important to remember that the Austin was built to be as lightweight as possible, and consequently it needs far more frequent maintenance than most more modern vehicles. Plentiful and regular greasing at all points is vital, so look for a car that has been cherished and maintained accordingly.

OWNING ONE



Serial tractor collector **Paul Baker** – "I don't know how many tractors I've got," he laughs – saw this Austin Seven in a farm auction 20 years ago. "I didn't have the money for it then," he recalls, "but a friend bought it and 15 years ago he sold it to me.

"The registration number is my initials, but when I got hold of the logbook there was an even bigger coincidence – it was first registered on my birthday! It was restored about 30 years ago and is great fun to drive – everywhere you go it brings a smile to people's faces. We used it to transport the best men for my son's wedding – it managed to climb a steep bank up to the church with four of us in it. It still has 6V electrics and is generally very original, having been registered in January 1933. The next job will be to replace the gearbox bearings, because they are getting a bit growly."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1922 696cc Chummy launched
1923 Up to 747cc; cooling fan added
1924 Wider chassis rails, front/rear dampers
1926 Stronger body; saloon and van added
1928 Headlamps to wings, coil ignition
1929 Stiffer crank; saloon/tourer bodies enlarged; Sports renamed Ulster
1930 Extra chassis leg added
1931 De Luxe 6in longer wheelbase added
1932 Four-speed 'box, sidedraught carb replaces downdraught, key ignition
1933 Synchro on 3rd/4th gear; higher compression; Sports 65 with 23bhp
1934 Ruby introduced: new chassis, synchromesh on 2/3/4, cowled radiator
1938 Girling rod brakes
1939 Production ends

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1922-'39/290,924
Construction steel chassis, aluminium or steel body **Engine** iron-block/head, alloy-crankcase, sidevalve 696/747cc 'four', Zenith carburettor **Max power** 10.5bhp @ 2400rpm to 24bhp @ 5000rpm
Max torque n/a **Transmission** three/four-speed manual, RWD
Suspension: front beam axle, leading arms, transverse leaf spring, friction dampers from 1924 **rear** torque tube, live axle, trailing arms, quarter-elliptic springs, friction dampers from 1928 **Steering** worm and wheel (worm and sector from '36)
Brakes cable drums (rod from '38)
Length 8ft 7in-9ft 11in (2621-3023mm)
Width 3ft 10in-4ft 3in (1170-1295mm)
Height 4ft 10in (1475mm) **Wheelbase** 6ft 3-9in (1905-2057mm) **Weight** 952-1400lb (432-635kg) **0-50mph** c55 secs
Top speed 42-55mph **Mpg** 40-52
Price new £165 (Chummy, 1923)

CLUBS

Pre-War Austin Seven Club pwa7c.co.uk
Austin Seven Clubs Association a7ca.org

SPECIALISTS

A7 Components a7c.co.uk **Oxfordshire Sevens** oxfordshiresevens.co.uk
7 County Austins 7ca.co.uk **The Seven Workshop** theaustinsevenworkshop.com
John Barlow austin7spares.co.uk
Austin 7 Specialist austin7specialist.co.uk
Southern Sevens southernsevens.co.uk
Pigsty Racing pigsty-racing.com
Vintage Austin Services vintageaustinservices.co.uk

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
Ruby, '30s saloon	£1300/4500/9000
Pre-'30s saloon	£1750/6000/12,000
1930s tourer	£2000/7000/15,000
1930s Sports	£4500/12,500/22,000
Chummy, van	£5000/14,000/23,000
Ulster	£12,000/22,000/45,000

OUR VERDICT

There's a bewildering range of Seven bodies and specifications to choose from, so you'll rarely see two the same. Many have had parts swaps over the years, but most owners aren't too worried about originality. The highest prices are always paid for cars that are correct in every detail, but if you just want to enjoy owning and driving a Seven, then a well-maintained bitsa can be every bit as fun for a fraction of the top money.

FOR
Excellent club, specialist and parts back-up, with even new uprated crankshafts available; simple, dependable and great fun

AGAINST
Many have been modified beyond hope of returning to originality; Sevens are tiny and challenging to drive, so won't suit everyone



ALTERNATIVES



MORRIS MINOR *1928-'34, 86,318 built*
Intended to steal sales from the Seven by being a bit better, with a 20bhp, ohc 850cc engine, but costlier, too. Stripped sidevalve version came in 1931 for £100, similar improvements to the Austin up to '34. **Price now** £2-15,000



CITROËN TYPE C *1922-'26, c81,000 built*
France's people's car came with an electric starter and coil ignition (later magneto). Tough and heavy, with an 856cc, 11bhp four-cylinder engine, the 5CV could sit at its 37mph top speed all day long. **Price now** £4-30,000

AUSTIN A30 & A35

The second coming of the Austin Seven would be equally revolutionary and best-selling, a true people's car

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **JAMES MANN**



Perfectly pitched into Britain of the early 1950s – battling the crippling costs of war, but looking forward to a better future – the A30 Austin Seven was the ideal transport for a young family. Post-war Britons wanted independence, but times were tight, so an affordable, light car that was solid, while returning 50-60mpg (a figure rarely beaten even now), was a revelation.

Austin had contracted Raymond Loewy's US styling house to help design the car, though Holden Koto's proposal was heavily modified in-house, not least by reducing it to the overall dimensions of the pre-war Austin Big Seven. David Bache had a hand in some later restyling, especially the 1953 dashboard.

The A30 boasted monocoque construction, a new overhead-valve engine, a four-speed, three-synchro gearbox, four doors (a two-door came later), 12V electrics and surprisingly good handling, aided by a rear anti-roll bar. The significance of the introduction of the new A-series engine, which would endure for half a century in production and power so many iconic BMC vehicles, cannot be overstated.

With only 803cc, the original A30 unit was willing but far from swift, reduced to slogging at 30mph in third up anything steeper than the gentlest of hills, yet by the standards of the day it was more than adequate. In November 1952 *The Motor* wrote: 'Its acceleration and speed capabilities are greater than a large proportion of its potential public will ever require.'

The 948cc unit in the A35 of 1956 was far livelier and better geared, and is often credited with being the sweetest of the A-series engines. The A35 was replaced by the Mini in 1959, but the Countryman estate variant continued until late 1962, while the 5cwt Van version soldiered on to 1968, featuring the 1098cc A-series for four years and an 848cc version (the same size as the original Mini) from 1963-'68. The rarest production variant is the 5cwt Pick-up, of which only 475 were built from 1956-'57.

The A30 won the Tulip Rally outright in 1956 and the likes of John Sprinzel campaigned A35s in production saloon races; an A35 also set a bevy of long-distance class speed records at Montlhéry in 1957. Now, they are popular again for racing at the Goodwood Revival and elsewhere – great publicity, though a fair few of the best survivors have been turned into racers.

TROUBLE SPOTS

RUST Check the front panel; front-wing leading edges and rear lower sections; inner front wings; floorpans; inner and outer sills; door pillars; door bottoms; rear chassis legs; rear arches; rear spring hangers; boot floor

ENGINE Listen out for rattly timing chains and bearing rumbles, and watch for oil smoke. Check the engine number and spec (swaps/upgrades are common)

GEARBOX Poorly rebuilt units have a short life: check the synchros, listen for excess noise and watch for jumping out of gear

BRAKES Vital to be in top condition, but rarely are. Original parts are costly, so upgrades are common

STEERING Check there is no excess free play or stiffness

SUSPENSION Needs frequent greasing, and is dangerous if worn or seized

REAR AXLE Look out for leaks and listen for whining or rumbles







Cute, cuddly and surprisingly spacious inside, the A30 and A35 have great 1950s charm, and attract favourable comments wherever you go



Both the Austin A30 and A35 are a joy to drive, with responsive steering and sweet handling, encouraging you to use your skills behind the wheel to get the best from them. The interior appointments are relatively minimal, but there is a remarkable amount of room for four in the cabin, considering the tiny overall dimensions



The legendary A-series engine began its long life in the A30, so this was a modern, advanced unit for its day. Now, some parts for the earliest 803cc A30 version are becoming scarce, but the 948cc A35s are better served. These engines are sturdy if well maintained, and have huge tuning potential if you're after more performance



Look for signs of regular greasing, check condition of brake hoses, and for wear in kingpins, bushes, bearings, steering box and joints, plus tyre wear/cracking



A35s had a remote gearshift, A30s a long lever into the 'box. Look out for bearing noise (stops if you dip the clutch), weak synchros and for jumping out of gear



Smart, original interiors are rare and many cars have had trim swapped over the years, but good-quality retrim kits are available from Newton Commercial



A difficult area to repair properly is the rear spring hanger, which rusts badly, extending into the boot floor and inner wing. Check that it hasn't been bodged

"We joined the club and soon realised that ours was in better condition than most of the others"



Transatlantic styling in miniature gives the Austin real character and, though far from rapid, A30s and A35s are huge fun

Before you buy

Loewy Studios and Austin combined to devise a sturdy monocoque, but age and poor rustproofing mean body condition is the key consideration when buying – and half a century of low values is plenty of time for rampant bodgery.

Engines and gearboxes have often been swapped around over the years: check the engine number (on a riveted plate attached to the top right-hand side of the block) and the capacity (cast into the left-hand side of the block, for example '950'). Plenty of Austins have since been modified to 1098cc, 1275cc or more. Bigger engines need ribbed-case transmissions; they will quickly destroy smooth-cased ones. More power will also require better brakes, such as an MG Midget front-disc conversion or 8in front drums from an Austin A40.

Engine wear will make itself heard through bearing rumbles and knocks (needing a full rebuild, probably around £2500) or oil smoke, which may be worn piston rings (also requiring a full rebuild) or just valve stems and seals (leading to cylinder-head overhaul, at £250-500). If driven hard (over 3000rpm) on unleaded fuel, the valve seats will eventually fail and hardened seats will be needed (c£300). Low power may be caused by eroded valve seats or poor sealing: check compressions if you are suspicious.

Parts for the A30's 803cc engine are becoming scarce and expensive – even the water pump and oil filter are now difficult to source. With its lower power (but great charm), the 803cc unit has purist appeal but is less easy to live with than the larger engines.

When properly adjusted, the brakes are perfectly adequate for standard engines – but seized cylinders and poor adjustment can make them scary.

OWNING ONE



Keith Bennett bought his A35 in 1982 after having admired a friend's A30. "I got it for my wife to run around in," he recalls. "We joined the club and soon realised ours was in better condition than most of the others there. It's a four-door Deluxe with rear quarterlights and chrome overriders; it had led a charmed life with only two previous owners.

"We used it a lot, and fitted a towbar to pull a trailer with it. By 2009 it was getting rusty, so I stripped it down and The Mobile Welder did the bodywork. It had sills, floor repairs, rear arches, inner wings and other small patches. I rebuilt the engine, gearbox and running gear myself – I had a garage full of spares. A stainless-steel exhaust is the only modification. I really enjoy driving it, and the brakes are good if you keep on top of them. We've won a few prizes over the years, too."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1951 A30 launch at Earls Court: single rear light, T-key boot release, keyless ignition
1952 Bootlid lock, twin rear lights
1953 Two-door option, larger grille, revised seating (leathercloth standard), new dash (trapezoidal speedo), full-width parcel shelf
1954 5cwt Van: stiff rear suspension, low-ratio axle, roof ventilator, stiffening side panels, single bucket seat. Countryman estate: Van body, but car-spec mechanicals
1956 948cc A35 saloon/Countryman: body-colour grille, indicators, slimmer front seats, remote gearchange, bigger rear window; Van gets low-compression 948; 5cwt Pick-up added, fold-up seat in bed
1957 Pick-up dropped (475 built)
1959 A35 saloon replaced by Mini
1962 MkII Van/Countryman with non-indented doors; Countryman dropped, MkIII Van with 1098cc (until 1966)
1963 848cc option in Van
1968 Van production ends

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1951-'68/577,871 (194,256 A30s; 142,565 A35s; 240,575 Van/Countryman)
Construction steel monocoque
Engine all-iron, ohv 803/848/948/1098cc 'four', single Zenith carburettor
Max power 28bhp @ 4800rpm to 34bhp @ 4750rpm **Max torque** 40lb ft @ 2400rpm to 50lb ft @ 2000rpm
Transmission four-speed manual, RWD
Suspension: front independent, by double wishbones, coil springs **rear** live axle, semi-elliptic springs, anti-roll bar; lever arm dampers f/r **Steering** cam and lever **Brakes** hydraulic front, mechanical rear drums **Length** 11ft 4-6in (3457-3505mm) **Width** 4ft 7-8in (1400-1422mm)
Height 4ft 10¼in-5ft ¼in (1480-1600mm)
Wheelbase 6ft 7½in (2020mm)
Weight 1512-1680lb (687-764kg)
0-60mph 40.2-30.1 secs
Top speed 63-72mph **Mpg** 45-60
Price new £475-560 (2dr-Countryman, '55)

CLUB

Austin A30/A35 Owners' Club
austina30a35ownersclub.co.uk

SPECIALISTS

Clayton's A30 & A35 Spares
austina30a35parts.co.uk
Moto-build Racing moto-build.com
ANG Classic Car Parts
angclassiccarparts.co.uk
B&C Coachworks britishandclassic.co.uk

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
Pick-up	£4000/12,500/20,000
Van	£1500/6000/14,000
Countryman	£1000/5000/11,000
Saloon	£500/2750/8000

OUR VERDICT

No-one can fail to be charmed by these diminutive, characterful saloons and estates, and recent action in historic motorsport has boosted interest in them further. They are still good value compared to Morris Minors, so now is the time to buy. A30s in standard form are less versatile than the pokier A35s, but still fun; many have been uprated, too. Just watch out for rust, and past modifications and bodgery: a good one is brilliantly cheap to run.

FOR
Economical, usable and most parts are available and cheap (especially for the A35); there is strong club support, and they are extremely easy to own and maintain

AGAINST
Rust can be rampant under past patches – inevitable for a car that has been cheap for 50 years; some A30 parts are very hard to find



ALTERNATIVES



MORRIS MINOR *1948-'71, 1,303,331 built*
Widening the Minor just as production began gave it a longer life than the A30/35. Sidevalve-engined at first, it thrived with the A-series from 1952. Parts are plentiful, and rust is the biggest enemy. **Price now** £500-20,000



TONY LARGE

STANDARD 8/10 *1953-'60, 300,817 built*
Aping the A-series, Standard's small engine was 803cc in the 8, then 948cc in the 10 – ahead of BMC. Overdrive and auto were (rare) options. Cheap, but few left now, and parts and rot are tricky. **Price now** £500-12,000

AUSTIN-HEALEY 100 & 3000

Timeless beauty and effortless grunt make the Big Healeys a dynasty of great classics

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



Donald Healey and stylist Gerry Coker hit the jackpot with the stunning Healey 100. One prototype was built and tested, then taken to Earls Court where the reception was so positive that Austin's Leonard Lord thrashed out a licence agreement overnight. It was a perfect match: the 100 was built around Atlantic running gear and was clearly going to sell in far greater numbers than the tiny Healey factory could make. Healey would get a royalty on each one, so he wasted no time in shipping pre-production cars to America and touring the States demonstrating them. He knew it was the largest market: more than 80% went there.

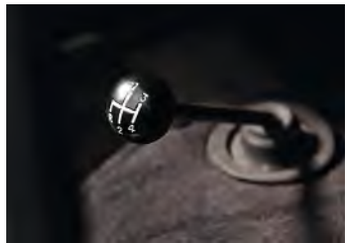
Healeys won races and rallies from the start, the potent works cars being highly developed, and competition improved the breed. The 100S, of which 50 were built in 1955, is on a par with ex-works cars in value, boasting aluminium bodies and cylinder heads, all-disc brakes and a 125mph top speed: expect to pay six figures for a real one. The 100M is also highly desirable, though not as costly. It was offered as a £105 conversion in 1954, with high-compression pistons, a high-lift cam, twin 1¾in SU carbs, heavy-duty dampers and anti-roll bar, a louvred bonnet with strap and two-tone paint.

'Effortless' was the word most widely used in period tests, both for the torquey four-cylinder engine and the super-smooth 'six'. The lack of ground clearance and excess cockpit heat were the biggest criticisms; scuttle shake also became an issue with the Convertible. Production stopped in 1967 because the 3000 needed too much work to meet US safety and emissions regulations; the MGC took its place.

Rust is now by far the costliest Healey issue, exacerbated by electrolytic corrosion between the aluminium shrouds and adjacent steel. With the inner steel body welded to the chassis, repair is complex and the whole lower section is rot-prone. Look closely at how the doors fit to assess the quality of past work, and inspect the main chassis rails for crash distortion. It's vital to get under a car to ensure it is 100% sound: check the front of the chassis where the shroud bolts on; the bottom of the front wings and the seam to the shroud; A-posts and bulkhead; inner/outer sills; footwells; door bottoms and frames; B-posts and rear floor; inner and outer rear wings; plus boot floor and rear shroud.



Seats were leather up to the 3000 MkIII and don't like damp (or excessively dry) environments. They do look good, but weren't very comfy even when new



Four-speed gearboxes, as here, have a non-synchromesh first. Check for worn selectors and synchros, and ensure that overdrive works on the top two gears





The pretty 100 is much lighter to drive than the 'sixes'; the 'screen folds flat to add to its rakish looks





Initially offered as a two-seater only, the 'Big Healey' is one of few sports cars to be sold in both two-seat and 2+2 forms (from the 100/6 to the 3000 MkII, after which all cars sold were 2+2s). Of the 3000s, the rarer two-seater model is sought after for rallying, while others prefer the power and comfort of the 3000 MkIII Phase 2



Engines are robust, simple and unstressed. Look for signs of regular servicing, plus 50psi oil pressure at speed; a worn engine will show in excessive breathing, rattles and blue smoke. Check the spec is correct, notably with rarer models such as the 100M. Four-cylinder units cost more to rebuild than 'sixes' due to smaller numbers



Overheating is common, invariably due to a silted radiator and engine. The only solution is an engine strip and recored rad; an electric fan just masks the issue



Healeys used an antiquated steering box that needs regular topping up; the steering can become very vague if the box and associated joints are worn



Look out for axle leaks fouling the rear brakes and reduced ground clearance due to sagging springs. Clonks between forward/reverse mean worn splines



Kingpins require frequent greasing or they will wear quickly. The bushes and dampers also have limited life. Poly bushes, if not too hard, are better



Big Healeys aren't for shrinking violets, with glorious exhaust bark

Before you buy

If the car has a hood or hardtop, put it up for the test drive – you'll hear untoward noises better and also smell how badly the engine fumes find their way into the cockpit. All engines should feel lively, with tremendous torque from low revs, but acceleration is not stunning by modern standards. The first 100/6 with a galleried head (carbs bolted direct to the cylinder head) is slower than the 100, but it's easily uprated and 1957 cars are eligible for the Mille Miglia.

The works rally and racing cars used triple Weber carburettors to great effect, with the final examples boasting 173bhp at the wheels, an aluminium cylinder head and all-round disc brakes. You can build a car to this spec now, but it's not cheap to do, so expect to pay a premium for a good rally replica.

The early 100s had a slightly clumsy gearchange due to the A90 gearbox being designed for a column shift. First gear was blanked off because it was deemed to be unnecessary, leaving three speeds with overdrive on second and top. The four-speed Westminster transmission from August 1955 was much stronger, but is just as likely to be worn out now. Unusually, when you switch it out of overdrive it should not disengage until you accelerate again, being controlled by a throttle switch.

Austin lagged behind Triumph with mechanical innovations during this period, not fitting front disc brakes until 1959 and retaining a steering box throughout. Be prepared, instead, to treat the Healey like a 1950s car when you're driving it – using engine braking and adopting a relaxed grip on the wheel to accommodate steering wander. That said, excessive waywardness means wear, which can be sorted.

OWNING ONE



Bernard Northmore bought his 1959 Austin-Healey 3000 MkI in 2007. "I owned a pre-war Riley Special before that, but it wasn't really usable as a regular driver," he explains "The Healey was a car I had always dreamed of owning; I bought an early 3000 in order to qualify for the 1950s class in road rallying. It was a bit of a shed, but I did the Rally of the Tests in it before getting the car's bodywork properly sorted.

"Healey expert John Chatham helped me to improve it a bit. It's still on 1¾in carburettors, but it goes, handles and stops a lot better now, with a lightened flywheel, tuned engine, stiffer anti-roll bar and bushes, plus a brake servo. I really like driving the car, I like its grunt and its noise. I'm fitting a Kenlowe fan next, because it gets a bit hot while waiting at the start of tests."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1952 100 prototype shown at Earls Court
1954 Steel bonnet instead of aluminium
1955 BN2 introduced: four-speed 'box
1956 100/6 replaces 100 (14,634 built)
1957 New 12-port head: 117bhp, 149lb ft
1958 Lighter BN6 two-seater launched
1959 BN7/BT7 3000 replaces 100/6 (15,444 built): 1¾in SUs, higher final drive
1961 MkII supercedes MkI (13,650 built, 80% 2+2s): triple SUs, 132bhp, new grille
1962 BJ7 Convertible: wind-up windows, better hood, less rear space, twin SUs
1964 MkIII replaces MkII (11,564 built): wood dash, Ambla seats, 2in SUs; 'Phase 2': revised rear set-up, more ground clearance
1967 Production ends (17,704 MkIIIs built)

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1953-'67/73,054
Construction steel chassis, steel inner body, steel/aluminium skin **Engine** all-iron (100S alloy head), ohv 2660cc 'four' or 2639/2912cc 'six', twin/triple SU carbs
Max power 90bhp @ 4000rpm to 148bhp @ 5250rpm **Max torque** 142lb ft @ 2400rpm to 165lb ft @ 3500rpm **Transmission** three/four-speed manual, o/d (optional on 'six'), RWD **Suspension: front** independent, by wishbones, coil springs, anti-roll bar **rear** live axle, semi-elliptic leaf springs, Panhard rod (radius arms on MkIII P2); lever-arm dampers f/r **Steering** cam and peg
Brakes drums f/r (100 and 100/6); front discs (3000); discs f/r (100S and 50 100/6s); optional servo from BJ7
Length 12ft 7½in-13ft 1½in (3850-4000mm) **Width** 5ft ½in (1540mm)
Height 4ft ½-1in (1230-1240mm)
Wheelbase 7ft 6-7¾in (2290-2340mm)
Weight 2176-2604lb (987-1181kg)
0-60mph 12.9-9.8 secs
Top speed 103-125mph **Mpg** 17-30
Price new £1227 (100/6, 1958)

CLUBS

Austin Healey Club austinhealeyclub.com
Healey Drivers' Club healeydriversclub.co.uk

SPECIALISTS

A Head 4 Healeys ahead4healeys.co.uk
AH Spares ahspares.co.uk **Denis Welch Motorsport** bighealey.co.uk **Murray Scott-Nelson** murrayscott-nelson.com
JME Healeys jmehealeys.co.uk **Rawles Motorsport** rawlesmotorsport.co.uk **UK Healey Centre** ukhealey.co.uk **Bill Rawles Classic Cars** rawlesclassiccars.co.uk

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
100	£15,000/35,000/60,000
100M	£n/a/50,000/90,000
100/6	£12,000/26,000/50,000
3000 MkI	£14,000/30,000/60,000
3000 MkII	£18,000/33,000/65,000
3000 MkIII	£19,000/35,000/70,000

OUR VERDICT

Price and desirability vary dramatically between the different models, despite their similar looks and performance. It is far better to buy a mint 100/6 or 3000 Mk1 on which someone else has borne the massive restoration costs than to buy a scruffy 100 and then have to fork out to have it brought back up to scratch. Many enthusiasts have spent £30,000-plus having a Healey restored, some double that.

FOR
Fabulous sporting looks; terrific rally and race pedigree; six-cylinder cars are smooth, torquey and fast; great spares availability

AGAINST
A rotten Healey is hugely expensive to put right; ground clearance is a big issue on rallies; a tidy E-type can be cheaper than some Healeys



ALTERNATIVES



AC ACE *1953-'64, 1059 built*
Exclusive and equally stunning, the Ace has soared in value over recent years and is now a far more expensive proposition than all but the rarest of Austin-Healeys, despite most models struggling to match their outright performance. **Price now** £100-300,000



TRIUMPH TR2-4A *1953-'67, 152,290 built*
Always cheaper and almost as rapid as the Healey, the TR series comfortably outsold it when new and today remains much cheaper to buy and simpler to run. The Triumph lacks the ultimate beauty and class of the Healey, however. **Price now** £5-40,000

BENTLEY 3 LITRE

It's the model that launched a famous brand, and Britain's best-loved vintage sports car can be a delight to own

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



It's hard today to imagine the world in which WO Bentley launched his 70mph supercar in 1919. All adults could recall the days when covering 15 miles in an hour on a good horse was the fastest way to travel. Where decent roads existed, cars such as the Bentley 3 Litre permitted previously unheard-of speeds. But for many well-heeled purchasers of such exotic chassis, comfort was a higher priority than outright pace, and heavy saloon bodies were often fitted. WO quickly responded with the Long Standard chassis of 1922. More than a foot was added to the wheelbase and, with lowered gear ratios, it proved very popular; many of today's short-chassis Bentleys started out in this form.

But this was no temperamental, lightweight sports car. Bentley built real durability into his machines, deriving impressive performance from high torque, aided by four well-chosen gear ratios, competent handling and effective brakes. He offered an unprecedented five-year guarantee on the chassis, too.

Radiator-badge colour originally had some significance, with blue being standard, red for Speed Models and green for the 100mph Super Sports – but the customer could have any colour to order, so the importance is limited.

Though the cars went through a long period in the doldrums, changing hands for a fistful of fivers, they have now been worth serious money for decades. But that long period of decline, combined with the relative fragility of 1920s bodywork, means that very few of these Bentleys retain their original coachwork or engines. While originality commands a price premium, there is no stigma in buying a 'bitsa'.

You could easily spend a quarter of a million pounds on a 3 Litre; you wouldn't spend that on a house without a survey, so you shouldn't on a Bentley: a major engine rebuild will cost more than £50,000. Surviving cars are well known to the club and specialists, so make the small investment of a professional inspection.

Check the condition of the radiator shell and the aluminium bonnet panels, which can chafe through. Cast-aluminium bulkhead legs crack, metal bodies corrode around 'screen mounts and wood floors rot. Inspect the main chassis rail around the crossmembers and beneath the doors on metal bodies. Check the ash frame, especially where it sits on the chassis, and look out for chassis distortion and rusty fuel tanks.



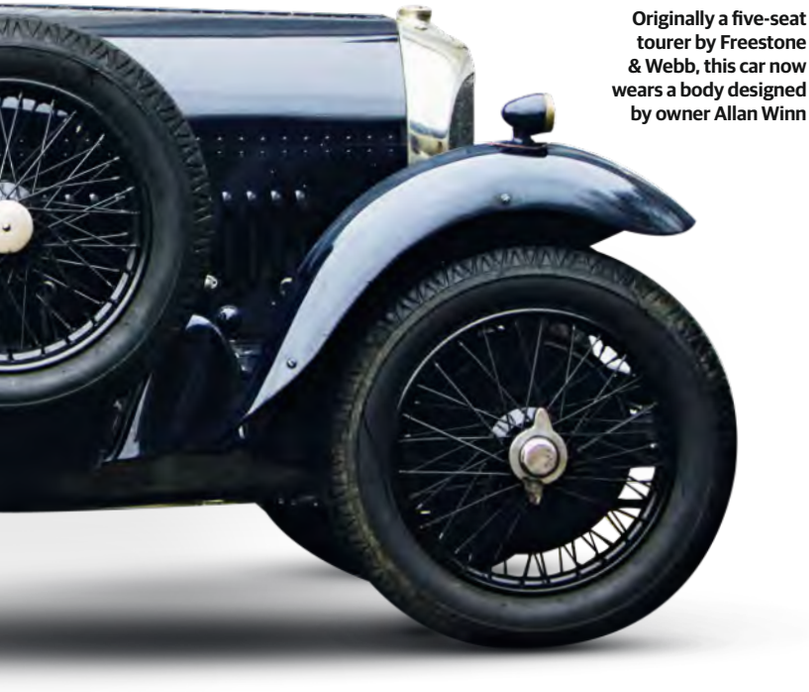
The cone clutch needs gentle treatment and accurate adjustment, otherwise gear selection can be very challenging – and double-declutching is essential



A car featuring a correct, period set of instruments is a real plus; even better if they work. Rebuilding failed items is cheaper than replacing missing units







Originally a five-seat tourer by Freestone & Webb, this car now wears a body designed by owner Allan Winn



Driving a 3 Litre is easy if you're used to vintage machinery, and there is a surfeit of torque on offer. The 3 Litre excelled in racing, most famously at Le Mans, where John Duff and Frank Clement won the second 24-hour race in 1924. The model took victory again in 1927, and its derivatives did likewise for the following three years



An engine rebuild is expensive: establish its health and adjust the price accordingly. Expect 15-20psi oil pressure on a run – less means wear or internal bleeding. Ask to see bills for past engine work. A Phoenix counterbalanced crank is good and usually means shell bearings, which tolerate modern oils – otherwise, using SAE50 is best



A vacuum-powered Autovac fuel pump was standard, but proved inadequate on long inclines: this double-ended SU electric pump is the ideal alternative



All suspension points should be oiled every six months or 2000 miles. Worn bearings and shackle pins mean heavy steering, and can affect the handling



Radiators were always nickel-plated on the 3 Litres; corrosion means a costly rebuild. Pre-chassis 1003 cars had no header tank; 1092-on were 1in taller



Four-wheel braking was introduced in 1923, but only after '25 was the system made reliable. An aftermarket servo is a bonus for tackling modern traffic



"It's perfectly capable of living with modern traffic – I chuck the family in and go hundreds of miles"

A sorted 3 Litre should stop smartly and handle securely

Before you buy

If you are unfamiliar with vintage Bentleys, by all means try driving one to be sure that you will be able to cope with it, but most importantly get an expert to check that everything is as it should be. You can't assess a car's condition while simultaneously learning to drive with a central throttle, right-hand gearchange and no synchromesh.

Engines are never quiet, but high oil consumption, knocking big ends, excess clatter and a very smoky exhaust will betray a worn powerplant. You retard the ignition to start the motor, then advance it to drive. Setting off is a simple matter of releasing the clutch and handbrake together, then accelerating: you don't slip the clutch, you release it gently and allow the huge flywheel momentum to pick up the car and sweep you away.

Match the revs and you can change up without double-declutching, but you'll need to master it for coming back down through the ratios. Having said that, the Bentley gearbox is easier to learn than many of its period rivals.

The steering is hugely heavy when stationary, but you will discover that it lightens immediately upon moving off; gears from a 4½ Litre will give lighter steering and are often fitted. A good car should feel firmly planted on the road, with no excessive slop in the steering or a tendency to wander. If a brake servo is fitted (they were standard on the six-cylinder cars), then you should be able to lock all four wheels.

The acceleration from the big 'four' feels like that of a powerful locomotive, with effortless pull from low revs. There should be no need to exceed 3500rpm, and extensive modifications are needed to allow these engines to safely rev higher for competition use.

OWNING ONE



Former Brooklands Museum director **Allan Winn** has owned this very late 3 Litre since 1986. He designed its bodywork and has driven it 85,000 miles since it was rebuilt after an engine-bearing failure in 1991. "I had helped to work on it before that," he recalls. "We raised the axle ratio in 1981 and fitted a BS gearbox, which gives it a high third gear – which makes it much more usable on the road. I sprint and hillclimb the car, and occasionally race it, too; it's great fun, but not very competitive. It has had some sensible modifications – servo brakes, an electric fuel pump, oil filter, Kenlowe fan and a rev counter – but I have retained the 21in wheels, dynamo and white-metal bearings. It's perfectly capable of living in modern traffic; I can chuck the family in the back and go hundreds of miles in a day."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1919 3 Litre first shown at Olympia
1921 Production starts: 9ft 9½in wheelbase, rear-wheel brakes only, 'A' gears
1922 Long Standard chassis added (10ft 10in wheelbase); 'B' gears; TT Replica high-compression option on standard chassis
1923 Four-wheel brakes, ML CG4 magneto, six-bolt rocker cover, direct-drive dynamo
1924 Speed Model added with twin SU G5 'sloper' carburettors; frame gauge increased from 0.144in to 0.156in
1926 One-piece sump, duralumin rockers, four-star back axle (cast-iron cage) replaces two-star (aluminium cage); 5¼x21in tyres
1927 Speed Model fitted with 'C' gears
1928 Engine gets located top bevels; frame gauge increased to 0.188in
1929 Last 3 Litre supplied, chassis DN1741

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1919-'29/1622
Construction steel ladder-frame chassis, cast-aluminium bulkhead, wood/fabric/aluminium/steel bodies
Engine iron-block/head, alloy-crankcase, sohc, twin-spark 2996cc 'four', single Smiths/Claudel-Hobson or twin SU carbs, twin magnetos **Max power** 70-85bhp @ 3500rpm **Max torque** n/a
Transmission four-speed manual, no synchromesh, inverted cone clutch, RWD
Suspension: front beam axle **rear** live axle; semi-elliptic springs, friction dampers f/r **Steering** worm and wheel
Brakes mechanical Perrot rotating-shaft, four-wheel drums (from Sept 1923)
Length 12ft 5in-14ft 3in (3785-4345mm)
Width 5ft 8½in (1740mm)
Wheelbase 9ft 9½in-10ft 10in (2743-3302mm) **Weight** 2688-3916lb (1222-1780kg) **0-60mph** n/a
Top speed 70-100mph **Mpg** 15-22
Price new £1050 (chassis, 1923)

CLUB

Bentley Drivers Club bdcl.org

SPECIALISTS

Vintage Bentley vintagebentley.com
VBE Restorations vbe-restorations.co.uk
P&A Wood pa-wood.co.uk **Kingsbury Racing Shop** kingsburyracing.com
Neil Davies Racing ndrbentley.com
RC Moss vintagebentleys.com
Frank Dale frankdale.com
Vintage Bentley Spare Parts vintagebentleyspareparts.co.uk
Petersen Engineering bobpetersenengineering.co.uk
David Ayre davidayre.com

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
Saloon	£75,000/125,000/175,000
Tourer	£100,000/140,000/190k
Speed, Sports	£150,000/225,000/375k

OUR VERDICT

An enthusiast who had just bought his first 3 Litre once said to me: "Buy one while you're young, lad – it's the best car I have ever owned." These vintage Bentleys have immense appeal and most owners can't get enough of driving them. However, purchasing one is a massive commitment: you must be sure of what you are getting, and that you have the resources to continue to maintain and enjoy it.

FOR
Ultimate British vintage sports car; excellent parts availability; very usable; easy to maintain once properly sorted

AGAINST
Substantial purchase price; very expensive to fix if worn or broken; lots of areas for potential corrosion; makes you look like Mr Toad...



ALTERNATIVES



LANCIA LAMBDA 1922-'31, c13,000 built
The survival rate of the innovative Lambda is pitiful compared to that of the Bentley. The first production monocoque car, the Lancia made up for a relative lack of power from its V4 engine with excellent handling and light weight. **Price now** £30-150,000



VAUXHALL 30-98 1919-'27, 587 built
Developed from the legendary Prince Henry, the 4.5/4.2-litre 30-98 was an impressive and successful sporting machine in its day. It's a highly collectable machine, but smaller build numbers mean parts supply is not comparable to Bentleys. **Price now** £75-200,000

BMC FARINA

Roomy, reliable and with many variants, these mainstream saloons make stylish and practical classics

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **JAMES MANN**



Prince Philip's well-intentioned comments about the looks of the British Motor Corporation's saloons not matching up to the European competition resulted in a whole new family of cars growing on the A55 Cambridge platform. Pinin Farina drew up the ADO9 and BMC productionised the design into Austin, Morris, Wolseley, MG and Riley variants. For the first time, all shared Austin running gear – a backward step in areas such as the cam-and-peg steering, when Morris and Wolseley cars had used rack-and-pinion since WW2. Lever-arm dampers integral with the top wishbones and long kingpins needing frequent greasing were also somewhat dated, but with BMC's global market including much rougher roads than those in the UK, the robustness did make sense, as did the standardisation.

Surprisingly, it was the Wolseley that was launched first – followed by Austin, MG, Morris and finally Riley. The Austin and Morris models were the most affordable, with the Wolseley an upmarket (wood and leather) version of the base variants, then MG and Riley had the plusher trim plus twin carburettors to give a modicum of extra performance. The Austin was fractionally cheaper than the Morris, while Rileys were priced slightly above MGs. The sales numbers were interesting: Cambridge A55 and A60, c150,000/276,500; Oxford Series V and VI, 87,432/208,823; Wolseley 15/60 and 16/60, 24,759/63,082; Magnette MkIII and IV, 16,676/14,320; Riley 4/68 and 4/72, 10,940/14,151.

At first, updates came thick and fast. The new, lighter and smoother Borg-Warner 35 auto 'box arrived with the 1622cc models in 1961, which brought significant improvements all round. The wheelbase was longer, front and rear tracks were wider, the springs were lower and stiffer, and anti-roll bars were added.

Then BMC turned to Alec Issigonis' front-wheel-drive range and the Farinas stagnated. Production continued because the demand remained for front-engined, rear-drive, high-built cars that were comfortable and easy to get into and out of. Australia built the six-cylinder Austin/Morris Freeway and Wolseley 24/80 in 1962-'65. In Argentina, a whole range was made under licence by fridge manufacturer Siam: the Di Tella 1500 used the Riley shell, while its Magnette was more upmarket – and it made estates, Argenta pick-ups and other models.

TROUBLE SPOTS

RUST Front wings around headlights, front valance under radiator, anti-roll bar mounts, rear edge of front wing, 'screen surround, A-pillars inside and out, front floors, chassis outriggers, triangle box under footwell, sills, jacking points, main chassis legs (especially rear spring hangers), door bottoms, rear wheelarches, rear valances, estate tailgate

ENGINE Look out for smoke, leaks, heavy breathing, rattling, tapping or knocking

TRANSMISSION Manuals: worn synchros, bearings and clutch. Automatics: dirty fluid, slipping bands, jerky engagement

SUSPENSION Large front dampers and pivots/splines wear; kingpins can seize

STEERING Box and idler both wear out

COOLING SYSTEM Eventually silts up; look for use of antifreeze/inhibitors, and signs of blocked radiator gills and overheating

BRAKES Seized slave cylinders are common; check the fluid is fresh







Italian styling, tailored to individual marques in the UK, with an interior full of wood and leather (or leathercloth), was a winning combination for BMC



An early Farina such as this is great fun to drive and very comfortable, if top-heavy. The later cars had a better-sorted chassis with wider tracks, stiffened suspension and a lower stance to make them a bit less wallowy and unpredictable when driven hard. Radial tyres improve grip, but crossplies give the best ride and lighter steering



The B-series was overengineered and lasted well, passing 150,000 miles if well serviced between rebuilds. Check the engine number and spec – many have been swapped over the years – mostly uprated, but occasionally downgraded. Oil leaks, low pressure, blow-by, rattles and knocks indicate the need for specialist attention



Look for enough grease around the front suspension, ineffective damping, wear in the kingpins and excessive play in the steering box, idler and linkages



Scrutinise the bottom of the A-post, inner and outer sills, floors (including box-sections), jacking points, bulkhead, outriggers and inner wings for rust



Trim specification varied through the different marques and models. Original is the ideal, as here; many survivors have had interior swaps over the years



An original, unrepaired spring mount such as this is rarely found – check that any work done has been performed properly, or if remedial work is needed

"I waited a long time to find the right car – it has always been garaged and is all original"



The Farina's brakes and handling are well up to modern use, if kept in order. Wolseleys' light-up grille emblems make the 15/60 and 16/60 highly prized

Before you buy

Though corrosion was – and remains – the biggest enemy, Farinas were built like tanks. An Austin A60 won the first Banger World Championship in 1974, an accolade that Farina models would go on to win six further times. Any repairs that have been made to the structure should be sound and tidy, not messily patched together.

The widely used BMC mechanicals are simple and reliable, but everything wears out with time and neglect. If the engine is worn, you will likely see excessive exhaust smoke and breathing, oil leaks, rattles from the top end and knocks from the bottom. It can all be repaired, but a full rebuild of a B-series engine will cost £2-3000. The valve seats eventually wear if you use unleaded fuel and drive it hard – budget around £500 for a rebuilt cylinder head with hardened seats if it hasn't been done already. Drive gently, though, and you may never need it. Lacklustre performance is usually a seized vacuum-advance unit.

Lever-arm shock absorbers can be rebuilt if they are weak. Kingpins and swivels should be greased at least every 3000 miles, but can be replaced if they are worn out. The brakes were adequate when the cars were new, but must be in perfect order for modern traffic; all the parts you need to overhaul them are available and relatively inexpensive.

The gearbox (either column or floor change) has synchromesh on all but first gear – with second being the most susceptible to wear. Check for excess bearing noise (which will fade when the clutch is engaged in neutral) and jumping out of gear. The Borg-Warner 35 auto can still be rebuilt – check for reasonably positive changes, effective kickdown and clean, pink fluid.

OWNING ONE



"BMC Farinas have been in my blood since I was 14 years old," admits **Gerald Foster**. "Dad had an Almond Green Riley 4/72 in New Zealand, and my first car there in 1980 was also a 4/72, which my brother still looks after for me and exercises from time to time. My sisters have owned Rileys, an Austin Cambridge and a Morris Oxford, but this is the first Wolseley in the family. I saw it when on a walk 12 years ago, befriended the owner and finally, two years ago, he decided to sell.

"I waited a long time to find the right Farina. This one has always been garaged and is all original, having covered just 67,000 miles. Plus, it is the earliest-possible specification. It is a nice, comfortable car to drive and I believe it has had the sunvisor since new. I'm looking forward to retiring and putting some more time into it."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1958 Wolseley 15/60 launched: 1489cc, 53bhp, 78mph, 0-60mph 24.5 secs
1959 Austin A55 Cambridge MkII arrives, followed by MG Magnette MkIII (60bhp, 88mph and 0-60mph in 18.8 secs) then Morris Oxford Series V and Riley 4/68
1960 Austin A55 Countryman and Morris Oxford Traveller estates arrive
1961 Facelift: 1622cc engine, wider tracks, longer wheelbase, revised interior, stiffer suspension. Optional column change and Borg-Warner three-speed automatic, plus 1489cc diesel engine for export models. A60, Oxford VI, 16/60: 61bhp, 81mph; Magnette IV, Riley 4/72: 68bhp, 82mph; diesel: 40mpg, 40bhp, 64lb ft, 67mph, 0-60mph in 39.4 secs
1962 Higher axle ratio for estates; diesel A60/Oxford offered in UK
1968 Magnette discontinued
1969 Cambridge and 4/72 discontinued
1971 Oxford and 16/60 discontinued

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1958-'71/c866,700
Construction steel monocoque
Engine all-iron, ohv 1489/1622cc 'four', single/twin SU carbs; or 1489cc diesel
Max power 40bhp @ 4350rpm to 68bhp @ 5000rpm
Max torque 64lb ft @ 2100rpm to 90lb ft @ 2100rpm
Transmission four-speed manual with no synchromesh on first (three-speed Borg-Warner 35 auto option from 1961), RWD
Suspension: front independent, by wishbones, coil springs **rear** live axle, semi-elliptic leaf springs; lever-arm dampers f/r (anti-roll bar f/r from Oct 1961)
Steering cam and peg
Brakes drums
Length 14ft 6¼-10½in (4432-4534mm)
Width 5ft 3½in (1613mm)
Height 4ft 11-11¾in (1499-1518mm)
Wheelbase 8ft 3¼-4¼in (2521-2549mm)
Weight 2352-2565lb (1069-1166kg)
0-60mph 25.6-18 secs
Top speed 78-89mph **Mpg** 25-33
Price new £721-916 (A60 Cambridge saloon to Riley 4/72, 1964)

CLUB

Cambridge-Oxford Owners' Club
co-oc.org

SPECIALISTS

NTG Services bmcfarina.com
Longbridge Motor Spares longbridgemotorspares.co.uk
MEV Spares mevspares.co.uk

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
Austin, Morris	£750/4750/12,500
Countryman, Traveller	£1000/5000/16k
MG, Riley, Wolseley	£1250/5500/17,500

OUR VERDICT

Body condition is paramount. Differences in value from model to model are small, and the appeal of the light-up grille badge means that Wolseleys command as much as the rarer (and livelier) twin-carb Rileys and MGs. All are lovely, usable classics that will make you relax and smile when at the wheel, while still being capable of a good day's work. Beware of incorrect or missing components, and model-specific trim, because many are becoming increasingly scarce.

FOR
Surviving cars have mostly led a sheltered life, being simple and inexpensive to own and maintain, with good parts availability for service items

AGAINST
Values rarely cover the cost of significant restoration; correcting modifications and sourcing lost parts can be tiresome



ALTERNATIVES



HILLMAN SUPER MINX *1961-'67, n/a built*
With estate versions, plus Singer Vogue and Humber Sceptre siblings, the Super Minx was a key rival for the BMC Farina. More spacious and modern in appearance, it's a civilised and cheap option. **Price now** £600-12,000



VAUXHALL VICTOR *1957-'72, 1,165,012 built*
Despite three bodyshell upgrades and larger engines during its life, the spacious, American-styled Victors barely outsold the Farinas. Early examples are prone to rot and finding parts can be difficult. **Price now** £500-15,000

BRISTOL 401-403

The aircraft maker's finest car was the executive jet-setter of its day, and is now highly desirable

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



Bristol's 401-3 was outrageously expensive for a 2-litre saloon when it was new, but feels like a spacecraft compared with most of its contemporaries. A stiff chassis, a smooth and powerful engine, effective suspension and a light yet well-insulated body combined to make it taut and sophisticated. Some say Bristols went downhill from here, losing their streamlined styling, gaining weight and retaining 'advanced' engineering until it became archaic.

The heart of the car's success was its pre-war, BMW-derived, hemi-head straight-six that was sought-after for sports and racing cars at the time. But Bristol made the most of it here. It was the first 100mph 2-litre production saloon, with an exceptionally sleek, all-aluminium body helped by pushbutton door opening, and internal bonnet and boot releases. Bristol adopted Carrozzeria Touring's *Superleggera* construction long before Aston Martin. Even the gauge of aluminium varied: 16 for the front wing tops and bonnet, where pressure might have dented a thinner gauge, and 18 elsewhere. Shapely, body-coloured bumpers with chrome inserts, mounted to the chassis via rubber blocks, were decades ahead of their time.

Other clever details include a bonnet that opens sideways (which is safer) in either direction, or which can be removed by undoing a bolt, and a spring-assisted bootlid strut. Early 401s even had a Tufnol floor and front bulkhead, later replaced by steel. Where the aluminium panel edges were wrapped around the steel tubes on the lower body, however, the sacking between gets wet and electrolytic corrosion can occur; letting in new metal is the only cure. Paintwork is critical: check it has been done properly, or it will flake off.

Areas to inspect include the front apron; along the sills and over the arches; chassis legs, outriggers and rear extensions; behind the B-posts; rear inner arches; double-skinned steel panels each side of the spare wheel; above the rear bumper; and the aluminium fuel tank where it's held by steel straps.

The rare drophead 402 attracted Hollywood stars, early examples going to Stewart Granger and Jean Simmons. In 1953 the 403 refined the idea, its engine boasting a stronger crank and larger valves, with greater oil capacity, to give 100bhp and power the car to 106mph.



Instruments can generally be rebuilt if complete; secondhand ones can be found. Check wood all matches and is good; replacement is relatively easy



Leather-upholstered seats are comfy, and front backrests can be set to four angles. A full retrim costs £15k, and the thickness of factory hide is unavailable



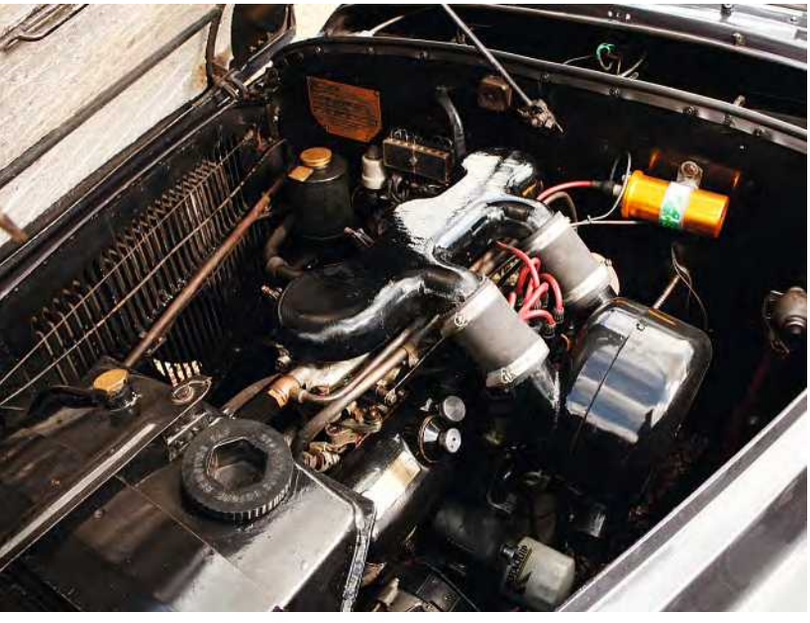


Only the likes of Bentley, Rolls-Royce and Lagonda cost more than the 401 when it was launched in 1949





Signature Bakelite two-spoke sports wheel fronts a stylish dashboard. The later 403, as here, boasted fresh-air or recirculated heating/ventilation, automatic reversing lights, multi-adjustable seats and an aluminium petrol tank. It was phased out in 1955 after the arrival of the close-coupled 2+2 404 and the four-door 405



Check for cracked block on right-hand side; it costs £2-5000 to repair. Skimming the alloy cylinder head can drastically raise compression; listen for pinking and inspect for signs of overheating or head-gasket leaks. If the radiator is more than 10 years old, it should be recored and the engine coolant passages cleaned out



Bristol-made gearbox is sturdy and can invariably be rebuilt. Adding a compact J-type overdrive is worthwhile; the kit requires no chassis modifications



Axle oil lubricates the torsion-bar link-arm pivot bearing; if it wears, the oil leaks out. This, plus rear hub leaks, can wreck the axle if left to run dry



Drum brakes are okay on the 403s (but fade on steep descents); the 401's are heavy. Front discs/servo can be fitted. Repro master-cylinder quality varies



Steering and suspension wear if they're neglected: look for signs that one-shot lubrication works and has been used, and that springs have leather gaiters



"The performance, handling and steering are not like driving a '50s car – it cruises at 70-80mph"

Beautifully balanced 403 shape is basically the same as the 401, but the fine proportions were lost in the restyled and less streamlined 405 four-door

Before you buy

The Autocar was hugely impressed by the 401's comfortable 80mph cruising when it tested the car in 1949, and by 'handling qualities very much above the average'. Only the fairly heavy brakes (improved on the 403) were criticised. Dunlop front discs (with a servo) became optional on the 405 and are often retrofitted on the 401/3. A Coopercraft four-piston caliper/disc conversion is also available, but care must be taken to get the balance correct with the rear brakes.

Having a good engine is crucial because rebuilds are costly. Check which unit is in place, because upgrading to later, more powerful ones is not unusual: 401s should have 85C engines and 403s 100As, but you may well find alternatives such as the 125bhp 100D2, the torquey 2.2-litre 110-series or the 130-155bhp BS (Bristol Sports) motor. The engine should be driven gently until it is warm – check that the vendor does so – and when the oil is at 70°C the gauge should show 60psi oil pressure at 3000rpm. Well cared for, these 'sixes' ought to last 100,000 miles between rebuilds.

One-shot chassis lubrication (every 100 miles) needs checking to ensure that the pipes haven't become blocked. Some oil dripping is to be expected, but confirm it is not leaking from rear axle hub seals, which are a pain to replace.

Inspect the wiring loom, because only two circuits are fused and it is pricey to renew. Semaphore trafficators are often replaced by flashing indicators – the function can be built into the spotlights and reversing lights to avoid adding extra indicator lamps.

Bristols were built to take crossplies, but they work well on Michelin X radials, Pirelli Cinturatos or Vredesteins. Heavy taxi tyres spoil the feel.

OWNING ONE



"I have liked Bristols since they were new," explains **Mike Davies**, "and I can remember LJK Setright writing about them. I have owned various classics and had a Scimitar when I bought this 403 in 2001, but I soon found I wasn't using the Reliant. This car has the disc brakes and overdrive, and it feels so modern for its time. The performance, handling and steering are not like driving a 1950s car – it keeps up with modern traffic and cruises at 70-80mph on the motorway.

"I have fitted Mahle pistons – the rings and grooves were worn in the old ones – and put fresh bearings in the gearbox, plus a new clutch. I enjoy working on it, but I had to get Bristol Cars to fit the new headlining! I have also reset the carbs; the jets used to work loose. We've driven it to France and Spain on holiday."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1948 401/402 launched: 400 chassis and 85C engine, more spacious, aerodynamic *Superleggera* body (400 continues)
1950 401 Second Series: Brivadium dry liners in cylinder block, improved cooling, optional oil cooler, freer-flowing exhaust, plain (not pleated) leather seats, chrome inserts not rubber in bumpers, bigger lip over top of dash. 402 production stops (21 built); also 400 ends
1951 401 Third Series
1953 403 replaces 401 (618 built): 100bhp 100A engine, front anti-roll bar, Alfin drums all round (later finned iron rear); 404 short-wheelbase 2+2 also launched
1954 Four-door 405 joins the family
1955 Final 403 (281 built); last 12-15 had 100B2 engine, 105bhp, sidelights on top of front wings, rear reflectors

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1948-'55/920
Construction steel chassis, aluminium body over steel-tube frame welded to steel underbody
Engine iron-block, alloy-head, cross-pushrod 1971cc straight-six, triple Solex 32BI carbs **Max power** 85bhp @ 4500rpm to 105bhp @ 5000rpm **Max torque** 107lb ft @ 3000rpm to 123lb ft @ 3750rpm
Transmission four-speed manual, freewheel on first, RWD
Suspension: front independent, by upper wishbones, lower transverse leaf spring; anti-roll bar on 403 **rear** live axle, longitudinal torsion bars, A-frame; telescopic dampers f/r **Steering** rack and pinion **Brakes** Lockheed drums f/r (403 Alfin front, finned rear; Alfin f/r on early 403s) **Length** 15ft 11½in (4865mm)
Width 5ft 7in (1700mm) **Height** 5ft (1525mm) **Wheelbase** 9ft 6in (2895mm)
Weight 2786-2814lb (1266-1279kg)
0-60mph 16.4-13.4 secs
Top speed 94-106mph **Mpg** 19-28
Price new £2976 (403, 1953)

CLUBS

Bristol Owners' Club boc.net
Bristol Owners' & Drivers' Association bristoloda.org

SPECIALISTS

Spencer Lane-Jones spencer-lj.com
SLJ Hackett sljhackett.co.uk **Brabazon Motors** brabazonmotors.weebly.com
IN Racing inracing.co.uk **Mitchell Motors** mitchellmotors.co.uk **TI Developments** tidevelopments.co.uk **Coleman Classic Cars** colemanclassiccars.co.uk

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
401	£5000/25,000/44,000
402	£n/a/75,000/120,000
403	£7500/30,000/50,000

OUR VERDICT

Prices for early Bristol saloons are rising fast as their exclusivity and quality are finally being recognised: buy a good one and you will not regret it. Beware of down-at-heel examples – Bristols were cheap for a long time, and many owners couldn't afford the high parts and repair costs. Neglect of the bodywork and engine can lead to severe restoration costs, so choose a rusty project with caution.

FOR
Superb performance for a '50s 2-litre; delightful details and quality; practical for everyday use or touring; comfortable and quiet; fine handling

AGAINST
Superleggera body is expensive to fix and paint; complex engine is pricey to rebuild and can disintegrate with age; costly parts



ALTERNATIVES



AC 2-LITRE SALOON/DROPHEAD/BUCKLAND *1947-'58, 1129 built*
AC's venerable ohc 'six' in leaf-sprung, alloy-on-ash body was refined, but lacked Bristol's modernity. Made as the Buckland tourer, dhc and four-door saloon. **Price now** £2-30,000



HEALEY ELLIOTT/WESTLAND/TICKFORD/ABBOTT *1946-'54, 466 built*
The 2.5-litre Riley 'four' wasn't as smooth as the Bristol 'six', but it was potent enough with light alloy bodies. Appealingly sporting, with great heritage. **Price now** £15-50,000

CITROËN TRACTION AVANT

The first truly successful front-wheel-drive monocoque family car makes a great classic

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **JACK HARRISON**



Precedents can be found for its innovations, but the blend of advancements in car design and production in the Traction Avant have led to it being tipped as among the most revolutionary mass-produced cars of the 20th century. Front-drive, monocoque construction, wishbone/torsion-bar suspension, damped engine mounts, a flat floor, hydraulic brakes, rack-and-pinion steering, a wet-liner, overhead-valve engine and an early type of CV joint were all combined in one, attainable family car. Then there was the hatchback Commerciale, the early use of steering-column stalks on Slough-built cars – the list went on. With the gearbox mounted ahead of the motor, the Citroën was front-mid-engined and, with a wheel at each corner, the handling was excellent. It was no surprise that the car launched in 1934 was in production right up to 1957, by which time most rivals were still far from catching up.

Some 20,000 Tractions were made in England from 1934, built from panelwork shipped from France with a high level of local content, such as leather and wood trim, plus all instruments and switchgear locally sourced, 12V electrics, a chrome grille and optional sliding sunroof.

The monocoque structure extended from the front bulkhead, with box-section arms on either side of the engine, reaching forward to hold the suspension and transmission mounts. Innovative and sturdy, the construction did suffer some unexpected stress fractures: most such areas were addressed early in production, but cracks can still be found, exacerbated by weakness from corrosion. Rot and past bodges are the biggest challenges today. It is also important to understand that pre-war cars need frequent maintenance: around 26 points require greasing every 1000 miles and the oil should be changed at the same interval, or annually if mileage is lower. If maintenance is not done, wear will be rapid and white-metal engine bearings make a full rebuild costly.

Most cars are the Légère (light) saloons, but Tractions can be found in many styles including the spacious long-wheelbase Normale, huge Familiale, Commerciale, and stylish Roadster and Coupé. Most engines were 1911cc 'fours'; next most popular was the 2867cc 'six', and early on there were smaller four-cylinder units – though many of those have been updated.

TROUBLE SPOTS

RUST Check the sills (they are three-part, beware crude patches), suspension mounts on rear of the inner sills and up into the rear wheelarches, torsion bar and steering box mounting areas, floors, backs of the front wings and mounting flanges, bottoms of the doors and bootlid, boot hinge mounts, boot floor and rear valance mounts

CRACKS Inspect the floor at the back of the engine bay, base of 'screen pillars, and look for ripples behind rear doors on LWB cars

ACCIDENT DAMAGE Check the front arms of the monocoque for distortion (open the bonnet) and inspect the door gaps

ENGINE Look out for exhaust smoke, oil breathing, oil/fuel/coolant leaks; knocks and rumbles indicating wear; vibration and knocks from worn engine mounts; cracked exhaust manifolds; worn carburettors

GEARBOX Transmissions are weak: beware of cracks and leaks, and listen for noise





Styled by Flaminio Bertoni and engineered by André Lefèbvre, the Traction Avant was a product of a brilliant team under André Citroën, with its low, flowing design refined by wind-tunnel testing in 1934





A revelation when new, a good Traction feels taut and well controlled, exceptionally comfortable, with adequate performance and great roadholding. Despite the three-speed gearbox, it can be hustled along to keep up surprising averages and a 10:31 crownwheel-and-pinion upgrade makes it more relaxed at speed on modern roads



Robust and durable, the wet-liner Traction engine inspired the Triumph TR's unit. Early 1302 and 1529cc engines are rarely seen, but 1628cc 7C (UK 11hp) motors were made until 1941. Power output of the plentiful 1911cc unit went up steadily through production, and the rarer 2.9-litre six-cylinder was an impressively potent machine



Check the water pump for leaks, which will run down into the bellhousing and can damage the clutch components. It can be rebuilt or exchanged



The gearbox on four-cylinder cars is a weak point and should be handled with care: bump- or tow-starting can explode it. The 15/Six has a much stronger unit



Original trim materials can be sourced from France for the French-built cars; British wood and leather is also pretty straightforward (if costly) to reinstate



The rear suspension mountings, sited at the back of the inner sills, are prone to rusting and should be completely dismantled to repair the area properly

"It keeps up with traffic and is just wonderful to drive – the handling and ride comfort are superb"



'Small-boot' Légère saloon, as here, is the most common, but there was a wide range of body styles

Before you buy

Among the many worthwhile upgrades available for the Traction Avant are the more powerful engine from the ID and its four-speed gearbox. Later, shell-bearing conrods and a diaphragm spring clutch are useful improvements, too. British cars had 12V electrics, while the French cars were 6V: fitting 12V to French-built cars is sensible for driving at night. All were originally on dynamos but are often uprated with alternators.

Check the engine for excessive exhaust smoke, oil breathing and leaks – also look out for any fuel and coolant leaks. A worn Solex carburettor can be exchanged for a rebuilt one or replaced with a new Weber. Overheating leads to head-gasket failure: beware of block cracking caused by over-tightening the cylinder-head bolts. A rattly timing chain is okay if it's not excessive; listen out for knocks and rumbles, indicating engine wear. Six-cylinder cars can warp the cylinder head. Failing engine mounts cause vibration and knocks.

Inspect the gearbox and axle for major oil leaks, and listen for rattles, rumbles and knocks indicating significant wear. The gearchange was never particularly fast, but the synchromesh should be functional. It's important to fix clutch judder before it wrecks the gearbox. Driveshafts click on lock if worn; some owners update to modern CV joints. The Silentbloc bushes on the suspension are costly to replace, so watch out for wear and perishing, plus signs of uneven tyre wear. The drum brakes should feel adequate; if not, it's likely to be caused by seized cylinders and poor adjustment.

The Traction Owners' Club is a great resource for information, good-value components and rental of the special tools required for certain tasks.

OWNING ONE



"I bought this Légère when my wife was away, in 2019," laughs **Simon Lloyd**. "She loves it, though. I used to walk past John Gillard's workshop in London and loved to see the Tractions there. It's a 1952 Paris-built car that came to the UK in 1990 with Dutch numberplates on. It's now showing 69,000km and the interior trim is all original, with an aftermarket – but period – heater fitted. It's had the engine, gearbox and water pump rebuilt, and a partial respray. We take it to France regularly: it keeps up with modern traffic and is just wonderful to drive – the handling is superb and so is the ride comfort. You do have to be slow and deliberate with the gearchange – it helps to double-declutch. Mark Harding at Devon Tractions looks after the car, and he did a really good job on the mechanicals."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1934 7A: 1302cc Berline; 7B: 1529cc; two-door Roadster and Coupé added (pre-WW2 only); 7C: 1628cc, improved construction to reduce cracking; 11A/B: 1911cc, Légère and long-wheelbase 5/6- or 7/8-seat Normale; telescopic dampers, opening bootlid
1936 Rack-and-pinion steering
1938 15/Six: 2867cc 'six'; 8/9-seater Familiale; 7C power increase
1939 Commerciale split-tailgate hatchback added; 11A/B up to 56bhp @ 4250rpm
1947 Production resumes post-war
1950 Higher compression, 59bhp
1952 Styling update with larger boot
1953 Commerciale returns: one-piece hatch
1954 15H: self-levelling rear suspension
1955 11D: 60bhp @ 4000rpm, 78mph
1957 Production ends

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1934-'57/759,111
Construction steel monocoque
Engine all-iron, ohv 1302/1529/1628/1911cc 'four' or 2867cc 'six', single Solex carburettor (twin-choke on 15/Six)
Max power 42bhp @ 3200rpm to 76bhp @ 3800rpm **Max torque** 88.2lb ft @ 2000rpm to 138lb ft @ 2000rpm
Transmission three-speed manual, FWD
Suspension: front lower transverse arms, upper wishbones, torsion bars, telescopic dampers (friction pre-'35) **rear** beam axle, transverse torsion bars, trailing arms, lever-arm dampers from '35 (telescopic from '38)
Steering rack and pinion (bevel gear pre-'36)
Brakes drums **Length** 14ft-16ft 3in (4267-4953mm) **Width** 5ft 3½-10½in (1613-1791mm) **Height** 4ft 11¼in-5ft 1in (1505-1549mm) **Wheelbase** 9ft 6½in-10ft 9in (2908-3277mm) **Weight** 2296-2968lb (1044-1349kg) **0-60mph** 37.7-18.6 secs
Top speed 63-83mph **Mpg** 18-32
Price new £620 9s 6d (15/Six, 1946)

CLUBS

CitroënVie! citroenvie.com **Traction Owners' Club** traction-owners.co.uk

SPECIALISTS

Devon Tractions fb.me/DevonTractions
Traction Repairs tractionrepairs.uk
Citroën Classics citroenclassics.co.uk
Classic restorations facebook.com/classicrestorationscitroen **Roger Williams** www.steam-car-dev.karoo.net
CTA Service Holland ctaservice.nl
Depanoto depanoto-boutique.com
Renel Auto Accessories renelauto.fr
Enpi Retro enpi-retro-auto.com

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
Légère*	£2500/8000/20k
Familiale, Commerciale	£5000/15k/30k
15/Six	£10,000/20,000/40k
Cabriolet, fhc**	£n/a/70,000/100,000

*NORMALE 10-20% LESS, PRE-WAR 25-40% MORE. **REPLICA CABRIO/FHC 20-30% OF GENUINE; 15/SIX CABRIO DOUBLE 4-CYL

OUR VERDICT

Prices for the Traction Avant have come down in recent years and they now represent great value for money – and still thrive on regular use. A full restoration is expensive unless you do all the work yourself, so buy the best-restored bodyshell you can find, with upgrades already done if you want them. Pre-1937 cars are best left to ardent enthusiasts; two-doors are rare and sought-after, so check originality because some are converted saloons.

FOR
Practical usability and comfort wrapped in an evocative pre-war style; as it finds a new audience, prices are sure to rise; parts availability is outstanding

AGAINST
A dodgy Traction will cost more to restore than it will be worth, and the quality of reproduction parts can be variable



ALTERNATIVES



LANCIA APRILIA *1937-'49, 27,642 built*
With monocoque build, all-independent suspension, an overhead-cam V4 engine and hydraulic brakes, the Aprilia was a high-quality machine. Rust claimed many, though, and parts are scarce. **Price now** £2500-90,000



RILEY RM *1945-'55, 23,917 built*
A delight to own and drive, especially in more potent 2.5-litre form, but very expensive to restore, with complicated woodwork as well as rusting metal to contend with. Also great value now. **Price now** £1250-20,000

CITROËN 2CV

Judging by current prices, the 'ugly duckling' has grown into a classic swan. This *toute petite voiture* has enduring appeal

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



Innovative design in every detail characterised the 2CV – the brainchild of Pierre Boulanger – with the joint aims of economy and convenience. Air-cooled, with just two cylinders and no distributor, it was cheap to both build and run. Yet it was one of the most comfortable cars ever built, using clever interlinked horizontal coil springs that act upon each other for all-independent suspension, with minimal unsprung weight thanks to low-mass wheels and inboard front brakes. Rack-and-pinion steering, a four-speed gearbox, separately controlled fresh-air ventilation and warm-air heating, radial tyres and hydraulic brakes were also well ahead of period rivals. Headlight beams adjustable from inside and even road-speed-related wipers took *Deux Chevaux* innovation well into the future.

The 2CV was launched in 1948 and made for 41 years, but only sold in the UK from 1953-'61 (when it was built in Slough) and from '74 on. The unburstable flat-twin – designed by former Talbot man Walter Becchia – started square, at 375cc with a 62mm bore and stroke, and gradually went oversquare to 602cc (74x70).

The lightweight components and simple construction make home restoration viable. Most have had the platform chassis replaced: galvanised chassis give ultimate protection, but painted is fine if looked after. The body is likely to have needed significant welding, too. Check that it has been done and isn't filled-over rot.

Inspect the front bumper mounts (but these are easy to replace); bonnet hinge and flange; windscreen surround and vent panel; toe board; A-, B- and C-posts; chassis, in particular the top surface; floors and sills; rear wing mounting areas, plus the inner wings around the seatbelt anchors; and the boot hinge and boot floor, especially the back edge.

Look out for signs of water getting into the car, usually via a leaking windscreen rubber or the vent-flap seal. It will rust through both the floor and chassis over time, and late models in particular could have rotten frames within 10 years. Portuguese-built cars were not as well protected as later French ones. In extreme cases, the structure begins to bend, opening up the panel gap from the back of the front wing to the bonnet hinge, or closing it and causing the triangular panel to bulge out. Be prepared for significant expense if you're buying a car in this condition – and don't drive it!



The unconventional dog-leg gearchange should be easy and crunch-free. Test the synchromesh (especially in third) and listen for noise from worn bearings



Inspect for kingpin, steering-rack and trackrod-end wear. Kingpins should be greased every 1000 miles on early cars. Heavy steering indicates neglect here







Roof folds halfway or can be rolled right back. The 2CV was roomy, with a rear seat that could be removed for vast luggage capacity



Dash gearshift is initially awkward but soon learnt, and hammock-style chairs are really comfortable. Owning a *Deux Chevaux* is a lifestyle statement, and it means joining a worldwide family of enthusiastic owners who will welcome you with open arms. You'll never be short of help and advice to get the most out of your ownership



2CVs don't have a lot of power, but they should have enough to make reasonable progress. Rattly, weak engines may have broken piston rings and/or maladjusted valves. Conrods can break – the car will actually keep driving on one piston, but it won't be smooth. The spark-plug threads do get stripped, but can be repaired



Upgraded soft-tops and even heated rear windows are available, along with sunshades and thermal liners. A new, original-specification roof costs £250



Inboard disc front brakes (£17-26 for pads) replaced drums in 1981 and are easier to service, but the handbrake (£12.60 for separate pads) is weaker



The outside edge of the driver's seat wears, and sunlight can destroy the tops. New rubbers and central canvas support will transform sagging chairs



2CVs started with a single-choke Solex carb (£359 new, 1963-'70), enlarged in 1970 (£294 exchange) and replaced by a twin-choke unit (£400 new) in 1978



'Tin Snails' are often personalised by their owners, such as the cream wheels and bumpers on this one to match its top

Before you buy

A well-cared-for Citroën 2CV should start instantly (providing it is in regular use), run smoothly and be surprisingly quiet. 'Power' isn't a term that really applies, but when rowed along between second and third it should be able to maintain around 55-60mph without too much difficulty. If not, something is awry.

Look for service history and evidence that care has been lavished on both the running gear and the structure. 2CVs came with a front-grille muff, to be fitted below 50°F (10°C) and removed above 59°F (15°C). See that it is still in the car.

The points are awkward to change: they are buried in a box behind the fan, so 123 electronic ignition is a popular upgrade. Numerous options for tuning are offered: 9:1 barrels and pistons are effective, or skimming 0.3mm from the tops of the barrels should enliven the performance without penalty. Visa engine conversions are not a great idea, because the 652cc unit is not as durable. If you really want more power, Sparrow offers a kit for around £1000 that converts to a BMW R-series flat-twin motorcycle engine, with 70-125bhp, but you'll need to spend a fair bit more on donor parts and a stronger gearbox. You can even fit a 4x4 conversion.

Apart from the brushes wearing, not much goes wrong with the alternator. The rest of the electrics are equally simple, but modern coils are not as good as the original ones.

Nankang 135x15 tyres at £40-45 each (or Toyos at £75, or even Maxxis at £55) make an appealing alternative to the original Michelin X 125 at £100-120, but the Xs last longer and look right. You can usually resolve noisy suspension by injecting vegetable oil into the cylinders and greasing the knife-edges.

OWNING ONE



Richard Forsyth bought this 1987 *Deux Chevaux* a decade ago: "I had always wanted a 2CV and saw this one at a show I was attending in my Ford Model A: I bought it on the spot. My wife has warmed to it, and we finally went to France in it last year. It attracted lots of attention, from both the French and other tourists.

"It's all original and has covered only 23,000 miles. I like the simplicity: it is economical, it has plenty of space inside and the suspension is fantastic – it's ideal for Britain's deteriorating roads. It will just about keep up with modern traffic, cruising happily at 60mph – until you come to a hill, that is. You can get all the spare parts without a problem – although all that this one has needed in 10 years has been a new silencer and a replacement ignition coil."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1948 2CV Type A makes its debut at Paris Salon de l'Auto: 375cc, 9bhp, built to 1959
1951 Fourgonette AU van announced
1954 425cc AZ added: 12bhp, 47mph, centrifugal clutch to '61, built to '70 (21bhp)
1965 Extra side window, front-hinged doors
1967 Angular Dyane hatchback added
1968 Méhari jeep launched, using strengthened Dyane chassis with ABS body
1970 12V electrics; revised 435/602cc units
1974 Rectangular halogen headlights; 2CV reintroduced to UK market, 602cc engine
1975 New basic Spécial, with round lights
1980 Charleston special edition added
1981 Front disc brakes
1985 Dolly two-tone, based on Spécial
1988 Last French 2CV produced
1990 Final 2CV built, in Portugal

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1948-'90/5,114,966
Construction rectangular-tube chassis with welded floor, bolt-on steel body
Engine all-alloy, ohv 375/425/435/602cc flat-twin, Solex single- or twin-choke carb
Max power 9bhp @ 3500rpm to 29bhp @ 5750rpm **Max torque** 14.5lb ft @ 2000rpm to 29lb ft @ 3500rpm
Transmission four-speed manual, FWD
Suspension independent, at **front** by leading arms, friction dampers (telescopic from 1974) **rear** trailing arms, telescopic dampers; horizontal interlinked coils f/r
Steering rack and pinion
Brakes drums f/r; front discs from 1981
Length 12ft 5-6¾in (3785-3830mm)
Width 4ft 10¼in (1480mm) **Height** 5ft 3in (1600mm) **Wheelbase** 7ft 9¼-10¼in (2375-2400mm) **Weight** 1120-1320lb (509-600kg) **0-60mph** 27.3 secs (602cc)
Top speed 41-71mph **Mpg** 36-60
Price new £2285-2745 (1982)

CLUBS

Deux Chevaux Club of GB 2cvgb.co.uk
Citroën Car Club citroencarclub.org.uk

SPECIALISTS

ECAS ecas2cvparts.co.uk **Sparrow Automotive** sparrowautomotive.co.uk
Matt's Soft Tops matts-soft-tops.co.uk
The 2CV Shop the2cvshop.co.uk **Richard Dalton** richard-dalton.com/classic-cars
2CV City facebook.com/2CVCity **Totally 2CV** sites.google.com/view/totally2cv
Bill Gale www.uk2cvworkshop.f9.co.uk
MWR mwrmotors.co.uk
The Chevronic Centre chevronics.co.uk
Cambridge 2CV cambridge2cvltd.co.uk

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
Up to 1965	£2000/7500/20,000
1965-'80	£1500/5500/15,000
1980-'90	£1000/6000/18,000
Van	£2500/8500/22,000

OUR VERDICT

Idiosyncratic, brilliant and fun, the 2CV has succeeded where its French and Italian rivals have so far failed by capturing an enthusiast following so strong that prices have now rocketed it far beyond its bargain-basement origins. But be wary: 'cheap to run' doesn't equate to 'cheap to restore', and rotten examples abound, disguised with underseal and shiny paint. Buy with caution.

FOR
Cheap to run and maintain; characterful and charming; all parts are available, but prices are rising; superb support from clubs and specialists

AGAINST
Can rust severely; performance is strictly limited; tarted-up rotboxes are not uncommon; not the bargains they once were



ALTERNATIVES



FIAT 126 *1972-2000, 4,673,655 built*
Replacing the 500, the tiddly 126 was a huge success, growing from 600 to 650cc in 1977, then 700cc and water cooling in 1987, with improving equipment levels. Rust was its biggest enemy. **Price now** £600-12,000



RENAULT 4 *1961-'92, 8,135,424 built*
Renault's first front-drive car was a clear, measured response to the 2CV, rationalising the idea. It added a hatchback, two more cylinders, water cooling and torque. It rotted equally, too. **Price now** £500-12,500

CITROËN DS & ID

The *Déesse* – or goddess – stunned the public at its 1955 Paris launch. Don't let its daunting complexity put you off

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



Citroën pioneered so much on the DS that it should never have been possible to make it affordable. Yet it was, and in later years, once tooling costs had been amortised, it was great value: a 2.3EFI could give a Jaguar XJ6 4.2 a run for its money and cost two-thirds as much.

In 1955, when the DS was launched, no other vehicle could boast this combination of sophistication. There was self-levelling, height-adjustable hydropneumatic suspension, power-assisted steering, powered brakes and semi-automatic gearchanging – even pioneering new materials, with a glassfibre roof and injection-moulded nylon dash. The base-unit construction, offering the rigidity of a monocoque but with panels bolted on, was new, and there were front-wheel disc brakes, all-independent suspension, radial tyres, rack-and-pinion steering, aerodynamic styling (0.37Cd)... The list goes on. Little wonder that 12,000 people placed orders for the new car at the Paris Salon on the day it was announced.

That so much could be so different yet work so well after a couple of years ironing out its teething troubles is testament to the quality of the design. Only the basic four-cylinder engine detracts from its star qualities: costs became too great to develop the planned air-cooled flat-six, which could have been perfect.

A wide range of models was offered over the years, and it is sensible to familiarise yourself with them because the spec can affect value significantly. However, it shouldn't be your first priority when buying: every good DS or ID (the down-specced, less-complex model) should be a pleasure to own. Unless you're looking for a restoration project, don't be drawn into buying a rusty or neglected car because it has a high spec. The cost of bringing it back to a good level will far exceed the difference in value.

With that in mind, inspect the apron and crossmember below the spare wheel; front wings around the wheelarches, lower corners and behind the lights; bulkhead around the 'screen; roof around the cant rail; door bottoms; sills, especially at the A-, B- and C-posts; rear crossmember; the front of the boot floor; inner wings; bumper mounts; gutters; rear wings, particularly at the top and bottom edges; bootlid corners and base; and the front and rear of boot floor.



The hydraulic fluid should be changed every two years: check it is clean with no sediment or particles that indicate the rubber seals are breaking up



Start the engine and see that car rises to normal height, then the pump should cut out, clicking on and off every 20 secs or so. Bearing noise means it is worn



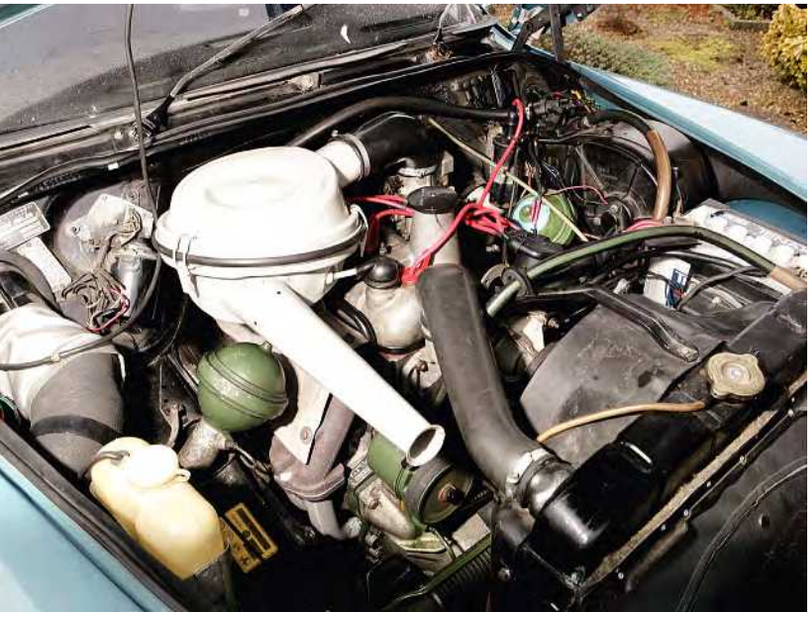




Everywhere you look, there are innovative details: single-bolt rear wings, frameless door windows, bootlid closing against the rear 'screen



Last evolution of the dash in 1969 included a padded wheel. For a first-time owner, it is best to go for a later car: they are more common, the parts are readily available and they are easier to own. In 1965/'66, more powerful five-bearing engines were fitted and the hydraulic fluid was changed from red and corrosive to green and inert



Never the sweetest-sounding of engines, these DS units are nevertheless reliable and long-lived. Wet-liner sinkage at high mileage is the biggest danger, leading to a tendency to blow cylinder-head gaskets that no amount of head skimming will cure. Check for the warning signs – oil in the coolant and emulsion on the oil-filler cap



Green spheres signal green LHM: the older (red) LHS is hygroscopic. A harsh ride means the diaphragms have failed; fitting CX items is the cheapest solution



Remove the rear wings for inspection: check for rust in all the inner panels and the rear hydraulic junction box (behind a panel in front of the left-rear wheel)



Trim is generally cloth – and is hard-wearing. It is widely available from specialists, but not cheap. If you're lucky, it can be found secondhand



Five-speed column 'change is precise if properly set-up; if it's not, it needs attention. Semi-autos are complex so costly if they fail, but they rarely do



"It had lived in Hungary from new. As a top-of-the-range 21 Pallas, it must have belonged to someone pretty special"

Lines on the headlamp fairings are often mistaken for heating elements, but they are just a styling touch

Before you buy

Once described by French philosopher Roland Barthes as "a new Nautilus", the Citroën DS is as different to drive from a conventional car of the 1950s as it is to look at. The pushbutton brakes, foot-operated parking brake, hydraulic gear selection, one-spoke steering wheel and non-cancelling indicators all take some acclimatisation – although only some models have all of these features.

Expect the four-cylinder engine to sound uninspiring, but excess rattling means wear – and a full rebuild will be expensive. Check for overheating, too. Fuel injection, where fitted, is usually reliable, but beware aged flexible fuel lines that can split, causing fires.

Gear selection, whatever the model, should be easy once you understand the layout: if it isn't, there is something wrong, but simple adjustment may be all it needs. The hydraulic clutch and gear selection are wonderful to experience when properly set-up. The DS was also the first car to feature a column-mounted five-speed manual gearchange.

Inspect the service records: clutch replacement is a 10-hour job. If the hydraulic pump clicks all the time, the main accumulator has probably failed, but it could also signal a fault with the power steering.

The brakes should respond to the lightest touch; if not, they need attention. Make sure the handbrake works well, because its mechanism is difficult to access so costly to repair. The suspension should be smooth, taut and supple: if it's harsh, the spheres are failing, and if it rattles or thumps, the suspension bushes are shot. Driveshaft joints will clonk when worn. Take the suspension up to full height and switch off, then get out and check for leaks. It should stay up!

OWNING ONE



Citroën Car Club chairman **Brian Drummond** came late to the DS. "I started with Traction Avants and worked my way right up through the range," he explains. "I have owned everything from 2CVs to C5s. I used to take engines out of the Light 15s, and I did all of my own maintenance up to the Xantia, so it's nice to be hands-on again.

"I bought the DS in January 2008; it had been fully restored in Hungary, where it had lived from new. As a top-of-the-range DS21 Pallas, it must have belonged to someone pretty special. I have had a couple of misfire problems, which turned out to be faulty spark plugs, but apart from that it has been very reliable over 3000 miles. It's no problem driving a left-hand-drive car here in the UK; my biggest problem has been getting used to the non-cancelling indicators!"

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1955 DS introduced: 1911cc, 75bhp
1956 66bhp manual ID added: unassisted steering and brakes; UK production begins
1959 Estate arrives (optional seven seats)
1960 Décapotable introduced
1961 More conventional steel dash on DS
1962 Front tweaks; manual clutch option
1964 Pallas high-spec luxury model added
1965 New oversquare five-bearing engines
1966 Change to green fluid; last Slough car
1967 DS front restyled: faired-in twin lights
1968 DS/ID19 replaced by DS/ID20
1969 D Spécial replaces ID19, D Super ID20
1970 Injection/five-speed manual options
1971 Recessed doorhandles; Borg-Warner automatic option
1972 DS23 added, 141bhp in EFI form
1975 DS discontinued

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1955-'75/1,580,643
Construction steel punt, bolt-on panels
Engine iron-block, alloy-head, ohv 1911/1985/2175/2347cc 'four', single carburettor or electronic fuel injection
Max power 66bhp @ 4500rpm to 141bhp @ 5250rpm
Max torque 92lb ft @ 3000rpm to 144lb ft @ 2500rpm
Transmission four-speed semi-automatic, four/five-speed manual or three-speed automatic, FWD
Suspension independent, at **front** by twin leading arms **rear** trailing arms; gas-sphere springs, hydraulic dampers, self-levelling, anti-roll bar f/r
Steering power-assisted rack-and-pinion
Brakes powered inboard discs front, drums rear
Length 15ft 10½in (4839mm)
Width 5ft 11in (1800mm)
Height 4ft 10in (1475mm)
Wheelbase 10ft 3in (3125mm)
Weight 2716-3002lb (1235-1365kg)
0-60mph 23.3-10.4 secs
Top speed 83-120mph **Mpg** 19-29
Price new £2064 (DS20, 1973)

CLUB

Citroën Car Club citroencarclub.org.uk

SPECIALISTS

DS Workshop dsworkshop.co.uk
Citroën Classics citroenclassics.co.uk
The Chevronic Centre chevronics.co.uk
Pallas Auto pallasauto.co.uk
French Classics frenchclassics.com
BL Autos blautos.co.uk

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
ID, D	£1000/14,000/40,000
DS	£1500/15,000/60,000
Pallas	£2000/17,500/75,000
Break	£3000/20,000/50,000
Décapotable	£n/a/75,000/170,000

OUR VERDICT

Find yourself a Citroën DS or ID with minimal rot in the main structure and which has been well maintained, and you will be in possession of a timeless classic car that remains a pleasure to drive even on long Continental tours, while turning heads and attracting admiring glances wherever it goes. But beware, because a rusty and neglected example can be a millstone with which to drown yourself.

FOR
Superb ride; relaxing to drive long distances; exceptionally advanced for its time; power steering, semi-automatic gearchange

AGAINST
As rust-prone as any car of its day; hydraulics are costly to rebuild if neglected; front-wheel drive, so some jobs are time-consuming



ALTERNATIVES



NSU Ro80 *1967-'77, 37,204 built*
The Ro80 proved how revolutionary cars can go horribly wrong, as rotor-tip seal wear and a hefty fuel thirst cancelled out its exceptional features – including the twin-rotor Wankel engine, semi-automatic 'box, great handling and supple ride. **Price now** £1500-18,000



ROVER P6 *1963-'77, 329,066 built*
Similar in build to a DS, the P6 is easy to drive, cheap and built to high standards, and it should be reliable. Choose based on what fuel thirst you can tolerate, because even the 2-litre car offers a reasonable turn of speed. Just don't buy a rotten one! **Price now** £500-15,000

DAIMLER MAJESTIC & MAJOR

The last of the big, independent Daimlers offered mayoral levels of luxury with optional V8 muscle

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **JAMES MANN**



Early sales of the Daimler Majestic were hampered by its dated looks and obsolete, separate-chassis coachbuilt construction. Conversely, these features add to its appeal today because they emphasise its traditional British qualities – characteristics that are not normally found with servo-assisted four-wheel disc brakes, let alone the option of a 4.6-litre hemi V8.

The Majestic was unusually wide for its day and is delightfully spacious, wonderfully comfortable and exceptionally well equipped. The high standard of finish makes restoration of a neglected car potentially very expensive, albeit manageable by an enthusiastic amateur because everything is hand-finished.

Road tests complimented the handling of this big car, with its minimal roll and gentle understeer. The Majestic had ponderous steering, but the Majestic Major enjoyed power assistance first as an option, later as standard.

The Major's oversquare V8 engine was a *tour de force* by Edward Turner, adding 50% more power for a 20% increase in capacity than the 'six'. It was 26lb lighter, too, and performance was quite startling for the day, with 0-60mph in 9.7 secs and a 123mph top speed from a car weighing just under two tonnes.

Turner had taken charge of BSA's motor-car division (primarily Daimler) after the flamboyant Sir Bernard and Norah Docker were ousted by the board. Profligate they had been, but they had many friends in high places and damage had been done to the group's future. Turner was a brilliant engine designer, but faced impossible hurdles. He attempted to save the firm with a US-targeted sports car using a superb 2.5-litre V8 in what was basically a TR3 chassis, but the SP250 was expensive with a quirky glassfibre body and sales were poor.

An attempt to drop the V8 into the Vauxhall Cresta was swept away when Jaguar purchased Daimler in June 1960, but the Major went into production five months later and continued until the British Leyland takeover of '68, its cancellation blamed on uneconomic engine production methods and tiny volumes.

Parts availability now is limited, but a small number of dedicated specialists can usually find the mechanical items to keep you going. Fabrication is the only option for body panels, while some used trim parts can still be found.

TROUBLE SPOTS

RUST Check the front wings, especially above the headlights and the rear edges; A-posts, particularly at their bases; sills; floors; door bottoms; rear inner/outer wings; boot floor; and chassis box-sections

ENGINE Cylinder-head gasket failure was common on the V8s, but the situation is improved by using modern gaskets. On both engines, listen for rattly timing chains and for knocking bearings; check for oil leaks, heavy oil breathing and signs of the oil and water mixing

TRANSMISSION Look out for smooth changes and an effective kickdown; check the fluid colour (black is bad) and level

INTERIOR Trim is very costly to have restored if the wood and leather are in need of full replacement

BRAKES Cast-iron brake calipers corrode and seize readily; ask the vendor if the system has been uprated to silicone fluid





Imposing rather than beautiful, the Major has a longer boot and distinctive 'V' markings on the side grilles to distinguish it from six-pot Majestics





For its time, the six-cylinder Majestic was lively for a big, opulent saloon – but the Major was an absolute revelation, with 0-60mph in less than 10 secs and surprisingly nimble handling. As an effortless touring machine with the highest levels of traditional luxury, the Daimler is a delight to either ride in or drive



Just 2044 cars were built with the big Daimler V8 engine, which shares few components with the smaller unit. Surprisingly, most parts can still be found. Check for signs of head gasket leaks on V8s and 'sixes'; both are durable if well maintained, and they have few vices. Beware of oil leaks, knocks and rattles



Modern for its day, the Borg-Warner three-speed automatic transmission was the only option and was at its limit in the Major; adding an oil cooler helps



Burr walnut on this early Major, with a full set of instruments and leather upholstery. A neglected interior can cost many thousands to put right



The running gear of these heavy cars needs frequent maintenance: check the power steering for leaks, joints for wear, brakes for neglect, and tyres



Check all the bodywork for rot, which is particularly hard to repair where the A-post and front wing meet: the front edge of the door pivots into the wing



Turner's 220bhp hemi V8 gives the Majestic Major a turn of speed at odds with its rather staid looks

Before you buy

The Majestic and Majestic Major offered a traditional handbuilt quality from the 'good old days' that Sir William Lyons indulged for eight years after buying Daimler. The cruciform box-section chassis had evolved from the 1937 Daimler New Fifteen, but, fitted with telescopic dampers and an anti-roll bar, it could still hold its own in the 1960s.

These traditional cars need frequent maintenance, but do that and the engines will reward with both plenty of torque and lazy dependability. Used Major V8 units can still be found for £2-3000 secondhand; their biggest weakness is the steel cylinder-head gaskets that were originally used. Modern gaskets cure the leaks, provided the heads themselves are in good order.

The Borg-Warner DG250M automatic transmission was at the limit of its capabilities in the Major; Mercedes-Benz fitted an oil cooler to this gearbox, and doing so makes for a worthwhile – if costly – conversion.

Larger front brake calipers and pads were fitted on the Majestic Major. The cast-iron Dunlop calipers are very prone to corrosion if normal hygroscopic fluid is used, so an upgrade to silicone fluid is a wise investment.

Jaguar kept the Major's specification under review throughout production, and numerous changes were made. Most of them were positive: a deeper radiator; rear track widened by adding spacers between the hubs and wheels; exhaust re-routed from under the rear axle to over it; and late Majors had alternator charging, a limited-slip differential and power-assisted steering all fitted as standard equipment. But some costs were cut, too, with plain walnut veneer replacing burr walnut in the cabin.

OWNING ONE



Talented engineer **Peter Bristow** bought his 1961 Majestic Major in 1967. "It was absolutely rotten," he says, "I wasn't a proficient welder then and couldn't afford new panels, so I patched it with aluminium and pop-rivets – some of those repairs lasted until 10 years ago! It was my daily driver at first and has had only one eight-year spell in the garage after the torque converter failed; otherwise it has always been on the road. The transmission is the weak point, so I've had an oil cooler fitted.

"I added a stainless exhaust early on, and it has had silicone brake fluid for 45 years. I rebuilt the engine 10 years ago: it had done 150,000 miles. I had to get pistons from Australia. I've had the sills and some bodywork done professionally, but other panels I've welded myself, and I had it painted a Jaguar colour. I keep it Waxoyled now!"

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1958 Majestic launched: 3.8-litre 'six', Borg-Warner three-speed auto, all-disc brakes, 3.92:1 axle, 6.50x16 tyres
1959 DQ450 Majestic Major launched
1960 Jaguar takes over Daimler; Majestic Major production starts: 4.6-litre V8, longer boot, twin fuel pumps, 3.77:1 axle, 7.00x16 tyres, bigger front calipers, Girling dampers, padded sunvisors, redesigned dash, bench or individual front seats
1961 DR450 Major limousine added: 11ft 6in wheelbase, eight seats, 110mph
1962 Majestic production ends
1964 Power steering made standard; alternator and limited-slip differential fitted
1966 Jaguar group joins BMC to form British Motor Holdings
1968 British Leyland formed: 4.5-litre V8 Daimler production ends

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1958-'68/1490 Majestic, 1180 Majestic Major, 864 DR450
Construction steel body, steel chassis
Engine iron-block, alloy-head, ohv 3794cc 'six', twin SU HD6 carburettors, or 4561cc V8, twin SU HD8 carbs
Max power 147bhp @ 4400rpm to 220bhp @ 5500rpm **Max torque** 209lb ft @ 2800rpm to 283lb ft @ 3200rpm
Transmission three-speed Borg-Warner automatic, RWD
Suspension: front independent, by lower wishbones, upper links, radius arms, coil springs, anti-roll bar **rear** live axle, semi-elliptic leaf springs; telescopic dampers f/r
Steering Burman recirculating ball, power-assisted on Major (optional at first)
Brakes Dunlop discs, with Lockheed servo
Length 16ft 4-10in (4980-5130mm)
Width 6ft 1¼in (1860mm) **Height** 5ft 2¾in (1595mm) **Wheelbase** 9ft 6in (2895mm)
Weight 3920-4200lb (1782-1909kg)
0-60mph 14.2-9.7 secs
Top speed 101-123mph **Mpg** 15-23
Price new £2495/2906/3766 (Majestic/Major/limousine, 1962)

CLUBS

Daimler & Lanchester Owners' Club dloc.org.uk **Daimler Enthusiasts' Club** daimlerclub.co.uk

SPECIALISTS

David Manners jagspares.co.uk **Robert Grinter Restorations** robertgrinter.co.uk
Graham Whitehouse Autos gwautos.com
J&E Engineering Services 250v8.co.uk
David Beales Engineering daimlerspares.org

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
Majestic	£1750/6000/15,000
Majestic Major	£2000/9000/22,000
DR450 limousine	£2000/10,000/30k

OUR VERDICT

Both the Majestic and Majestic Major offer an almost unique combination of olde-worlde charm with decent performance, handling and brakes. Body rot and general neglect are the big challenges because these cars have been unloved for decades, but find a good one and it will reward with all the luxury and elegance of a Rolls-Royce, without the snobbery and high parts prices. Just don't buy a rustbucket...

FOR
Exclusivity, charm, elegance and usability; purchase prices are very reasonable, as are parts – if you can find them

AGAINST
Rusted severely from new, so survivors are likely to have been bodged; prices are currently way below the cost of a quality restoration



ALTERNATIVES



JAGUAR MkX *1961-'70, 24,282 built*
Slower than a Major to 80mph in 3.8-litre form, the MkX had to grow to 4.2 litres to match the Daimler. More modern-looking, monocoque, with good parts supply, but equally rust-prone. **Price now** £1500-30,000



PRINCESS IV/VdP *1952-'68, 4318 built*
With a 4-litre 'six', the saloon hit 99mph but the limousine just 86mph: more for mayoral processions than chauffeured commuting. Luxurious and spacious, but it lacked the prestige of a Daimler. **Price now** £2-17,500

FIAT 500

The world's best-selling microcar also makes a great fun city classic

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



We tend not to think of 500s as microcars, simply because they looked and went like proper cars, but in dimensions – both of the bodyshell and the engine – they fit the microcar criteria. Dante Giacosa's brilliant design, taking a new, air-cooled two-cylinder engine and mounting it in the back of a scaled-down version of his water-cooled 633cc 600 model, made a tiny car ideal for the congested streets of Europe's historic cities.

That said, the original two-seater '57 Nuova, with just 13bhp from 479cc, was perhaps going a bit too far; it was quickly uprated to 15bhp and given rear seats. Demand for the 21bhp 499.5cc Sport model encouraged Fiat to replace the Nuova after just three years with the 17.5bhp 499.5cc 500D. This engine was used virtually unchanged until 1973, when the last 500R got the 594cc engine scheduled for the new 126.

Abarth-tuned variants were available from the start. In 1963, Abarth launched the 595 with 28bhp, then soon after came the 695 with 32bhp and the ultimate 695SS with 38bhp, or up to 55bhp in race trim; production ended in 1971. A less well-known tuning house, Giannini, also produced fast 500s with special engines from 390-652cc, often beating Abarths on the track.

The near-identical Steyr-Puch 500, of which c60,000 were built from 1957-'73, used a Puch motorcycle flat-twin of 16-20bhp; the 650 TR had a 660cc twin with 27bhp, or 41bhp in TRII form, and was a potent competition model. The estate Steyr-Puch had a 643cc 20/25bhp twin.

Genuine examples of the hotter Abarth, Giannini and Steyr-Puch models are highly sought-after and worth many times more than standard cars, which tempts the unscrupulous to pass off replicas as the real thing: beware.

The 500 is susceptible to rust, so inspect any potential purchase carefully; also verify the car is what the vendor claims it to be. Check the front panel, particularly the bottom edge and return; front inner and outer wings, especially wheelarches; battery tray in the front boot; bottom corners of the 'screen; door bottoms; inner/outer sills; floors; inner and outer rear arches; rear spring mounts; and lower corners of rear 'screen and vent panel. There are many left-hand-drive Italian imports around: some are excellent, others not so well restored.



All 500s including the R had a non-synchro 'box, so double-declutching is vital. When worn, expect noise and jumping out of gear in first or reverse



In the front boot, take a look under the battery for corrosion both from acid and damp; inner panels can reveal the truth behind a recent shiny paintjob







Dante Giacosa's Fiat 500 is supremely cute, and surprisingly nippy around town and out on country lanes



Despite its diminutive proportions, the 500 is comfortable once you've squeezed in. The cars are perfectly capable of driving huge distances, and you will only hold up traffic on steep hills, motorways and dual carriageways, but you are better off allowing additional time and picking A-roads for safety and a lot more enjoyment



Expect some oil leaks, but excessively oily engines are an embarrassment and can mean internal wear that could spell an imminent rebuild; excessive smoking will confirm this. Listen out for a worn timing chain (bearing in mind that the engines are always quite thrashy) and check that the engine that's fitted is as described



Make sure this flap closes when cold and opens when warm: if it's stuck shut, the engine may overheat, if it's stuck open, it will take too long to warm up



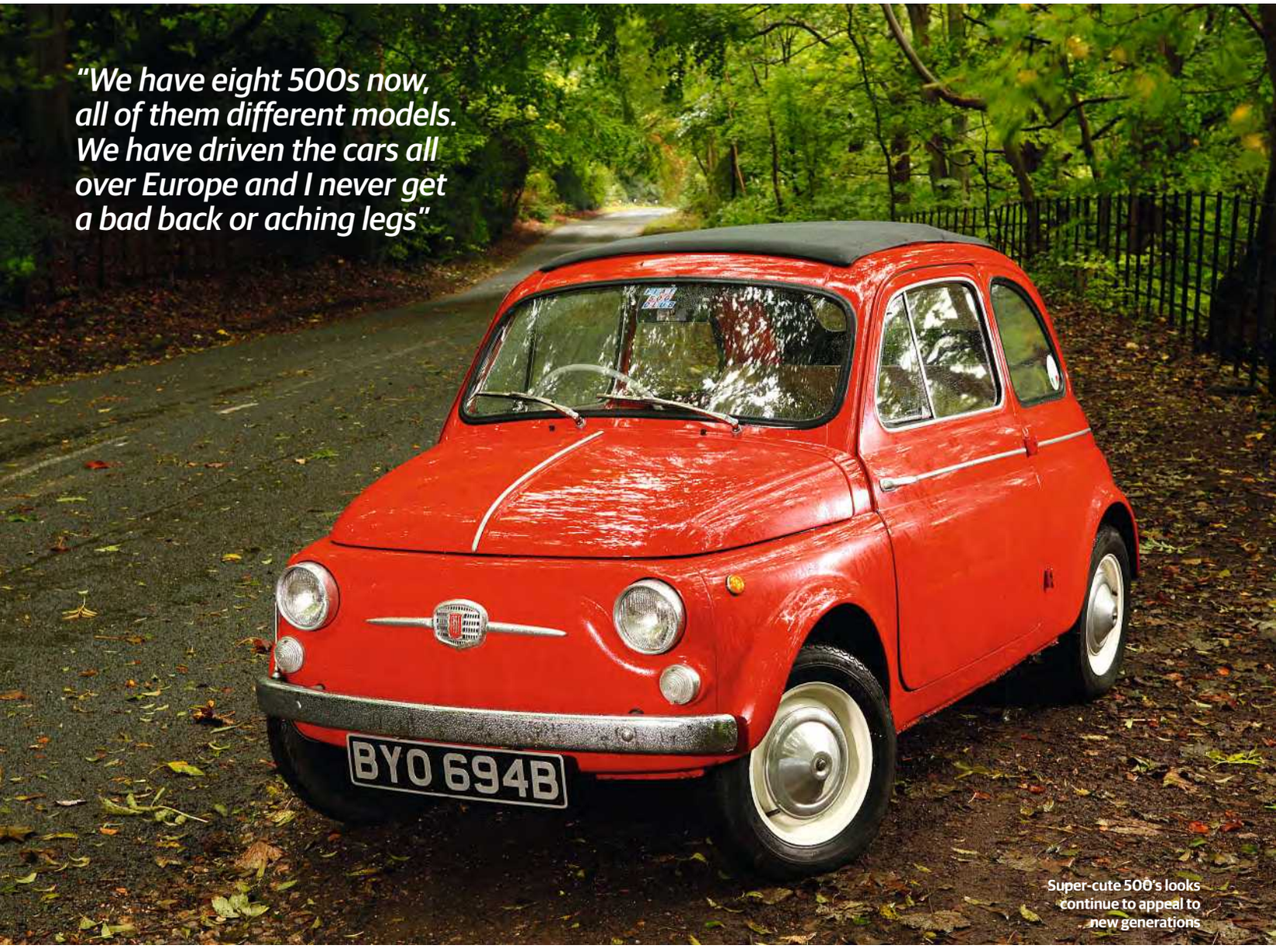
Check the rear suspension arms for signs of rust or cracks, especially near the front mounting bush: if not repaired, this could lead to suspension collapse



Check the steering box and idler for leaks, indicating wear; track-rods can become bent by kerbing. Alignment is crucial: look out for uneven tyre wear



Kingpin front suspension quickly wears if it's not greased every 1000 miles, but few owners keep to this: watch out for wear and ask about past maintenance



Super-cute 500's looks continue to appeal to new generations

Before you buy

Any 500 model should start readily, whether cold or hot, but many of them don't: poor past servicing and a worn carburettor or distributor won't help, but a faulty condenser is often the cause – especially if the engine cuts out when hot. Frequent spark-plug replacement is advisable: use motorcycle plugs such as NGKs. Simple electronic-ignition conversions will also help; although the 500's electrics are fairly simple, they can often give trouble. When driving, use plenty of revs and change down early to keep the engine on the boil: Fiat units always thrive on revs. Only the 500L and R models boast a standard fuel gauge – others just have a warning light when there's around half a gallon left.

Pistons and barrels from the 126 can be fitted to give more power; some cars feature complete 126 running gear, with 594cc, 23bhp and synchromesh on the top three gears, or 652cc and 24bhp in post-'76 form. The latter engine has '650' cast into the top of the cylinder head, and is fitted with an alternator. The 600 unit is detected by looking at the engine number, adjacent to the rear engine mounting (it will start '600').

Some owners struggle to master the unsynchronised gearbox: watch out for excessive noise and wear. It is possible to convert to the three-synchro 126 'box, which should last well and has a higher final-drive ratio, which is vital for an uprated engine. The five-speed Abarth gearbox is the ultimate choice.

The brakes should be adequate – if not, they need attention. Cars with bigger engines benefit from larger brakes from the 126. Stiff steering means neglected servicing: it should be finger-light. Check the ride height to be sure the front spring has not sagged or broken.

OWNING ONE



Roger and **Janet Westcott**, both committee members of the Fiat 500 Club, hired a 500 for their honeymoon on Jersey in 1960. "We loved it, so I bought us a 600 when we came home," recalls Roger. "We had other Fiats, then in 1988 we looked at 500s at a club rally and thought, 'That would be fun,' so we decided to buy this one. It had already been restored, so I've only had to look after it.

"I always put Activ8 additive in the oil and I think that helps them to run cool. Electronic ignition helps, too. We have eight 500s now, all of them different models, and do thousands of miles in them each year, but this one goes best of all. We have driven the cars all over Europe and I never get a bad back or aching legs when I'm driving them."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1957 500 launched: 479cc, 13bhp; relaunched at Turin Show as Nuova 500 Normale with 15bhp and upgraded trim; original model becomes the Economy
1958 Sport: 499.5cc, 21.5bhp, no sunroof
1959 Economy becomes Trasformabile: full-length sunroof; Normale gets short sunroof
1960 Giardiniera estate: engine on side for lower floor, plus longer wheelbase; 500D (499.5cc, 17.5bhp) replaces 479s: folding rear seatback, 59mph; Sport dropped
1965 500F replaces D: front-hinged doors (not Giardiniera), deeper 'screen, stronger clutch/diff/driveshafts; Trasformabile ends
1968 L (Lusso) added: chrome trim, nudge bars, new trim, full plastic dash, fuel gauge; Autobianchi takes over Giardiniera build
1972 R (not sold in UK) replaces L/F: 126-style floor, 594cc 18bhp engine, 126 wheels
1975 500R production ends
1976 Giardiniera production ends

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1957-'76/c3,408,000
Construction steel monocoque
Engine iron-block, alloy-head, ohv 479/499.5/594cc twin, single carburettor
Max power 13bhp @ 4000rpm to 21.5bhp @ 4600rpm **Max torque** 18lb ft @ 2500rpm to 22lb ft @ 3000rpm
Transmission four-speed manual, RWD
Suspension independent, at **front** by transverse leaf spring, upper wishbones **rear** semi-trailing arms, coil springs; telescopic dampers f/r
Steering worm and sector
Brakes drums
Length 9ft 9in-10ft 5in (2970-3180mm)
Width 4ft 4in (1320mm)
Height 4ft 4-5in (1325-1350mm)
Wheelbase 6ft ½-4½in (1840-1940mm)
Weight 1035-1224lb (470-555kg)
0-50mph 33.6 secs
Top speed 53-65mph **Mpg** 43-54
Price new £525 (Normale, 1959)

CLUBS

Fiat 500 Club UK fiat500club.org.uk
Fiat Motor Club GB fiatmotorclubgb.co.uk

SPECIALISTS

FD Ricambi fdricambi.com **Middle Barton Garage** middlebartongarage.com
Auto Rossa autorossa.com
ItalCorsa users.totalise.co.uk/~italcorsa/
Moto Bambino motobambino.com
R Proietti proietti.co.uk
Ricambio ricambio.co.uk
Weenie Fiats weeniefiats.co.uk
Tiny Car Company tinycarcompany.co.uk

WHAT TO PAY*

	Resto/Average/Show
Nuova, D	£6000/14,000/40,000
500F, L	£2000/6500/15,000
500R	£1500/5000/12,500

*GENUINE SPORT/ABARTH/GIANNINI 25-75% MORE, DEPENDING ON SPEC

OUR VERDICT

The survival rate of 500s is highly impressive considering that they rust comprehensively and are not simple to rebuild properly: it doesn't make sense to buy a project car unless it is a very rare or desirable model. Uprated engines don't command a significant premium and are sensible choices for daily use, but otherwise originality is generally preferable: seek out a cared-for, rust-free car and keep it that way.

FOR
Cute looks, accepted anywhere; extremely cheap to run; great parts availability; plenty of tuning bits to boost performance

AGAINST
Not a good choice for motorway driving; can rust everywhere if neglected; expensive for its size and performance



ALTERNATIVES



BMW 600 *1958-'59, 35,000 built*
With a horizontally opposed 585cc twin (from a BMW motorbike), the 600 was a real oddball four-seater. It had an Isetta-type opening front door for the front seats and one side door for the rears, but it was compact, lively and sold well. LHD only. **Price now** £12-50,000



NSU PRINZ *1958-'73, 664,550 built*
A surprisingly peppy overhead-cam 583cc engine (30bhp from 1961), with a bigger body from 1960, kept the little Prinz a notch above the 500, though it couldn't match its sales. Rust has decimated the numbers, but a nice car to drive. **Price now** £500-25,000

FIAT 600

The compact but highly practical little 600 is a true Italian everyman icon

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



Scarce in the UK, but sold in huge numbers and built for more than 30 years, the 600 is in many ways superior to the cheaper and more compromised 500. Dante Giacosa excelled himself with the 600: there was something decisive about choosing a wheelbase of exactly 2m, and using it to build a car shorter than the Topolino but with twice the space.

Despite its diminutive engine size and overall dimensions, the 600 really was a 'proper car in miniature' – monocoque construction, four seats and a four-cylinder, water-cooled engine. The remarkably spacious Fiat was also available as a Convertible with a full-length sunroof and had independent suspension all round, with semi-trailing arms at the back.

The 600's floorpan was so good that it inspired numerous small-volume spin-offs, notably the gorgeous 'double-bubble' Abarth 750, the rapid 1000TC, plus the Bialbero and Monomille sports coupés. In '58, the Abarth 750 would get to 60mph in 22.7 secs and top 80mph – but it cost more than a Ford Zephyr MkII in the UK. Giacosa used the platform for the forward-control 600 Multipla – an adaptable compact vehicle that could be transformed from a six-seater minibus into a flat-floored van in minutes. Ghia produced roofless Jolly 600 and Multipla beach cars, while Autobianchi came up with the Stellina two-seater sports car that surely inspired Fiat's 850 Spider.

Original right-hand-drive 600s are now rare and, among the left-hookers, you're as likely to see a Serbian-made Zastava or Spanish-built Seat as an Italian Fiat. The differences are not great, except that Seats were produced to '73, four years after Italian manufacture ended (plus there was also a stretched four-door 800 from 1964-'67), and Zastavas to '85, with 843cc from '79. Both used some different parts (even wheel bearings on the Zastava) and are worth significantly less than genuine Latin-built 600s.

They rust everywhere, but it's best to walk away if the chassis legs have gone (check both front and rear). You can easily spend more than the car is worth on restoration. Other areas to inspect include the lower front valance and inner panel; inner and outer front wings; lower corners of the windscreens front and rear; inner and outer sills, plus floorpans (£180 per side); doors; rear wings, especially around the wheelarches; and rear semi-trailing arms.



Replacement instruments and warning lights – of which there were seven – are hard to find; the latter were shared with various Ferraris including the 250GTO!



The gearchange was highly rated when new and should still feel smooth, with synchro on the upper three ratios. It is robust and can handle uprated engines







Parts availability is good (though trickier on early cars) and there are many options for uprating with original or more modern tuning parts



The 600 cabin is basic, but chic and surprisingly roomy; this is a rare RHD survivor. It featured 12-volt electrics, flashing indicators, twin electric wipers, heating, stalk controls for the lights and indicators (from 1957), an interior light and a lamp in the engine compartment as standard – all rarities on economy models of the mid-'50s



The 633cc engine was basic, with a non-counterbalanced crank, but the 767cc unit was much improved and has easier parts availability. They last well if looked after, but show their age with smoke, excessive oil leaks/breathing and rattles. Check for signs of water/oil mixing (emulsion under filler caps) indicating a failed head gasket



Cooling relies on a fan and thermostat-operated flap underneath that opens when the engine warms. Check that it works (and hasn't been jammed open)



Interior trim is vinyl or cloth and new seat covers are readily available. There's extra space behind the rear seat, which folds down to accommodate large items



The kingpin bushes (and steering links on early cars) should be greased every 1000 miles and will wear rapidly if not. A worn steering box is expensive to fix



Semi-trailing-arm rear suspension was ahead of its time in '55 and copes easily with more power. Four-wheel alignment and camber adjustment is worthwhile



In its element, on a fun back-road trip where you'll revel in the handling and won't mind the lively ride

Before you buy

The 600D engine was significantly smoother and quieter than the earlier unit and noticeably more powerful, though both feel hard pressed and make plenty of noise when going uphill with a full load. Excessive rattling can be down to worn spacers between the valve rockers. Gutless performance, if not accompanied by excessive smoke indicating worn bores, may simply be a tired or maladjusted carb. Check the heater blows warm air without fumes, especially when the engine is still cool.

The easiest way to uprate a 600 is to drop in a 70bhp motor taken from an Autobianchi A112 Abarth, although it will need a front-mounted radiator to keep it cool. The first-series 850 engines look right, but rotate the opposite way, so they require some clever modifications to avoid having four reverse gears and one forward. Late Seats and Zastavas may come with larger engines, but were cheaply built and invariably thrashed, only fairly recently becoming collectable in their home countries.

The ride was always fairly hard and bouncy, but the handling was good, with predictable understeer gently increasing with more throttle. Wayward behaviour indicates wear in the steering box, idler, linkages and kingpins; all can be rebuilt, but an exchange steering box is £370. A conversion to a double-wishbone front end is available for £600, but that does not include the coil springs.

The drum brakes are fine for standard cars, if they are properly maintained; upgrades to front discs are available (at around £835). A transmission handbrake was fitted until November 1959; it should only be used when the car is stationary and is prone to leaking oil inside the drum, which is difficult to cure.

OWNING ONE



"I bought this 600 in 2009," says **Tommy Cerrone**. "Tony [Castle-Miller] at Middle Barton Garage told me about it – it's done just 19,000 miles from new and was off the road for 30 years. It had its most recent MoT in 1972 when it was less than eight years old. I've spent a fortune on it, but it's just about finished now and is running in.

"You can still get most of the components; fortunately, almost everything on this example is original, although unfortunately the new badge on the front panel is made of plastic. I'm not as confident with it yet as I am with my Multipla – I would drive that anywhere – but it's a lovely little car. It really just needs to be used, after being laid up for so long. I also have a Fiat 500 saloon and three Giardinieras, so you could say I'm fanatical about small Italian cars!"

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1955 600 launched; Zastava 600 production kicks off in Yugoslavia
1956 Multipla MPV added; Convertible option (with large sunroof) added later
1957 Wind-down windows replace sliding; Seat 600 build starts in Spain; Neckar Jagst 600 manufacture begins in Germany
1960 600 assembly starts in Argentina; 600D launched (quarterlights on front windows) – Multipla uprated, too
1962 Zastava 750 production ramps up
1964 600D gets front-hinged doors
1965 Multipla production ends
1967 Jagst 770 added (172,000-plus built)
1969 Italian 600 production stops
1973 Seat 600 build ends (797,319 made)
1982 797cc Fiat 600R discontinued in Argentina (304,016 produced)
1985 Zastava 750/850 manufacture ends in Serbia (923,487 built)

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1955-'69/2,695,197 in Italy (4.9m worldwide)
Construction steel monocoque
Engine iron-block, alloy-head, ohv 633/767cc 'four', Weber 22DRA/28 ICP carb
Max power 21.5bhp @ 4600rpm to 32bhp @ 4800rpm
Max torque 29lb ft @ 3000rpm (767cc)
Transmission four-speed manual, RWD
Suspension independent, at **front** by lower transverse leaf, upper wishbones **rear** swing axles, coil springs, semi-trailing arms; telescopic dampers f/r
Steering worm and sector **Brakes** drums
Length 10ft 6½-10in (3215-3300mm)
Width 4ft 6½in (1385mm)
Height 4ft 4¾-7in (1340-1397mm)
Wheelbase 6ft 6¾in (2000mm)
Weight 1260-1322lb (573-601kg)
0-60mph 35.5 secs (767cc)
Top speed 59-70mph **Mpg** 35-55
Price new £470 (1964)

CLUBS

Fiat Motor Club GB fiatmotorclubgb.com
Sporting Fiats Club sfconline.org.uk

SPECIALISTS

FD Ricambi fdricambi.com **Middle Barton Garage** middlebartongarage.com
Auto Rossa autorossa.com
Moto Bambino motobambino.com
Ricambio ricambio.co.uk
Axel Gerstl fiat500126.com
Holtmann & Niedergerke fiatparts.de
ItalCorsa users.totalise.co.uk/~italcorsa/
R Proietti proietti.co.uk

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
600	£3000/8000/20,000
600D	£2000/6000/15,000
Multipla	£6000/25,000/45k
Abarth 850, 1000TC	£n/a/20,000/50k

OUR VERDICT

Decades of neglect, bodging with incorrect components and poor past rebuilds make finding a good 600 today a challenge; if you are in any doubt, ask a specialist to inspect it. The early cars are cute but slow, and hard to source spares for; a 1964-'65 600D may be the ideal choice. Find a good example and you will have a fun, practical classic whose all-round abilities will surprise and entertain you.

FOR
Ultra-compact four-seater; good parts availability; readily tuned for performance; highly usable and practical (off motorways)

AGAINST
Rot-prone steel bodywork, so check the underside carefully – longerons in particular; tiring on long journeys; bouncy ride



ALTERNATIVES



BMW 700 *1959-'65, 174,609 built*
Michelotti-styled saloon, coupé and ragtop that helped to save BMW from collapse, with a motorbike-derived 700cc flat-twin in the back. They are fun to own and drive, with decent parts support, and easily tuned for use in motorsport. **Price now** £4-40,000



DAF DAFFODIL/33 *1958-'75, 312,367 built*
A novel continuously variable transmission using belts and cones enabled the rear-wheel-drive DAF to live for nearly 20 years, despite its air-cooled flat-twin (initially 590cc; up to 746cc from '62). Rot and parts availability are the main issues. **Price now** £500-5000

FORD MODEL A

Henry's Depression-busting offspring of the Model T makes a great introduction to vintage motoring

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



The Model A represented a new era compared to the Model T. Gone was the idiosyncratic (though clever) planetary transmission, in favour of a conventional three-speed 'box with clutch. The hand-operated, rear-only brakes were replaced with four-wheel, foot-pedal operation. And pumped cooling superseded the thermo-syphon type, while coil ignition replaced a magneto and electric starting was standard. Built in 53 factories in 15 countries, the total number made is worthy of a Miss Marple mystery, with wildly differing figures quoted that all look authoritative. The Model A Ford Club of America's website contains a page of body styles totalling 4,858,644 and another of production by plant at 3,724,747. Other sources quote 3.25m, or 4.32m. Look up British production and you learn it was 25,464 (1928-'30 Manchester, '31 Dagenham) – or was it 14,516?

Certainly, UK build was dismal compared to the US, due to the huge difference in roads and tax regimes. The Model A saved Ford at home, but here it was an oversized anachronism, rated at 24hp. A stopgap was the 2-litre 14.9hp AF, though it was slow: the 24hp is preferable today. Many now in Europe are ex-USA – and in Britain many are ex-Argentina or Uruguay, where they were right-hand drive in period.

Worldwide anticipation at the launch of the Model A was immense: more than 10 million people (10% of the US population) viewed the car on 2 December 1927, and 25m that week. Henry Ford had wanted to build a car as radical as the T – he had an air-cooled 'X8' engine under test, with four pairs of cylinders on a common crank – but had to concede to his son, Edsel, who argued that a degree of convention was unavoidable for Ford to be competitive.

Henry chose simplicity over cheapness, and the Model A had advanced features such as the first dash-mounted choke. Uniquely in its class, it had hydraulic dampers – a big advantage in ride on rough roads – and a laminated safety-glass 'screen. Best of all, it was over-engineered to the extreme and exceptionally rugged.

They do rot, however, so check front wing mounts; bonnet bottom edges; fuel tank base; lower A-posts; body support channels (and steel subframe where fitted); running boards; floors; wooden body frames (where relevant); rear inner wings; and rear light mounting area.



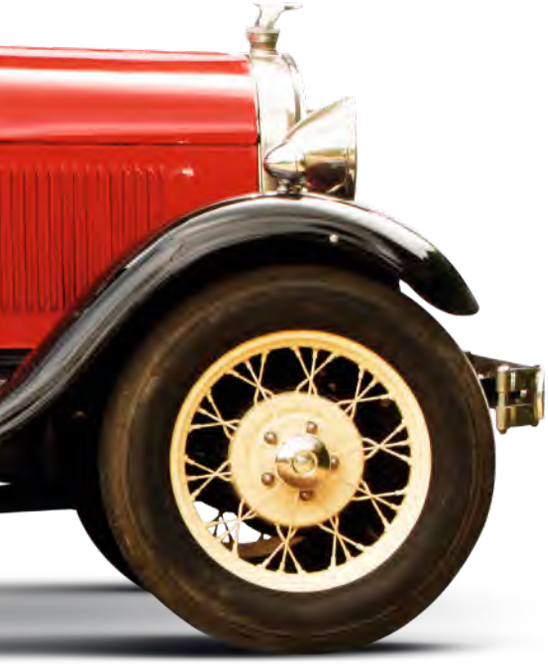
A full set of instruments and switchgear in the correct dashboard panel is a real bonus, but used parts are fairly readily available and failed items can be rebuilt



Ford had more ball- and roller-bearings than any rival; five were in the gearbox, but it will wear out. Multi-plate clutch ('28 only) best replaced by single-plate



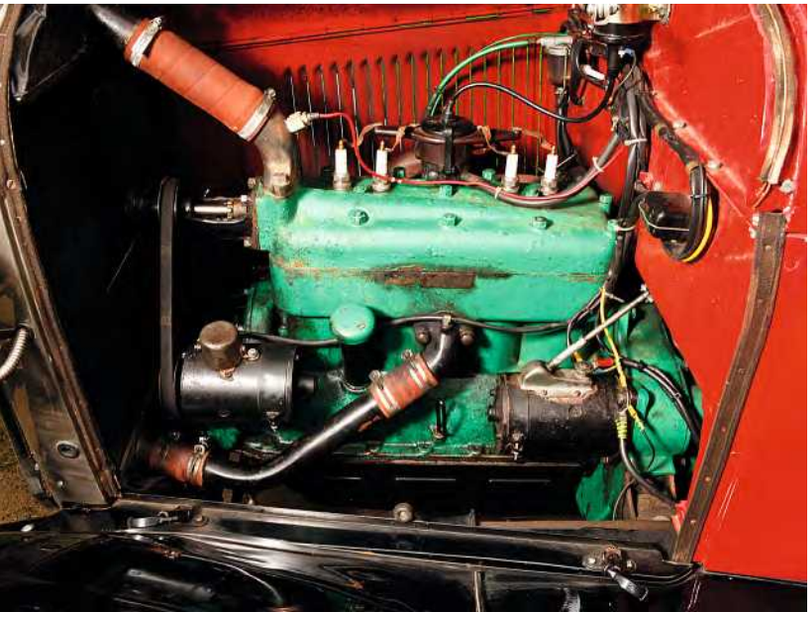




The Model A came in a range of body styles and colours, with prices no higher than the Model T's (at around $100 below the competition)



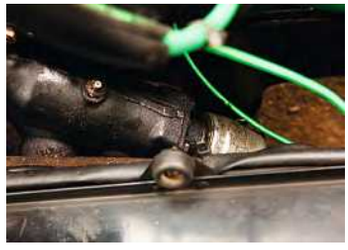
There aren't many gauges to look at in a Model A, so you can concentrate on your double-declutching. In the main it is just like a modern to drive – except right-hand-drive cars, which feature the throttle in the centre and the brake on the right. Plus, there's no transmission synchromesh and reverse is where first would usually be



The engine is simple, but there's still lots to go wrong. Check carefully for cylinder block cracks: they can be stitched, but will probably entail a full strip and rebuild. Knocking is often a worn fibre cam-timing gear, affecting performance, but heavier rumbling and knocking could be worn bearings; excess smoke suggests worn bores



At £1440 a new radiator isn't cheap, until you compare it to rebuilding many vintage ones, running into thousands. Watch out for overheating and leaks



Seven-tooth steering box was gradually replaced in 1929 by an adjustable, two-toothed box; both can wear out, but conversion to the latter is sought-after



Check the wheels for rust and trueness, and tyres for age. Pre-1930 As should be on 21in rims, but many now wear 19s – if fitted, a higher-ratio diff is desirable



Kingpin-type suspension is durable if greased every 500 miles; a Panhard rod or damper (a £179 kit) helps control front-end shimmy under braking



Model As can keep up with moderns; more so with subtle mods

Before you buy

Before starting the engine, turn on the fuel tap under the scuttle-mounted tank. The exposed, gravity-feed tank is the actual top of the scuttle on most models. If the car has been laid up for a while, the inside of the tank itself can rust – you will then suffer problems with muck blocking the outlet pipe and causing intermittent fuel starvation.

Adjust the choke if required; it is important to start with the steering-wheel-mounted spark lever retarded, then adjust it for optimum running. The starter is operated by a button on the floor, located in the left-hand-drive position on our featured example. With a compression ratio of just 4.22:1, the Model A will run on the cheapest petrol and is not troubled by unleaded fuel.

There is plenty of scope for making modifications if you fancy more poke. Model B spec gives 50bhp, or you could invest in one of Belcher Engineering's competition engines: a sidevalve (86bhp at 3500rpm and 158lb ft at 1500rpm) or the ultimate inlet-over-exhaust version on twin SUs, with 115bhp and 196lb ft.

Modern roads combined with 1920s gearing mean that your speed is often restricted by comfortable engine revs: fitting a taller-ratio axle is vital if you have changed an early car from 21in to 19in wheels and for a tuned engine. An overdrive conversion (kits are available from the USA) is also effective.

Once you get used to period features such as the unsynchronised gearbox and the shift pattern with reverse in the conventional first position, the Model A is supremely straightforward to drive for a vintage car. There is oodles of torque and a gearbox that shrugs off amateurish double-declutching skills with a good-natured chuckle and clunk.

OWNING ONE



"I rebuilt an Austin Seven in the 1990s," recalls **Richard Forsyth**, "then one day I heard a Model A ticking over and knew that I had to have one. I found this Phaeton in Skegness in 1997: it had been imported from Argentina and was advertised as '90% rebuilt'. It soon turned out, however, that it was 90% in need of restoration.

"I dismantled it and started over again: it took two and a half years. I overhauled everything, converting it to a modern clutch and fitting 19in wheels with a higher-ratio rear axle. I rebuilt the engine with adjustable tappets, too. You can get all of the parts in the UK, with next-day delivery. I organised a club run to the Loire valley this year, and flew into a panic when the fibre timing gear stripped just a few days before, but I was able to get the parts and fix it in time."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1927 Model A production starts, with Tudor, Sport Coupe, Coupe, Roadster, Phaeton, Truck and Commercial body styles
1928 Separate parking brake added (a legal requirement in Columbia and Pennsylvania); Fordor (2-window), Business Coupe, Town Car, Taxicab and Station Wagon added
1929 Fordor (3-window), Town Sedan and Convertible Cabriolet also available
1930 Stainless steel replaces nickel plating, new chrome-plated bumpers, higher bonnet line concealing fuel tank, more cabin space, integral running boards, 19in wheels not 21in; Deluxe Coupe, Roadster, Phaeton and Victoria arrive; stainless oval dash panel
1931 Deluxe Tudor and Convertible Sedan added; US production officially ends
1932 Last As built in Canada and Rouge, MI

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1927-'32/3,724,747
Construction steel chassis, steel and timber body
Engine all-iron, sidevalve 2041/3283cc 'four', single Zenith carburettor
Max power 28bhp @ 2600rpm to 40bhp @ 2200rpm
Max torque n/a to 128lb ft @ 1000rpm
Transmission three-speed manual, no synchromesh, RWD
Suspension: front beam axle, radius arms **rear** live axle, torque tube; transverse leaf spring, Houdaille lever-arm dampers f/r
Steering worm and sector
Brakes rod-operated drums f/r
Length 12ft 8½in-13ft (3873-3962mm)
Width 5ft 7½in (1715mm)
Height 5ft 9in-6ft (1753-1828mm)
Wheelbase 8ft 7½in (2629mm)
Weight 2073-2500lb (942-1136kg)
0-50mph 24.6 secs
Top speed 54-65mph **Mpg** 25-35
Price new $500 (Tudor Sedan, 1929)

CLUBS

Model A Ford Club of Great Britain mafcgb.org.uk **Model A Ford Club of America** mafca.com
Ford Model A Restorers' Club modelarestorersclub.org

SPECIALISTS

Barry Smith Cars barrysmithcars.co.uk **Belcher Engineering** belchers.uk **O'Neill Vintage Ford** oneillvintageford.co.uk **The Model A Revival Company** modelarevival.co.uk **Meka Classic Engine Parts** mekaengineparts.com **Tim Walker Restorations** timwalkerrestorations.co.uk

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
All	£3500/12,000/30,000

With a huge range of bodies, Prices vary primarily according to condition, originality and attractiveness of body/colour scheme

OUR VERDICT

The Model A is one of the simplest vintage machines to own today: it has reasonable performance, is strongly built, easy to maintain, much roomier than the cramped English models of the day and well supported with spares. The oldest examples are now a century old, though, and in that time every component can get worn, broken or swapped for the wrong part, so check any potential purchase with care.

FOR
Robust and reliable; relatively straightforward to run and drive; good performance for its age; choice of bodies to suit all tastes

AGAINST
Central throttle on right-hand-drive models; age means everything could be tired by now; keeps going even when totally knackered



ALTERNATIVES



AUSTIN 12HP & 20HP *1927-'31, 84,731 built*
Using a longer stroke allowed Austin to build a 45bhp model rated at 20hp versus the Ford's 24hp, and a 12hp compared to the 14.9; both were better suited to English lanes, but not as fast as the Model A. Antiquated magneto and artillery wheels. **Price now** £2-15,000



MORRIS OXFORD/SIX *1926-'29, c188,500 built*
The 1920s offerings from William Morris curiously included a 2.5-litre sidevalve 'four' (Oxford) and the 2.5-litre overhead-cam Six, with little difference in size and performance. The big Model A was quicker and more stylish than both of them. **Price now** £4-15,000

FORD CONSUL, ZEPHYR & ZODIAC

The Blue Oval's 'Three Graces' are now seen as style icons as well as outstanding classics

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



Ford adapted brilliantly to the UK market, with sturdy components in bodyshells at the styling forefront so they could continue in production long enough to amortise costs over large numbers. This kept prices down and profits up. The MkII Consul, Zepyhr and Zodiac, advertised as 'The Three Graces', were perfect examples of this, with uprated MkI running gear in elegant, modern bodywork. Although these genuine six-seaters were larger and roomier than MkIs, they were only 25lb heavier because Ford was honing monocoque build. When combined with more power, they were faster and more relaxing to drive. Relatively small 13in wheels helped them look larger and sit lower, reduced unsprung weight and gave more interior space, while the Consul's 'four' allowed it to be 8in shorter than its six-cylinder brethren.

Ford was aiming at the upwardly mobile family market and thrusting executives with its glitzy two-tone, gold-badged, whitewall-tyred Zodiacs, while wooing more conservative customers with black versions with brown trim. The gutsy Zephyr 'six' had excellent sporting potential for weekend warriors, especially when boosted by performance modifications from Raymond Mays.

Unlike the British Laycock, the Borg-Warner overdrive option on six-cylinders incorporated a freewheel, allowing largely clutch-free driving and giving vastly improved high-speed economy and noise reduction, making it desirable for long-distance commuters.

These are big cars with a propensity for rust, so check the body condition carefully when buying. Areas to inspect include the front valance and the crossmember behind; bonnet, notably the front lip; front wings around the headlights, wheelarches and rear corners; inner wings and strut tops; roof gutters, 'screen surround and A-posts; chassis rails, outriggers and jacking points; footwells and floors; door bottoms; three-part sills; rear arches; boot floor, rear valance and crossmember.

Finding good brightwork is a bonus because replacements are scarce and rechroming is costly. Ensure that all of the trim, inside and out, is present and correct; this is particularly important for a restoration project. Bear in mind, too, that there are 14 grease points that require careful attention every 1000 miles.



On soft-tops, check that hood is in good order, and raises and lowers smoothly – and locates positively to the 'screen frame. Electric operation was optional



Three-speed column shift should work efficiently and not baulk or jump out of gear; synchro is only on second and top. Overdrive is a sought-after extra





The six-cylinder cars produced strong race and rally results, enhancing its competition image





Advanced features included key-starting, MacPherson-strut front suspension, stalk-operated flashing indicators, plus counterbalanced bonnet and boot. Less advanced were a three-speed 'box with no synchro on first, and a live rear axle with lever-arms. Consuls had the same brakes as the 'sixes', so the fronts could lock up prematurely



Engines are robust, but will ultimately need hardened seats for unleaded if driven vigorously. Tappet adjustment can cure flagging performance; oil smoke may be a failed vacuum pump or excessive wear if accompanied by unpleasant knocks and rattles. Inspect for water in the oil and vice versa, and look for signs of overheating



Disc front brakes could be retrofitted to earlier cars – desirable for 'sixes', but hardly needed on Consuls. Poor brakes are likely to be seized wheel cylinders



Don't expect to find trim 'off the shelf', but good specialists can recreate most variants. Zephyr/Zodiac had a leather facing option. Make sure it's all present

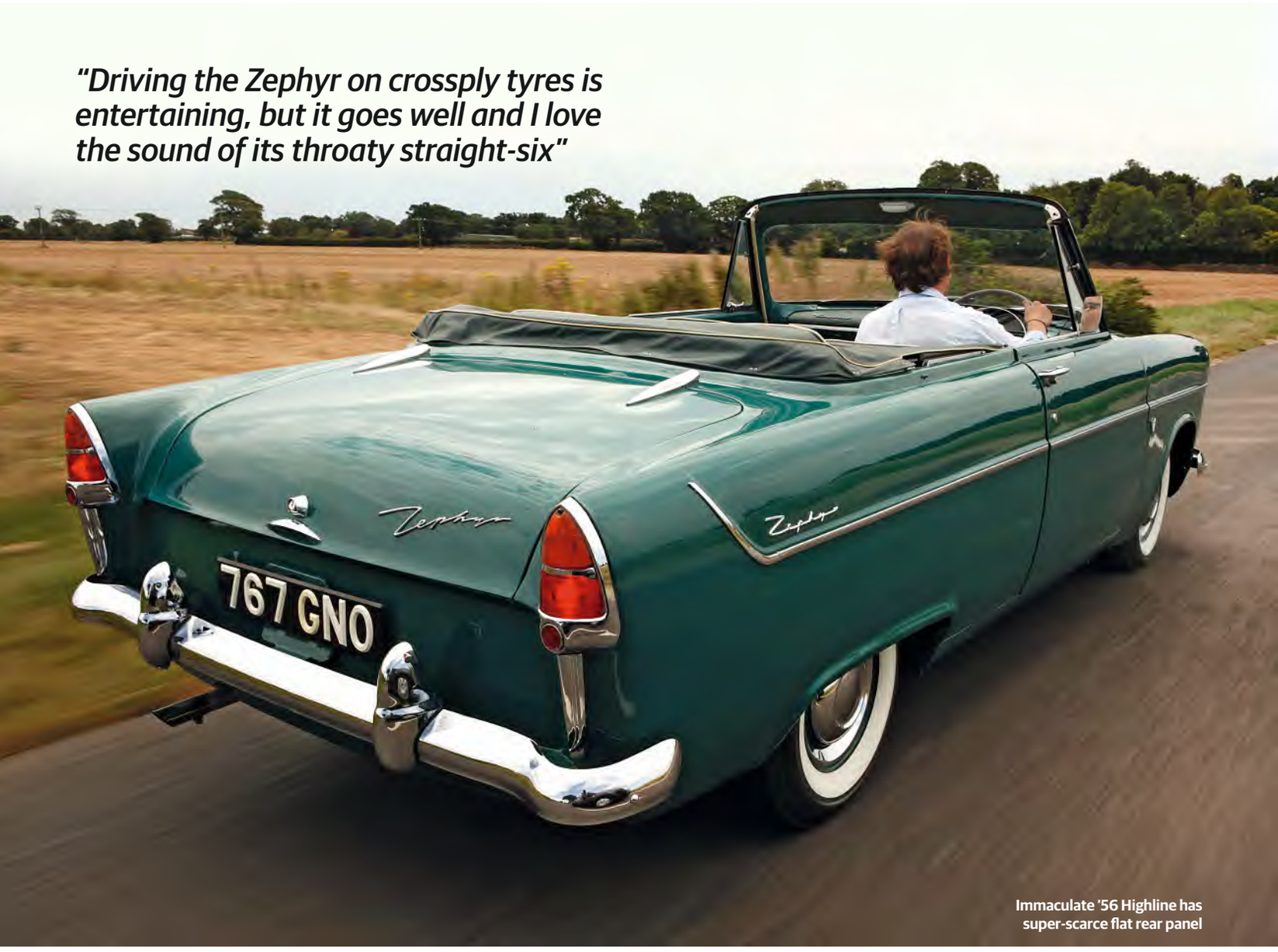


Single Zenith carbs are difficult to keep in tune when worn and didn't offer very efficient running when they were new; performance mods can reduce thirst



One of few places where the cars' '50s origins are clear is in the suspension, which needs greasing every 1000 miles. Look out for leaking struts, too

"Driving the Zephyr on crossply tyres is entertaining, but it goes well and I love the sound of its throaty straight-six"



Immaculate '56 Highline has super-scarce flat rear panel

Before you buy

All Consul, Zephyr and Zodiac models offer decent pace from oversquare four- and six-cylinder engines that rev freely. Poor performance may be due to closed-up tappets or a worn carburettor. Excessive oil smoke is normally a sign of engine wear, especially when combined with rumbles, knocks or rattles, but may also be due to a failed vacuum pump. Weak windscreen wipers when accelerating would support the latter; the pump can be rebuilt inexpensively, unlike the engine. Overheating and hot running may just need a new radiator to cure, but if one has been fitted recently suspect a cracked cylinder head.

The three-speed gearbox with column change was an antiquated feature, but it works well enough. The overdrive option is highly desirable for today's motoring, but do ensure that it works and doesn't slip. Check, too, that the synchromesh works on second and top, and that the car doesn't jump out of gear. Automatic 'boxes should provide smooth changes, efficient kickdown and have red (not black) fluid on the dipstick.

The ride ought to be comfortable and the handling effective, with a tendency towards safe understeer, though snap oversteer can result from injudicious use of the throttle on crossply tyres in the wet. Excessive wandering indicates a worn steering box, while wallowy handling could be down to worn struts and dampers. The rear springs can sag, but can be retempered. Rear-axle whine indicates wear or low oil level.

The brakes – drums or discs – were efficient when the cars were new, but are prone to seized cylinders/calipers. Standard drums are perfectly fine for normal driving, but the disc conversion is needed for competition.

OWNING ONE



Having been captivated by MkIIs in his youth, **John Deverell** has owned this very early Zephyr convertible for five years. "I read an article on someone who had three stylish 1950s cars and I wanted to be like him," he recalls. "I nagged the owner of this example for years to sell it to me, and eventually he relented. It's a 1956 car with the flat back panel and buttoned upholstery, which are particulary rare.

"I also have a Warwick Green 1956 saloon, a Farnham estate and a Zodiac Lowline soft-top. The convertible models are seaside cars, so when I moved to the south coast they seemed like an ideal choice. Driving the Zephyr on crossply tyres is very entertaining, but it goes well and I love the sound of its throaty six-cylinder exhaust note when you pull away."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1956 MkII launched; estate added, and six-cylinder auto; pick-up for Australia
1957 Consul de luxe (two-tone paint/trim, plated windowframes); better front seat with centre armrest (optional on Consul); better steering box; new grille on Zephyr
1958 Experimental disc brakes on rally cars
1959 'Lowline': 1½in lower roof and straight side trims, interior changes include padded dash top, new rear lights, twist-release handbrake, sunvisors on convertibles
1960 Front disc brakes with servo optional on all models, also as kit for older cars
1961 Front discs standard, plus sealed-beam lights; Consul renamed Consul 375 (to differentiate it from Consul Classic 315)
1962 MkIII replaces MkII

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1956-'62/682,400 (380,983 'fours', 301,417 'sixes')
Construction steel monocoque
Engine all-iron, ohv 1703cc 'four' or 2553cc 'six', Zenith carburettor
Max power 59bhp @ 4200rpm to 90bhp @ 4400rpm **Max torque** 91lb ft @ 2300rpm to 133lb ft @ 2000rpm
Transmission three-speed manual, optional Borg-Warner overdrive or three-speed auto (both 'sixes' only), RWD
Suspension: front independent, by MacPherson struts, anti-roll bar **rear** live axle, semi-elliptic leaf springs, lever-arm dampers **Steering** recirculating ball (worm and peg to October 1957)
Brakes drums (front discs from '61)
Length 14ft 4½in-15ft ½in (4382-4585mm) **Width** 5ft 7in (1702mm) **Height** 5ft ¼-2in (1530-1575mm) **Wheelbase** 8ft 8½-11in (2654-2718mm) **Weight** 2464-2856lb (1120-1298kg) **0-60mph** 24.2-16.4 secs
Top speed 78-89mph **Mpg** 20-32
Price new £1014 (Zodiac, 1958)

CLUB

The Ford MkII Consul Zephyr Zodiac Owners' Club
mk11consulzephyrzodiacownersclub.com

SPECIALISTS

Zodiac Motor Services zodiacmotorservices.com **Old Ford Auto Services** oldfordautos.co.uk **Ex-Pressed Steel Panels** steelpanels.co.uk **Cambridge Classic Cars** cambridgeclassiccars.co.uk **Classic Ford Spares** classicfordspares.co.uk

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
Consul	£1000/6000/15,000
Consul Conv	£4000/10,000/22,000
Zephyr	£1500/7000/20,000
Zephyr Conv	£5000/15,000/25,000
Zodiac	£2000/8000/22,500
Zodiac Conv	£5000/17,000/28,000
Estates	£1500/8000/25,000

OUR VERDICT

For sheer style and glamour, the MkII Consul, Zephyr and Zodiac far outstrips the MkI and MkIII, and is priced accordingly – this car is an icon of all that was best about 1950s Britain, and demand now exceeds supply. Be wary of cars that were restored when they were worth little, because some will be full of filler and bodges: a known history and photographic record of a rebuild are worth seeking out.

FOR
Fabulous '50s looks; practical, usable family classics; desirability means rising prices; plenty around so parts availability is fair

AGAINST
Considerable propensity for corrosion; many trim items are unobtainable; heavy fuel consumption if driven hard



ALTERNATIVES



MORRIS OXFORD/ISIS
1954-'60, 153,999 built
Bland styling, smaller size and relatively dull performance left Morris trailing, notably the Isis despite optional overdrive or auto: just 12,155 were sold. Rare, and good value if you can find one. **Price now** £1-20,000



VAUXHALL VICTOR/VELOX/CRESTA
1957-'62, 564,511 built
In ultimate Cresta spec, the Vauxhall was faster than the Ford and offered more transatlantic styling; the Victor 'four' outsold the Consul, but 'sixes' came nowhere near. Decimated by rot, and now scarce. **Price now** £5-20,000

JAGUAR XK120-150

The consummate sports car of the 1940s and '50s is just as much fun today

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



One of the most beautiful cars ever built, the XK120 was a showstopper when it was launched in austerity Britain in 1948. Its impact now is only slightly less dramatic: this is a car that turns every head, making people smile and marvel at its perfect lines.

The XK can still impress with its speed and drivability, but the progressive refinement of later models shows through. Jaguar constantly developed the car and the final XK150 fixed-head, though sharing similar lines, was a much heavier, more comfortable and altogether more civilised carriage for two adults and two kids. In ultimate 3.8 S form, it was more than a match in pace for its lightweight ancestor.

With the many options in models, body styles, specs and build changes, no two XKs are identical and shopping around is well advised. The earliest, aluminium-bodied 120 OTS (Open Two Seater) is the most sought-after, especially with an interesting history; the final 3.8 S 150 OTS is also prized. Least desirable are 3.4-litre 150 fhcs – yet they are good to drive, capable of cruising all day at 90mph (particularly if they have the optional overdrive) with impressive rolling refinement for a separate-chassis car.

Almost every car will have been rebuilt, some several times, and standards have risen dramatically over the years. Key areas to inspect for rot are the chassis, especially above the anti-roll bar mounts, the join ahead of the rear wheels, and behind the spring hangers; front wings, notably at the valance, lamp pods and rear corners; bulkhead, especially around its lower edges; vent boxes; sills, particularly where they join the B-posts; door bottoms (check the panel gaps); footwells behind the seats; and boot floor and inner wings.

Restoration is costly, re-restoration even worse, so find a car that has been rebuilt to your requirements. One that was done some time ago and has been well cared for since is ideal, with enough patina to look like a genuine old car and not a fresh recreation, plus sufficient use to iron out teething troubles. Many XKs get little use, which is a tragedy. If you're going to press such a car into action, expect to spend time and money getting it perfect.

An original car will just require a little more practice to master than a well-modified one, while a poorly uprated car can be a liability.



Overheating/water loss are common. A remote header tank is a useful mod. Electric fans are often fitted, but a recored rad may be all that's needed



Moss gearbox didn't boast the best synchro when new and a worn one is a nightmare. Many have been replaced, but a good Moss 'box suits the car





With the exception of cars with special history, any open XK is worth more than a closed one





Early cars are cramped (clever pedalbox mods can help), so make sure that you fit – later 140s and 150s are much roomier. Modifications are a moot point. Many cars have been extensively altered to change their performance and handling – this is a matter of personal taste, but don't let anyone convince you that mods are essential



The Jaguar XK twin-cam straight-six is a thing of beauty. Check for matching numbers (on the cylinder head and block), for signs of overheating and for rattles, especially on start-up – although a little top-end clatter is inevitable. Excessive oil consumption is a common malady and can be expensive to cure



XKs need greasing every 1000 miles. Look for signs of regular maintenance of the steering and suspension, which can soon wear to excess if not seen to



A neglected rear end can ruin a car's handling, if the bushes are worn and dampers weak. Replacement springs are hard; retempered originals are best



Original, nicely patinated seats are rare. Rebuilt items should be just as good, but excessive padding can make the already snug cockpit impossibly tight



Check the dash for originality of trim and electricals. Don't expect the clock or fuel gauge to work well. Original light-up cigar lighters are now scarce



"It has Jaguar MkIX front discs to make it stop, but I prefer the feel on the original crossply tyres"

Drop-dead gorgeous looks of the earliest XKs still turns heads now

Before you buy

The vast majority of the XKs built were left-hand drive; many now in the UK have since been converted. Check the chassis number with the Jaguar Daimler Heritage Trust, in *Original Jaguar XK* and with the XK Club, which has a wealth of information on almost every car. Conversions are fine if they have been done well. Do drive it before you buy – XK120s are notoriously cramped for tall drivers, though ingenious and costly pedalbox alterations can improve this.

Expect a gutsy, torquey engine with a beguiling exhaust note and not too much rattling on start-up. Lacklustre performance, especially with a top-end chatter, probably suggests that the cams are worn. Deeper rattles indicate that imminent bottom-end attention is needed especially if the oil pressure drops below 35-40psi at speed when hot. Watch out for signs of excessive oil consumption (look for blue smoke from the exhaust) as well as fluid leaks.

Check for evidence of overheating, which is common – largely because people do not replace radiators when they should: they silt up with age and 10 years is about the maximum life you can expect. Separate header tanks and Kenlowe fans have their merits, but will not cure a clogged radiator.

The Moss 'box is notorious for its slow change and the proximity of first to reverse; it's rare to find a properly rebuilt one (some new parts are unavailable). Gear selection should be precise.

Properly set-up drum brakes should be effective. Early discs were not the most reliable and can be expensive to rebuild.

The age of these cars hits home when you look for the indicators on an XK120: they weren't fitted at first (the spotlights are used on the featured car).

OWNING ONE



"I've been coming to Shelsley Walsh ever since I was a boy," explains the famous hillclimb's long-time clerk of the course, **David Nursey**. "Back in 1975, I met Philip Porter here and he persuaded me to buy an XK. We found this one in Luton; it needed new sills and B-posts but was otherwise very original. I ran it for 10 summers, then took it off the road to do some little jobs; 14 years later, it needed a full rebuild and I gave it to Phoenix Restorations. I was very pleased with the result.

"Steve Grimsley fitted a header tank and a Kenlowe fan to help keep the water in, and it has Jaguar MkIX front disc brakes to make it stop, but I prefer the feel of the car on the original crossply tyres. I've grown so attached to the XK I could never envisage selling it. There's nothing better for a blast to Le Mans in good weather."

THE CARS THAT SHAPED MOTORING HISTORY

ARE STILL DOING WHAT THEY WERE BUILT TO DO

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Speed

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Loton – 19 July

Vintage Prescott – 1 and 2 August

Harewood - 23 August

Prescott Long – 26 September

SPEED TICKETS

Race

Cadwell – 20 June

Mallory – 15 August



THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1948 XK120 shown at Earls Court
1950 Steel body production starts
1951 Fhc build starts: wood dash, winding windows; SE offered: 180bhp, wire wheels
1953 Dhc production starts: wood dash, winding windows, thick lined hood
1954 XK140 replaces 120: thick bumpers, indicators, 180bhp; SE: C-type head, 210bhp
1957 XK150: disc brakes, curved 'screen, more rounded grille, 210bhp (B-type head)
1958 XK150S: triple 2in SUs, 250bhp
1959 3.8 option, 220bhp (265bhp in S)
1960 XK150 production ends

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1949-'60/30,364
Construction steel ladder chassis, steel body (early 120 aluminium on ash frame)
Engine iron-block, alloy-head, dohc 3442/3781cc straight-six, twin/triple SU carbs
Max power 160bhp @ 5400rpm to 265bhp @ 5500rpm **Max torque** 195lb ft @ 2500rpm to 260lb ft @ 4000rpm
Transmission four-speed manual, optional close-ratio (overdrive or three-speed auto option from XK140), RWD (via LSD on 3.8)
Suspension: front independent, by double wishbones, torsion bars, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar **rear** live axle, semi-elliptic leaf springs, lever-arm dampers (telescopics from XK140)
Steering recirculating ball (XK120) or rack and pinion **Brakes** drums (XK120/140) or discs, with servo **Length** 14ft 5-9in (4400-4500mm) **Width** 5ft 1½-4½in (1560-1640mm) **Height** 4ft 4½-7in (1335-1400mm) **Wheelbase** 8ft 6in (2590mm) **Weight** 2855-3247lb (1295-1473kg) **0-60mph** 10-7.6 secs
Top speed 122-141mph **Mpg** 16-27
Price new £1763 (150 fhc, 1958)

CLUBS

XK Club xkclub.com
Jaguar Enthusiasts' Club jec.org.uk
Jaguar Drivers' Club jaguardriver.co.uk

SPECIALISTS

Twyford Moors jagxk.com
Guy Broad guybroad.co.uk
SNG Barratt sngbarratt.com **Winspeed Motorsport** winspeedmotorsport.com
Coventry Auto Components coventryautocomponents.co.uk
CKL Developments ckl.co.uk

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
Alloy XK120	£60,000/100,000/200k
XK120 OTS	£22,500/50,000/90,000
XK120 fhc, dhc	£17,500/45,000/85,000
XK140 OTS, dhc	£25,000/65,000/110k
XK140 fhc	£15,000/40,000/75,000
XK150 OTS*	£22,500/60,000/110,000
XK150 fhc*	£14,000/37,500/75,000
XK150 dhc	£20,000/55,000/100,000

*ADD 25% FOR 150S 3.4, 40% FOR 150S 3.8

OUR VERDICT

A good Jaguar XK of any flavour will be a delight both to drive and to own, but they can be hard to find because owners are reluctant to part with the best examples. Be prepared to shop around, drive as many cars as you can and decide which is the ideal model for you, then spend plenty of time – and money – tracking down the perfect car before you commit. Rush in blind and you could end up with a costly error.

FOR
Superb styling; well able to keep up with modern traffic; twin-cam 'six' always sounds fabulous; good spares availability from specialists

AGAINST
Separate chassis is crude by modern standards; badly rebuilt cars can be expensive to sort; many have been poorly modified



ALTERNATIVES



AC ACE/ACECA *1953-'63, 1059 built*
Ferrari-inspired body with all-independent suspension, plus a straight-six, made the AC an appealing prospect, boosted by the Bristol engine from '56 (Ford 2.6 on last few). Initially not a match for the XK's pace; now more desirable. **Price now** £30-300,000



ASTON MARTIN DB2- MkIII *1949-'59, 1725 built*
Never quite as fast as the Jaguar because its WO-designed straight-six was always smaller, the Aston became ever-more rapid. Hatchback convenience on the fixed-head, but otherwise it appeared to be a step behind with a vastly higher price. **Price now** £30-500,000



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JAGUAR MkVII-MkIX

The finest sporting luxury saloon of the 1950s makes a wonderful limousine to enjoy today

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **JAMES MANN**



The star of the 1950 Earls Court show, the magnificent MkVII looked like an all-new luxury car from Jaguar. It was, in fact, a clever marriage of a lightly modified MkV chassis with the superb XK twin-cam engine, already proven in the XK120, clothed in a capacious new body offering up-to-the-minute styling for the '50s.

Without lengthening the wheelbase, Jaguar gained more passenger space by mounting the 3in-longer engine 5in further forward. A width of more than 6ft was definitely US-orientated, giving a cabin-space advantage over most of its British rivals. Drop-down tool cases in each front door were a delightful touch, while twin fuel tanks in the rear wings (17 gallons in total, each with its own pump) gave a generous boot.

Advanced features included an auto choke, self-adjusting brakes with a servo, fresh-air heating/demisting, a sliding sunroof and, from January 1952, self-parking two-speed wipers. In early '53 the MkVII became the first British car in volume production fitted with a modern automatic 'box, though only for the US at first.

The only significant complaint in *The Motor*'s MkVII road test was for the gearchange, which was considered to need a longer lever with a shorter throw, more powerful synchromesh and quieter intermediate gears – quite a strong criticism in 1952 for the Moss 'box that Jaguar would continue to use until the mid-'60s.

Compared with the US offerings in its key market, the early MkVII appeared almost austere: William Lyons tackled this first with the MkVIIM, adding extra chrome. The Queen Mother loved her MkVIIs, but had her interior uprated by Park Ward; seeing this, the by then Sir William tasked his team with achieving the same luxury at a minimal cost increase. The magnificent cabin of the MkVIII that resulted boasted wood everywhere, including rear picnic tables, three cigar lighters, five ashtrays and lambswool overrugs.

A strong chassis has helped the cars survive in good numbers, but they have always been more expensive to restore than they are worth, so be prepared for all kinds of bodgery to the body and interior, and swaps of mechanical items. While some upgrades are desirable, other non-original parts will not be, and tracking down correct components may prove almost impossible as well as costly.

TROUBLE SPOTS

BODY ROT Front wings, especially around sidelights, lights/grilles and lower edges; front bulkhead, particularly around battery; inner and outer sills; floors; rear wing spats; door pillars; door bottoms; boot floor; and the sunroof, plus its gutters and drains

CHASSIS Rarely rusts, but check the outriggers, rear spring hangers, tail sections and front anti-roll-bar mounts

CHROME Extensive, especially later, parts are mostly unobtainable (particularly windscreen surrounds and side strips) and expensive to rechrome

WOOD Also extensive; all veneers are matched, so costly to restore properly if missing or badly deteriorated

LEATHER Original with patina is fine, but retrimming is expensive and not the same

FUEL TANKS Inaccessible to inspect, and sit on a sponge base, which absorbs water and causes corrosion





Available in single or dual tones, the MkVII/VIII/IX was a benchmark sporting saloon: nothing else at the price could match its style, luxury and performance





Jaguar's 'Grace, Space and Pace' advertising slogan was never more appropriate: these magnificent four-doors are a joy to drive and surprisingly capable if pushed – the MkVII even proved an effective touring-car racer. If it was fitted with the early automatic you had to work hard for real speed; the 3.8 MkIX redressed the balance



Jaguar's inspired twin-overhead-cam straight-six engine was one of the greatest power units of the 20th century, and is a delight both to look at and to drive behind. Listen out for rattly timing chains or a rumbling bottom end, and watch for oil leaks and excessive breathing, all of which could have you budgeting for a rebuild



Front suspension is heavily loaded, but parts are cheap. Original drum brakes need regular maintenance – this front disc conversion is from Coopercraft



Early cars had sprung seats, but soft Dunlopillo foam cushions came in '54, all trimmed in the finest leather. A full set of original trim is a real asset

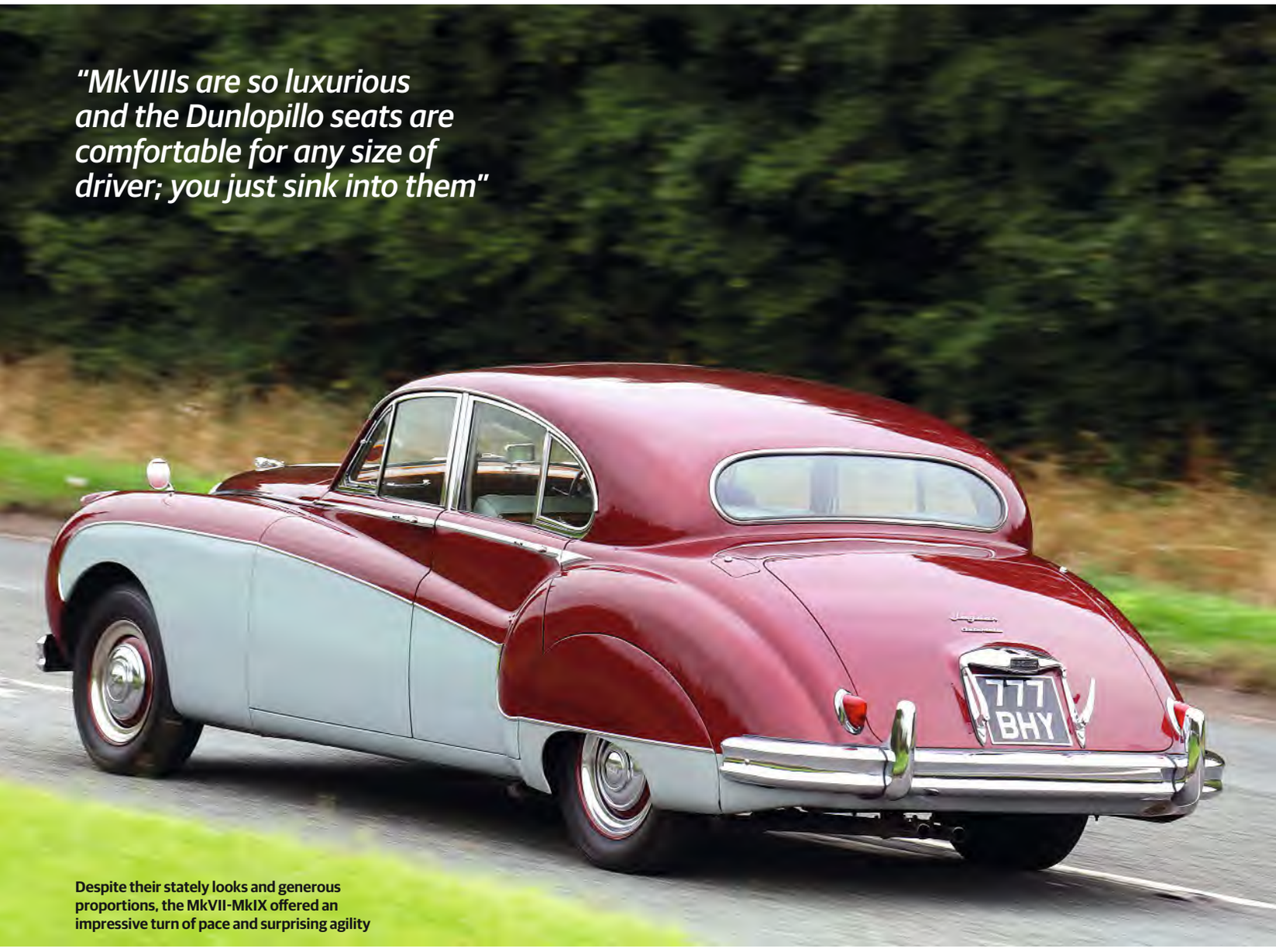


The interior woodwork was delightful, with all matched burr-walnut veneers. A complete original set of timber is a huge plus, provided it's restorable



The Burman worm-and-nut steering box does wear, so check for excessive play or stiffness off-centre. Power steering was standard on the MkIX

"MkVIIIs are so luxurious and the Dunlopillo seats are comfortable for any size of driver; you just sink into them"



Despite their stately looks and generous proportions, the MkVII-MkIX offered an impressive turn of pace and surprising agility

Before you buy

The XK twin-cam straight-six should pull lustily, especially in 3.8-litre MkIX form, without excessive rattles, knocks, oil leaks or smoke, any or all of which should have you budgeting around £5000 for a professional engine rebuild. Check for oil leaks, especially from the rear crankshaft seal, which can be a curse even on recently rebuilt engines. If it feels low on power but is not smoky, a top-end rebuild may well suffice. Inspect for matching numbers on the cylinder head and engine block, because motor swaps are common.

The Moss manual transmission, which has no synchromesh on first gear, is strong, but requires a measured change and is rarely rebuilt well; check that it doesn't baulk or jump out of gear. The optional overdrive unit is a highly desirable addition for modern roads, and a higher-axle ratio is not difficult to fit.

The Borg-Warner DG automatic is heavy and slow – that's fine and characterful if you are not pressing on, but it is often upgraded today. Check that the fluid isn't black and that it is not leaking excessively. Having a column-mounted change meant the automatic came with a bench front seat instead of the twin buckets fitted to the manual cars.

The brakes on MkVIIs and MkVIIIs featured an unusual arrangement of twin trailing front shoes, with a servo to ensure that sufficient pressure is applied. If it is kept maintained in top condition, this system should be fine for most everyday use, but the all-disc set-up introduced for the MkIX provided a great improvement in stopping performance. Power-assisted steering, fitted as standard to the last of the MkVIIIs and all MkIXs, is a bonus, but look out for leaks and signs of wear.

OWNING ONE



Running the Jaguar Enthusiasts' Club for decades gave marque fan **Graham Searle** experience of the whole range. "The MkVIII is rare," he says. "There are only 60 left in the UK. It's so luxurious – there probably isn't a more expensive interior to restore on any Jaguar model – and the Dunlopillo seats are comfortable for any size of driver; you just sink into them.

"This example was owned by the Hon Jean Elphinstone, a lady-in-waiting to the Queen Mother, so I've had it restored in her colours. I bought it in 1996 after it had been standing outside: it had a 12-year rebuild at Auto Classico. We've fitted front discs, an XJ S3 three-speed automatic, an X300 crownwheel and pinion, and EZ power steering. It was a big car for its time, but it doesn't feel it when you drive it."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1950 MkVII launched at Earls Court
1953 Borg-Warner auto fitted to all cars for the US market, with bench front seat
1954 Laycock overdrive option; 190bhp MkVIIM, with closer gears, horn grilles, flashing indicators, reshaped bumpers, stiffer suspension, Dunlopillo seats; options include high-compression 'Le Mans' head, 2in SU carbs, higher-ratio steering
1956 MkVIII launched: new grille, one-piece 'screen, two-tone paint, auto option worldwide, HD6 carbs, big-valve head, twin exhausts, upgraded interior
1958 Optional power steering; MkIX launched: 3.8-litre, disc brakes, power steering, improved heater
1961 Last MkIX built

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1950-'61/30,190 (MkVII), 6332 (MkVIII), 10,005 (MkIX)
Construction steel chassis, steel body
Engine iron-block, alloy-head, dohc 3442/3781cc 'six', twin SU carburettors
Max power 160bhp @ 5200rpm to 220bhp @ 5500rpm
Max torque 195lb ft @ 2500rpm to 240lb ft @ 3000rpm
Transmission four-speed manual or three-speed automatic, RWD
Suspension: front independent, by double wishbones, torsion bars, anti-roll bar **rear** live axle, semi-elliptic leaf springs; telescopic dampers f/r (lever-arm to August 1953) **Steering** Burman worm and nut (with power assistance on MkIX)
Brakes drums, with servo (discs on MkIX)
Length 16ft 4½in (4990mm)
Width 6ft 1½in (1867mm)
Height 5ft 2in (1575mm)
Wheelbase 10ft (3050mm)
Weight 3864-4157lb (1756-1889kg)
0-60mph 14.1-11.3 secs
Top speed 101-114mph **Mpg** 14-22
Price new £1829-1897 (1958)

CLUBS

Jaguar Enthusiasts' Club jec.org.uk
Jaguar Drivers' Club jaguardriver.co.uk

SPECIALISTS

SNG Barratt sngbarratt.com **Worcester Classic Spares** worcesterclassicspares.com **Auto Classico** autoclassico.co.uk **David Marks Garages** davidmarksgarages.co.uk **Coventry Auto Components** coventryautocomponents.co.uk **Hardy Engineering** hardyengineering.co.uk **Twyford Moors Classic Cars** jagxk.com **Graham Whitehouse Autos** gwautos.com

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
MkVII, MkVIII	£2000/15,000/30,000
MkIX	£2750/18,000/40,000

OUR VERDICT

These cars still represent exceptional value for money, as they did when new, but be extremely cautious when purchasing a car that needs work. Unless you're an exceptional DiY restorer, costs can seriously exceed value. A sound, unrestored example is always a better bet than a poorly restored but shiny heap of potential trouble. Find a good car and it will reward you with reliable, elegant and enjoyable motoring.

FOR
Handsome, luxurious, inexpensive to buy and fitted with reliable running gear, for which most parts are cheap and readily available

AGAINST
Often bodged over the years, with parts lost and swapped, and which can be hard to find; one of the most expensive Jaguars to restore fully



ALTERNATIVES



ARMSTRONG SIDDELEY SAPPHIRE
1953-'60, 8187 built
The closest UK rival, offering 100mph, all-synchro manual, preselector or auto, and disc front brakes on the '59 Star. Couldn't match Jaguar on price. **Price now** £1250-25,000



MERCEDES-BENZ 300-300D SALOON
1951-'62, 10,323 built
Superb build quality, 3-litre 'six' shared with the Gullwing (some injected) and 100-110mph; later auto and power steering options. Costly new and now rare. **Price now** £18-65,000

JEEP

Born of necessity, this utilitarian in its many forms kick-started a whole new genre of vehicle around the world

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **JAMES MANN**



In 1940, the US War Department asked 135 manufacturers to design a 4x4, 40bhp, 1300lb recce car: only the American Bantam Car Co met the tight timescale of a working prototype in 49 days. Bantam did a great job, then the War Dept gave the blueprints to Ford and Willys to build it in quantity, with Bantam getting the contract to build trailers.

Vastly more capable than the rear-wheel-drive German Kübelwagen, of which just 50,000 were built, Jeeps spread throughout Allied forces and served around the world for decades after WW2. The French Army found it so useful that it had Hotchkiss licence-build an updated Jeep up to 1966. Fewer than 30,000 Hotchkiss M201s were built, compared with 650,000 WW2 Jeeps, but they survive in better condition – partly due to a thicker-gauge chassis, timing gears rather than a chain and a better clutch and gearbox bearings, but mainly due to not having seen combat. For regular use they are ideal. Only connoisseurs know the difference, and prices are now close to wartime Jeeps.

There are various ways to tell each type apart. The Ford GPW's chassis number is stamped on top of the left-front chassis rail behind the front crossmember, while the Willys MB's is on a plate attached to the inner face of the same chassis rail ahead of the crossmember. Hotchkiss M201s have an extra channel-section reinforcement inserted vertically in each chassis leg ahead of the front grille, with shallower swaging at the bottom of the grille panel. Both the Willys and Hotchkiss have a round-tube front crossmember, while Fords use an inverted channel section.

The bonnet piano hinge has nine segments on Willys, 11 on Fords and 13 on the Hotchkiss. The folded flange across the top of the dash has much more pronounced spot-welds on the M201 and lacks the central rebate found on Willys/Ford bodies. The Ford had numerous detail differences from the Willys, including the 'Ford' or 'F' logo on every component.

Wartime Jeeps were used for a huge range of tasks, often modified crudely to suit one use then changed again for another purpose. Don't expect them to be identical: these machines were thrown together and repaired with whatever was to hand, and they wear their scars with pride. Just beware of poor-quality modern reproduction parts, which are even more of a curse on Jeeps than other classics.

TROUBLE SPOTS

RUST It's easy to spot, so check everywhere, especially for poor past repairs: front floors, toolbox bases, chassis centres (WW2 Jeeps), underfloor footplates and 'top hat' channels

ENGINE Watch out for cracks in blocks, cylinder heads and manifolds, internal wear, low oil pressure, worn or clogged carburettors, poor-quality reproduction fuel pumps and incorrect spec

RADIATOR Can silt up, causing overheating

TRANSMISSION/AXLES Look for wear, running dry, jumping out of gear and clonks

ELECTRICS Starting issues are common on 24V M201s; WW2 6V is weak, 12V better; watch for poor-quality ignition components

STEERING/SUSPENSION Inspect for a worn or loose steering box and for worn bell-crank bearings, track-rod joints, kingpins and bearings; ride height should be 33in to top of front arch, 35in at the rear



Jeeps are basic and tactile, and should feel lively (albeit at low speeds) and not too heavy. Watch out for dragging brakes (tired hoses or seized cylinders or), clutch slip (may need adjusting), steering slop and overheating (clogged radiator)





The Willys 'Go-Devil' sidevalve engine was also built under licence by Ford and is a gutsy slogger of a unit. You can still buy a new Carter 539 carburettor, or substitute a much cheaper Solex M32 PBIC, or rebuild either. Cork seals, diaphragms and fuel pipes need to be replaced to cope with modern E10 fuel



Check here for identification: a round crossmember means Willys or M201; a channel means Ford; the Hotchkiss has extra stiffening on the main legs, too



Check all transmission options for operation: listen for excessive noise, clonks and whining; check for jumping out of second gear on the overrun



This is a common rot spot, so look out for repairs; the reinforcement under the 'door' should be a smooth curve (M201s had straight lines with a fold)



Look in the radiator for signs of oil contamination: cooling should be adequate, but watch out for block and head cracks, and blown head gaskets

"I found six scrap Jeeps that had been in Devon for 50 years and managed to get a correct 1942 Ford block from one"



Although hardly sporty, all forms of Jeep are rugged, reliable and great fun to drive, and ideal for shorter family weekend jaunts

Before you buy

A Jeep is a primitive thing by modern standards, but it presents a very different driving experience. The three-speed gearbox has reverse where first would normally be, and there are two other levers: one of them selects high or low range, while the other is to engage four-wheel drive instead of the normal rear-wheel drive. It's best to stop before changing range, and four-wheel drive only works in the low-range setting.

Most operate on a 6V battery, although the wartime radio Jeeps were 24V; many – both 6V and 24V – have since been converted to 12V electrics.

These are honest vehicles that will reveal their mechanical faults fairly readily. When viewing, insist on a road test of several miles if the vehicle is road-legal, then get the engine thoroughly warmed up and check all the gears and the transmission's drive options. Oil pressure should be 40-50psi on the road and 10psi at idle when hot (or 20psi on a Hotchkiss); engine temperature should sit at around 160-185°F. Inspect the engine carefully for cracks in the block or cylinder head, especially around the distributor, and look for signs of oil in the coolant and coolant in the oil, either from cracks or a blown head gasket. Check for excessive smoke: worn bores and/or rings are likely if it's worst when driving, valve guides the culprits if the smoke is bad on the overrun.

A tired engine will show itself via low oil pressure, knocking sounds, and excessive oil breathing and leaks; a worn transmission will be revealed by jumping out of second gear on the overrun and an excessive whining noise from the axles, transfer box and gearbox. Look for heavy oil leaks from all and ask the vendor how often they check and top them up.

OWNING ONE



Adam Trowbridge is keeping military vehicles in the family: "My first was a Dodge Command Car, like General Patton's – I've had it for 22 years now. I bought this Ford 20 years ago as a present for my wife – that's why it's called 'Duchess'. Her father has collected military vehicles for 50 years, and it's nice to take the Jeep to shows with the kids, so they can see Grandad. I bought the GPW restored then had to rebuild the engine, gearbox and transfer box. It had Hotchkiss parts, but I was able to acquire the correct 'boxes from Nick Jeffrey and the engine from Devon – I found six scrap Jeeps that had been there for 50 years and managed to get a correct 1942 Ford block from one. It's nice to keep these vehicles going out of respect, as a way of remembering the fallen. We wouldn't have this hobby if it weren't for them."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1940 US Army tender for 4WD, 40bhp, 1300lb reconnaissance car won by Bantam, shared by the Army with Willys and Ford
1941 Contract awarded for Bantam BRC 40, Willys MA, Ford GP, all with Willys 'Go-Devil' engine
1942 Regular production Willys MB, Ford GPW; Ford builds engines under licence; Bantam only builds trailers; Willys replaces slatted grille with stamped; the first 16,000 MBs/15,000 GPWs have 'Willys' or 'Ford' stamped into the rear panel
1944 American Central Manufacturing Company builds 'composite' bodies for Ford and Willys
1945 Wartime production ends: 2675 Bantams, 363,496 Willys, 281,448 Fords
1955 Hotchkiss M201 production starts in France: updated MB, built under licence
1966 M201 production ends (27,628 built)

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1941-'66/647,619 in wartime, plus 27,628 by Hotchkiss
Construction steel ladder-frame chassis, bolt-on steel body
Engine all-iron, sidevalve 2200cc 'four', Carter WO-539S carburettor (Solex M32 PBIC on Hotchkiss)
Max power 54bhp @ 4000rpm
Max torque 95lb ft @ 2000rpm
Transmission three-speed manual with high/low transfer box, RWD/4WD
Suspension live axle, semi-elliptic leaf springs, telescopic dampers f/r
Steering Ross cam and lever
Brakes hydraulic drums, with transmission handbrake
Length 11ft (3360mm)
Width 5ft 2in (1575mm)
Height 6ft (1829mm)
Wheelbase 6ft 8in (2032mm)
Weight 2454lb (1113kg)
0-60mph n/a
Top speed 60-65mph **Mpg** 14-18
Price new n/a

CLUB

Jeep Owners' Club jeepowners.club

SPECIALISTS

Dallas Auto Parts dallasautoparts.com
Jeffrey Engineering Ltd jeffreyeng.com
Universal Jeep Supplies shop.universaljeepsupplies.co.uk **East Coast Jeeps UK** eastcoastjeepsuk.com
Willys Jeeps UK www.willysjeepuk.co.uk
Jeeparts-UK jeeparts-uk.co.uk
Joe's Motor Pool joesmotorpool.com
RR Motor Services Ltd rrservices.co.uk

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
Ford GPW	£7000/18,000/37,000
Willys MB	£6000/16,000/35,000
Hotchkiss M201	£5000/14,000/28,000

OUR VERDICT

There's a huge range of Jeeps out there: cosmetically great vehicles with worn-out and/or non-original mechanical parts; good runners but in scruffy condition; or rebuilt throughout, but with non-original components. In service, parts would have been swapped at random so, to most owners, originality doesn't matter. Very few are fully rebuilt with all-correct items for their year and model. It's a personal choice, but it does affect the price, so make sure it's fair.

FOR
Almost everything is available in new, reproduction or substitute form, making the Jeep very practical to own and enjoy – provided you don't want every detail period-correct

AGAINST
It can be frustrating if you want the right logos on every component; many have been bodged, and reproduction parts are often poor quality



ALTERNATIVES



FIAT CAMPAGNOLA *1951-'73, 39,086 built*
Also built by Zastava, the Campagnola was clearly influenced by the Jeep: a bit heavier, with similar power from a 1.9-litre petrol or diesel ohv 'four', it was sold for both military and civilian service. **Price now** £4-18,000



LAND-ROVER S1 *1948-'58, c200,000 built*
The Wilks brothers' brilliant, Jeep-inspired farmer's all-rounder started a dynasty and is now hugely sought-after. Early petrol 1.6 was uprated to 2 litres in 1952, getting a diesel option in 1957. **Price now** £3-100,000

JOWETT JAVELIN

This surprisingly sporting post-war saloon makes an excellent practical purchase

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



Alec Issigonis wanted the Morris Minor to have a flat-four unit, but Lord Nuffield decided it was too expensive to develop. Meanwhile, up in Yorkshire, the tiny Jowett concern – undaunted by its antiquated equipment and desperate shortages of raw materials – just went ahead and built one, along with an aerodynamic monocoque body to in which to install it. Gerald Palmer was the young designer responsible for the Javelin, poached from MG in the middle of WW2.

Palmer had grown up in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia), so he knew well the needs of such export markets. He devised a compact and powerful 1.5-litre flat-four, calling in Harry Weslake to advise on induction tweaks to get the best from it. The Jowett's structure was immensely strong, with a steel shell welded to a substantial box-section chassis, which was designed before it was decided to weld the body to it. Yet the car was still light compared with rivals. Cart springs were out, torsion bars being used all round, with double wishbones at the front and four-link location for the live rear axle. The first Javelin hit the road in 1944, and it was almost ready by the time hostilities ended.

Far better than it deserved to be from such a small firm, the Jowett ran rings around most contemporary saloons under 2 litres and many larger ones. Javelins took class wins in the 1949 Spa 24 Hours and on the Rallye Monte-Carlo.

The change to an in-house gearbox in 1951 brought unexpected troubles that dogged Jowett for over a year and led to an unfortunate reputation for unreliability. This, and under-capitalisation of the business, led to its downfall. Briggs Motor Bodies had been bought by Ford and was reluctant to extend credit to Jowett or build in small quantities, so the firm had nowhere else to go and Bradford's brave car manufacturer simply faded away.

The early monocoque construction is very complicated to repair, so inspect carefully. Key areas are the front wings around the headlights and rear edges; front torsion-bar and steering-box mounting areas; chassis outriggers and jacking points; door bottoms and bases of the B-posts; sills and floors; rear trailing arms and mounts, plus torsion-bar mountings under the seat; chassis extensions under the boot floor; and the tool tray/spare-wheel carrier.



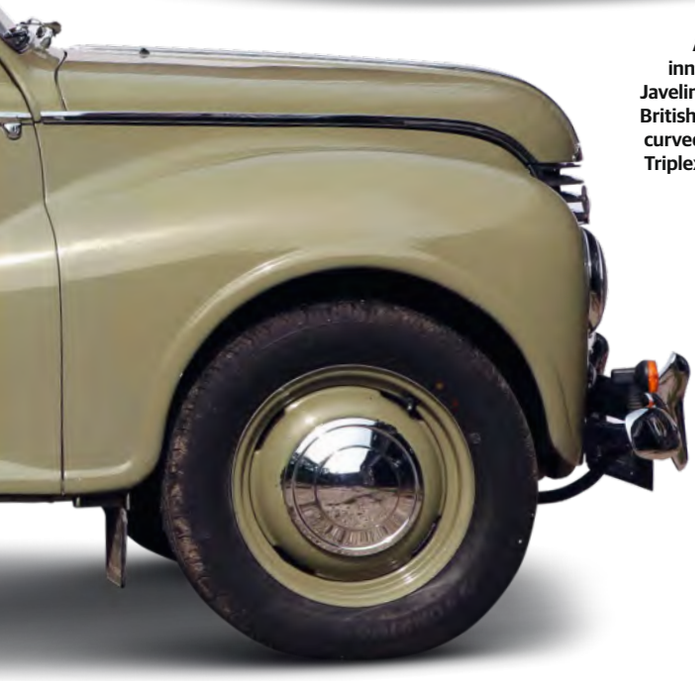
Though durable, leather dries out and cracks over the years. A good trimmer can either repair the original or let in a new section, but modern hide is thinner



The standard painted dash is rare; most survivors are de Luxe cars with lots of wood. See that it's in good order and all matches, and that all instruments work



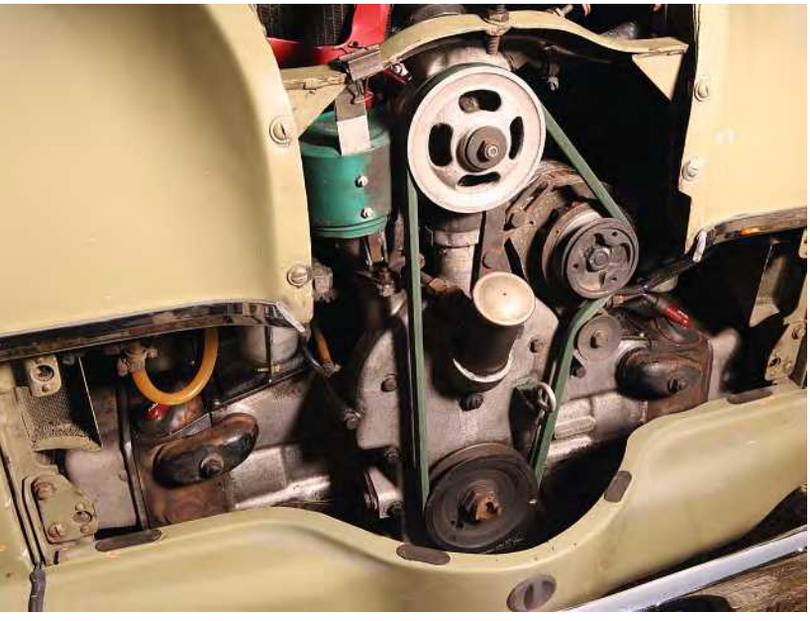




Among many innovations, the Javelin was the first British car to have a curved, toughened Triplex windscreen



Ther cabin is fairly basic, but comfortable and excellent quality. This innovative and effective saloon was still one of the liveliest in its class when production ended. Even in 1953 (on its fourth road test), *The Motor* described the Jowett as: 'In many respects one of the most attractive medium-sized cars built anywhere in the world'



Provided the wet liners have been correctly seated, the engine has no inherent faults, but, like all flat-fours, it's prone to oil leaks. Look for drips below and do the standard checks for wear: blue smoke, excessive oil breathing, knocking/rattling sounds. Lower grille is easily removed for access. This engine runs an alternator



Rear-mounted radiator will silt up with age, so look for signs of overheating and oil/water mixing. Here a fan has been fitted behind for peace of mind



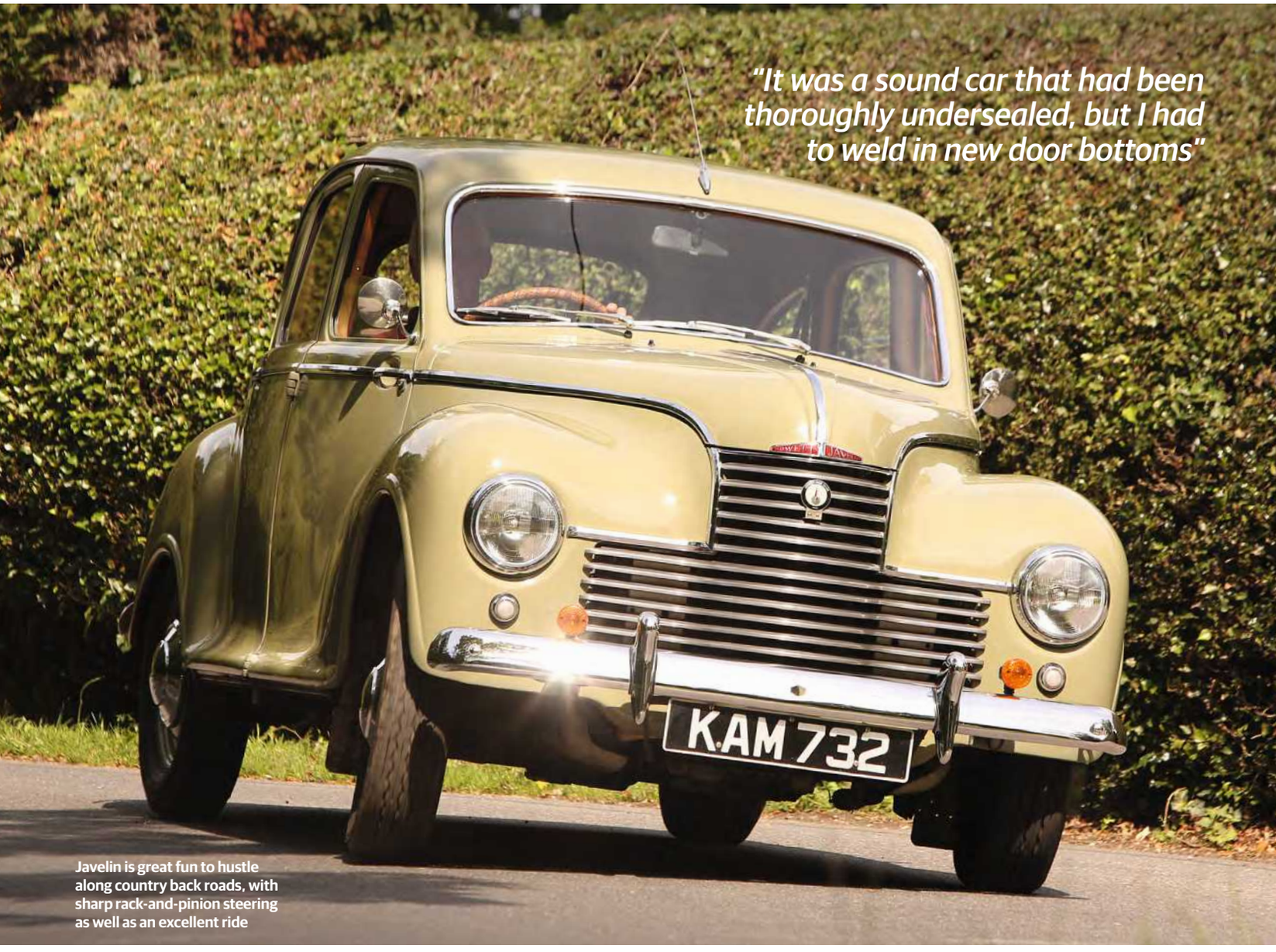
Jowett-built gearboxes from 1951 had production issues that hit the firm hard. It shouldn't be a problem now; many have been rebuilt with roller bearings



Front suspension's multiple grease points need attention every 500 miles on early cars; fewer (but same interval) with Metalastik bushes from late 1952



The transverse torsion bars for the rear suspension are hidden under the back seat. Rot-prone mountings are tricky to repair, so confirm they're not festering



"It was a sound car that had been thoroughly undersealed, but I had to weld in new door bottoms"

Javelin is great fun to hustle along country back roads, with sharp rack-and-pinion steering as well as an excellent ride

Before you buy

The Javelin was lively for its day and had notable success in races and rallies. The engine makes a throaty, almost Subaru-like growl and should pull well through the rev range. Worn or unbalanced carburettors can hold back performance; blue smoke will reveal if any sluggish response is due to worn bores.

Check what work has been done on the engine: although durable, they need frequent maintenance to last well. Rust-inhibitor levels should be maintained to avoid rapid silting-up of the cooling system and the radiator, and leading to damaging corrosion in the aluminium waterways of the crankcase. The unusual arrangement of alloy crankcase, cast-iron head and wet liners works well if put together by someone who knows what they are doing; if not, it can give trouble. Spare engines and gearboxes can still be sourced through the club.

The column gearchange should be precise and well defined, although it cannot be rushed. There is no synchromesh on first, but it should be effective on the other ratios. Confirm that it doesn't jump out of gear, and dip the clutch at tickover while listening for bearing wear/rumble. Vibration from the drivetrain is likely to be a worn Layrub coupling in the long propshaft.

The steering box, which is a clever Jowett design with a curved rack inside, is prone to oil leaks, but it is otherwise durable and precise. The ride should feel comfortable, with long-travel but effective damping from telescopic shock absorbers (at a time when most rivals were still on lever-arm dampers). The brakes are part-hydraulic and part-mechanical on early models; they were full hydraulic from late 1950. Hydraulics are prone to seizing if rarely used.

OWNING ONE



JCC Southern Section chair **Ian Roxburgh** owned a Javelin from 1957 through to 1960, and bought this 1952 de Luxe in 2000. "I rebuilt it from 2002-'06," he recalls. "It was a sound car that had been thoroughly undersealed. Even the mudguards unbolted, although I did have to weld in new sections to the door bottoms. It's my own choice of colour, specially mixed – so now it is going to be a nightmare to match!

"I bought a rusty late car for spares, and it was equipped with overdrive; we believe it was a factory prototype. The unit is remotely fitted in place of the propshaft coupling and works on third and fourth gears, giving relaxed 65-70mph cruising. I have also added a brake servo and a huge number of other mods over the years, so I can drive it with more confidence."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1944 Original prototype hits the road
1946 Javelin shown at the London Cavalcade of Motoring
1947 First production body of 31 cars produced that year
1949 Javelins take class victories in the Spa 24 Hours endurance race and on the Rallye Monte-Carlo
1950 De Luxe model added with leather and wood, plus heavier bumpers and more instruments; full hydraulic brakes adopted, plus larger headlights; solid tappets replace hydraulic
1951 Jowett gearbox supersedes the original Meadows unit
1952 Metalastik bushes replace many of the grease points in the front suspension; revised, mostly timber dashboard; stiffened crankcase; S-type Javelin available, with Jupiter engine, wheels, axle ratio and rev counter (nine made)
1953 Last Javelin produced

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1947-'53/23,307
Construction steel monocoque
Engine alloy-crankcase, iron-head, wet-liner, ohv 1486cc flat-four, twin Zenith 30VM4 or 30VM5 carburettors
Max power 50bhp @ 4100rpm to 52.5bhp @ 4500rpm
Max torque 76lb ft @ 2600rpm
Transmission four-speed, three-synchromesh manual, RWD
Suspension: front independent, by torsion bars, double wishbones
rear Salisbury live axle, torsion bars, four trailing links; telescopic dampers f/r
Steering Jowett rack and pinion
Brakes Girling drums, hydro-mechanical at first, fully hydraulic from 1950
Length 14ft (4267mm)
Width 5ft 1in (1549mm)
Height 5ft 1in (1549mm)
Wheelbase 8ft 6in (2591mm)
Weight 2380lb (1082kg)
0-60mph 22.2-20.9 secs
Top speed 77.6-82.4mph
Mpg 27-35
Price new £1129/1261 (standard/de Luxe)

CLUBS

Jowett Car Club jowetteer.com
JowettTalk jowett.net

SPECIALISTS

Jowett Car Club Spares jowetteer.com/jowett-car-spares (members only)
Coolex coolexperts.co.uk
Kip Motor Co kipmotor.com
Scott Renner jowettjupiter.com
Jupiter Owners' Auto Club joac.org.uk

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
All	£1000/5000/10,000

OUR VERDICT

The Javelin is an attractive and intriguing machine that will give a great deal of pleasure, and its surprising practicality belies its years. Only motorways really reveal its era, but owners have discovered various solutions to give higher gearing. The club is a huge help with spares and advice: with a vehicle of this age, someone will always have come across – and perhaps found a solution to – the same problem!

FOR
Innovative and practical; comfortable ride; surprisingly powerful for its era; British engineering at its best

AGAINST
Corrosion can be extensive; original panels are scarce; unitary construction is complex to repair, so not really suitable for home restorers



ALTERNATIVES



CITROËN LIGHT 15 *1935-'57, 759,127 built*
One of the best pre-war saloons continued well into the 1950s, with front-wheel drive, great roadholding and a spacious cabin. Three-speed gearbox and heavy steering, plus corrosion can be severe. **Price now** £2500-20,000



SINGER SM1500 *1949-'56, 22,154 built*
One of the last designs from the independent firm, it boasted an overhead-cam engine and hydraulic brakes, but still had a separate chassis. 'Modern look' is somewhat childlike; now ultra-rare. **Price now** £1-7500

JOWETT JUPITER

The Bradford firm's intriguing and attractive swansong makes a great Continental tourer

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



The Jowett Jupiter was a clever, innovative, compact sporting car that was effective and reliable in competition. Sales were small only because its maker lacked the resources to build it cheaply enough.

Forced to produce cars for 'export or die' after WW2, Britain's car makers battled with outdated equipment and desperate material shortages. Gerald Palmer's brilliant Javelin saloon – aerodynamic, monocoque and with a low, forward-mounted flat-four – was a revelation, but overseas sales were slow. The potential for a sports-car derivative was clear, however. Influence from Laurence Pomeroy of *The Motor* and ERA resulted in a joint project to bring Austrian Prof Eberan von Eberhorst, designer of the phenomenal pre-war Auto Union Typ D, over from Italy to join ERA and design a sports car for Jowett.

Von Eberhorst was horrified by the primitive nature of the ERA works, but he sketched out a tubular chassis on the floor with chalk. Novel and stiff, it employed torsion-bar suspension all round with trailing-arm rear-axle location, plus anti-roll bars front and rear (deleted for production). Displayed at the motor show in 1949, before the body was ready, it attracted attention and resulted in quite a few Jupiter rolling chassis being sold to coachbuilders. Chief designer Reg Korner drew up a rakish two/three-seater soft-top body. Steel was used for the inner body frame, but all of the outer panels were pressed in aluminium (which was not subject to the strict tariffs placed on steel), then individually panel-beaten to fit.

When the Healey 100 was launched in 1952 for just £39 more, the Jupiter's days were numbered; the far cheaper Triumph TR2 nailed its coffin shut in '53. Jowett tried to introduce the smaller, more sporting R4, but had to call it a day. The factory was sold to International Harvester and Jowett faded into history.

Inspect for cracks in the engine bearer tubes, if they aren't reinforced, and the chassis where the Panhard rod mounts. The steel structure needs checking for rust in the transverse chassis tubes; bulkhead and A-posts; and sills and floors, especially the six mounting points to the chassis. And look out for electrolytic corrosion where the aluminium meets steel, such as the water trap at the bottom of the aluminium panel behind the door.



Smiths gauges are unobtainable new and costly to recondition; look for a full set in good order. Alternative or repro instruments never look quite right



The wide leather seat and column shift meant three could be carried at a pinch, or two in comfort. On Mk1s it hinged forward for access to the luggage space







The Jowett makes an excellent classic buy, offering a level of comfort and practicality that belies its age



The Jupiter was an expensive car to build. It featured a well-equipped dashboard, with a big rev counter and speedo, and was specified with such luxuries as wind-up windows and a quality stowaway hood because it was clear from the beginning that Jowett would not be able to compete directly on price with the likes of the MG TD



Jowett had early production issues with head gaskets and crankshafts on the wet-liner flat-four engine, although all of these problems have long since been resolved and there are no inherent weaknesses with the unit. Standard oil cooler was moved from ahead of the radiator, behind the motor, to the front in 1952



Zenith carburettors are often replaced by Webers or, as here, Dell'Ortos that are available new and release a little more power than rebuilt Zeniths can



Gearchange should be precise (if not, selectors need adjusting). Test synchros (2nd/3rd/4th) and for jumping out of gear, indicating an overhaul is needed



Front suspension needs lubrication every 500 miles (11 grease points), or kingpins will wear and start to seize (stiff steering). A rebuild is expensive



Easy-to-erect hood and sturdy wind-up windows make the Jupiter practical. Check condition and alignment of the frame, hood cover and wood sections



Curvaceous Jupiter rides and handles much better than you would expect a '50s sports car to, with its chassis designed by Eberan von Eberhorst

Before you buy

A good Jupiter should feel lively and relatively modern to drive, with a throaty, almost Subaru-like exhaust note from the water-cooled flat-four. An oil cooler is standard and the large radiator is set behind the engine. Check for any signs of overheating and leaks – the radiators do silt up with age, and neglect will ultimately lead to head-gasket issues. Look for emulsion in the oil and radiator. Most (but not all) engines leak a little oil; ensure it's not excessive and that the unit is not blowing oil smoke everywhere, indicating worn bores and rings. Listen for knocking under acceleration, which means crankshaft wear.

With a bit of little practice, the column gearchange is easy to master and, while gearshifts shouldn't ever be rushed, the Jupiter can be rowed along effectively because its ratios are well chosen. Listen for gearbox bearing wear (dip the clutch at tickover) and test for worn synchros (second to fourth) and jumping out of gear. Vibration from the drivetrain is likely to be a worn Layrub coupling – the forward-mounted engine means an unusually long, split propshaft.

The Jupiter should handle well, with light, precise steering and a comfortable ride thanks to its sophisticated, long-travel suspension – which does, like all '50s cars, need frequent lubrication.

Although the electrical system is fairly straightforward, it's wise to inspect the condition of the wiring loom, because it may be dangerously hard and/or frayed in places if it's still the original item. New looms are available, but they are time-consuming to fit. Some cars, such as the featured example, have had their original trafficators replaced by flashing indicators – a worthwhile modification for safety, if not originality.

OWNING ONE



"Jupiters have always been part of the family," laughs **Greg Jackson**. "My dad had them first. My brother bought this one as a non-runner for £35 in 1965. Dad towed it for a couple of miles then opened the bonnet, tweaked the distributor and it fired up! I bought it from my brother and have had it for more than 50 years; it was my everyday car for a long time. It has been uprated with Dell'Orto carbs and, when the engine was rebuilt, Ford Fiesta pistons. The skirts have to be modified slightly, but they give higher compression and a bit more power.

"The Jowett Car Club is fantastic for parts; if I order on a Monday evening, they're here on the Wednesday. It gets batches made, and I have a good stock of used spares. It's very friendly, too – we enjoy several trips with the club every year."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1949 Chassis unveiled at Earls Court
1950 Jupiter launched at New York show; wins class at Le Mans
1951 Left-hand-drive version introduced; ash-framed aluminium hardtop available for standard Jupiter by WM Park (glassfibre top offered later in USA); lightweight sports R1 built for Le Mans and wins its class (also in 1952), three built
1952 Engine side valances attached to bonnet instead of chassis; oil cooler moves from ahead of radiator to front of engine; Mk1A arrives: external-opening larger boot, longer cabin, smaller fuel tank, symmetrical metal-face dash in place of handed walnut
1953 Jupiter R4 introduced: new deep-box chassis, cam steering, leaf rear springs, welded-on sports-racing body, 8.5:1 compression, overdrive (three built)
1954 Last Jupiter produced, using original 1949 London Motor Show chassis

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1950-'54/825 (plus 75 chassis for coachbuilders)
Construction chrome-molybdenum tubular chassis, steel and aluminium body
Engine all-iron, ohv 1486cc flat-four, twin Zenith carburettors
Max power 60bhp @ 4750rpm to 65bhp @ 5000rpm
Max torque 84lb ft @ 3000rpm
Transmission four-speed, three-synchro manual, RWD
Suspension: front independent, by unequal-length transverse links **rear** live axle, four parallel trailing arms, Panhard rod; torsion bars, telescopic dampers f/r
Steering rack and pinion
Brakes Girling hydraulic drums f/r (hydraulic front/mechanical rear for first c56 chassis)
Length 14ft (4267mm)
Width 5ft 2in (1575mm)
Height 4ft 8in (1422mm)
Wheelbase 7ft 9in (2362mm)
Weight 2100lb (955kg)
0-60mph 14.2 secs
Top speed 89mph **Mpg** 22-30
Price new £1284 (1952)

CLUBS

Jowett Car Club jowetteer.com
Jupiter Owners' Auto Club joac.org.uk
JowettTalk jowett.net

SPECIALISTS

Jowett Car Club Spares jowetteer.com/jowett-car-spares (members only)
Coolex coolexperts.co.uk
Kip Motor Co kipmotor.com
Scott Renner jowettjupiter.com

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
All	£7000/16,000/28,000

OUR VERDICT

Considering their relative prices when new and the quality of construction, Jupiters remain undervalued against other sports cars from the 1950s. Whether you're looking for a project car or a concours example, it's important to check carefully for originality and missing components. With decent weather protection and good performance, they make ideal touring cars as well as competitive rally mounts.

FOR
Comfortable; efficient weather protection; good handling and usable performance; fine spares supply from the club

AGAINST
Many have been modified, not all well; original panels and instruments are hard to find; costly to restore due to complex construction



ALTERNATIVES



MORGAN PLUS FOUR
1950-'58, 245 built
The 2.1-litre Standard-engined Plus Four was Morgan's only model from 1951 in two-seat, four-seat or Drophead Coupé forms, the last close in concept to the Jupiter. Pre-war styling, handling and pace. **Price now** £7500-30,000



SINGER SM1500 ROADSTER
1951-'55, 3440 built
Not that quick given its 1497cc overhead-cam engine, the relatively scarce SM was (and remains) something of a bargain, especially with price-cutting during production. Most went for export. **Price now** £3-15,000



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Offer ends 1 January 2027.

LAGONDA 2.6 & 3 LITRE

This handsome post-war express is a quality item and a delight to drive

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **WILL WILLIAMS**



More than 70 years after its launch, the Lagonda still elicits gasps of amazement from all who venture under its skin. This was a very advanced car in 1947 and throughout its production life. With a twin-overhead-cam engine, pure cruciform I-beam chassis, all-independent suspension – front wishbones and coils, rear torsion bars – and rack-and-pinion steering, this was state-of-the-art racing specification. Yet it formed the underpinnings of a fine saloon and drophead in the years of post-war austerity and was brought to production by a tractor manufacturer...

The secret was WO Bentley. This brilliant engineer, who introduced aluminium pistons in 1913 and won numerous races before WW2 with his eponymous cars, joined Lagonda in 1935 and, following its pre-war V12, designed the twin-cam 'six' for the post-war market. The Ministry of Supply was unimpressed and it could all have disappeared if it wasn't for David Brown. The transmission- and tractor-maker, who had designed his own twin-cam straight-eight in the '20s, bought Aston Martin in 1946 but found it desperately lacking in the engine department. The opportunity to buy Lagonda in '47 – for a mere £52,500 – couldn't have been better timed. He really only wanted the engine, but realised the 2.6 Litre was too special to die and it was put into limited production.

That the Lagonda was a very fine car shines through in *The Motor*'s road test of the 3 Litre: 'It is one of the very few passenger saloons whose primary appeal is to the skilful and appreciative driver' – although the tester did mention a hard ride and a pronounced tendency to oversteer in spite of excellent traction.

This special car came at a special price, however, and the Lagonda was very costly compared with mass-produced Jaguars and the like. That said, it was trimmed to an exceptionally high standard throughout and came fitted with plenty of equipment that would have been optional extras on others, such as a radio, two-speed wipers, windscreen washers, and a comprehensive heating and ventilation system. Sadly, Frank Feeley's superbly elegant restyle and the new car's 104mph top speed failed to reignite Lagonda sales, and production slowed to a halt in 1957.

TROUBLE SPOTS

ENGINE The cast-iron, twin-cam straight-six engine demands expert care to ensure reliability

FRONT BULKHEAD This steel panel can suffer from rust, so check it carefully

FLOORPAN The steel floor is mounted to the chassis on just four points, so any corrosion can severely weaken it and affect the overall integrity

ASH FRAME The timber body structure can also rot away if neglected

ALLOY BODY Corrosion of the body is rare, but damage to the voluptuous panels is common, so check carefully for filler and other signs of improper repair

INNER WHEELARCHES Steel panels are prone to rust

REAR BULKHEAD Also steel and rot-prone

REAR SUSPENSION It's a complex set-up and hard to inspect, but any wear will cause poor handling





WO Bentley pedigree exudes from the elegant, Frank Feeley-styled 3 Litre Lagonda, giving it high performance as well as class and exclusivity





Although there's a pre-war feel to the body's flexibility, it is exceptionally well insulated from chassis noise and vibration. The Lagonda bowls along effortlessly, with a surprising turn of speed from the free-revving twin-cam straight-six motor. An overdrive conversion gives this example even longer legs for relaxed touring



Shared with contemporary Aston Martins, the cast-iron twin-cam engine is set low and well back in the chassis. Watch for signs of the coolant and oil mixing (head-gasket or liner-seal failure), for excessive breathing and leaks, and for fore/aft crank movement that indicates failed thrust washers. Properly set up, it is durable



Timber abounds: check its condition, and that it all matches. Instruments should be complete and original – if present, they can always be rebuilt



Double-wishbone front suspension with anti-dive characteristics was state of the art when new; regular lubrication is needed to reduce bush/kingpin wear



The four-speed, three-synchromesh David Brown gearbox is a robust unit, shared with Astons: check all synchros work well and that first isn't too noisy



Luxurious trim was a given: it will be expensive to restore, but lasts if well looked after. This example is all original, with subtle repairs to the driver's seat



Rare two-door 3 Litre is particularly stylish from the rear; advanced spec results in a fine drive but complex maintenance

Before you buy

In their heyday, these Lagonda saloons and tourers provided lively performance and a comfortable ride. Pre-war body construction methods mean there is some flex, but the sturdy cruciform chassis keeps the all-independent suspension under control. By today's standards a 2.6 Litre might feel a little staid, but the 3 Litre offers an impressive turn of speed and lopes along quite effortlessly – and remarkably quietly – at the legal speed limit.

The cast-iron engine (an aftermarket alloy cylinder head is available, albeit at a price) is a fine piece of engineering, with wet liners that have to be set up accurately otherwise leaks can occur either from the head gasket or the liner-base seals. It's not exactly rocket science, but it's recommended that engine work is handled by engineers experienced in the Lagonda's foibles. There is no valve adjustment; instead, clearance was achieved originally by swapping cam followers, but today it is usually done by grinding the valves to length. Hardened seats and stainless-steel valves improve durability on unleaded petrol.

The transmission is a sturdy David Brown unit, supplied with a column-mounted gearchange until 1955, although the featured car has since been converted (as have many others) to the more familiar floor change. Installing a later 3-litre engine into a 2.6 is not an uncommon modification, and it should not detract from the value.

Rust is the real killer with these cars, because the entire floorpan, bulkheads and rear inner wings are steel; the ash body frame also rots away. Parts are available from the very keen Lagonda Club and Aston Service Dorset, plus there are stashes of used spares.

OWNING ONE



Peter Gilkes' 3 Litre two-door saloon has been in the family for more than 30 years. He says: "It was my father's retirement project; we bought it at the Ellard auction of Lagonda projects and rebuilt it together over eight years. The interior is original, except for the carpets, and the body was done professionally, but we did the mechanicals.

"We stripped down the engine and the thrust washers were broken, but it was largely unworn. The bodywork was good apart from the lower rear wings, which were full of filler. It's been on the road for 26 years now. It's a great touring car and does around 2000 miles a year: we've been to Ireland, the Dordogne, Shetland, the Orkneys and Le Mans. I have fitted Simon Constable's overdrive conversion, which fits in place of the torque tube in front of the diff and is brilliant."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1946 Lagonda announces 2½-litre saloon and dhc; saloon prototypes bodied by Vanden Plas, to a design by Frank Feeley
1947 David Brown buys Lagonda after just six prototype saloons have been built
1948 2.6 Litre saloon production starts at Feltham, with David Brown manual 'box
1949 Drophead coupé production starts, bodied by Tickford
1952 MkII: saloon only (10 built), 125bhp
1953 2.6 Litre production ends, with 519 built (124 dhc); replaced by 3 Litre (two-door sports saloon built first)
1954 3 Litre two-door dhc and four-door saloon production starts
1955 David Brown buys Tickford; MkII model gets floor gearchange
1956 Two-door fhc and dhc build ends
1957 3 Litre production ends (261 built)

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1947-'57/780
Construction cruciform chassis, steel floor and bulkheads, aluminium body over wooden frame
Engine all-iron, dohc 2580/2922cc 'six', twin SU carburettors
Max power 105bhp @ 5000rpm to 140bhp @ 5000rpm **Max torque** 133lb ft @ 3000rpm to 164lb ft @ 2000rpm
Transmission four-speed, three-synchro manual, RWD
Suspension independent, at **front** by wishbones, coil springs (anti-roll bar on 3 Litre) **rear** swing-axles, torsion bars, radius arms; lever-arm dampers f/r
Steering rack and pinion
Brakes drums, with servo on 3 Litre
Length 15ft 8in-16ft 3½in (4775-4966mm)
Width 5ft 8-10in (1727-1778mm)
Height 5ft 2-4in (1575-1626mm)
Wheelbase 9ft 5½in (2883mm)
Weight 3136-3724lb (1425-1693kg)
0-60mph 17.6-12.9secs
Top speed 90-104mph **Mpg** 15-20
Price new £2996/2957 (sal/dhc, 1953)

CLUBS

Lagonda Club lagondaclub.com
Lagonda 1949-1958
lagonda1949-1958.co.uk

SPECIALISTS

Lagonda Club Spares
lagondaclub.com/spares/ (members only)
Wren Classics wrenclassics.com
Bishopgray bishopgray.com **Aston Service Dorset** astonservicedorset.com
David Ayre davidayre.com

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
2.6 saloon	£7500/17,500/35,000
2.6 dhc	£15,000/25,000/50,000
3.0 saloon	£10,000/18,000/45,000
3.0 dhc	£15,000/30,000/75,000

OUR VERDICT

The discerning customer's post-war saloon and drophead coupé of choice, the Lagonda has class, performance, heritage, style and many innovative features, without being in the least bit brash. When well restored it is a capable and relaxed touring car that is a delight to own and drive. A rough one, though, is a money pit of Aston Martin proportions. So be warned: check thoroughly and buy wisely.

FOR
Thoroughly usable and comfortable, with terrific club support and specialists that make owning such exclusivity surprisingly affordable

AGAINST
Prohibitively expensive to restore due to rot and complex construction; Aston values make shared components expensive



ALTERNATIVES



ALVIS TA/TC21 *1950-'55, 2074 built*
Sporting rather than sports saloons and dropheads with 3-litre 'six' and 85-100mph in pre-war styling, finally brought up to date by Graber in 1956. **Price now** £5-35,000



BENTLEY MkVI/R-TYPE *1946-'55, 7728 built*
Although 50% more expensive new (100% in the case of the coachbuilt cars), Bentleys sold in far higher numbers and are affordable now in Standard Steel form. **Price now** £6-90,000

LANCIA APRILIA

One of the most advanced cars of the 1930s, this chic saloon is an underrated classic

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **JAMES MANN**



The Aprilia, which would be the last car conceived by Vincenzo Lancia, was designed by Battista Falchetto, who helped style the Lambda, and was one of the first road cars to be wind-tunnel tested. Its shape was exceptionally smooth, with the boot blended into the bodyshell.

The Aprilia was of integrated monocoque construction, with four pillarless doors. It had a light, compact, narrow-angle V4 engine with hemispherical combustion chambers, and it was fitted with four-wheel hydraulic brakes – inboard at the rear – with finned aluminium drums. A 9ft wheelbase within a 13ft-long car gave a 'wheel at each corner' stance and, with sophisticated independent suspension, it feels incredibly modern for its age. Even Vincenzo himself, the ultimate critic, declared after his first drive in the prototype: "What a magnificent car!"

A platform steel chassis with a 4in-longer wheelbase was produced for coachbuilt bodies, which made up 30% of Aprilia sales: early on, Trasformabile cabriolets were series-built by Stabilimenti Farina, and post-war versions had leaf-sprung live rear axles. Lancia still preferred right-hand drive, regardless of the market: no left-hand-drive Aprilias are known.

First-series Aprilias were imported to the UK by Lancia Works of Alperton, without trim or even bumpers to minimise import duties; many were upholstered in leather instead of the standard cloth. The Aprilia was not sold in post-war Britain, and most in the UK now have been imported, including 'our' car, which arrived in 2013 from Australia.

The Lusso (luxury) version differed in many details, with running boards and square, geometric instruments including a clock, thermometer and fuel gauge. The larger engine for the second-series Aprilia required complete re-engineering, because a narrow-vee engine's angle is dependent on the bore, stroke and conrod length. At 1352cc, the vee angle was just over 19°; for 1486cc it was 17°.

Both the quality engineering and attention to detail in the Aprilia are delightful: rubber strips on the bumpers were another pioneering feature. Rust and the difficulty of finding some parts are the biggest problems today: service items are widely available, but an incomplete car can be a challenge to restore.

TROUBLE SPOTS

RUST The central sill membrane is vital to the body structure, so check for bodges/patches to the sills and floor. On platform-chassis cars, the honeycomb structure can corrode, but it can be replaced in sections. Floors are available via the Lancia Motor Club. Check the double-skinned bootlid, the boot floor and the panels around it; also the double-skinned valance under the radiator. Vulnerable box-sections continue up each side of the engine, and supports are welded in for the front/rear suspension and jacking points. Watch for body flex: doors should fit well, close easily and not pop open

TRIM Chromework is mostly unobtainable

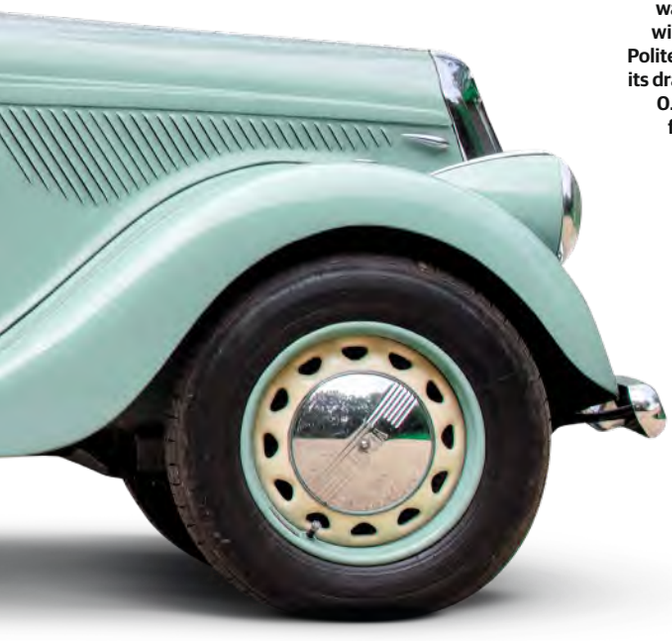
DASHBOARD Instruments and switchgear are very hard to find: check that it all works

ELECTRICS Watch for deteriorating wiring

WHEELS Early, unvented wheels are now unobtainable and rims rot. Most today have the vented wheels from later models







The Aprilia's styling was refined in the wind tunnel at the Politecnico di Torino; its drag coefficient of 0.47 was a record figure for its day



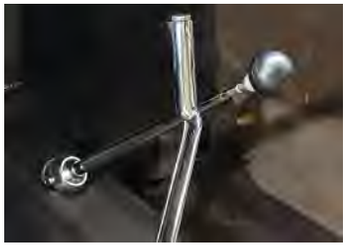
The Aprilia is an engineer's delight to drive: its ride and handling feel much more modern than most 1930s cars, with supple suspension, good brakes and strong acceleration. Though compact, the barrel-shaped body provides space for four or even five adults, with lovely touches including the folding window-winder knobs



Compact dimensions with a good power-to-weight ratio led Lancia to the narrow-angle V4. A Weber carb (as here) is a common substitution for the original Zenith. Details vary between cars: this has a rear-damper control and brake-fluid reservoir on the bulkhead, with the oil reservoir for the front suspension on the other side



Lancia's sliding-pillar front suspension was first used on the 1922-'31 Lambda, but it was still leagues ahead of other set-ups when the Aprilia was new



Beautifully engineered, but without synchromesh, gearboxes can jump out of the straight-cut first if worn. Clutch judder points to leaking gearbox oil



Cloth to recreate trim in most original colour schemes can now be sourced in Italy; first-series cars sold new in the UK were often trimmed locally in leather



Complex but effective independent rear suspension was state of the art. Inboard brakes seize if not used, with tricky access via a trapdoor in the boot



Distinctive shape provides remarkable interior space, as well as neatly integrating its luggage compartment

"It's happy in modern traffic and much lighter than an Aurelia, and it has a special charm"

Before you buy

The impressively compact V4 engine has a central overhead camshaft that is driven by a Duplex chain and which operates triple rocker shafts sited above and alongside it. The engine block is in aluminium alloy with steel liners, while the cylinder head is made of cast iron and the rocker cover alloy. Lancia even experimented with a fuel-injected Aprilia in 1937, and a narrow-angle V6 in the 1940s. A Nardi twin-carb conversion is a rare but desirable extra.

The second-series engine has a bit more torque, but both are reliable, long-lived units, and parts are available to rebuild them when they get worn. Power loss at higher speeds may be down to a worn fuel pump (it's easy to rebuild). A leaky water pump is expensive to replace; so, too, is recoring a clogged radiator, due to the dynamo passing through its centre. Electrics were 6V, updated to 12V in 1939. The spark-plug connectors can break down in the rocker cover, causing a misfire.

Lancia's sliding-pillar front suspension set-up gives soft, progressive springing, and it's mated to hydraulic damping, impressively low unsprung weight, controlled braking and outstanding steering angles. Look out underneath for oil leaks and broken springs.

The rear torsion-bar suspension is softened by a transverse leaf spring inverted to oppose it. Watch for cracked spring leaves and rusty spring hangers: if they fail completely, the car can roll over. Original Italian driveshafts feature 16 bearings that cost around €100 each to replace; British-finished cars had Hardy Spicer driveshafts, which are cheaper but not as well articulated. Special tools to complete the job can be borrowed from the Lancia Motor Club.

OWNING ONE



Lance Batt's father Gerald is a founding member of the Lancia Motor Club, with an impressive collection, so enthusiasm for the marque runs in the family. "I've driven them from a young age, and grown to love them," Lance says. "This Aprilia was restored in Australia and drives like a new car. They are hugely underrated: it can drive happily in modern traffic, it is much lighter than an Aurelia and it has a special charm. I took it to Scotland last year – it boasts a twin-choke Weber, an aftermarket conversion, and it cruises happily at around 60mph. The gearbox has no synchromesh but doesn't need it – the lever just snicks in; it's a lovely change. We have a Lusso version as well, and a Spider based on the platform chassis with a body built by Basso – I took that one to Goodwood this year."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1936 Aprilia Berlinetta Aerodinamica revealed publicly at Paris Salon; Ardennes-badged French version on sale in the autumn: larger headlights, 1620 built
1937 Italian sales commence: first series 1352cc, 10,354 built. Founder Vincenzo Lancia dies of a heart attack, aged 55
1939 Second series replaces first: 1486cc, 9728 built; French assembly ends
1946 Lungo LWB version offered, 706 built
1947 Aprilia wins 2000cc Sports and 1500cc Touring classes on the Mille Miglia
1949 Production ends, replaced by Aurelia

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1936-'49/20,064 *berlina*, 7553 separate chassis
Construction steel monocoque, or platform chassis with coachbuilt body
Engine alloy-block, iron-head, ohc 1352/1486cc V4, with single Zenith 32 carburettor (Weber from 1946)
Max power 47bhp @ 4000rpm to 48bhp @ 4300rpm
Max torque 57lb ft @ 2000rpm to 74lb ft @ 2500rpm
Transmission four-speed manual, with no synchromesh, RWD
Suspension independent, at **front** by sliding pillars, coil springs, telescopic hydraulic dampers **rear** torsion bars, trailing arms, opposed transverse semi-elliptic leaf spring, friction dampers (optional adjustable hydraulic; Houdaille lever-arms from 1939)
Steering wheel and sector
Brakes hydraulic drums f/r: first-series Lockheed, second-series Sabif
Length 13ft-13ft 7½in (3962-4153mm) **Width** 4ft 10in (1473mm) **Height** 4ft 9½in (1460mm) **Wheelbase** 9ft ¼-4¼in (2750-2850mm) **Weight** 1936-2090lb (880-950kg) **0-50mph** 12.6 secs
Top speed 80mph **Mpg** 28-32
Price new £350 (1938)

CLUB

Lancia Motor Club lanciamc.co.uk

SPECIALISTS

Classic Lancia Restorations lanciaclassic.com **Officine Lancia Classiche** stellantisheritage.com/en-uk/heritage/places/officine-classiche
Thornley Kelham thornleykelham.com
Omicron Engineering shop.omicron.uk.com
Cavalitto SAS oldlanciaspares.com
Day & Whites dayandwhites.co.uk

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
Berlina	£2500/15,000/37,000
Trasformabile	£n/a/50,000/90,000

NB Double Trasformabile price for coachbuilt cabriolets

OUR VERDICT

The Aprilia's character, compact dimensions and combination of comfort, performance and ease of use give it a near-unique appeal among pre-war cars. They make it such a relaxed car to drive in modern traffic that it's almost too good! Lancia driveability and quality were reflected in a very high price when it was new, which is now hardly seen in current values. Track down a good (or at least complete) example and enjoy it.

FOR
Quality engineering seeps from every pore, making working on an Aprilia a delight; most consumable parts are available; great back-up from the club and specialists in the UK and Italy

AGAINST
Pre-war charm is almost engineered-out; some parts can be scarce or very costly



ALTERNATIVES



CITROËN LIGHT 15 *1935-'57, 759,127 built*
Advanced front-wheel-drive monocoque with great roadholding, let down by three-speed gearbox and heavy steering. Rust has ravaged many, but support for the Traction Avant is very good. **Price now** £2500-20,000



JOWETT JAVELIN *1947-'53, 23,307 built*
A flat-four engine, stiff body/chassis and torsion-bar suspension (double-wishbone front, four-link rear) gave the Javelin an edge in post-war Britain; today they suffer from rust and neglect. **Price now** £1-10,000

LANCIA AURELIA

The groundbreaking '50s B20 GT and its family are hugely rewarding machines

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



Lancia's hallmark was innovative engineering with exceptional attention to detail, and the Aurelia of 1950 was absolutely true to that fine tradition. Both its V6 engine and the semi-trailing-arm independent rear suspension were world firsts on a production car. The design team was led by Vittorio Jano and Francesco de Virgilio: Jano focused on the four-speed transaxle, while de Virgilio was first to solve the V6's vibration problem. He used a narrow 60° vee and turned the valves, worked by pushrods from a central cam, through 90° to ease their operation. From the S2 GT, 'skewed' valves improved breathing and raised power by 5bhp to 80bhp.

From the capable but now rarely seen saloons, Felica Maria Boano at Ghia developed the stylish coupé, the B20, on a 20cm-shorter wheelbase. It established the fastback GT idea, and the first 60 or so were made by Ghia and Viotti. Pininfarina then built the production run and Battista himself designed the Spider. The more civilised (if heavier) B24 Convertible has quarterlights, wind-up windows and full bumpers. Constant development kept production costs high and created nightmares for parts supply: four different drum-brake sizes were used during B20 production.

Lancia also marketed the Aurelia in chassis form, and many coachbuilders built unique or small-run coupés, cabrios and even estates. A total of 862 were produced, including the 81 long-wheelbase B15 six-light sedans.

Early B10 saloons are light and delicate, with Volkswagen-like streamlined headlights, while B12s are more spacious and solid. It's the same for the coupés. The S6 is 250kg heavier than the one-tonne S1, and while the early cars are lively if a little unsophisticated, S5s and S6s are luxurious GTs with a quieter transaxle, plus roomier cabins on the final series. The S3 and S4 perhaps represent the best of both worlds: refined, but still light and nimble.

For all their quality, Aurelias will rust. Check the front panel and valance around openings; inner and outer front wheelarches; bulkhead, especially lower edges; footwells front and rear; door bottoms and internal bracing (early skins are alloy); inner, outer and central sills; rear suspension mounts; inner and outer rear wings and valance; and bootlid lower edge (aluminium on coupés up to Third Series).



B20s had five different dash layouts, starting with triple instruments on S1 and ending with this S6 set-up. Check that it all works as parts are scarce



The Nardi floor gearshift is desirable in place of the ponderous column change with a complex linkage to the transaxle; clutch is not long-lived so check for slip





The 3871 B20s were virtually handbuilt; even the 2-litres will exceed 100mph and the 2.5s can top 115mph





Owner Ryk Heuff has fitted more supportive Flaminia seats his Sixth Series. Aurelias did well in competition: a B20 came second in the 1951 Mille Miglia; in '52 one was sixth at Le Mans and they took a 1-2-3 in the Targa Florio. It also won the '53 Liège-Rome-Liège rally and was the road car of choice for Fangio, Hawthorn and Behra



All-alloy with wet liners (prone to sinkage), the V6 went through many detail changes and in the past was often rebuilt with incorrect parts. Check history, beware signs of overheating, head-gasket leaks and excessive oil breathing, as well as obvious noises. Documentary evidence of recent rebuild is a bonus



The sliding-pillar suspension is durable, provided that the oil reservoir is kept topped up. It can be adjusted from soft to hard by nuts on top of the pillars



Reservoirs for front suspension oil and brake fluid are on the bulkhead: check the vendor knows how they operate and that they are adequately filled



Early semi-trailing arms could catch out the unwary, so Lancia changed to a de Dion rear axle from the S4 on. Inboard brakes are good if well maintained



The grille lifts out after undoing a wing nut: remove it for rot checks and access to the steering box, which should show negligible play if it's been well cared for



Aurelia's trailblazing monocoque comprises more than 100 pieces

Before you buy

With its innovative V6 engine and suspension in a monocoque shell, the Aurelia was a revelation to drive when new and feels more like a 1970s or later car today – provided it has been well looked-after in all areas. Wear, neglect and simple lack of use can wreak havoc, but all of them can be cured at a price.

The engine should be smooth and responsive – not wildly powerful, but capable of maintaining progress at modern road speeds with the help of the well-chosen gear ratios. With the rear-mounted transaxle, the propshaft turns at engine speed and as a result precise balance is vital – many cars are plagued by vibrations, but they can be sorted. If the car has a Nardi conversion, the gearchange is wonderfully slick and easy to use. Wear in the linkages can spoil the column gearchange, but it is pleasant enough if properly fettled.

The suspension gives an excellent ride and was built around Michelin X radial tyres that are still on sale. The steering should be light and remarkably precise for a worm-and-sector mechanism. Handling is impressive, helped by good weight distribution with the transaxle, and it allows the car to make far quicker progress on twisty roads than most of its period rivals. Any waywardness is likely to be down to worn bushes or misalignment, although the early type was known for sudden breakaway on the limit – hence the introduction of the de Dion axle from the S4.

Large drums give confident braking if set up properly, but modern usage patterns mean that many Aurelias are deficient because cylinders seize from lack of use. If the car darts about under braking, it's likely that it won't be cheap to sort out the problem.

OWNING ONE



Artist **Ryk Heuff** has fond memories of Lancias from his childhood in The Netherlands, and they inspired him to purchase his Sixth Series Aurelia. He says: "It had done only 43,000km when I bought it in 1994, yet I'd known it since I moved to England in 1972. It has needed few repairs and even has its original sills. Since then I have had the engine, brakes, steering and carburettor rebuilt and the propshaft vibration cured. I have had many classics, from Ferraris to Talbot-Lagos, but the Aurelia is the one I keep going back to.

"I fitted Flaminia seats so we don't slide around too much on rallies. It has the floor gearchange and a later heater fitted by the Maglioli brothers, who owned the car from new. My wife and I really enjoy touring, and it's the only old car I've owned that is so relaxing to drive."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1950 B10 saloon: 1754cc, 56bhp; 5451 built to 1953, plus 583 chassis to '51
1951 B20 GT: 1991cc, two single-choke Webers, 75bhp, aluminium boot floor, 731 made to 1953; B21 saloon: 70bhp, 3780 built to '53, plus 184 chassis
1952 B22 saloon: 90bhp, 1074 built to 1953; S2 B20: 'skewed' valve heads, 80bhp (saloons keep 'straight' valves)
1953 B20 S3: 2451cc, single twin-choke Weber, 118bhp, larger rear window
1954 B24 Spider: 2451cc, 240 built to 1955; B12 saloon: de Dion, 2266cc, 87bhp, 2400 built to '55 plus 11 chassis; S4 GT: de Dion, shell bearings in V6, LHD offered, steel boot floor, new Jaeger gauges, dash moved 30mm back
1956 B24 Convertible: 521 built to '58

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1950-'58/18,197 (all)
Construction steel monocoque
Engine front-mounted, all-alloy, ohv 1754/1991/2266/2451cc V6, with single/twin Solex/Weber carbs
Max power 56bhp @ 4000rpm to 118bhp @ 5000rpm **Max torque** 78lb ft @ 2500rpm to 134lb ft @ 3500rpm
Transmission four-speed manual transaxle (synchro on top three), RWD
Suspension: front independent, by sliding pillars **rear** semi-trailing arms, coil springs, lever-arm dampers (later de Dion axle, leaf springs, Panhard rod, telescopic dampers) **Steering** worm and sector **Brakes** drums, inboard at rear **Length** 13ft 10½in-14ft 8½in (4230-4483mm) **Width** 5ft 1-1½in (1550-1562mm) **Height** 4ft 3½-11in (1300-1500mm) **Wheelbase** 8ft ½in-9ft 4[11]½in (2450-2858mm)
Weight 2200-2772lb (1000-1260kg)
0-60mph 20-12.3 secs
Top speed 84-115mph **Mpg** 18-30
Price new £3471 (B20 GT, 1955)

CLUBS

Lancia Motor Club lanciamc.co.uk
Registro Aurelia Italiano registroaurelia.com

SPECIALISTS

David Ashworth lanciaclassic.com
Thornley Kelham thornleykelham.com
Tanc Barratt deltaintegrale.com **Omicron Engineering** shop.omicron.uk.com
Phoenix Green phoenixgreengarage.com
Cavalitto SAS oldlanciaspares.com

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
B10 saloon	£6000/15,000/25,000
B22 saloon	£15,000/30,000/55,000
B20 GT	£30,000/80,000/175k
B24 Convertible	£75,000/225k/350k
B24 Spider	£n/a/300,000/750k

OUR VERDICT

Owning an Aurelia guarantees you respect and exclusivity at any classic meeting, but these are complex vehicles that are best suited to patient owners who have a good understanding of their car's engineering: sorting a neglected or badly modified example will empty your wallet in no time at all. The saloons were more common when new, but they are now rarer than coupés and just as costly to rebuild.

FOR
Advanced spec gives a remarkably modern drive; well supported by clubs; practical and usable; 'handmade', so almost anything can be remade

AGAINST
Highly complex and exclusive; prolific changes make finding correct parts hard; many older rebuilds were done with wrong parts



ALTERNATIVES



ALFA ROMEO 1900 *1950-'58, 19,039 built*
The first Alfa Romeo twin-cam 'four' produced a healthy 90bhp in a modern monocoque body. The saloons sold well, but the SS coupé cost more new than a B20. Rot is the biggest enemy, but it's blissfully simple compared with the Lancia. **Price now** £15-75,000



BRISTOL 401-405 *1949-'58, 1361 built*
Bristols offered the same levels of handbuilt detail and a choice of four-door, two-door coupé and soft-top, but they were built in penny numbers. The 401-3 are good value against a B20, but they have more of a pre-war feel to drive. **Price now** £5-120,000

LAND-ROVER SERIES ONE

The original, brilliant off-roader is a timeless workhorse

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



Necessity is the mother of invention and, when WW2 came to an end, small-time farmers such as Maurice Wilks needed a new light multi-purpose vehicle. It would have to drag a trailer of hay cross-country, power a sawmill, plough a field, take a few sheep to market, or ferry the family to church. The war had made mechanisation normal and near-essential, and war-surplus Jeeps or cut-down pre-war Austins and Fords were a stopgap.

What made Wilks different was that, as well as running a farm, he was the chief designer at Rover – where his brother Spencer was MD. Maurice used a Jeep on his farm, but it was worn out and there was no alternative: the brothers saw a gap in the market. A Rover for the land must be a Land-Rover, and in no time a prototype devised by Gordon Bashford was on test. To make the vehicle more useful than a Jeep, it would have power take-offs to drive machinery, and effective weather equipment.

With a limited budget, restrictions on steel and minimal press tools, the Land-Rover's simple, square shape was enforced, yet just softened enough to give it character. Tooling and steel availability led to the chassis being welded from strips of flat plate, a surprisingly successful method that continued for decades on SWB models. Despite a smaller engine than the Jeep, development ensured that it was just as capable off-road and much more versatile. Just 25 pre-production cars had been built by the time of its 1948 launch. Motoring writers were astonished by the vehicle's adaptability, which was beyond their wildest dreams. It cost only £450: passenger seats, doors, a spare and a starting handle were optional at first, but soon included. Rover had to rapidly gear up its plans for production, and never looked back.

The Series Ones are collectable and caution is urged when buying an early car: rust is the main enemy, but previous owners substituting incorrect major components can create havoc, too. Inspect the chassis carefully, particularly around the spring hangers, damper mounts and bump-stops, outriggers, top surfaces of the main chassis legs and rear crossmember. Bulkheads are crucial, too: check door posts and hinges, below the windscreen and chassis mounts. Also look for rot in the footwells, inner faces of the A-posts, and steel door frames.



Suspension takes a pounding, so look for broken spring leaves and wear in the swivels and six track-rod ends. If fitted, the freewheeling hubs need to be used



Halfshafts can't be removed from the semi-floating axle. Excessive internal leaks mean soaked brake shoes and diffs may be suffering due to lack of oil



The cabin is supremely functional with only a few basic instruments, but make sure they're all there. Steering should not be unduly heavy or vague





This is a 1600 engine; the 2-litres have an air filter on the rocker cover and a side-mounted breather. The starter ring gear is no longer available for the 1.6 and early 2-litres. When hot, oil pressure can drop to 10psi at idle; 50psi at speed. Check for overheating/blown head gasket (look for water loss, emulsion in the oil filler cap)



Everything is available to retrim an early Landie, or to change body spec from truck cab to canvas tilt, so tatty or missing fabric trim is not a big problem



2/4WD lever control came in 1950, previously a pull ring engaged the front freewheel. Transmissions are strong provided they don't leak too much



Limited instruments and switchgear can be a challenge if you are keen to have an early car 100% original: details often change and parts can be scarce



Aluminium-cased steering box of early cars cracks. Check swivel balls on front axle are smooth and rust-free: if not, budget up to £1500 to put both right



Landies handle tidily, but the ride of 80in model is a bit lively

Before you buy

The Series One might be basic, but it shouldn't feel primitive or unsafe when driving. The engine should be smooth, with good oil pressure and no untoward clattering or knocking. Look for signs of overheating: the unit was designed to work hard in low ratio with no airflow, so should have plenty of spare capacity for normal use. Some rattles are inevitable, but if everything shakes and feels as if it is about to fall apart, it probably is: major expenditure may be imminent.

Transmission noise should be noticeably reduced in third and fourth gears. Make sure you get up to speed in two-wheel drive, but also ensure that it works properly in four-wheel drive and low ratio. If four-wheel drive is engaged, you should be able to feel the steering wheel wobbling when driving on Tarmac; if the freewheel front hubs are fitted, lock them. Don't drive long distances in four-wheel drive on Tarmac because it strains the transmission and wears the tyres; original-spec Avons are costly, so check for tread depth and cracking. The Series One gearbox has synchro only on third and top ratios, so double-declutch when changing down into second. But it is a strong unit and a rebuild will usually only entail new bearings, synchros and seals.

With its short wheelbase, the early 80in model has the choppiest ride on uneven road surfaces: the 86/88in are much smoother and the LWB better still. The steering should not be excessively heavy or sloppy, the former suggesting seized swivels and the latter worn track-rod ends or a tired steering box.

Many Land-Rovers suffer from bodged wiring, which can be a fire hazard, so inspect the circuitry carefully for age and quality, and check everything works.

OWNING ONE



Chris Wilderspin had always wanted a Series One, and jumped at the chance when he was tipped off about one in a barn in Wales in 1999. "When the Heritage Certificate arrived, I learnt that it was built the day I was born, 20 December 1950," he chuckles. "There was rust in both the bulkhead and the chassis; at first it was a rolling resto, plating bits each year, but the chassis had rotted. I bought a '51 chassis from Australia and started a full rebuild, putting it back to original. I swapped its 2-litre for a '51 1600.

"It took 3½ years, of evenings and weekends, and was on the road in 2009. Some details aren't perfect because I couldn't find the answers then, and it has a 'stealth overdrive' control hidden under the seats. We recently towed the caravan 360 miles to Scotland for a club event, and back."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1948 Land-Rover launched at Amsterdam motor show; Station Wagon introduced: all-alloy panels, winding windows, £959 (to '51); pressed curved bulkhead replaces folded
1950 Metal van-type roof option added; headlamps exposed; freewheel front replaced by selectable two/four-wheel drive
1951 One-piece front wings; external doorhandles, chassis braces under rear
1952 1997cc IoE engine replaces 1595cc
1954 80in grows to 86in; 107in LWB introduced, with 10-seat wagon option; dash reshaped/larger dials
1955 P4-type 1997cc cylinder block standardised in Land-Rover
1956 Wheelbase grows to 88/109in
1957 Diesel engine option: 51bhp, 87lb ft
1958 Series II introduced

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1948-'58/c200,000
Construction steel ladder chassis, steel and aluminium-panelled body
Engine all-iron, inlet-over-exhaust 1595/1997cc 'four', with Solex carburettor, or ohv 2052cc diesel, with CAV fuel injection
Max power 50bhp @ 4000rpm to 52bhp @ 4000rpm **Max torque** 80lb ft @ 2000rpm to 101lb ft @ 1500rpm
Transmission four-speed manual, 4WD via high/low-ratio transfer box
Suspension live axle, semi-elliptic leaf springs, telescopic dampers f/r
Steering worm and nut **Brakes** drums f/r
Length 11ft-14ft 5½in (3353-4407mm)
Width 5ft 1-2½in (1550-1588mm)
Height 5ft 10½in-6ft 11½in (1790-2120mm) **Wheelbase** 6ft 8in-9ft 1in (2032-2718mm) **Weight** 2780-3444lb (1264-1565kg) **0-50mph** 28.9-25.5 secs
Top speed 58-60mph **Mpg** 18-30
Price new £560-1029 (1956)

CLUB

Land-Rover Series One Club lrsoc.com

SPECIALISTS

Vintage LR Co vintagelrco.uk **Shoolheifer Restorations** shoolheifer.com **Cox & Turner Engineering** coxandturner.co.uk **Richards Chassis** richardschassis.co.uk **Britpart** britpart.com **Jaguar Land Rover Classic** parts.jaguarlandroverclassic.com **John Craddock** johncraddockltd.co.uk **Exmoor Trim** exmoortrim.co.uk **Series One Shop** seriesoneshop.com **Series Forever** seriesforever.com

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
80in covered lights	£7000/25k/100k
80in open lights	£5000/12,500/50k
86in	£4000/9000/25,000
107in	£4000/10,000/27,000
88in	£3000/8000/22,000
109in	£3000/12,000/32,000

OUR VERDICT

The Series One may be the most appealing of the Land-Rover family to look at, but it is not the quickest or the most sophisticated, so don't expect it to double as everyday transport unless you are very patient. However, they are hugely versatile and still impressive off road. Beware bitsas, fakes of rare models and the demon rot: otherwise, buy and enjoy a leisurely vehicle that started a whole new genre.

FOR
First and purest of the world-beating all-rounder; simple, practical and easy to run; still highly capable off-road; virtually all parts are available

AGAINST
Early cars are quite slow on the road; many have been heavily modified over the years; corroded bulkheads and chassis are expensive to fix



ALTERNATIVES



WILLYS JEEP CJ-2/3 *1945-'68, 501,539 built*
The rugged and reliable non-military CJ-2A came with optional power take-offs, winch and belt drive on its wartime 2.2-litre sidevalve engine. The CJ-3B was fitted with an IoE head for 1953. **Price now** £3500-22,500



AUSTIN GIPSY *1958-'68, 21,208 built*
With Flexitor trailing-link, all-independent suspension, a pressed-steel body on a 90in wheelbase, and 62bhp 2.2-litre petrol or 55bhp diesel, Gipsys are good value but rust worse than Land-Rovers. **Price now** £500-15,000

LOTUS SEVEN

The original racer for the road has become a highly sought-after spartan sports car

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



Pure and uncompromising, the Lotus Seven perpetuated the best of the '50s Specials boom, when youngsters built sports cars from tired old saloons, slapped on lightweight bodies and drove to the nearest circuit for a spot of club racing.

Lotus had been in from the start and its Six proved hugely successful on track, but its basic suspension was dated by 1957. Colin Chapman – still operating out of sheds behind his father's pub in north London – combined a simplified Eleven spaceframe (built by nearby Progress Chassis Co) with the front suspension of his Elite and a well-located Austin Metropolitan (later Standard 10) axle. Riveting alloy panels to the frame made a light and rigid structure. Chassis production later moved to Universal Radiator, then Arch Motor of Huntingdon, which would build Seven chassis for 45 years.

Though steadily improved to keep its appeal through the 1960s, the Seven was becoming a sideline. Graham Nearn at Caterham Cars took the concession and worked hard on Chapman to keep the model alive. The largely glassfibre Series 4, conceived by Mike Warner at Lotus Components, was cheaper and more usable. It was slated for its more flexible chassis and greater weight, but it was ideal for the 'fun car' boom of the early '70s. When that fad ended as suddenly as it had begun, Nearn realised that the Seven's future lay in its performance and focused handling – a 'track-day car' decades before they became common – and Caterham reverted to S3 spec, which was easier to make.

Anglia 105E, BMC 948cc and Ford sidevalve 1172cc engines may be low-powered, but they all give the car a charm and character that is unique to its era, for prices lower than the ultimate originals with Coventry Climax, Lotus Twin Cam or Cosworth 1500cc power. S4s are bargains in comparison, at half as much as the equivalent S1-3. Always seen as the poor relation, they are the most practical of Sevens.

Inspect the chassis carefully for rot, cracks and distortion in the front and rear tubes; steel-sheet crossmember on S4s, notably the box-section; front and rear suspension tubes and by suspension mounts; around engine mounts; and lower side tubes. Body-wise, check the steel side panels, especially on S4s, and the aluminium floor for distortion and corrosion where it's riveted on.



Series 1-2 had red PVC/vinyl-covered seats, dashboard and side trim; in '68, this changed to ventilated black vinyl and even black carpeting appeared



Four-speed Ford or BMC, or (on early sidevalve-engined cars) three-speed Ford gearboxes were used. Close ratios were optional – a real plus if still fitted







A Seven is still the nearest you'll get to the sensations of a single-seater racing car on the road



With so many Caterhams and copycat offerings around today, genuine Sevens have become revered – especially the quicker models. Originality is highly valued, and a car that has been progressively modified over the years with more potent motors will not command as high a price, unless it is easy to put back to build specification



Original-spec engines (at least original to the model, if not to the car) are highly desirable. The more highly tuned, the more temperamental it is likely to be; most are understressed in the lightweight Seven, but look for signs of head-gasket failure, excessive oil breathing or leaks, rattles and rumbles indicating internal engine wear



S1-3s use the anti-roll bar as part of the top wishbone; simple suspension needs oiling of lower trunnions for long life. Check wishbones for rot and distortion



This car, like many, was sold without a hood; it now has a half-hood to provide some shelter. Weather protection was never great, but a full set is a bonus



Parts for S1 Austin Metropolitan and S2-on Standard 10 Companion axles are rare. On S2/3, look for leaks around the mount for the A-frame stressed axle



Remove nosecone and check chassis tubes for crash damage, cracks and rot; S1 chassis were painted duck-egg blue; S2 and most S3s grey; late S3/S4s black



"I used to see a Seven when I was 13, taking the bus to school, and I've wanted one ever since"

Sevens handle brilliantly, with sublime steering, little roll and strong grip. They stop well, too

Before you buy

What to look for will depend on the type of engine fitted, with each having its own weak points – from the white-metal big ends on sidevalves, to cylinder-head corrosion and water-pump failure on Lotus Twin Cams. All of them need the standard checks for bottom-end noise, heavy breathing and head-gasket or overheating issues, but most Sevens cover low mileages and are cherished, so such problems are rare.

Cars that have been raced are more prone to wear out mechanical parts and crack chassis tubes, especially if oversized tyres have been fitted and the performance has been uprated above factory parameters. Mods always have a knock-on effect, which is one reason why originality is so prized – the best Climax models go for £50,000-plus.

Check gearboxes for effective synchro (some lacked it on first), no excessive noise or leaks and not jumping out of gear. Rear axles also came in numerous specifications; these days higher ratios are more desirable. Listen out for noise: the A-frame mount on the Standard 10 Companion axle strained it and leaks are common, leading to rapid axle wear if is not kept topped up.

Brakes, whether disc or drum, should be powerful – if not, the wheel cylinders or caliper pistons could have seized from lack of use. Don't expect a very compliant ride – the Lotus was too light and too uncompromising for that – but a firm set-up and superb handling typified the Seven, not bone-jarring but well controlled. With a short-travel throttle, you have to brace your foot against the side of the body to control it smoothly over bumps and, with such minimal weight, even the smallest engines should give sparkling performance.

OWNING ONE



"When I was nine, my uncle taught me to drive," recalls long-term Lotus fan **Terry Tumber**. "He had a Lotus Six and we used to go to The Chequered Flag and Performance Cars in London. He only sold it in 1995. I used to see a Seven when I was 13, taking the bus to school, and I've wanted one ever since. I had a 200bhp Caterham Zetec first, then persuaded marque expert John Watson to sell me this one in 2004: I just had to have it, it's pure Lotus.

"The car was restored in 2000 from a barn-find – it was a factory-built Super Seven with the single-Weber 1500 giving 66bhp; it now has about 75bhp. I've fitted '65 Elan wheels, which were optional when new, and a smaller steering wheel to make access easier, and bent the pedals to make them ideal for heel-and-toe changes."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1957 Seven kit launched: Ford 1172cc
1958 Rack-and-pinion steering; Super Seven Climax 1097cc option, BMC 'box, wires
1959 BMC 948cc engine option added
1960 S2 (243 S1s built): GRP nose/wings, 13in wheels, Standard 10 axle with A-frame; Ford 1172cc, BMC 948/1098cc engines
1961 997cc Ford 105E option; Super Seven launched with 1340cc Ford up to 85bhp
1962 SS 1500: Cortina 116E unit, Weber, 66bhp, front discs; 95bhp Cosworth tune
1968 1600 Crossflow option; S2 ends (1311 built); S3 introduced: Escort axle, Herald steering, new dash; Ford 1300 (68bhp) or 1600 (84bhp), Lotus Twin Cam (125bhp)
1969 stronger chassis; Seven S offered, fully built with 120bhp 1600, luxury finish
1970 S3 ends (339 built); S4: simpler chassis, GRP skin (steel sides), Mexico axle
1973 S4 production ends (664 made)

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1957-'73/2557
Construction steel spaceframe chassis, aluminium body (S4 glassfibre/steel body)
Engine iron-block, iron/alloy-head, sv 1172cc; iron, ohv 948/997/1098/1340/1498/1598cc; iron/alloy, dohc 1558cc; alloy, ohc 1097cc 'four', single/twin SU/Weber; 28bhp @ 4500rpm to 125bhp @ 6200rpm; 50lb ft @ 2500rpm to 116lb ft @ 4500rpm
Transmission three/four-speed manual, RWD **Suspension: front** twin wishbones, anti-roll bar **rear** live axle, trailing arms, A-bracket; coils, telescopics f/r; S4 twin Watt linkages, triangulated arm **Steering** worm and nut or rack and pinion **Brakes** drums (front discs on SS 1500/S4) **Length** 10ft 3in-12ft 2in (3124-3716mm) **Width** 4ft 5in-5ft ½in (1346-1538mm) **Height** 3ft 3½-5½in (1003-1054mm) **Wheelbase** 7ft 4-5in (2235-2260mm) **Weight** 896-1300lb (407-590kg) **0-60mph** 19-6.9 secs **Top speed** 78-116mph **Mpg** 22-45
Price new £645/869 (kit/built 1500, 1963)

CLUBS

Club Lotus clublotus.co.uk **Lotus Seven Register** lotus7register.co.uk **Caterham & Lotus Seven Club** caterhamlotus7.club **Lotus Drivers' Club** lotusdriversclub.org.uk

SPECIALISTS

James Whiting jameswhiting.com **Mike Brotherwood** mikebrotherwood.com **UK Sports Cars** uksportscars.com **Redline Components** redlinecomponents.co.uk **Axminster Specialist Panels** axminsterspecialistpanels.com **Classic Sports Cars** classicsportscarsltd.co.uk

WHAT TO PAY*

	Resto/Average/Show
Seven S1	£14,000/25,000/38,000
Seven S2-3	£10,000/20,000/30,000
Seven S4	£5000/10,000/17,000

*AVERAGE PRICES SHOWN: ENGINE SPEC CAN PUSH VALUES CONSIDERABLY HIGHER

OUR VERDICT

For totally uncompromised sports-car fun on everyday roads, without having to look for *autobahns* or Alpine passes, you still cannot beat a Seven. Be wary of cars that have been thrashed and highly modified: instead, look out for a well cared for and/or well-restored Seven to original spec, and you can enjoy great drives while it quietly appreciates – and without it costing an arm and a leg to maintain.

FOR
Sensational handling; easy to maintain; as much fun on the road as on a track; good performance from small engines

AGAINST
Minimal weather equipment; check the spec carefully; small and low equals vulnerable; impractical for more than a weekend away



ALTERNATIVES



AUSTIN-HEALEY SPRITE
1958-'70, 128,325 built
BMC's no-frills sports car is far more practical than a Seven. It isn't as quick, but is still great fun to drive. Rust is main enemy of the steel monocoque. **Price now** £750-20,000



MORGAN 4/4
1955-'82, c7000 built
Traditional fun from a 1930s-style car gives the 4/4 a very pure feel like the Seven, but lacking its sharpness. Rot in the wooden body frame is costly to repair. **Price now** £5-35,000

MERCEDES-BENZ PONTON

Mercedes' first monocoque was a best-seller and now makes a stylish and practical buy

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



Mercedes' family car for the '50s was – as you'd expect – meticulously engineered. Hugely strong, its bodyshell was insulated from vibration by fitting the engine, suspension and steering to a rubber-mounted, box-section subframe, slung across the front a bit like a pontoon bridge – hence the nickname, also attributed to its all-enveloping bodywork.

Full-width styling was in vogue at the time, but the imposing radiator grille made it stand out against more plebeian rivals. Though it started with a pedestrian sidevalve engine, its all-synchromesh 'box and fully independent suspension were carried-over features that were still well ahead of most opponents.

More upmarket models soon appeared and, while rubber floormats continued, six-volt electrics were only fitted on the sidevalve cars. The straight-sixes were phased out before the 'fours' because their successor came first, but not until the 220SE had become the first mid-range car to be fitted with fuel injection, giving a big boost in torque as well as more power.

Saloon numbers have been decimated to the point where you now see almost as many cabriolets for sale. But find a good survivor and they are endearing cars, feeling refined and supremely reassuring. Coupés are rare and not as well-proportioned as the Cabriolets.

While the bodyshells do rust, their solidity means that problems are usually localised, unless the car has suffered extreme neglect such as being left in a garden or a damp garage for decades. In those circumstances, you can expect rot almost anywhere, on any car. Check the inner and outer front wings; footwells and sills; door bottoms; floor chassis sections, crossmember and jacking points; rear arches; boot floor, rear chassis rails and rear valance.

Parts availability is impressively good, with Mercedes-Benz itself still stocking most bits, and everything else can be sourced through marque specialists. There is no point being insular – while a few firms exist in the UK, if you want to find rare parts you have to look to Belgium, Germany, the USA and beyond. Components are not usually outrageously expensive, though chromework can be costly – especially if you need a lot of it – and wood interior trim on those that have it is also tricky.



All six-cylinder cars had wood interior trim on the dash and door cappings. If the former needs to be restored or changed, it is a windscreen-out job



Cabrios came with bench or individual front seats, and proper or folding rears. Woolcloth or leathercloth were offered at first, with tough MB-Tex coming later





The glamorous Cabriolet was favoured by celebrities when new and has become enormously popular, with prices to match





Separate driver and passenger heating controls with powerful through-flow ventilation and a laminated windscreen were advanced features of the first cars, but 6V electrics, no passenger sunvisor and rubber floormats were not. The Cabrio is the most desirable Ponton, and trim levels improved across the production run



Specialists say that it's rare to find a Ponton with engine problems, so robust are these rugged units. Neglect will cause any motor to wear out, though, so watch for excessive oil breathing and consumption, leaks, rumbling and knocking. Cars with aluminium cylinder heads can suffer expensive corrosion and head-gasket failure



Most cars have Solex carburettors, but the diesels and late 220SEs had Bosch mechanical injection – it's well built, but not always understood by mechanics



Brakes gained wider linings, finned drums and even Alfins during the car's life to reduce fade. Seized hydraulics are common on rarely used examples



Kingpins wear, as do the steering idlers and, to a lesser extent, steering boxes. Front wheel bearings have a limited life, too. All last longer if greased regularly



Swing-axle independent rear was hairy at first, but improved on 'sixes' and all post-'56. Driveshafts and bearings wear, and beware a car with a leaky/noisy diff



"It's a fabulous drive and wherever you stop, people want to talk about it"

Twin-carb 'four' or injected 'six' offer decent performance

Before you buy

Pontons offer a comfortable ride with sophisticated suspension for their time, a solid feel and one of the nicest column gearshifts you will find – just as slick as a good floor change. By modern standards, the sidevalve- and diesel-engined cars are sluggish, and really suitable only for those who enjoy a relaxed lifestyle. If you prefer to have a car with a bit more poke, go for an overhead-cam petrol 'four', or any of the straight-sixes – all of which are more than capable of mixing it with today's traffic. The late injected 'sixes' give the strongest performance, the saloons being lighter than Coupés, with the Cabriolets the heaviest of all.

Look out for evidence of regular maintenance and beware a leaky engine – either oil or water – or one that breathes heavily when hot. Except for the diesels, the overhead-cam units have an alloy head that corrodes if inhibitor has not been used in the coolant, and can crack. Check carefully for signs of oil and water mixing, and of overheating.

The sidevalve four-cylinder cars have six-volt electrics. If you plan to drive at night, an upgrade to 12 volts is desirable and even cars equipped as such from new often have an alternator conversion. A large number of grease points need regular attention on the suspension and steering: if it's done, the parts will last for ever, but they will wear if not. Kingpins, steering idler, rear driveshafts and wheel bearings are usually the first to go.

When you are buying componentry, be sure you get the right parts because the huge model range meant there were many variations. For example, Pontons came with four different wheelbases: four-cylinder cars were shortest, then the Coupé and Cabriolet, the 219 and, finally, the 220 was the longest.

OWNING ONE



Mercedes-Benz Club register captain **Alan Cross** already had a Pagoda when he fell for the Ponton Cabriolet: "It's an elegant, smart car – very different from anything else on the road. I bought my silver, left-hand-drive example in 2007 from Silver Arrows Automobiles. It was originally a 220SE, but had been converted to 220S specification in the days when people were scared of fuel injection. It runs beautifully and has been to Germany many times.

"We've tidied the paintwork, changed the wheel bearings, converted it to an alternator and went to Holland to have EZ power steering fitted. It's a fabulous drive, and if it breaks down we can usually fix it. Wherever you stop, people want to talk about it. Parts availability is great if you know where to go: we buy lots at Techno-Classica."

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THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1953 180 with 52bhp sidevalve engine
1954 180D (44mpg); 220 'six' with improved IRS, finned drums, 12V, 85bhp
1955 180D up to 43bhp; 220 gets servo and Alfin drums; 220A/C Coupé/Cabriolet
1956 IRS from 220 fitted to 180 and 180D; 190: better trim, ohc engine, 12V, 75bhp, 86mph, finned drums; 220 replaced by 219; 220S with twin carbs, 100bhp, soon joined by 220S Cabrio and Coupé
1957 180a replaces 180 (52,186 sold): 12V, 65bhp; 219: 90bhp; 220S up to 106bhp
1958 180a gets 190 quarterlights, better trim; 190D: 50bhp; 220SE: Bosch injection
1959 Facelifted 180b 68bhp), 180Db, 190b (80bhp), 190Db; 220b is only 'six' saloon, then discontinued; finned drums, optional servo; 120bhp 220SE Coupé/Cabriolet
1961 180c; 180Dc: 1988cc, 65bhp
1962 Production ends

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1953-'62/559,369
Construction steel monocoque
Engine all-iron, sidevalve 1767cc, alloy-head, ohc 1897cc, all-iron 1897/1988cc 'four', or iron-block, alloy-head, ohc 2195cc 'six', single/twin Solex carbs or Bosch injection **Max power** 40bhp @ 4000rpm to 115bhp @ 4800rpm **Max torque** 75lb ft @ 2000rpm to 152lb ft @ 4100rpm
Transmission four-speed manual, optional Hydrak automatic clutch (219/220S), RWD
Suspension independent, at **front** by wishbones, anti-roll bar **rear** swing axles; coil springs, telescopic dampers f/r
Steering recirculating ball **Brakes** drums
Length 14ft 8½in-15ft 7in (4485-4750mm)
Width 5ft 8½-9⅓in (1740-1760mm)
Height 5ft-5ft 1½in (1530-1560mm)
Wheelbase 8ft 8⅓in-9ft ⅓in (2650-2820mm) **Weight** 2595-3241lb (1180-1470kg) **0-60mph** 39-c14 secs
Top speed 69-103mph **Mpg** 15-44
Price new £1793 (190, 1956)

CLUB

Mercedes-Benz Club
mercedes-benz-club.co.uk

SPECIALISTS

Gratt Motors 0161 223 0284 **John Haynes** john-haynes.com **Mercedes-Benz Classic** mercedes-benz.com/classic **SL SHOP** theslshop.com **Bruce Greetham Classic Benz** classicbenz.co.uk **Ponton Manufaktur** mercedes-ponton-shop.de **Werner Karasch & Co** karasch-mb.com **Miller's Inc** shop.millermbz.com

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
4cyl saloon*	£1250/9000/20,000
6cyl saloon*	£1500/10,000/25,000
Coupé	£22,000/50,000/130,000
Cabriolet	£30,000/80,000/150,000

*RARE ESTATES UP TO DOUBLE SALOON PRICE

OUR VERDICT

Find a well-maintained Ponton and you are almost guaranteed to make a reliable family friend with few inherent weaknesses. Just beware of neglected cars dressed up to look better than they really are. The overhead-cam engines, especially twin-carb models or injected straight-sixes, perform well and Cabriolets are increasingly sought after, but there are still worthwhile projects if you have the skills.

FOR
Exceptional build quality; most models are remarkably usable; last for ever if well maintained; virtually all parts can be found

AGAINST
Spares can be expensive; sidevalves and diesels are slow; neglected cars may need extensive work; corroded alloy heads are bad news



ALTERNATIVES



LANCIA AURELIA *1950-'58, 18,197 built*
Technically advanced, with an all-alloy V6 giving up to 118bhp. Available as a unitary saloon, coupé or convertible, the Aurelia is highly complex, but feels remarkably modern to drive. **Price now** 6-55,000 (saloon)



ROVER P4 *1949-'64, 130,342 built*
Plentiful wood and leather, with a choice of lumbering four- or silky six-cylinder engines. As durable as a Mercedes-Benz and most parts are significantly cheaper, making it an appealing option. **Price now** £750-14,000

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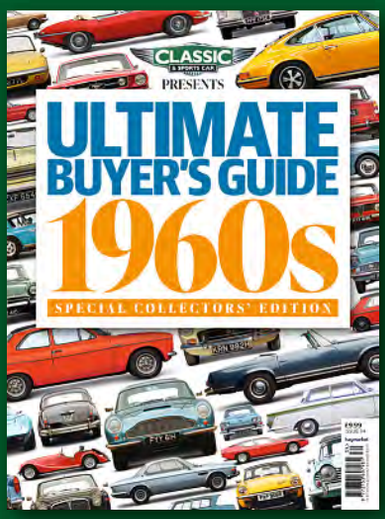



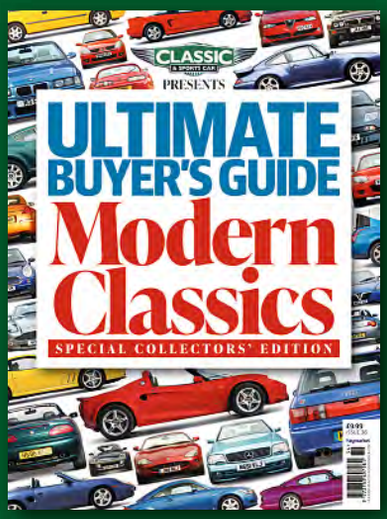

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- ***1960s Legends*** (on sale 27 August)
- ***Mini Legends*** (on sale 8 October)

MESSERSCHMITT KR175 & 200

The most aerodynamic of microcars makes a fun alternative city car

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



Known as *Schneewittchensarg* (Snow White's Coffin) in Germany, the Messerschmitt has long been the butt of jokes, but it emerged from those dark decades respected as a fine concept for enclosed motoring at minimum cost.

Aircraft engineer Fritz Fend designed the 'Flitzer' carriage for injured war veterans in the late 1940s. It sold well, so he approached Messerschmitt (forbidden to build aircraft at the time) for capacity to manufacture an improved two-seater. When Messerschmitt resumed aircraft assembly in 1957, Fend and Valentin Knott bought the works and continued production as FMR, widening the range.

Early KR175s in '53 had no reverse and used a motorcycle-style twist-grip throttle, hand clutch and kick-start. A foot-operated clutch, electric start and optional reverse were added later. The engine was solidly mounted to the rear suspension, transmitting vibrations to the body, but was fully floating on three rubber mounts in the much-improved KR200 of '55.

Prices have soared since, with rarer models commanding such a premium that modified standard cars are common. Many Kabrios are conversions, because the Perspex dome and folding hood are interchangeable; originals had a steel wind deflector (glassfibre on many conversions). Only two genuine Sports are known, while most of the more civilised KR201 Roadsters – with hood and sidescreens – are also recent creations. Any pukka four-wheel 500cc Tg500 'Tiger' is now more than £50k.

Rust can be extensive, but most panels are available and there's no reason why any car can't be rebuilt. Inspect the nose and its floor; front wings for cracks around the wheelarches; floors, especially where the sides are welded on; canopy frame below the handle on the nearside and the welded-in piano hinge, which seizes if the car is left standing; and the tail above its catches and below the numberplate.

The original crank and alloy conrod can self-destruct: the big-end bearing seizes and rips open the conrod, forcing it into the gearbox. The club's replacement crank with steel conrod solves this problem. If an engine is unknown, you can inspect it when the piston is right up, by taking off the air filter and looking through the carb. Difficult items, if missing or broken, include the Bosch/Siba Dynastart.



Dome is pricey to replace (£1800) and easily damaged if the strap breaks. Early ones were lower (now rare); repros are all the later style, with more clearance



Spartan dash is well equipped with warning lights, such as for electrically selected reverse; it runs the engine backwards to give four reverse gears



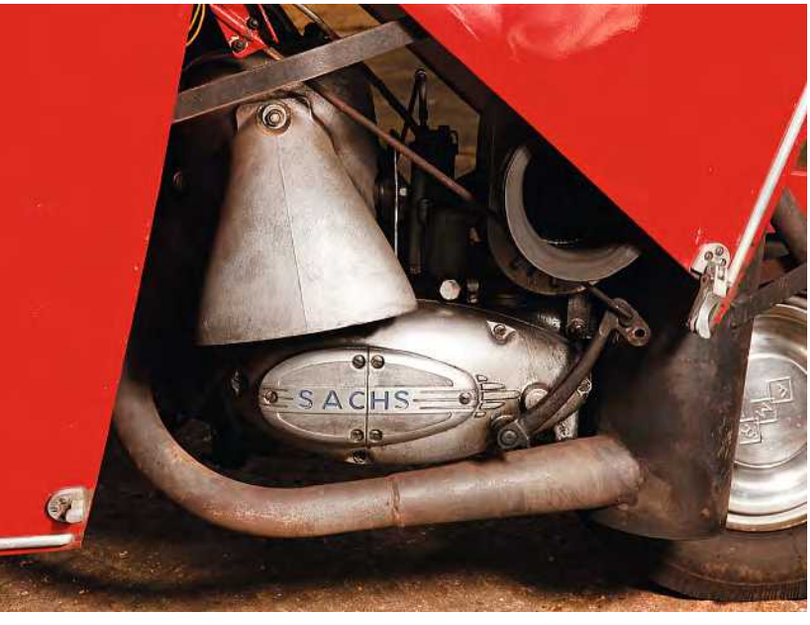




The KR175's DM2100 price was around half that of a VW Beetle and about the same as a motorcycle with full weather gear



Lightweight, efficient and surprisingly civilised inside, with a nicely finished cabin, the Messerschmitt is great fun to drive, boasting super-quick steering operated by a bicycle-style handlebar. They are also easy to maintain and restore at home, being well supported for components by the very active Messerschmitt Owners' Club



Sachs enlarged the single-cylinder, two-stroke engine from 150cc to 191cc, but didn't uprate the gearbox and clutch so they are barely strong enough to cope. This was an economy machine that wasn't designed to last long, so be prepared for short-lived components; many tweaks exist to uprate and improve durability



Check wheels for fatigue cracks around the bolt holes: use the MOC's uprated wheel on the rear. The original fuel-tap cork disintegrates and blocks the tap



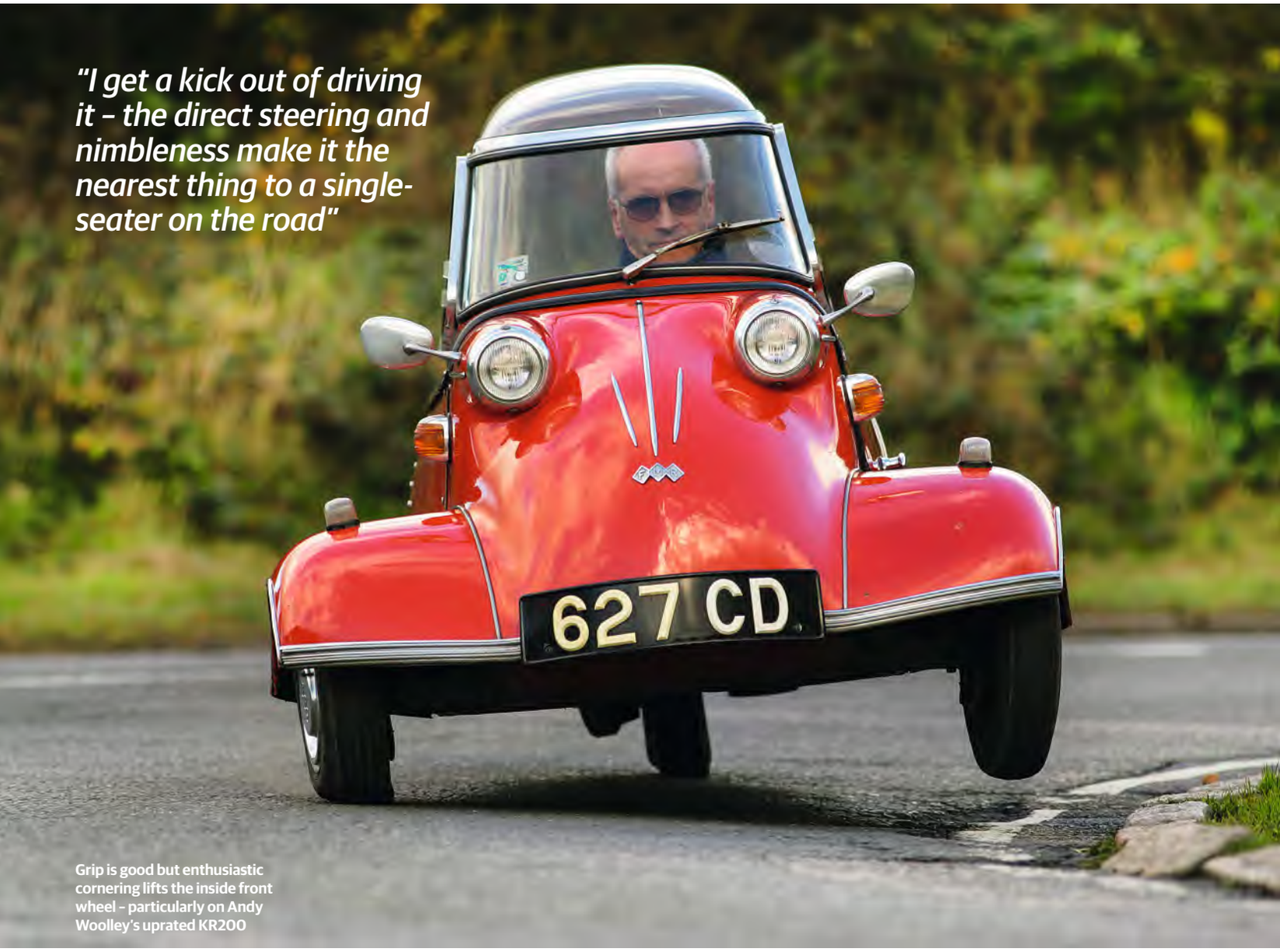
Some indicator lenses are NLA, others are expensive (£204 for a pair of front light units), so check for completeness and condition when inspecting a car



Check wheel-stud sizes: they increased from 8 to 10mm in late 1959. Swap 8mm rear studs: they can fail. Avoid trailer tyres: Heidenau P30 is best, c£45 each



If either end sags, the rubber springs have had it: they go hard if not used. Failing rubber looks rough and fibrous; rear springs are £293/pair (fronts £253)



"I get a kick out of driving it – the direct steering and nimbleness make it the nearest thing to a single-seater on the road"

Grip is good but enthusiastic cornering lifts the inside front wheel – particularly on Andy Woolley's uprated KR200

Before you buy

With so little power available, it will soon become apparent during the test drive if anything is wrong – performance will feel flat and the engine will probably be smoky and rattly. All two-strokes smoke a little, especially on choke, but when warm at speed there should only be a slight haze emitted from the tailpile, especially when using modern two-stroke oils. A fuel to oil ratio of 25:1 was recommended, but this can be leaned off considerably if using the Messerschmitt OC's steel conrod, which has a needle-roller small-end bearing.

The gearchange is blissfully easy: pull back for first, then push forward for second, then third, then top – each time the lever returns to the central position. To engage neutral, you simply shift the small lever on the side of the gearstick. The clutch lasts 15,000 miles with hard driving, but is easy to replace. Second is weak and can break teeth: listen for clonks in that ratio. Some cars jump out of top gear, which is difficult to cure.

The brakes are fine for pottering around, but will fade quickly if you drive hard downhill and the front shoes last just 6000 miles – Andy Woolley fitted water-spray cooling for a Liège-Brescia-Liège Rally, which worked well. The rear brake is often fouled by chaincase oil (new seals help, but don't last long); Andy has converted to sealed bearings and a special greased chain.

The Dynastart can only be overhauled, if is not already beyond repair. If the red warning light is on, it's most likely to be caused by worn brushes, which last about 10,000 miles. It's an engine-out job to replace them, but that only takes half an hour. It is worth cleaning out the armature at the same time, because it can get clogged with carbon.

OWNING ONE



"I bought my first Messerschmitt for £20 in 1970, when I was 15," recalls Messerschmitt Owners' Club secretary **Andy Woolley**, "and the most I've ever paid was £150 for this one in 1979. The previous owner had bought it back in 1961 and used it well into his 80s, driving to Cornwall in it every summer with his wife. It had aluminium sheets pop-riveted to the floor.

"I must have done 120,000 miles in them – 45,000 in this one since I restored it in 1993. I get a kick out of driving it – the direct steering and sheer nimbleness make it the nearest thing to a single-seater racer on the road – it's just lacking in terms of brakes and acceleration. I've raised the compression, cleaned up the ports, bored the carb out to 27mm, changed the jets and fitted a cone exhaust: it'll now hold a genuine 66mph."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1948 Fritz Fend builds his first Fend Flitzer invalid car; 2½hp Fichtel & Sachs engine
1950 4½hp Reidel unit added (c150 built)
1952 Fend approaches Messerschmitt to build the Flitzer and cars based on it
1953 Launch of KR175, with 175cc Fichtel & Sachs engine (c11,000 sold)
1955 KR200 replaces KR175: 191cc, all-new panels except nose, curved 'screen, better suspension, reverse available
1957 Messerschmitt sells factory to Fend & Knott, which forms FMR to build the cars; KR201 Roadster added: removable sidescreens, frameless glass windscreen
1958 Kabrio: fixed side-window frames, steel wind deflector; Tg500: four wheels, 26bhp 490cc twin, 370kg, 85mph
1959 Sport: no lifting canopy, no hood, low Perspex 'screen, tonneau cover
1961 Tg500 ends (c320 built)
1964 Production ends

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1953-'64/c30,000
Construction steel semi-monocoque
Engine iron-barrel, alloy-crankcase/head, two-stroke 175/191cc single, with Bing 24mm carburettor
Max power 9-10.2bhp @ 5250rpm
Max torque 9-11lb ft @ 3800rpm
Transmission four-speed manual (forward and reverse), RWD
Suspension independent, at **front** by swing axles **rear** swing arm; rubber torsion springs, telescopic dampers f/r
Steering direct-link handlebar
Brakes cable-operated drums
Length 9ft 2-4in (2795-2845mm)
Width 4ft (1220mm)
Height 3ft 2in-4ft (965-1220mm)
Wheelbase 6ft 8in (2030mm)
Weight 466-510lb (212-232kg)
0-50mph 29.5 secs
Top speed 56mph **Mpg** 50-87
Price new £333 (1960)

CLUBS

Messerschmitt Owners' Club
messerschmitt.co.uk
Messerschmitt Enthusiasts' Club
messerschmittenthusiastsclub.net

SPECIALISTS

Radsatz Werkstatt radsatzwerkstatt.de
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Schmittparts schmittparts.co.uk
Messerschmitt Foundation of GB
messerschmittfoundation.weebly.com
Jims Micro Cars micro-car.net **Andy's Modern Microcars** modernmicrocars.co.uk

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
KR175	£12,000/22,000/35,000
KR200	£7500/15,000/30,000
KR201	£15,000/23,000/40,000

OUR VERDICT

Check the car's history, and with the club, to be sure of what you're buying (the chassis number is inside, on the front-right tube): conversions should be cheaper than genuine original rare models. The Messerschmitt Owners' Club's uprated components make the cars much more durable. Buy a well-restored one, or do the job properly yourself, and you'll enjoy many years of cheap and entertaining motoring.

FOR
Enormously fun to drive; inexpensive to rebuild and run; superb parts availability; values are strong, and still climbing

AGAINST
Expensive to buy and scarce; limited performance; invisible on dark, wet motorways; not really suitable for family holidays



ALTERNATIVES



BOND MINICAR *1949-'66, 24,482 built*
Britain's answer to minimal motoring was known for its spacious interior rather than good handling or performance. The drive unit was mounted on top of the front wheel and it could turn in its own length. Cheap now, in comparison. **Price now** £1500-7500



BMW ISETTA *1955-'62, 161,728 built*
Designed by Iso in 1953, the Isetta was built by BMW from 1955 and helped to save the firm from imminent collapse. Compact, civilised and well built, its 250/300cc four-stroke single gave flexible performance. Parts are readily available, too. **Price now** £6-35,000

MG T-SERIES

The definitive cropped-tail MG sports car is still a reasonably affordable and fun classic

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



Cutaway doors, a fold-flat 'screen, a crackling exhaust and leisurely but still fun performance make a T-series MG among the best ways of enjoying the sights, sounds and smells of the countryside – or indeed any landscape.

MG's new series of inexpensive two-seaters arrived in 1936, with hydraulic brakes and a tuned, overhead-valve version of the Morris 10hp engine. Bigger and more torquey than the overhead-cam motors of the past, it felt less sporty but offered more performance to the average driver and was effective on trials. After three years, MG replaced it with the XPAG unit that would power the T-series until 1955.

The TA-TC were right-hand-drive only, left-hookers for the burgeoning US market arriving with the much-improved 1950 TD. It had a new chassis based on the Y-type, with independent front suspension and rack-and-pinion steering. These are simple, honest cars with fine parts availability, but there are areas for caution when buying. The TA's engine is unique and fragile, with porous/cracked blocks and heads not uncommon. Properly rebuilt it should last, but examine it thoroughly. Fitting an XPAG unit is possible, but will not enhance a TA's value.

Body condition is critical, because these cars have an ash frame that, particularly on later models, can be rotten without it being obvious. Inspect both under the car and by lifting the carpets, checking the wooden floorboards and timber frame beneath, especially around the A/B-posts. Wood should have been treated with preservative, not painted (which may cover filler) or patched; doors should fit neatly and B-posts should be rigid. A rebuild with a new ash frame is entirely feasible, but pricey.

Rust is also an issue, particularly at the base of the structural front bulkhead; front wings at the edges, sidelight fittings and rear; battery tray and scuttle joins; door bottoms; rear arches; and base of the petrol tank. Look out for rot in the rear chassis member, and cracks behind the middle outriggers on the TA-TC.

Because these cars were cheap runabouts for decades, parts got swapped, so check carefully. The chassis number is stamped on the nearside front extension, and should match the plate riveted to the battery box or bulkhead. TA-TDs are prefixed with the model, TD MkIIs being 'TDC', and TFs have a more complex code.



Watch for jumping out of gear and weak synchro (on 2/3/4, just 3/4 on the TA). A Sierra five-speed conversion kit (not including the 'box) costs about £1800



The interior is basic and easily restored by a competent DiYer, but the cost of all-new trim, especially if other repairs are needed beneath, can be significant







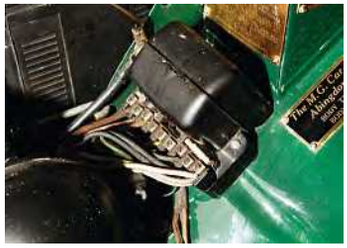
The MG Octagon Car Club for pre-'56 MGs can help with parts for these rugged, dependable little sports cars



If you're after the authentic vintage sensation – with beam axles at both ends and 19in wire wheels – go for a TA-TC. If you prefer a more comfortable ride, with precise steering and cornering, plus the option of radial tyres, the TD and TF provide the answer. The lovely sprung wheel in this TD fronts a full set of Jaeger instruments



TA engine is a long-stroke slogger with white-metal bearings; the block and head crack, parts are harder to find and rebuilds are costly. TB-TF units are well served by specialists. Oil pressure should be 50psi-plus at speed. Look for excessive oil thirst or breathing, plus signs of the oil and water mixing, severe rattles and overheating



Simple electrics can still cause issues in infrequently used cars. Check that the dynamo is charging well: it is an unusual type that also drives the rev counter



Excessive rear-axle whine means a rebuild; check it for leaks. TD-TFs can be converted to an MGA crownwheel and pinion, for more relaxed cruising



TD features rack steering, coil springs and IFS in place of beam axle, semi-elliptics and Burman box. Check for worn/seized parts and weak dampers



All have hydraulic drum brakes that are effective enough, but irregular use can mean poor performance due to seized wheel cylinders, which are easily sorted



The TD handles much better than earlier models; this car is sharper still, thanks to a Y-type front anti-roll bar

Before you buy

A T-series MG will cruise at 60mph on the motorway if required, but that's not its forte – and acceleration is steady rather than brisk. For more performance, you can fit a supercharger kit (£5000-plus) or a crossflow cylinder head.

Well-maintained XPAG/XPEG motors are robust, but head-gasket failure is not uncommon. Check the codes to ensure that the correct engine type is fitted. Sluggishness may just be due to the condition and tuning of the carburettor, but excessive oil breathing and rattles (or worse, knocking) signal the need for work and a price adjustment.

Gearboxes, especially on the TD and TF, work hard: weak synchromesh and jumping out of gear indicate that it is due for a rebuild, as does whirring in neutral that fades if you dip the clutch. The radiator and its chromed shell are costly, so check the condition and look for signs of overheating, which could mean that a recore is required. Slow warm-up from cold, suggesting a missing thermostat, is a warning sign.

The suspension and steering took a quantum leap forward for 1950, with an independent, coil-sprung front set-up allied to a rack-and-pinion helm. The brakes were also significantly improved, and TA-TC models benefit from an upgrade to twin leading shoes.

Early cars wander with road surface changes and ride firmly, but excessive waywardness means a steering-box overhaul and jumping around is caused by shot dampers. Datsun or VW steering boxes have been fitted to some cars, but originals can be rebuilt. A twisted beam axle can be straightened if not cracked. Later cars should feel sharp and precise: if not, then wear in suspension/steering components will need attention.

OWNING ONE



"I love the wind-in-the-hair feeling of driving the TD, and it normally goes everywhere with the hood down," enthuses **Andrew Murfin**. "We've enjoyed many rallies together, including when we won the 2011 Liège-Brescia-Liège with veteran co-driver Willy Cave, which was an education.

"I bought the car in 1999 as an early retirement present, having never previously owned a classic car: it's the archetypal small British sports car and the TD offers more room for luggage. It had a good body but needed mechanical TLC: Alastair Naylor ported the head, fitted pancake air filters and added a high-lift cam. The car is amazingly robust and really goes from 4000-5500rpm: it's great fun to drive and an unexpected bonus has been all the lovely people I have met just because I've been driving it."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1936 T-type launched
1938 Tickford dhc offered (260 built)
1939 TB replaces 'TA' (3003 built); new 54bhp XPAG engine
1940 TB production ends (379 made)
1945 TC introduced, with 4in-wider cockpit
1949 TD replaces TC (10,000 produced), new chassis, 15in disc wheels, LHD offered
1951 8in-diameter clutch replaces 7¼in
1952 MkII engine option: 57bhp (1710 built); wire wheels offered; round rear lights, three-bow hood, wiper motor in centre
1953 TF replaces TD (29,664 built)
1954 First TF-1500; last 1250 (6200 built)
1955 Final TF-1500 (3400 made)

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1936-'55/52,906
Construction steel ladder chassis, ash/steel body frame with steel panels
Engine all-iron, ohv 1292/1250/1466cc 'four', twin SU 1/1¼/1½in carburettors (TA is prefixed 'MPJG'; TB/TC 'XPAG'; early TD 'XPAG/TD', later 'XPAG/TD2', most MkII TDs 'XPAG/TD3'; TF 'XPAG/TF'; TF-1500 'XPEG')
Max power 44bhp @ 4750rpm to 63bhp @ 5000rpm **Max torque** 64lb ft @ 2600rpm to 76lb ft @ 3000rpm
Transmission four-speed manual, RWD
Suspension: front beam axle, semi-elliptic springs (TA-TC); independent, by wishbones, coil springs (TD/TF) **rear** live axle, semi-elliptic springs; lever-arm dampers f/r **Steering** Bishop cam (TA-TC); rack and pinion (TD/TF) **Brakes** drums
Length 11ft 7½in-12ft 3in (3543-3735mm)
Width 4ft 8-11½in (1422-1518mm)
Height 4ft 5-7in (1335-1397mm)
Wheelbase 7ft 10in (2388mm)
Weight 1764-2019lb (800-916kg)
0-60mph c25-16.3 secs
Top speed 79-88mph **Mpg** 26-33
Price new £569 7s 3d (TD, 1950)

CLUBS

MG Car Club mgcc.co.uk **MG Octagon Car Club** mgoctagoncarclub.com
MG Owners' Club mgownersclub.co.uk

SPECIALISTS

Andy King prewarmgparts.co.uk **Barry Walker** barrywalker.com **XPAG engine rebuilding** xpag.co.uk **Yorkshire Restorations** yorkshirerestorations.co.uk **Steve Baker** stevebakermg.co.uk **Hi Gear Engineering** hi-gearengineering.co.uk **NTG Motor Services** mgbits.com **Brown & Gammons** ukmgparts.com

WHAT TO PAY*

	Resto/Average/Show
TA	£5000/15,000/28,000
TB	£10,000/22,000/40,000
TC	£4500/14,000/25,000
TD	£3000/12,500/22,000
TF	£5000/14,500/26,000

*SPECIAL-BODIED CARS SUCH AS TICKFORD DHC SELL FOR c50% MORE

OUR VERDICT

Provided you are not too bothered about covering long distances in minimal time, or driving in comfort all year round, a T-series MG makes a great purchase, with everything that constitutes a classic car rolled into one irresistibly cute package. Body condition is crucial, though, so be sure to buy with your eyes wide open and check out the history file for proof of recent work.

FOR
Great looks; real fresh-air motoring; simple, rugged running gear; steadily increasing values

AGAINST
Less fun in inclement weather; not ideal for motorway cruising unless uprated and fitted with a five-speed or overdrive gearbox; limited passenger and luggage space



ALTERNATIVES



SINGER ROADSTER *1939-'55, c10,000 built*
With four seats and, at first, a 1074cc engine and a three-speed gearbox, the Roadster was more touring than sporting, but by 1953 it was up to 1497cc, with twin carbs and 58bhp. Built in decent numbers, it makes an individual rival for the MG. **Price now** £3-15,000



MORGAN 4/4 *1935-'50, 1315 built*
With an 1122cc Coventry Climax unit initially, then from 1939 a 1267cc Standard Special 'four', the original 'flat-rad' was a serious MG competitor until engine supplies stopped in 1950. Parts for the motor provide the biggest obstacle today. **Price now** £5-35,000

MGA

The definitive cropped-tail MG sports car is still a reasonably affordable and fun choice

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



When photographer George Phillips entered his TD for Le Mans in 1951, MG designer Syd Enever drew an attractive, streamlined body shape for it that was virtually the finished MGA. The car's 116mph top speed showed its aerodynamic advantages, but its occupants sat high, on top of the chassis. Enever set draughtsman Roy Brocklehurst the task of devising a new design, moving the side rails out to drop the seats. Scuttle shake, often the bane of separate-chassis roadsters, was eradicated by building a 'goalpost' structure on the frame, supporting the front bulkhead.

Completed in 1952, it was at first rejected by management at the British Motor Corporation (which was about to launch the Healey 100) and became a works speed-record car, but in 1954 it was prepared for production. Austin's B-series engine, enlarged to 1489cc, made it a more appealing prospect than the TF's costly XPEG.

Three aluminium-bodied prototypes were built for Le Mans in '55, one finishing 12th and one 17th. They ran again at Dundrod, testing twin-cam developments and disc brakes even before the production model was launched.

Calls for more performance were answered in 1958 with a dual-overhead-cam derivative of the B-series, with hemispherical combustion chambers, 9.9:1 compression and big valves. Expensive and unreliable, it was phased out in favour of uprated pushrod engines that, when tuned, could match Twin-Cam pace. MG took six years to answer testers' requests for a higher top gear, but criticism of the hood was never addressed. By the time the 100,000th MGA had been built in March '62, it was the world's best-selling sports car. Only 5% were sold new to the home market, with 80% going to the USA, so most cars now in the UK are re-imports.

Rust is the main enemy of survivors, followed by lack of originality, although there are still plenty of fine examples. Inspect for rot in the front wings, notably around the lights, arches and seams; front valance, shroud and inner wings; A- and B-pillars; door frames and alloy skins; inner and outer sills, and adjacent main chassis legs; wooden floorboards and steel floor-support rails; Coupé roof to rear shroud join; inner and outer rear wings; and boot floor, rear chassis crossmember and rear valance.



Hard to erect single-handed, the hood often stays furled under a tonneau. Check material, frame and sidescreens are in good order and fit together well



Colour choice was limited, but specials were common. Dash could be trimmed in leather, vinyl or rexine. A nice cabin is a bonus, especially with deluxe seats





Although the B-series isn't a powerhouse, aluminium-skinned doors, bonnet and bootlid helped to keep the weight down





The pretty MGA proved extremely popular, safe and fun, with a high door line that made it feel more comfortable than many rivals. A lively performer with a throaty roar, it boasted precise rack steering. Those unhappy with its poor security could opt for the civilised Coupé, but access was even trickier than with the roadster



The B-series is a robust unit, thriving on regular maintenance. Tired ones show low oil pressure when hot (should be 50psi-plus at speed), high oil consumption, blue smoke, rumbles and rattles, plus poor performance. If it's worn, rebuild or drop in an MGB unit for an easy performance boost. Check for water loss; heads can crack



Dual master cylinder for brake & clutch is £85; drum brakes are adequate if not abused. Front discs are better and all-discs the ultimate, but pricier to rebuild



Feel for tired synchros, particularly on second. Overdrive can be retrofitted with chassis mods. Five-speed 'boxes are popular (£1700 + Sierra gearbox)



Front suspension is simple but needs greasing every 1000 miles and wears quickly if neglected: look for play/odd tyre wear. Anti-roll bar optional on MkII



A lot is exposed underneath, including batteries, chassis and springs. Axle is robust provided it's not run dry: check for oil getting into the rear brake drums

"It looks gorgeous and the smiles I get make me feel I'm providing some kind of social service"



An MGA isn't just glorious to look at – with sublime styling by Syd Enever – it also handles and goes well. Sunvisors are non-original but a practical addition

Before you buy

The standard MGA should perform briskly; if the engine feels flat, then it needs attention. Raising the hood will reveal how it fits, plus help you hear the noise of the running gear. Various stages of engine tune were offered, involving polishing ports, changing carburettor needles (or swapping for bigger carbs), an uprated cam, higher-compression pistons and so on. Some, such as the crossflow head or a supercharger kit, are now highly sought-after, but over-zealous tuning may affect tractability for normal road use.

The Twin-Cam's high compression when new was its undoing, resulting in holed pistons – 8.3:1 became available, and something less than the standard 9.9:1 is advisable now. High oil thirst and an inaccessible dipstick didn't help; it was also too easy to over-rev. Despite some common parts, its cylinder block differed from the standard model's. Incorrect spark plugs and ignition settings also contributed to piston-holing issues, but today a Twin-Cam can be a reliable as well as sparkling performer if carefully maintained.

Any MGA should inspire confidence, with light, precise rack-and-pinion steering on either crossplies or radials. *The Motor* found that running all of the tyres at 27psi avoided understeer – a recommendation that's still followed today (30psi works well with 155s). An anti-roll bar was optional on the MkII.

Many cars now in the UK are imports, mostly from the US, and conversion from left-hand drive is fairly straightforward. Cheap, plentiful parts availability has led owners to upgrade many items, not to mention appearance: 60% of MGAs were white when new; few are now. Tracing a truly original car can be a challenge.

OWNING ONE



"I bought my first MGA for £105, aged 19," recalls **Julie Eaglen**. "It was a bit of a wreck, but had an MoT, and I scraped the cash together to keep it going. They are a delight to drive – as long as you're not in a serious hurry! It was my daily transport, covering thousands of miles until its chassis needed a second rebuild. So, sadly, it had to be sold. I promised myself that one day I'd buy another: in 1989, I found myself almost priced out of an overheating market, but persevered.

"There is something so wonderful about the engine note, the roadholding, the seating position and the gorgeous looks – and the smiles I get make me feel as if I'm providing some kind of social service. Most mechanical things are fairly straightforward and the parts availability is fantastic, and reasonably priced."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1955 MGA launched
1956 Factory hardtop offered (aluminium first, later vinyl-covered glassfibre); Coupé launched: wind-up windows, locking doors
1957 Power up 4bhp, 102mph in Coupé
1958 Twin-Cam launched: all-disc Dunlop brakes, centre-lock disc wheels, vinyl dash, deluxe seats; all MGAs get slightly larger bowed bonnet and optional deluxe seats
1959 Close-ratio 'box option for Twin-Cam; 1600 replaces 1500: Lockheed front discs, revised lights and sliding sidescreens (also changed on Twin-Cam); 0-60mph 13.3 secs
1960 Twin-Cam discontinued (2111 built); 1600 De Luxe offered with all-disc brakes and knock-on wheels (395 built)
1961 MkII: 1622cc, 86bhp, 97lb ft, higher final drive, new grille, rear lights, vinyl dash, seatbelt mounts; 0-60 12.8 secs, 105mph
1962 Production ends

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1955-'62/101,082
Construction steel chassis, steel body
Engine all-iron, ohv 1489/1588/1622cc 'four', twin 1½in SU carburettors, or alloy-head, dohc 1588cc 'four', twin 1¾in SUs
Max power 68bhp @ 5500rpm to 108bhp @ 6700rpm **Max torque** 77lb ft @ 3500rpm to 105lb ft @ 4500rpm
Transmission four-speed manual, RWD
Suspension: front independent, by double wishbones, coil springs **rear** live axle, semi-elliptic springs; lever-arms f/r
Steering rack and pinion
Brakes drums f/r (front discs on 1600, discs f/r on Twin-Cam and De Luxe)
Length 13ft (3962mm) **Width** 4ft 10in (1473mm) **Height** 4ft 2in (1270mm)
Wheelbase 7ft 10in (2388mm)
Weight 2044-2128lb (929-967kg)
0-60mph 16-9.1 secs
Top speed 98-114mph **Mpg** 22-34
Price new £940-1282 (1959)

CLUBS

MG Car Club mgcc.co.uk
MG Owners' Club mgownersclub.co.uk

SPECIALISTS

Brown & Gammons ukmgparts.com
NTG Motor Services mgbits.com **Hi-Gear Engineering** hi-gearengineering.co.uk
Moss moss-europe.co.uk **Sportscar Metalworks** sportscarmetalworks.com
Anglo Parts angloparts.com
Auto Vintagery autovintagery.com

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
1500	£3-4000/12-14,000/22-26k
1600 Mk1	£3-5000/12-15,000/22-28k
1600 Mk2	£7-8000/15-16,000/28-30k
De Luxe	£10-12,000/20-22k/30-33k
Twin-Cam	£15-20,000/20-30k/30-50k

Price range covers from Coupé to roadster

OUR VERDICT

The MGA is something of a paradox: despite its modern looks, it was one of the last new designs built with wooden floorboards – but now, who cares? It's a fun, lively, stunning-looking 1950s sports car that is easy to drive and cheap to run. Accurate, original specification (look for details such as a full toolkit) will be highly valued in the future, but a well-restored, rust-free body is the crucial consideration for now.

FOR
Exceptionally good-looking; brisk, usable performance, particularly the Twin-Cam models; practical and economical; eligible for many forms of motorsport

AGAINST
Limited luggage space; roadsters are difficult to secure; convertible hood is a pain to erect



ALTERNATIVES



ALFA ROMEO GIULIETTA SPIDER
1955-'63, 17,096 built
A jewel, with a superb all-alloy 1290cc twin-cam engine, and delectable body with wind-up windows and a proper, easy-to-erect hood. Restoration is costly. **Price now** £20-100,000



TRIUMPH TR3/3A
1955-'62, 74,947 built
Gutsier and quicker, with a bigger boot and optional overdrive, the TR was costlier and cruder than a base MGA. Top parts availability and easier to restore. **Price now** £5-35,000

MORGAN 4/4 & PLUS 4

The eternal British sports car just gets better with age

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



Most attempts, even by the factory, to bring Morgans up to date fail: the pre-war look is still in demand from the UK's most traditional marque. As new cars, they have been an anachronism for decades – even 1950s tests referred to their primitive nature. Yet they have continued to be painstakingly handbuilt for a waiting list of eager customers who value their unique character, craftsmanship and seat-of-the-pants driving experience.

Morgan progressively stiffened the sliding-pillar front suspension that originated in 1910, losing its compliance and hastening wear. The cars are cramped and noisy, particularly with the hood up. But that is the experience owners cherish. With flexing chassis, stiff springing and limited grip, Morgans still captivated road testers into the '90s, once they had overcome initial misgivings to enjoy their predictability, their tremendous feel and the sheer fun.

The four-cylinder cars offer the best value for money and, depending on the model, more than adequate performance from a Plus 4 or late 4/4. Plus 4s made fine competition cars and are now sought-after for historic motorsport.

Morgans don't last long between rebuilds: if they don't shake themselves apart, they rot. Galvanising came in '86, four-pot calipers and a servo in '93 and airbags from '97. 'Wide body' '90s cars mean wider wings and wheels on the Plus 8 chassis. All chassis, ash frame and body parts are available, but they are not cheap. Inspect the wood for hardness of the A-posts (lift the doors); sills (ensure trim securing pins aren't loose); and B-posts. Check the chassis for rot and cracks in the crossframe; adjacent to the engine mountings; webs on each side of the bulkhead; and the crossmember, particularly where welded to the main rails. Plus look out for rot in steel inner/outer wings at the beading and where they meet the bulkhead.

Prices don't vary wildly; Ford Kent 4/4s and Rover twin-cam Plus 4s are good buys. Expect to pay more for a two-seater than a four-seater, and alloy-bodied cars command a premium (50kg lighter, but prone to cracks/corrosion, notably around the arches). The glassfibre-bodied Plus 4 Plus is worth up to £100k, Super Sports with race history up to £75k. The factory can provide a chassis record for £80-100.



Meadows, Moss, Ford, Fiat and Rover 'boxes were used. Problems are rare, but check for worn synchro and dip the clutch in neutral to hear layshaft noise

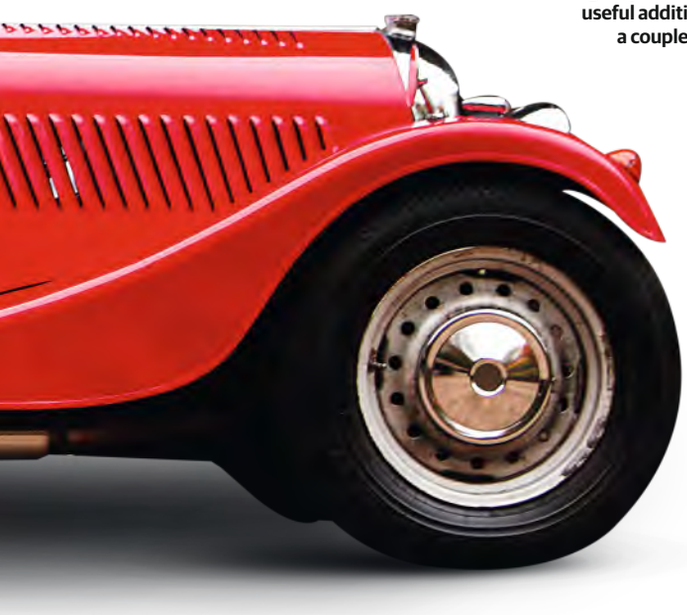


Original Burman/Cam Gears steering boxes become loose and floppy with age, but can be rebuilt. Gemmer boxes used from '84 are precise and durable





Four-seater models such as this early 'flat-rad' are a little ungainly to look at, but offer useful additional space for a couple when touring





As a classic purchase, Morgans are timeless and there is lots of choice. Early 4/4s have a charm all their own and a vintage feel, but are slow and parts can be hard to find. By the mid-'60s, 4/4s had Ford running gear with a decent power-to-weight ratio, which steadily improved and can easily be tweaked with readily available kit



All of the motors, except perhaps early 4/4s, were understressed and most cover few miles, so engine problems are unlikely if serviced regularly. Look for signs of overheating, notably with alloy units, or oil smoke, and listen for rattles or rumbles. Ensure that cambelt replacement schedules have been followed, where relevant



Instrumentation is generally reliable, but post-'76 switches are weak. Relays on more recent cars can suffer from corrosion if left unused for long periods



Only in 1982 did Morgan start using preservative, immersing the wood in Cuprinol from '86. Frame rot is common and costly to sort, so inspect carefully



Hoods are rarely used: they are a pain to put up or down and dramatically increase noise levels inside, but their condition can be a bargaining point



Sliding-pillar front suspension is the cause of the hard ride and wears if not greased often, because grit gets in. A full rebuild (at 20-25k miles) is c£1000

"After a two-year wait for it to be built, our brand-new 4/4 arrived and it took us all over Europe"



Fun, forgiving handling and excellent grip, but bumps upset the balance

Before you buy

Whichever model you are looking at, the history is important: try to find out how well it has been cared for by previous owners and how many times – and how well – it has been rebuilt.

On the younger models, engines are unlikely to be heavily worn unless the servicing has been neglected. On Ford CVH-powered cars – said by some to be the best Morgans of all: simple, reliable, rapid and perfectly balanced – neglect leads to rapid camshaft and tappet wear. Listen out for a tapping sound and check for lacklustre performance. Cooling is important on all of them: radiators do not last for ever (10 years is a fair guide); they silt up and engines with aluminium heads can distort if overheated.

The unusual, Z-section steel chassis does flex, and rot – the body flexes in harmony, but over time and hard driving it can shake itself to pieces. The signature Morgan sliding-pillar front suspension wears out in as little as 20-25,000 miles (less if is not frequently greased), so ensure that it all feels solidly screwed together when driving. The car should drive much like a go-kart, with lively performance, an unforgiving ride and immensely predictable handling. Expect there to be some play in the steering on pre-'84 cars, but it shouldn't wander all over the road. Check the age of the tyres – more than 10 years old will be hard and 20-plus will be dangerous, as will tyres of any age that have been left sitting flat.

The brakes on pre-'93 models can be upgraded with four-pot calipers (£731), and by fitting the later-style master cylinder with an integral servo (c£700). Removing a leaf from the semi-elliptic rear springs of the four-seater models is recommended for a gentler ride, unless you plan to carry very heavy loads.

OWNING ONE



"It all started in 1972 with a three-year-old 4/4 Competition," recalls **Hedwig Rodyns**. "It was one of the cheapest used sports cars that you could buy at the time that could do 0-60mph in less than 10 seconds – important at the traffic lights!

"It was sold for a profit after four years' hard work and replaced by a younger 4/4 that offered a bit more comfort, with individual seats instead of a bench. In 1979 – after a two-year wait for it to be built – our brand-new 4/4 four-seater arrived and subsequently took us all over Europe. It is still our daily driver, after a hard life of circuit racing (with a tuned Ford Kent engine), lots of rallying and a necessary rebuild I completed when the car was five years old. We are also restoring a 1939 Series I Coventry Climax. A 4/4 will be the car I will drive to the end of my life."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1936 4/4 launched: 1122cc Coventry Climax
1938 4/4 four-seater, then Drophead Coupé
1946 4/4 revived; 495 built to 1950
1950 Plus 4: 2088cc Standard engine, curved grille, faired-in lights
1955 4/4 SII: 36bhp 1172cc Ford 100E, three-speed 'box, sloping tail (386 built)
1960 Plus 4 SS: Lawrencetune TR engine
1961 62bhp 1340cc in 4/4 SIV (114 made)
1962 Plus 4 receives 2138cc TR4 engine
1963 1498cc Cortina engine for 4/4 SV
1968 4/4 gets 78bhp Cortina GT engine (3513 built to '82); Plus 4 replaced by Plus 8
1971 96bhp 1.6 Ford Kent for 4/4; then 98bhp 1.6 Fiat twin-cam from 1981-'85
1982 100bhp CVH replaces Kent in 4/4
1985 Plus 4 back: 122bhp 1995cc Fiat
1987 138bhp Rover M16 24v replaces Fiat
1991 4/4 gets injected 114bhp CVH; 121bhp 1.8 Zetec in '92; Plus 4 gets T16 Rover
2003 4/4 replaced by Runabout to '06
2004 Plus 4 gets Ford Duratec
2018 4/4 production ends
2020 Plus 4 replaced by CX-series

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1936-2020/c16,500
Construction Z-section steel ladder chassis, wood-framed aluminium or steel body
Engine iron/alloy 997-2138cc 'fours' with carb(s) or fuel injection **Max power** 34bhp @ 4500rpm to 154bhp @ 6000rpm
Max torque 53lb ft @ 2500rpm to 148lb ft @ 4500rpm **Transmission** three/four/five-speed manual, RWD
Suspension: front independent, by sliding pillars **rear** live axle, semi-elliptic springs; lever arm/telescopic dampers f/r
Steering worm and nut (recirculating ball from '84; rack and pinion from '99)
Brakes drums (hydraulic from 1950; front discs from '59 on Plus 4, '61-on 4/4)
Length 11ft 8in-13ft (3555-3960mm)
Width 4ft 6in-5ft 4in (1370-1625mm)
Height 3ft 10in-4ft 4in (1170-1320mm)
Wheelbase 7ft 8in-8ft (2335-2440mm)
Weight 1500-1995lb (680-907kg)
0-60mph 28.4-7.6 secs
Top speed 75-115mph **Mpg** 20-35
Price new £13,500 (Plus 4, 1988)

CLUB

Morgan Sports Car Club mscc.uk.com

SPECIALISTS

Morgan morgan-motor.com **Techniques** techniques.uk.com **Brands Hatch Morgan** morgan-kent.com **Melvyn Rutter** melvyn-rutter.co.uk **Allon White** allonwhite.co.uk
Lifes Motors lifesmotors.com
Vintage Wings vintagewingsandrads.co.uk

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
4/4	£5-8000/12-18,000/20-35,000
Plus 4	£6-12,000/14-22,000/30-40k

OUR VERDICT

Drive any example – from pretty much any era – and you will soon know if a Morgan is the right car for you. If it is, look at all the available options and pick the model that best suits your needs: the more recent cars are much more usable than earlier models and 1990s models are currently well priced. Bear in mind that these cars wear out at low mileages and neglect or corrosion can be expensive to put right.

FOR
Minimal depreciation, even on recent cars; sheer fun with hood down on (smooth) back roads; about as 'green' as car manufacturing gets

AGAINST
Very hard ride on most models; noisy and uncomfortable, especially hood-up; rapid deterioration if not looked after



ALTERNATIVES



PANTHER LIMA/KALLISTA
1976-'91, 2640 built
Well built, reliable and mostly cherished. The biggest worries are rust on early Limas and aluminium corrosion on Kallistas. A full respray can be costly on either. **Price now** £3-18,000



LOTUS/CATERHAM SEVEN
1974-'90, c3700 built
Sold mostly as kits in the UK, Sevens give the ultimate go-kart feel with mighty pace. Most do few miles so last well; check for stress cracks and rot in lower tubes. **Price now** £5-38,000

MORRIS MINOR MM & SERIES II

The first incarnations of this world-favourite small car are still top-value classics

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **WILL WILLIAMS**



Lighter, roomier and more aerodynamic than the Morris Eight Series E, the post-war Minor heralded a sea-change in small-car construction and looks, albeit with an antiquated sidevalve engine rather than the modern flat-four that designer Alec Issigonis had planned. At least the engine was well proven; reviewers concentrated instead on the Minor's revelatory handling, space, economy and light controls.

A clever touch on the first 'lowlight' cars was that the sidelights doubled as engine-bay illumination. The folding rear-seat back, opening through to the boot, was a rare feature at the time, and it combined with a double-folding passenger seat. But it was very basic: the 1949 road test cars had just a single driver's-side windscreen wiper and a single offside rear light, with a reflector on the nearside.

Morris was developing an overhead-valve version of the 918cc sidevalve when the BMC merger with Austin came, but the engineers were overruled and the ohv A-series from the Austin A30 was dropped in for the Series II, along with its gearbox. The 803cc unit was freer-revving but needed lower overall gearing, and its ratios were poorly chosen compared with the MM 'box, resulting in the same top speed, slower acceleration and marginally worse economy. This led to astonishing misinformation in *The Motor*'s road test, where 'approximately 25% faster acceleration from rest through the gears' was claimed, despite being at odds with the test figures.

Nevertheless, the Minor continued to sell well, aided by the introduction of pick-up, van and Traveller estate models; the commercials were built on a new, separate rear chassis, while the Traveller retained the saloon floorpan with a wood-framed, aluminium-panelled rear body that added a unique charm.

Today, rust is the main concern, followed by specification. Many early cars, especially SIIs, have been uprated with later running gear. This makes them more usable, but if you prefer originality, finding the correct early parts to revert can be challenging: even the wheels on MMs were different to later cars. Saloons can still be found cheaply, with Travellers fetching more and Tourers the most prized, alongside vans and pick-ups due to their extreme rarity. Very early cars also command a premium.

TROUBLE SPOTS

CHASSIS LEGS Rust affects much of the underside, but pay particular attention to the main chassis legs on each side of the engine, forward to the front valance and below the radiator, and back to the crossmember under the seats that takes the torsion bars and jacking points. The legs and crossmember often have to be replaced in their entirety

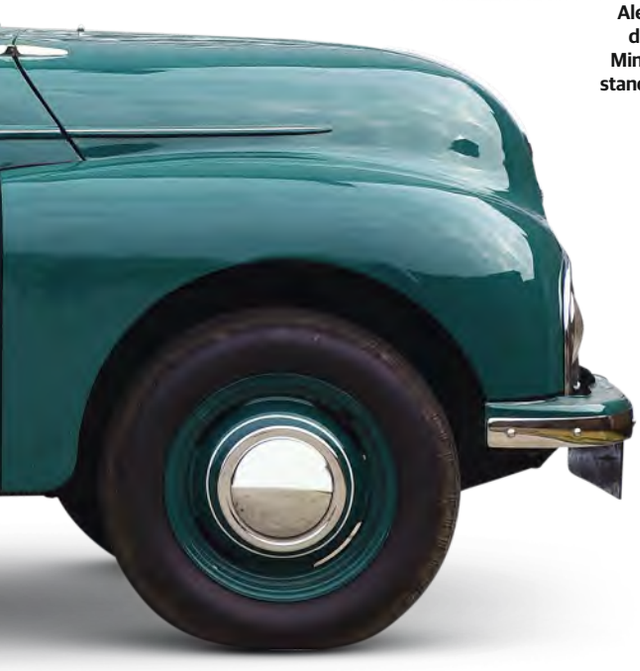
REAR CHASSIS Corrosion is common in the rear members, especially around spring mountings, and the floors and inner arches

OUTER PANELS Here rot tends to be more visible; bolt-on wings are easily replaced, but mounting flanges also rot away, as do the door bottoms, bulkhead, A/B/C/D-posts and sills

MECHANICALS Problems here can be plentiful but are invariably cheaper and easier to sort – unless you're trying to revert a much-modified car to original, or reconditioning worn running gear







Alec Issigonis' brilliant design for the Morris Minor brought modern standards to the masses



A well-restored Minor is a delight to drive, with astonishingly light controls – especially the clutch and steering. Expect some roll, but cornering should feel reasonably precise and well controlled. Early cars such as this example had oil-pressure as well as fuel gauges, but there was never a temperature gauge



Simplicity and ease of access characterise the Morris Minor engine bay, which was originally designed to take a flat-four. The smooth and reliable long-stroke sidevalve MM unit is completely different from the A-series in the Series II, but service and rebuild parts are available, so owning one need not be daunting



Many early cars will have acquired later seats and trim over the years. Worn originals can be retrimmed, but missing early parts are hard to find



The first Tourers had removable rear sidescreens; later ones had fixed glass windows and a different hood and frame. Check fit and condition



Suspension should be greased every 1000 miles, or it will become stiff and wear. Check chassis legs throughout their length for rot and bad repairs



All Minors had a three-synchro, four-speed gearbox, but the MM unit is different from the Series II 'box. Check synchros and listen for layshaft wear

"Despite tiny headlights and no heater, my 1950 saloon was my sole transport for six years and 60,000 miles"



Neat handling and sweet steering make the Minor great fun on a twisty country road, and made it a competent entry-level competition car in period

Before you buy

Expect a smooth, light and easy drive – if the car feels stiff and jerky or wallowy, it needs attention. Engines that have been worked hard could need a rebuild after as little as 30-50,000 miles, so look out for excessive smoke, heavy breathing, knocks and rattles. Check the gearbox synchros (fitted on all but first gear) and for layshaft wear, indicated by a bearing noise that goes quiet when you dip the clutch in neutral. Look underneath for oil leaks from the engine, gearbox and axle (especially on the inside of the brakes).

Frequent lubrication is vital to keep the steering light and the suspension precise: check for play underneath, and examine the tyres for uneven wear. Surprisingly, the correct 5.20x14 crossply tyres are no longer available. Most people choose more durable radials, which give improved wet grip, but ride comfort and overall gearing are not quite as good when they are fitted. The fractionally narrower Waymaster 5.00/5.20x14 (as fitted to our test car) is the nearest currently available crossply. Blockley does a nice 145/80x14 radial specifically for Minors, and the Pirelli Cinturato is good, too. Or you can upgrade to the 155 Michelin X – although even that has a slightly smaller rolling radius than the crossply. At the budget tyre end, a 155 Nankang can be bought for just £41.50 plus fitting.

Braking is one area in which the early Minor struggles in modern traffic: it's no bad thing if the front brakes have been uprated to the later 8in drums. If the brakes are ineffective, it's likely that the cylinders are sticking – it's a common fault often caused by infrequent use, and it is easily rectified. Weak shock absorbers often just need topping up.

OWNING ONE



"My 1950 MM saloon was my first car in 1961," says **Graham Holt**. "Despite tiny headlights and no heater, it was my sole transport for six years and 60,000 miles. The biggest expense was a Gold Seal replacement engine, which was fitted in advance of a Swiss touring holiday.

"I sold it to my sister in 1967 and bought it back in 1976 – and it has been with me ever since. In 2008 I rebuilt and fitted an engine with a 37bhp Alta overhead-valve conversion, which gave it far better performance. Two years ago a piston crown broke, so I put the sidevalve back in. I had the carburettor rebuilt by Burlen, and even after 80,000 miles it gives 40-45mpg. With cars of this type it's necessary to develop a good sense of anticipation and sympathy to get the best from it. Performance isn't great when driving up hills!"

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1948 Minor saloon and Tourer launched
1949 US cars get raised headlights
1950 Twin wipers, one-piece bumpers, name badges on bonnet; four-door: raised headlights, stainless door-window frames
1951 All get raised headlights; painted grille; Tourer gets fixed rear side windows
1952 Series II with 803cc engine, lower diff ratio; export four-door only at first: bonnet handle with 'M' motif
1953 Last MM built; van and pick-up launched; Traveller launched; De luxe with overriders, leather seats and heater
1954 New horizontal grille, sidelights in wings, big central speedometer
1956 Minor 1000 (948cc) replaces Series II

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1948-'56/176,002 MMs, 318,351 Series IIs
Construction steel monocoque, separate chassis for van/pick-up, wood-framed estate **Engine** all-iron, sidevalve 918cc or ohv 803cc 'four', SU H1 carburettor
Max power 27bhp @ 4400rpm to 30bhp @ 4800rpm **Max torque** 39lb ft @ 2400rpm to 40lb ft @ 2400rpm
Transmission four-speed manual, RWD
Suspension: front independent, by transverse arms, lower radius arms, torsion bars **rear** live axle, semi-elliptic springs; lever arm dampers f/r **Steering** rack and pinion **Brakes** drums **Length** 12ft 3½-5in (3746-3785mm) **Width** 5ft (1524mm)
Height 4ft 10in-5ft ½in (1473-1537mm)
Wheelbase 7ft 2in (2184mm)
Weight 1708-1848lb (775-838kg)
0-50mph 24.2-28.6 secs
Top speed 64mph **Mpg** 38-50
Price new £529-599 (2dr-Traveller, 1954)

CLUB

Morris Minor Owners' Club
mmoc.org.uk

SPECIALISTS

Tom Roy tomroy.co.uk **Morris Minor Parts UK** morrisminorspareparts.co.uk **Newton Commercial** newtoncomm.co.uk **Traveller Timbers** travellertimbers.co.uk **Woodies** morriswoodwork.co.uk **Morris Minor Centre (Bath)** mmcbath.co.uk **Morris Minor Workshop** morrisminorworkshop.com **West Riding Classic Cars** westridingclassics.co.uk **ESM Morris Minors** morrisminorspares.com **Canterbury Convertibles** morrisminorconvertible.co.uk **Minorparts of Oxford** minorpartsofoxford.co.uk

WHAT TO PAY*

	Resto/Average/Show
Saloon	£600/3000/8500
Traveller	£1250/4500/12,000
Tourer	£1750/5500/12,500
Van, pick-up	£4000/10,000/15,000

*LOW LIGHTS 50-100% MORE

OUR VERDICT

Provided the rust has already been dealt with successfully – or you've budgeted for it – you really can't go wrong with an early Morris Minor. True classics for bargain prices, they belie their years in being light and easy to drive, especially at home on country roads and in town. Uprating is cheap and simple, but remember that originality is becoming increasingly prized.

FOR
Great parts availability and enthusiast/specialist back-up make the Minor affordable to keep on the road, with good economy and reliability

AGAINST
Long distances can be a chore; rot is extensive so check carefully, especially if there's no MoT



ALTERNATIVES



FORD ANGLIA E494A *1948-'53, 108,778 built*
This mildly restyled version of the 1930s two-door economy saloon was simple and reliable, with a separate chassis, beam axles, rod brakes and 57mph. Charming – if you are not in a hurry. **Price now** £2-12,000



RENAULT 4CV *1947-'61, 1,105,543 built*
Delightful four-door (even as the rare and valuable Cabriolet), rear-engined cutie with all-independent suspension. Slower than the Minor with just 750cc, bar the rare and desirable Sport. **Price now** £1-40,000

PORSCHE 356

The car that established Porsche as a car maker is a tricky classic buy, but can be very rewarding

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



With an incredible production life of 18 years, the 356 was so successful due to the uncompromised quality of its design, engineering and manufacture, along with its exclusivity, practicality, performance, good handling and remarkable durability.

The more effort that goes into building a car and making it last when it is new, however, the more will be required to return it to that state when it is in need of a rebuild. Sadly, few 356s in the past had the necessary cash and attention lavished on them during restoration.

Don't be misled by its Volkswagen-derived history: the first Porsche rapidly became far removed from its humbler cousin and precious few parts are shared. The body is particularly complicated, with all welded and leaded joins, complex curves and plentiful rust traps. Corrosion is the biggest enemy and many buyers have been caught out by shiny paint that hides a ghastly catalogue of bodges. The cars will rot anywhere from the waist down (and higher in some areas), and repair is rarely simple. "It's not unusual to spend 1200 hours on the body alone," says Mick Pacey of Export 56.

Check the front clip carefully for corrosion, in particular the boot floor, inner and outer wings (paying attention to the top rear edge), and bulkhead. In addition, inspect the doors; floors; longitudinal chassis members; jacking points and sills (and the heater tubes that run inside them); B-posts and bases of rear 'screen pillars; plus rear wings and valance.

Panel fit is a good guide to the quality of any restoration work: it should be flush and even, with a consistent gap of c3.5mm. If it isn't, that doesn't necessarily mean the work is flawed, but it is a warning sign to investigate further. Front and rear lids get bent when people fail to understand their concealed ratchet operation and slam them; they are difficult to straighten.

The range of 356 variants is bewildering, so invest in a decent book and learn it before you go shopping, or you could get your fingers burnt. Open cars are particularly confusing: you could have a Cabriolet, Speedster, Roadster or Convertible D. Then there's the Notchback (or Karmann Hardtop), made only in 1961-'62. Genuine Carreras and Super 90s are rare, but copies are common: seek documented history.



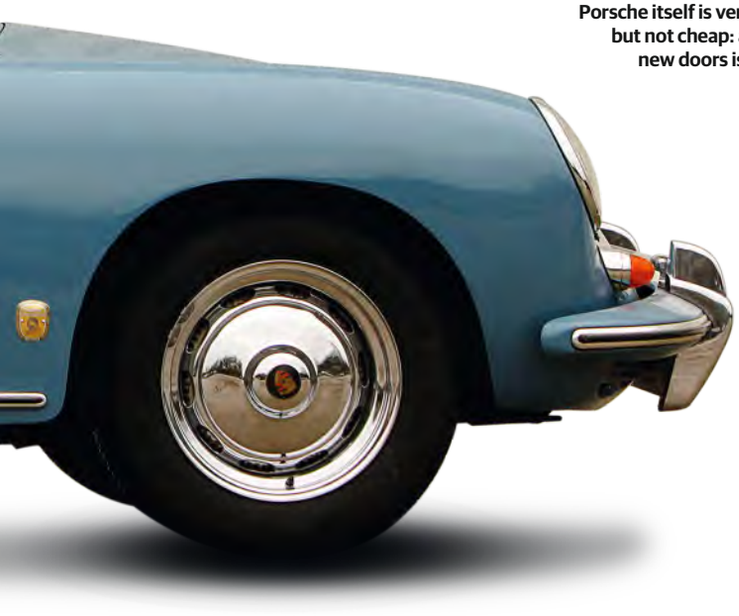
Early cars' VW steering boxes were replaced with a ZF unit in 1955 that is generally durable, with minimal play; getting a worn box rebuilt is expensive



Porsche gearboxes are usually strong and wear will show itself as a weak synchromesh on second gear; a sloppy linkage can be cured with new bushes







Parts supply from both marque specialists and Porsche itself is very good, but not cheap: a pair of new doors is £3200



Sweet steering and unique handling are the 356 hallmarks. A vast range of engine tweaks took place over the years, and different states of tune may not simply mean a change of carburetion, but completely different engine internals. If you are in any way unsure about what you are looking at, be sure to get an expert second opinion



An air-cooled, overhead-valve four-cylinder sounds like simplicity itself, but it's not. There are many spec differences – make sure the one you're looking at is what it's claimed to be – and regular oil changes are vital to long life. The four-cam units are hugely expensive to buy and even a pushrod engine is costly to rebuild properly



Six-volt electrics are fine if all of the connections are clean; they were rarely criticised when the cars were new. Some convert to 12V, but it's complex to do



The interior trim is generally simple, hard-wearing and relatively easy for a trimmer to restore, so a tired interior should be seen as a bargaining point



The Beetle-derived suspension is more highly stressed on the Porsche so it needs frequent lubrication; look out for worn kingpins and tired bushes



Drum brakes (until 1964, when discs all round were added to the 356C) are perfectly adequate if well maintained, but are rarely properly looked after



Details changed through production, but all 356s retain a family look

Before you buy

A good 356 has a 'hewn from solid' feel, both to look at and to drive: it feels as if it could go on for ever, while the reassuring thrum from the engine behind and the gentle shove in your back endear it to any enthusiastic driver. Add to that a good ride, lively performance and impressive handling for its day (albeit with the risk of snap oversteer at the limit) and it is very easy to see why the 356 appealed to discerning drivers, despite its superficially mundane specification.

With the spare wheel and fuel tank largely filling the front boot, there's no proper luggage compartment, but that's what the space behind the front seats is for: bags, kids, or a bit of each.

Consult the books and the experts to be sure what engine specification is (and should be) fitted – there's a big difference in performance and desirability between a 60bhp 'Dame' 1600 engine and a 90bhp Super 90, let alone between a 40bhp 'Pre-A' and a 130bhp four-cam Carrera GS2000. Expect to pay a huge premium for four-cams. Listen for knocking or rattling suggesting a worn-out engine and beware excessive oil leaks, which frequently lead to a full engine rebuild. Regular oil changes pay dividends with 100,000-mile-plus engine life. Rough running or black smoke is probably down to worn carburettors, which are also costly to rebuild or replace.

Engine and transmission oil leaks are common on neglected cars and can rapidly ruin both major components if they are not cured swiftly. Apart from that, the transmissions are very durable. Steering-box repairs can be tricky, but steering and suspension ailments are likely to be the least of your worries – unless they are due to a twisted shell, which is not uncommon on open cars.

OWNING ONE



"I was looking for a Volkswagen Karmann Ghia when I spotted a beaten-up 356," recalls **Kieran Higgins**. "It had never been restored and ran like a watch. I had always hankered after an open-top, in particular a Convertible D: Speedster lines, that lovely arc of a dash, but with a decent windscreen and weatherproofing, plus handling and running like the later cars. In 2000 I found a 1959 car that had been raced and driven hard when it was new, then stored from 1966 until I found it. The car was really original but rusty – it's been a long restoration, but worth every penny. Take reasonable care of them and you always feel positive: they consistently appreciate and are among the few '50s cars that can be used daily. I'm in touch with the first owner and that sense of history spanning the years is great."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1948 356 launched, Gmünd, Austria
1950 Moves to Zuffenhausen, Stuttgart
1951 1300cc 45bhp engine option
1952 'Bent window' replaces vee 'screen
1953 Synchro 'box, indicators directly below headlights, twin round rear lights
1954 Front grilles; Speedster and Carrera added; three-piece crankcase; 1100 ends
1955 356A: curved 'screen, 1600 option
1957 T2 body: teardrop rear lights, exhausts via bumpers, 1300 dropped
1958 T4 body; Convertible D replaces Speedster; Super 90 launched
1959 356B; T5 body; bigger bumpers; 1500 ends; Roadster replaces Conv D
1961 Carrera 2 2000GS launched
1962 T6 body; larger 'screens, squarer bootlid, twin air intakes; Roadster ends
1964 356C; disc brakes, flatter hubcaps
1966 Production ends

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1948-'66/c77,560
Construction steel monocoque
Engine all-alloy, ohv (or dohc-per-bank) 1086/1131/1286/1290/1488/1498/1582/1588/1966cc flat-four, single/twin Zenith/Solex carburettors **Max power** 40bhp @ 4000rpm to 130bhp @ 6200rpm
Max torque 88lb ft @ 3700rpm (Super 75)
Transmission four-speed manual, RWD
Suspension independent, by trailing arms, transverse torsion bars, telescopic dampers f/r; later swing-axles to rear; front anti-roll bar from Nov '54 **Steering** worm and nut
Brakes drums f/r; discs f/r from 1964
Length 12ft 9in-13ft 2in (3880-4010mm)
Width 5ft 6in (1666-1670mm)
Height 4ft 3-4in (1300-1330mm)
Wheelbase 6ft 10-11in (2100-2126mm)
Weight 1786-1932lb (810-878kg)
0-60mph 17-9.8 secs
Top speed 87-124mph **Mpg** 25-37
Price new £2049 (1600, 1960)

CLUBS

Porsche Club GB porscheclubgb.com
Porsche 356 Registry 356registry.org
The Porsche Enthusiasts' Club tipec.net

SPECIALISTS

Export 56 export56.com **Roger Bray Restoration** rogerbrayrestoration.com **PR Services** prs356.co.uk **Prill Porsche Classics** prillporscheclassics.com **Karmann Konnection** karmannkonnection.co.uk **Maxted-Page** maxted-page.com

WHAT TO PAY

Resto/Average/Show

Pre-A £50-100k/100-250k/250-400k
356A £40-90k/90-225k/200-350k
356B, C £20-50k/60-140k/125-300k

Price range covers from Coupé to Speedster (B: Roadster; C: Cabrio); prices for four-cam Carrera will be at least double

OUR VERDICT

There's no doubt that a good Porsche 356 can be an immensely reliable and enjoyable classic sports car to drive and enjoy – but a poor one will very swiftly become an intolerable drain on your resources. With that in mind, it is vital that you check out any potential purchase extremely carefully and seek advice from marque experts before committing to a purchase. Plus, of course, buy the best one you can afford.

FOR
Exceptionally durable if well maintained; practical, usable sports car; great 'jellymould' looks; exclusive and appreciating

AGAINST
Rust, rust, rust; poor past repairs will inevitably bite back; watch out for bitsas claiming to be valuable rarities



ALTERNATIVES



ALFA ROMEO GIULIETTA
1955-'62, 44,238 built
A quality coupé (Sprint) or convertible (Spider) with a tuned twin-cam, this was the Porsche's closest rival when new, but couldn't match its durability. Pretty and desirable. **Price now** £10-100,000

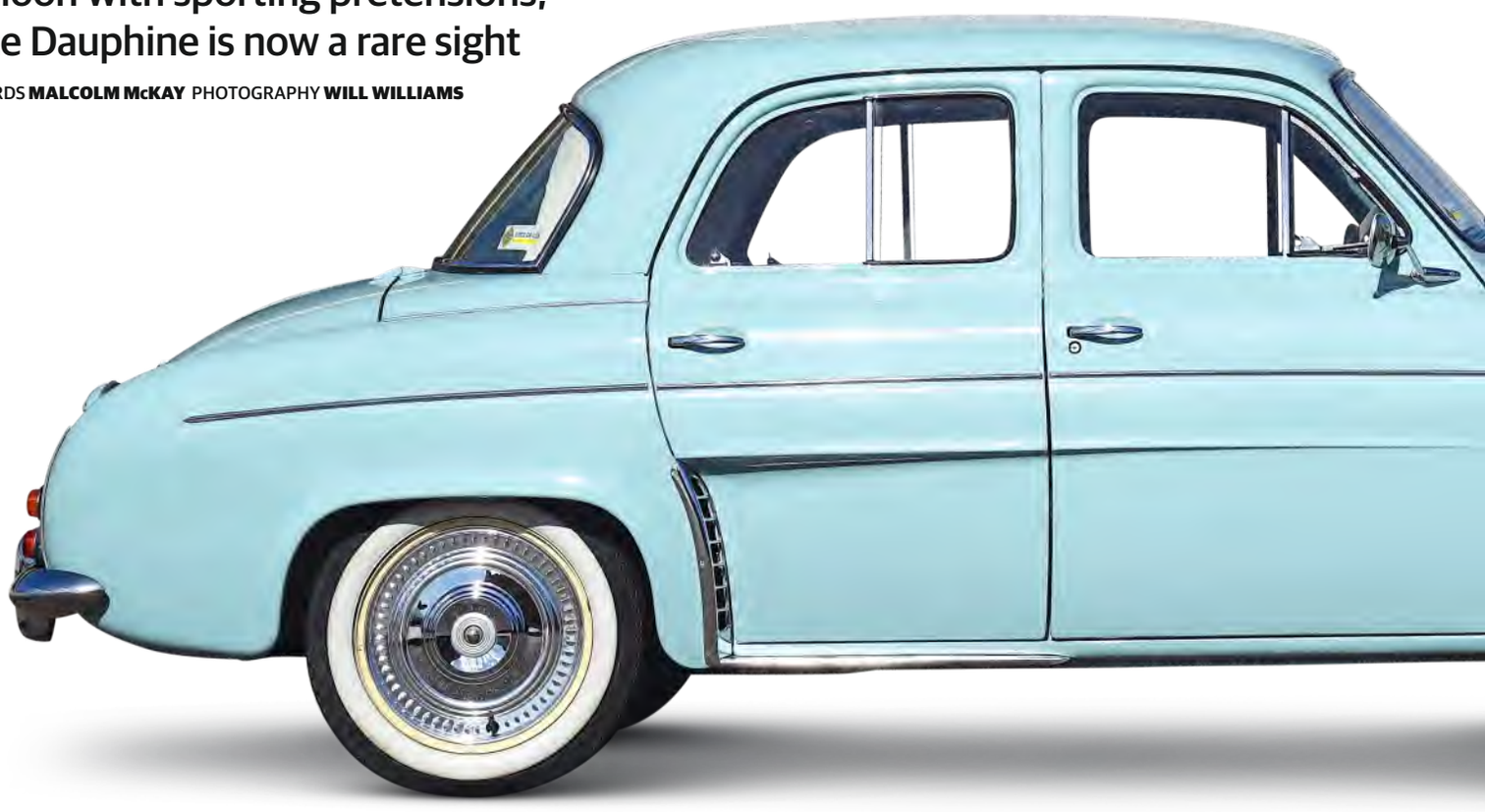


LOTUS ELITE
1958-'63, 988 built
The first glassfibre monocoque was as fragile as the Porsche was robust, but was a flyer with Climax power. Shells rot only where steel was inset, and this flyweight is now sought-after. **Price now** £25-75,000

RENAULT DAUPHINE

A refined and comfortable small saloon with sporting pretensions, the Dauphine is now a rare sight

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **WILL WILLIAMS**



Pretty to look at and entertaining to drive, the Dauphine was a global success for Renault. It catered for customers who could afford to spend a little extra to get a more 'special' car than the base 4CV and later Renault 4. The, fuel economy, tight turning circle, surprisingly spacious four-door interior and large front boot also made Dauphines ideal for use as taxicabs – and an Uber-style launch in London led some black-cab drivers to ram them when they saw them!

Lightweight construction was one of the Dauphine's secrets, giving it great performance for its size and power – but the very thin steel (22/23-gauge on non-structural panels) rusted through in just a few years – or less in severe environments. Even more rot-prone poor-quality steel afflicted the 1959-'63 models; Dauphine survival numbers are low because of rust, and it should be top of your list of things to check when buying. Ask yourself: is rot present, has it been hidden and, if repaired, has it been done safely and correctly?

Built in the world's most highly automated car factory of the late 1950s, turning out more than 200,000 examples a year, the Dauphine's advanced features included an automatic choke, steering-column-lock ignition/starter, childproof door locks from 1961 and, on the Gordini/Export models from 1964, all-disc brakes. From the start, tuning parts were offered by Renault through the Gordini brand, to boost power and offer four-speed or even five-speed gearsets that fitted in the standard three-speed housing – although the tuned engine made the handling distinctly tail-happy. Competition success followed, with Dauphines finishing 2-3-4 in class in the 1956 Mille Miglia, and the Renaults won the 1957 Tulip Rally, '58 Rallye Monte-Carlo and '59 Alpine Rally.

Dauphines were assembled worldwide, including in Acton, London, but poor quality control contributed to the end of assembly there in 1961. Elsewhere production continued for longer, especially in Argentina where it remained into the 1970s; some current parts supply, especially panels, emanates from Argentina. Meanwhile, Renault developed the stylish, rear-engined theme with the Floride and Caravelle coupé and convertible, both based on the Dauphine. They are even more desirable, but equally rust-prone.

TROUBLE SPOTS

UNDERNEATH Corrosion is the biggest enemy here: check the sills, floors, chassis rails and outriggers

FRONT/REAR WINGS Both inner and outer wings are susceptible to rust, along with the adjacent bulkhead panels

DOORS They corrode from the bottom up and the top down

ENGINE Check for cracks in the head and block; new pistons and liners are needed every 50,000 miles or so to keep the motor running sweetly

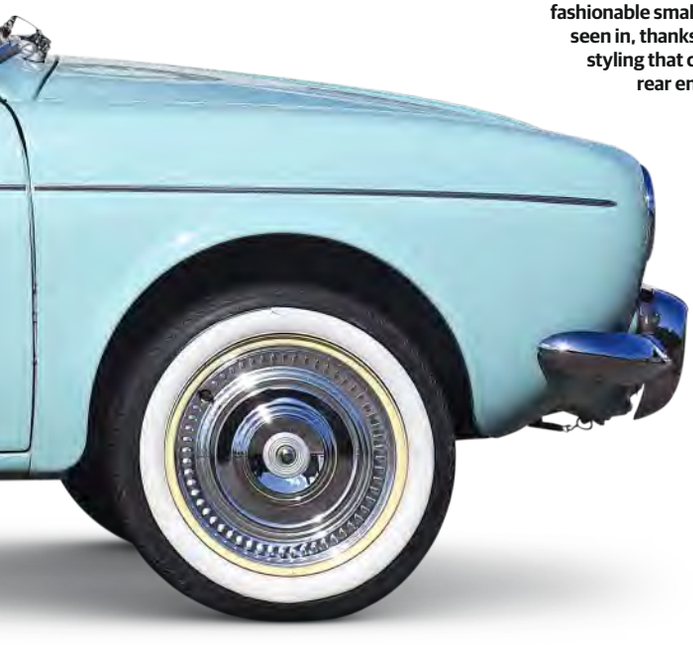
ALLOY HEAD Corrosion can cause leaks and overheating, especially if the internal steel pipe has failed

TRIM DAMAGE Materials and parts are available in France, unless the components are unique to Acton-built cars

SUSPENSION Check underneath for play, because the kingpins can wear out if servicing is neglected







The Dauphine was the most fashionable small saloon to be seen in, thanks to attractive styling that concealed the rear engine location



Low weight helps give the Dauphine lively performance, especially in four-speed models, combined with remarkable economy. The heavy rearward weight bias only makes itself known when the car is thrown around violently, and superb rally performances in period show it could have more advantages than disadvantages



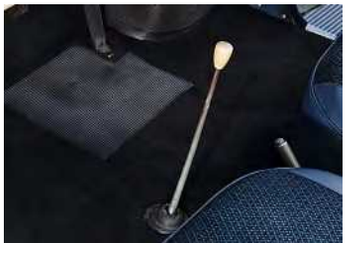
Look for excessive engine oil leaks and heavy breathing (or knocking) that can indicate the wet-liner 'four' is nearing rebuild time: new pistons and liners are still available and easy to change. Check the left side of the block, 3in above the sump, for cracks. The fibre gear in the camshaft drive gets noisy when worn



Poor performance and economy are usually down to a worn carburettor; new units are available, as are parts for the normally reliable automatic choke



Michelin tyres are excellent, but they cost more than £120 each; Toyos or Nankangs are cheaper. Brakes seize if the car is rarely used and kingpins wear



Until '62, most cars were three-speeds with no synchro on first, so practise your double-declutching. Four-speed gearboxes are well worth seeking out



Seat materials or good used parts can still be found at French autojumbles, although not for Acton-built cars; even so, the body is more critical than trim

"My father had to sell our first Dauphine because my mother couldn't cope with the non-synchro first – and the car was rusting"



Find a good one with a four-speed gearbox, and maybe some Gordini fettling, and you'll have great fun in the Dauphine

Before you buy

Low weight and low gearing give the Dauphine a lively feel, providing the engine is in good enough fettle; a tired or worn engine and/or carburettor will make for lacklustre performance, so watch out for exhaust smoke and oil leaks. The camshaft is driven by a chain running over three gears: the middle gear is fibre to keep noise down, so if the geartrain is noisy, it's the fibre gear that is failing. A full engine rebuild shouldn't cost much more than £1500 and parts are readily available, but a cracked block is expensive to repair.

Transmissions improved significantly during production, and you have to be a purist to favour the original three-speed gearbox without synchromesh on first gear; the four-speed is far more usable. The optional, Ferodo-made Ferlec electro-magnetic clutch is clever, and there's no need to avoid it; club experts know how to set it up. If engagement is abrupt, it needs to be realigned soon.

The electrics were 6V until 1962 and are perfectly adequate if kept in good condition (low-energy LEDs can help here), but the 12V systems of later models perform better overall and are cheaper to maintain.

The suspension's rubber-cone auxiliary springs (branded Aerostable) were added in late 1959 on French cars and from mid-1960 on the British-built examples, alongside softer coil springs. This was meant to allow for compliance across both unladen and fully laden conditions – a full load of passengers and luggage weighs half as much again as the car itself. But the system was not a great success, and it was abandoned for 1962. The rubber cones are hard to find now, so conversion to a standard suspension set-up may be wise.

OWNING ONE



"When I was 18 my father bought a Dauphine," recalls **Stuart Kitchen**. "It was the sexiest thing on wheels at the time, but he sold it after 18 months because my mother couldn't cope with the non-synchro first gear – and it had already started rusting. In around 2001 I decided to relive those memories, and my wife bid on this one for me at auction. It has led a sheltered life, covering only 46,000 miles in its first 58 years.

"It has never been restored. I had the engine rebuilt just as a precaution at 45,000 miles, and I had the radiator recored because it was running a little hot. Unfortunately, I now need to replace the original door seals – they went sticky last summer. It's a 1963 French-built car with a four-speed 'box and 12V electrics: we took it to the 50th-birthday gathering in France in 2005."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1955 First production Dauphines built
1956 Dauphine launched
1957 Gordini model added with four-speed gearbox, 36bhp
1958 Compression raised, vacuum advance added: 31bhp, better performance and economy
1959 Aerostable suspension introduced
1960 Four-speed gearbox optional on standard models; Deluxe Dauphine called Ondine in France
1961 UK assembly at Acton ends; Gordini Deluxe launched in the UK
1962 Compression raised again, 12V electrics, Aerostable and Ferlec dropped, three-speed goes all-synchro; LHD Rally 1093 model with 55bhp, 87mph top speed
1964 Gordini gets all-disc brakes and all-synchro four-speed 'box
1967 French production ends
1970 Argentinian production ends

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1955-'70/2,150,738
Construction steel monocoque
Engine iron-block, alloy-head, ohv 845cc 'four', single Solex carburettor
Max power 27bhp @ 4250rpm to 36bhp @ 5000rpm
Max torque 49lb ft @ 2500rpm to 48lb ft @ 3300rpm
Transmission three/four-speed manual, optional Ferlec electric clutch, RWD
Suspension independent, at **front** by double wishbones, anti-roll bar **rear** swing axles; coil springs, telescopic dampers f/r
Steering rack and pinion
Brakes drums (discs for Gordini from '64)
Length 12ft 11in (3937mm) **Width** 5ft (1524mm) **Height** 4ft 9in (1441mm)
Wheelbase 7ft 5in (2267mm)
Weight 1428-1456lb (649-662kg)
0-60mph 28-40 secs
Top speed 67-74mph **Mpg** 37-45
Price new £689/821 (1960)

CLUBS

Renault Classic Car Club renaultclassiccarclub.com **Renault Owners' Club** renaultownersclub.com

SPECIALISTS

Der Franzose franzose.de **Retro Renault Services** www.retrorenaultservices.co.uk **Alpine Renault Restoration** alpinerenaultrestoration.com **Vintage French Car Parts** vfrenchcarparts.com **Ichard** ichard.fr **Arnaud Ventoux Pièces** arnaudventouxpieces.com **Auto 4a** auto4a.com **Melun Retro Passion** melun-retro-passion.com

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
Standard	£1200/5500/11,000
Gordini	£3000/8000/20,000

OUR VERDICT

Prices have gone a bit silly in France for verified examples of the super-rare Rally 1093 model, but the Gordinis and regular Dauphines are still representative of a good-value, usable classic car – provided you keep on top of the rust issue. Restored cars aren't as light as originals – they may not be as lively, either. Make sure repairs have been done properly.

FOR
Great looking and surprisingly spacious; most parts are available and affordable

AGAINST
Rampant rust from new decimated the numbers of Dauphines on the road, and rot still blights many of today's survivors



ALTERNATIVES



MORRIS MINOR 1000 *1956-'71, 847,491 built*
Greater weight and dated styling, but with a 37bhp 948cc – then, from 1962, 48bhp 1098cc – A-series engine and 12V electrics. Rust is the killer today. **Price now** 500-20,000

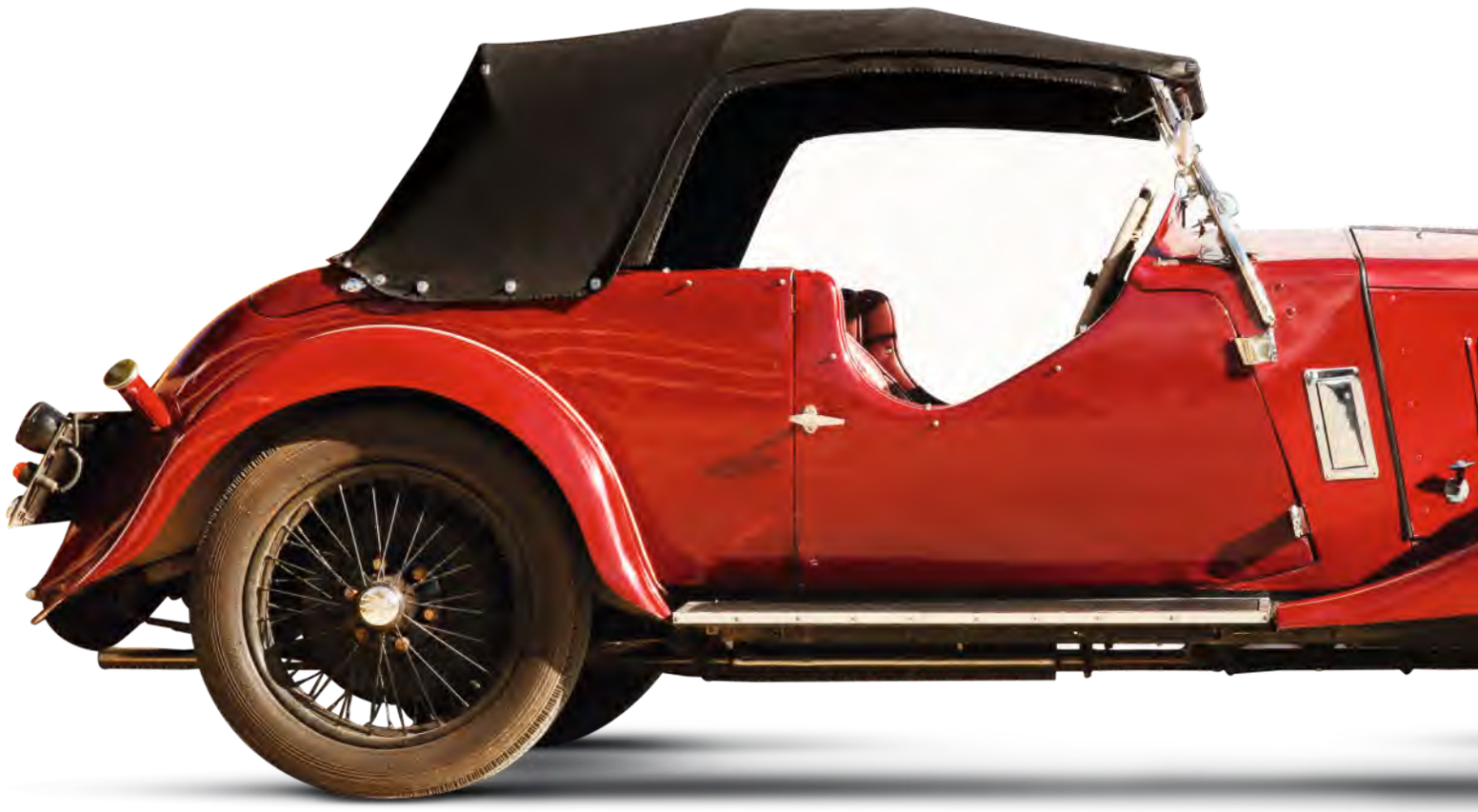


VW BEETLE 1200 *1954-'64, 7,267,899 built*
More torque but no more power from the unburstable, air-cooled flat-four, with 6V electrics and a four-speed transmission. Now a cult icon. **Price now** £750-22,500

RILEY NINE

The 'Wonder Car' of the late 1920s makes a remarkably usable vintage choice

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



It can be hard to establish how a vintage car was regarded when it was new, but the Riley Nine was seen as exceptional from the start, when it was called the 'Wonder Car'. It wasn't just Percy Riley's twin-camshaft engine; the cars were also noted for Stanley Riley's work on the low build, refinement, spacious interiors and fine performance.

The revolutionary engine had hemispherical combustion chambers and overhead valves inclined at 45°, operated by camshafts mounted high in the sides of the block. It melded the punch of a dual-overhead-cam motor with the easy servicing of a pushrod unit.

Also well thought-out was the drivetrain. Cars of that era had flexible chassis and bodies that compromised their handling, but Riley minimised this. First, the engine and gearbox were firmly – but not solidly – mounted to the chassis, so they would add stiffness without transmitting too much vibration. Second, a torque tube was used (except on 1935-'37 9hp Merlins, whose chassis were stiffened), which transmitted much of the suspension/braking load via a solid tube around the propshaft to a gearbox-mounting crossmember in the centre of the chassis. This minimised the stresses that had to be carried to the relatively weak rear.

The Nine's myriad production changes are too many to list here. Modifications were made to the chassis, engine, gearbox, drivetrain, fuel system, dash, brakes and more. Inexperienced restorers can wreak havoc by fitting the wrong parts or swapping incompatible bits. If you can find a car that has been maintained over a long period by marque experts, you can avoid the risk of a long, expensive rectification process.

Sports-racing models such as the Brooklands and Imp command high prices and copies, based on cut-down saloon chassis, abound (as do Specials of all kinds). All have their place, but do not be hoodwinked into paying full price for a copy: if in doubt, get expert advice.

With all models, inspect for rust in the wings and their attachments; chassis side members by body mounts, notably boxed types; cable tray (on the chassis offside); and door-hinge mounting areas. Watch for rot in wooden floors and body frames, especially near the windows and chassis, and check for cracks in windscreen pillars on alloy-bodied saloons and below the bootlid from its weight. Uneven door/boot fit is a good sign of weakness or a poor past rebuild.



Double-declutching is essential on all Nines, bar those with overdrive or preselector 'boxes; knob alongside is for cable adjustment (on cable-brake cars)



All parts can be found to rebuild worn front suspension, but it can cost £3000 if it needs new stub-axles and kingpins, so frequent lubrication is sensible







Riley offered many factory options, from the twin-carb Sports engine tune to alternative 'box and rear axle ratios



Sporty dashboard packs a full set of instruments, while ignition advance/retard and mixture are on the wheel. The Nine was quite conventional to drive for its time: only the gearbox layout was back-to-front, with the third/fourth plane to the left of first/second. Early cars had the gearlever and handbrake mounted to the driver's right



Oil pressure should be 40-50psi at 40mph in top; with no filtration, changing the oil every year/2000 miles and regularly dropping the sump to clean it are wise ideas. There were many changes to the engine during production: this car has a distributor instead of its original magneto, but many had distributor/coil ignition as standard



With a worn pre-'34 steering box (1in play is okay), you can turn the gearwheel to a new section; post-'34 you can't. The switch at the end fails if oil/grit gets in



A higher axle ratio improves cruising, but may affect flexibility with heavier bodies; axle/halfshafts uprated '29-on. Cable brakes are effective if well set-up



The original voltage cutout box should be here, but is hard to find and costly; modern fuseboxes and wiring, as here, give peace of mind in today's motoring



Thermosyphon cooling is perfectly adequate if the radiator is not silted up: having it properly rebuilt is costly, so check its operation rigorously



"The rebuilt engine lasted only 10,000 miles; you have to find the right people to work on these cars"

Clever design helps Riley to handle superbly for its age

Before you buy

A well-maintained Nine should be quiet and smooth. If it is not (and many aren't), it may take only half a day to put it right, or it may be expensive: only an expert can tell which. Talk to the Riley Register about any potential purchase to see what is known of its history. So many changes were made during production that it can be a bit bewildering to the novice – and even for many mechanics.

Look for 45-50psi oil pressure at speed and no excess rattling and knocking, or smoke from the engine, with smooth if not necessarily rapid acceleration, climbing gentle hills in top gear. Check that all of the controls work, that the dynamo charges with the headlights on – oil can leak from the engine into it, but this can be cured with modern seals – and that the wiring is safe.

The manual gearbox should be quiet in third, if whiny in the other ratios, and change cleanly with double-declutching down the 'box and careful rev-matching when changing up. Preselectors are a delight when properly set up, but are heavy and complex. If it slips, expect a costly gearbox or clutch rebuild.

There were different varieties of centralised lubrication mechanisms for the suspension and steering swivels were fitted on all Nines; they are effective if not blocked. When driving, coast in neutral and listen for a clinking behind the gearbox, denoting a worn universal joint: replacement of this means taking out the engine/gearbox or rear axle.

With four-wheel brakes and relatively little weight to haul in, a Nine should stop smartly and straight: if it doesn't, then attention is required. If the Riley leaps about on a bumpy road, it's likely to be caused by worn dampers, shackles, kingpins and steering bushes.

OWNING ONE



"I had a 1934 Monaco back in 1963," recalls **Bruce Fox**, "and I then replaced it with a Lynx Sprite in 1965. I came back to Rileys when I bought this car in 2005. It had a great early history, having won many trials awards with its first owner. It was expensively – but poorly – rebuilt in '92, then improved by the following owner.

"This disappearing-hood two-door Lynx tourer was offered for only one year: it has the Sports engine with twin SU carburettor. I've made a few subtle improvements, including the LED fuel gauge: I'm making a few for other owners now! The engine rebuilt in '92 lasted only 10,000 miles and was beyond repair; Hamlins built another for me. You really have to find the right people to work on these cars: this one had the wrong clutch, which never worked properly."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1926 Nine arrives at London Motor Show
1927 Production begins with tourer and Monaco saloon; 2str tourer with dickey and San Remo saloon added later in year, plus Brooklands Speed Model on 8ft wheelbase
1930 Nine Plus: stainless trim, fuel tank moves from scuttle to rear; Monaco and Biarritz saloons, Brooklands Sports, Open tourer and 2str Coupé
1932 Dropped-chassis 'Plus Ultra' available
1933 Monaco, Ascot, Gamecock, plus new Kestrel/Falcon saloons, Lynx tourer, Trinity 2str tourer, Lincock coupé, March Special
1934 Imp sports (7ft 6in w/b); steel-bodied saloons; preselector offered; chassis boxed
1935 Monaco, Kestrel, Lynx and Imp only
1936 Merlin saloon replaces Monaco; Kestrel modified; other bodies dropped
1937 New Monaco replaces Kestrel; Touring Saloon, with three-speed 'box
1938 Victor saloon only; Nine discontinued

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1926-'38/c29,500
Construction steel chassis, steel/wood/aluminium/fabric bodies
Engine all-iron, high-cam 1087cc 'four', single Zenith, Solex or SU carburettor, or twin Solex/SU carbs, or four Amal carbs (Brooklands)
Max power 27.7bhp @ 4000rpm to 50bhp @ 5000rpm **Max torque** n/a
Transmission three/four-speed manual or ENV/AS preselector, RWD
Suspension solid axle, semi-elliptic leaf springs, friction dampers f/r; torque tube (except 1935-'37) **Steering** worm and wheel (worm and segment from 1935)
Brakes rod drums (cable from 1930-'35)
Length 12ft-13ft 10½in (3658-4229mm)
Width 4ft 7-9½in (1397-1460mm)
Height 5ft 2in (1575mm) **Wheelbase** 7ft 6in-8ft 10½in (2286-2705mm)
Weight c1750-2500lb (c800-1135kg)
0-50mph 26 secs ('37 Monaco)
Top speed 60-80mph **Mpg** 30-40
Price new £298 (1933 Lynx/1934 Imp)

CLUBS

The Riley Register rileyregister.com
Riley Motor Club rileymotorclub.org

SPECIALISTS

Blue Diamond Riley Services blue-diamond-services.co.uk **Ashridge Automobiles** ashridgeautomobiles.co.uk **Robin Lawton** robinlawton.com **Hamlins Engineering** hamlinsengineering.co.uk **Brooklands EngineCraft** brooklandsenginecraft.co.uk

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
Saloon	£4000/10,000/17,500
Tourer	£8000/16,000/25,000
Imp, Brooklands	£40,000/90k/200k

OUR VERDICT

The Riley Nine was an exceptional car in its day, and is still capable of giving enormous driving pleasure in the 21st century, provided you find a really good one. Check the specification carefully – there were so many variations – to be sure that you're buying the best model for you. Try to find one with impeccable recent history and have it checked over by a marque expert.

FOR
High-performance engine for its time; easily tuned for more power; good handling; spares availability; among the most usable vintage cars

AGAINST
Only sports models can cruise at 60mph-plus; costly to put right if not rebuilt correctly



ALTERNATIVES



MG L-TYPE MAGNA/K-TYPE MAGNETTE
1932-'34, 981 built
MG settled on 1087cc for its mid-range car, with a Wolseley-based ohc 'six' producing 39-41bhp, or 120bhp blown. Tourer, saloon and sports bodies were fitted to the desirable K and L models. **Price now** £17,500-525,000



SINGER NINE SPORTS
1932-'37, c7500 built
With a compact body, ohc twin-carb 972cc engine and close-ratio 'box, the four-seater Nine Sports was competition-orientated; also came as a two-seater and in high-performance Le Mans spec. **Price now** £7500-30,000

ROLLS-ROYCE SILVER CLOUD

The 'best car' of the late '50s and early '60s still looks remarkably affordable

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



The Silver Cloud and Bentley S-series were Rolls-Royce's last 'Standard Steel' saloons built on a separate chassis, with imposing lines that set them apart from normal modes of motoring; they were also the last to have relatively straightforward mechanicals. If you would like to own one of the finest prestige motor cars ever built, they are currently excellent value.

Clouds and S1s went through a time when they were cheap, and many were neglected. Beware: scruffy cars require vast expenditure to sort. Check potential purchases carefully and have a professional inspection if done you are unsure. Take a long test drive and do not be satisfied with anything less than perfect working order. You'll also need to look out for any signs of rot: inspect the front wings and valances around and below the lights; inner and outer arches; bottom of front bulkhead and A-post bases; chassis at body mounts and rear side members (especially near battery); front footwells; inner and outer sills; and boot floor.

Bentley S1s have the ultimate development of Rolls-Royce's overhead-inlet, side-exhaust straight-six, with six instead of four exhaust and inlet ports among numerous tweaks. Long before the Cloud entered production, the firm began developing a new, all-alloy V8: the crucial US market wouldn't accept anything less in a top-line sedan. Without ancillaries, it was 30lb lighter than the old 'six'. Surprisingly, the Silver Cloud wasn't designed with a wide engine bay; the V8 had to be made narrower than the early prototypes and access is still difficult, due to the spark plugs sitting below the exhaust manifolds – they are accessed via removable panels in the wheelarches.

Incredibly, there were no externally visible changes for the V8 model (inside there was just a smaller steering wheel) and this 'sleeper' character gives the Cloud II and S2 a particular charm. The simple expedient of fitting twin headlamps and lowering the grille by 1½in gave the Cloud III/S3 a 1960s feel and a new appeal, aided by a further performance hike.

Alongside the Standard Steel saloons (and LWB models), Britain's coachbuilders produced numerous bodies on Cloud/S-series chassis. They cost much more than ordinary versions, but you might pick up a nice Cloud III/S3 coupé for £60,000 – and it is bound to appreciate.



Four-speed Hydramatic transmission is a little jerky, having a fluid flywheel not a torque converter; check it works in all gears and kicks down promptly



Interior condition really makes the car; hide is relatively easy to have restored, but the wood should all match – and there are many individual pieces





The Cloud I and Cloud II were barely distinguishable from each other (this is a Cloud I); Cloud IIIs got quad headlights





Opulent interior gives the Cloud its character. Air conditioning and electric windows became optional during production, although Rolls-Royce was too conservative to introduce such features as powered seats, which were expected on America's finest. But every component was exquisitely honed, for reliable service and a long life



Look for signs of regular maintenance on both engines. Correct antifreeze is key, as are oil changes: inspect for signs of overheating, plus water/oil leaks. These durable engines do wear out and are costly to rebuild (a secondhand 'six' is c£7800). HD6 carbs on the 'six' and early V8s give better economy, HD8s better performance



Power steering is desirable on S1s, and later standard. Ponderous due to its many turns lock-lock, but something's worn if there is significant free play



Among the best drums around, Cloud brakes will seize if left unused for long periods. The servo (a Hispano-Suiza design) requires specialist maintenance



S1s have a pedal-operated oil-lubrication system: it's prone to blockage when old, leading to rapid suspension wear. Later cars require annual lubrication



Built to last, but prone to fatigue if lubrication is neglected (or blocked), the front suspension can easily run up four-figure bills if it needs to be rebuilt



Cloud leans in bends, with lots of arm-twirling needed for the low-geared steering

Before you buy

In 1955, *The Autocar* wrote: 'The latest model offers a degree of safety, comfort and performance that is beyond the experience and perhaps even the imagination of the majority of the world's motorists.' While that was written in the context of its day, do bear it in mind when test-driving, because not all Silver Clouds drive anything like as well today as they should – and overhauling them to a good standard is not cheap.

Six-cylinder engines should be silky-smooth, smoke-free and reasonably lively; from 1958, they all boasted the ultimate Continental specification offering more performance (at the cost of economy). The V8 with cast-iron liners is immensely torquey, but suffers if it's neglected: get under the car with a good light to inspect the weep holes for each cylinder – if there's water or excessive oil escaping, run away. Minor oil leaks are to be expected, though, especially from around the rear crankshaft thrower.

Cloud Is featured centralised chassis lubrication via a foot pedal; Cloud IIs had individual grease points with annual or 10,000-mile service intervals. An overhaul of the air conditioning can be expensive, so check that the system works and, if not, negotiate the price.

Propshaft vibration is likely to be from the front 'Detroit joint', which is costly to refurbish; GW Autos does a modern prop conversion with a new centre mounting. The drum brakes should be powerful and light to use: if not, start saving.

Upgrades include fuel injection from Classic Restorations (Scotland), modern auto 'boxes (GW Autos), vacuum-servo front discs plus uprated suspension (Flying Spares does a full Harvey Bailey handling kit for £918), and a more efficient gear-reduction starter motor.

OWNING ONE



"My passion for English classic cars started when I was a teenager," explains Rolls-Royce Enthusiasts' Club registrar **Davide Bassoli**. "I believe the Silver Cloud represents the peak of elegance of British saloons from the 1950s and '60s. I bought my first Silver Cloud in 2002, when I was just 29. Since then, I have had several others, including a rare S2 Continental HJ Mulliner Flying Spur. I prefer the refined and smooth six-cylinder engine to the more powerful V8.

"I like the feeling of driving a car with a separate chassis, crossplies and a huge steering wheel, which requires attention in the turns but gives a lot of satisfaction. The Silver Cloud is the best compromise in enjoying the pleasure of driving a classic in modern traffic. I'm working on a definitive book about all the models."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1955 Silver Cloud (2361 built), Bentley S (3108) and 178bhp Continental (432)
1956 Power steering and boot-mounted air-con added as options
1957 LWB versions added, bodies chopped by Park Ward; Continental engine standard
1959 Silver Cloud II (2717), S2 (1920) and Continental (388): 6.2-litre V8, c200bhp, c325lb ft, power steering, new ventilation system with optional air-con behind dash
1962 Silver Cloud III (2810), S3 (1318) and Continental (311): four headlamps in new wings, interior improvements include separate front seats, engine uprated
1965 Standard Steel production ends
1966 Final Continentals delivered

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1955-'65/15,365
Construction steel box-frame chassis, steel (or coachbuilt) body, aluminium doors, bonnet and bootlid
Engine iron-block, alloy-head, overhead-inlet, side-exhaust 4887cc 'six', twin SU HD6/8 carbs; or all-alloy, ohv 6230cc V8
Max power not quoted (c157-215bhp)
Max torque not quoted
Transmission four-speed auto, RWD (four-speed manual option, 1955-'57 Bentleys)
Suspension: front independent, by double wishbones, coil springs, anti-roll bar
rear live axle, semi-elliptic springs, 'Z-bar' radius arm; lever-arm dampers f/r
Steering cam and roller, optional Marles assistance (later standard)
Brakes drums, with friction servo
Length 17ft 8in-18ft (5395-5480mm)
Width 6ft 2½in (1892mm)
Height 5ft 4¼in (1630mm)
Wheelbase 10ft 3-7in (3124-3226mm)
Weight 4480-4650lb (2032-2184kg)
0-60mph 13.5-10.1 secs
Top speed 103-114mph **Mpg** 10-19
Price new £5802 (Silver Cloud II, 1960)

CLUBS

Rolls-Royce Enthusiasts' Club rrec.org.uk
Bentley Drivers Club bdcl.org

SPECIALISTS

Flying Spares flyingspares.com **Harvey Wash** harveywashltd.co.uk **The Real Car Co** realcar.co.uk **Classic Restorations (Scotland)** classicrestorations.co.uk **IntroCar** introcar.com **P&A Wood** pa-wood.co.uk **Ristes Motor Co** ristesmotors.co.uk **Ghost Motors** ghostmotors.co.uk **Ranmore** rsande.co.uk **N Sandell** nsandell.com **Frank Dale** frankdale.com **GW Autos** gwautos.com

WHAT TO PAY*

	Resto/Average/Show
Cloud I, II, S1, S2	£8000/17,500/45,000
Bentley S3	£10,000/22,500/50,000
Cloud III	£15,000/27,500/60,000

*PRICES FOR STANDARD STEEL BODIES – COACHBUILT CONSIDERABLY MORE

OUR VERDICT

All models have their own appeal, so decide which one suits you best before buying. Corrosion is the biggest enemy of these cars, closely followed by lax maintenance. Go for one that's had money spent on it over recent years – the more the better – and cherish it in the same way. It should then become a faithful friend that will outlive you before it lets you down.

FOR
The 'best car in the world' in its day; relatively affordable in standard form; exceptionally durable; keeps up with modern traffic

AGAINST
Lots of steel to rot; a 'bargain' can rapidly become very expensive; won't fit most domestic garages



ALTERNATIVES



CADILLAC FLEETWOOD
1955-'65, c205,000 built
Regularly updated before, during and after the Cloud's lifetime, Cadillac's top-line sedan/limo offered a wealth of luxury features. UK-listed, but few were sold: you're better off finding a dry-state US car. **Price now** £14-40,000



MERCEDES-BENZ 300-300D
1951-'62, 10,323 built
Solid, staid-looking and very well built. Fuel injection from 1957 helped the 300 keep up with the Cloud. Rust and parts prices can be similarly excessive, but a fine automobile if properly maintained. **Price now** £18-65,000

ROOTES AUDAX FAMILY

Well-built and reliable, these underrated Coventry compacts make supremely usable classics

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



Styled by Raymond Loewy, the Rootes Group's new Audax range burst on to the market in 1955. The post-war restrictions were easing, America was dragging the world into a fresh boom and this new monocoque family-car range was right up to the minute. The first model to be launched was the stylish, pillarless two-door Sunbeam Rapier. The more sedate Hillman Minx saloon and convertible followed in May 1956, then in October the luxurious Singer Gazelle joined the fold in saloon and soft-top forms. The five-door estate versions of the Minx and Gazelle arrived in 1957, followed by the short-wheelbase Hillman Husky estate and Commer Cob van in 1958.

If you're thinking of buying one, it's worth examining the myriad options available before deciding which version would suit you best. The early, single-carburettor cars are relatively gutless and overdrive – an option on Gazelles and Rapiers – is a big plus if you'll be doing much motorway driving. The 1725cc models (from September '65) feel more modern, with lighter controls, an alternator and a smoother engine, but they don't rev as freely.

Rootes offered interesting transmission options, but they can be difficult and costly to repair. First there was the Manumatic – an automatic clutch triggered electrically from the column lever, working with the standard 'box. The Easidrive was the first fully automatic transmission fitted to a sub-1500cc British car; its clever system used magnetic steel-powder couplings operated by relays and solenoids, which suffer from damp and lack of use. Finally, the ubiquitous Borg-Warner 35 auto was offered, which is durable and cheap to fix.

Rust is the most significant problem, though these cars were not as rot-prone as many contemporaries. Past repairs may have been done on a budget: for example, if you want a concours Rapier, check that the sill line is correct – it should rise gently towards the rear, whereas most replacement panels are straight.

Areas to check include the grille; front wings around the lights and rear vertical edge, plus inners; floors and chassis crossmembers, and cross-bracing under convertibles; sills (a full outer panel is £256); door bottoms; rear spring hangers; rear wings, especially the arches and bottom edges; boot floor, in particular at the corners/seams; and rear panel and valance.



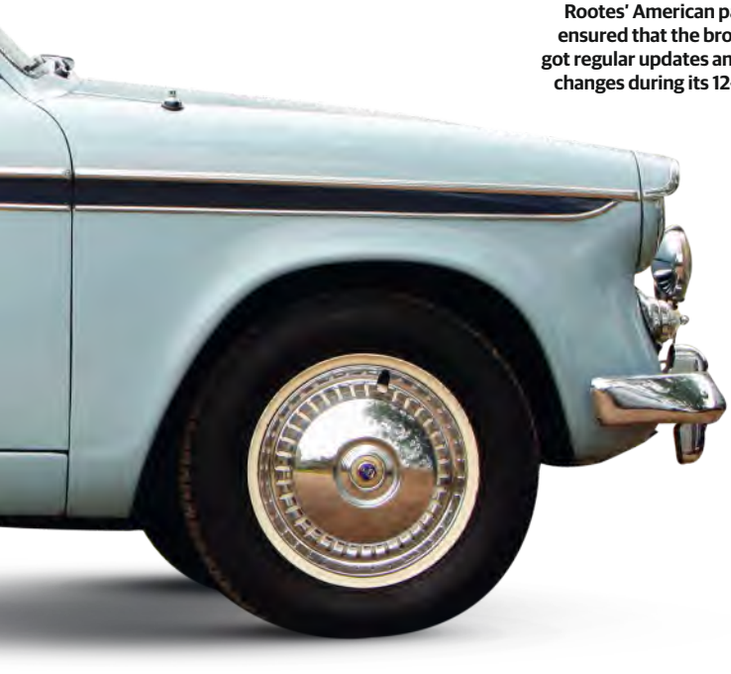
Rootes pioneered moulded plastics for dash/door tops; it rarely survives well. Fully working instruments/switches are a bonus; overdrive switch is hard to find



Four-speed manual 'box, with synchro on first from '64 and optional overdrive on some models, is strong. Check for worn synchros and rumbling bearings



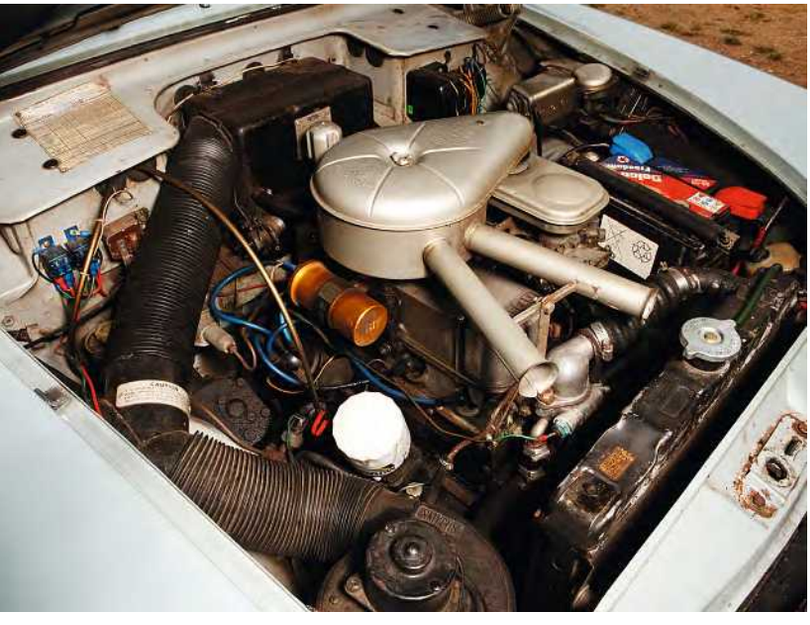




Rootes' American parentage ensured that the broad range got regular updates and engine changes during its 12-year run



Sporty Rapier and Gazelle had more gauges in nicely appointed cabins with wood-veneer dashboards. All, though, are practical and usable, with decent room for four, comfy seats and ride, a large boot and acceptable performance, though you'll need a Rapier (or twin-carb MkIIIA Gazelle) if you want to do well in historic competition



Robust and simple to maintain, the four-cylinder engines were all cast-iron except for Rapiers from 1959, whose alloy head boosts performance but corrodes if not properly maintained. Tired units will be smoky, rattly and leak oil; look for signs of overheating and gasket leakage, notably with alloy heads. A rebuild costs £3-4000



Worn carbs cause poor running/high consumption. Rapiers had twin Zeniths from '56, Gazelles in '59-'60. Alexander Engineering offered a conversion



Trim changed often over the years, so check that the car has a complete set of the correct items for the model/year. Secondhand pieces are getting scarce



These cars need proper servicing: 23 grease points every 1000 miles to '63. If neglected, suspension wears quickly (steering will be stiff). Parts are available



Chrome detailing altered often during production. It is prone to corrosion, replacements are hard to find and repro parts, where they exist, may not fit well

"I would always go for one with overdrive, because it makes a big difference on longer journeys"



Stylish Rapier has a strong competition pedigree and can easily handle more power

Before you buy

All of these cars are a pleasure to drive, with comfortable seating (some early models had a front bench), eager four-cylinder engines and a good ride from the double-wishbone independent front end, though inevitably at their age they roll a bit and the live rear axle may hop on bumpy corners. Performance steadily improved and a single-carb SI Rapier, Minx or Gazelle is only for those who appreciate relaxed, steady progress.

If originality is important to you – and it is becoming increasingly sought-after, influencing prices – then it is crucial to check exactly what motor is fitted: many cars will have been uprated with later, more powerful units, right up to the 1725cc Holbay engine from fastback Rapiers. The earliest 1390cc units had white-metal bearings and are more costly to rebuild; Rootes' 1494cc 'four' was introduced from February 1958. Rapiers from the Series III on had an alloy head that boosted performance, but it can suffer gasket failure. Engines are durable if well maintained: listen for rattles and look for excessive breathing, oil leaks and smoke, and for signs of overheating or head-gasket trouble.

Gearboxes (with a column change on most early models, a floor change later) last well, too. Bearing rumbles that disappear when you dip the clutch in neutral are a signal that a rebuild is imminent. Check the synchromesh works – from September 1964 it was fitted on first gear as well.

The drum brakes are effective enough if properly set up (all models had front discs by August 1963), and all of the parts are available. Steering boxes can suffer and suspension will get stiff and wear if they are not lubricated frequently, spoiling the driving experience.

OWNING ONE



"I have owned Sunbeam Rapiers since I was 23 and I don't think I'll ever be without one," muses **John Lockyer**. "In 28 years I've bought five and sold three, and must have driven 80-90,000 miles in them. I first saw this Series III in the 1980s when it was a concours-winner, and I bought it 12 years later, after co-driving in it on the Pirelli Classic Marathons, the Monte-Carlo Challenge and other rallies. It was resprayed and retired after the 1993 Monte. The engine has been tuned and has a four-branch manifold, and it has a Series III Alpine close-ratio 'box. It zips along and will sit at the legal limit all day without strain. I'd always go for one with overdrive, because it makes a big difference on longer journeys. It's comfortable and, in all these years, it has never broken down irretrievably."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1955 Rapier launched
1956 Minx saloon/convertible; Gazelle saloon/convertible arrives: 1497cc Singer ohc engine; Rapier gets twin carbs
1957 Minx estate; Minx SII: new grille, Manumatic option, floor change on Special; Gazelle MkII: estate and overdrive options
1958 Husky estate and Commer Cob van: 40bhp, 69mph; Rapier SII; Gazelle MkIIA (Rootes engine); Minx SIII Gazelle MkIII
1959 Rapier SIII: alloy head, front discs, close-ratio 'box; Minx SIIIA: Easidrive auto option; Gazelle MkIIIA: twin Zeniths
1960 Husky SII; Minx SIIIB; Gazelle MkIIIB
1961 Rapier SIIIA: 1592cc, thicker anti-roll bar; Minx SIIIC/Gazelle MkIIIC: 1592cc
1963 Minx SV/Gazelle MkV: BW auto option; Rapier SIV: twin-choke Solex
1965 Rapier SV, Minx SVI & Gazelle MkVI
1967 Rapier, Minx and Gazelle end

FACTFILE

Sold/no built 1955-'67/Minx 700,000+, Gazelle 83,061, Rapier 68,809
Construction steel monocoque
Engine all-iron or iron/alloy, ohv 1390/1494/1592/1725cc 'four', single-twin Solex/Zenith **Max power** 47½bhp @ 4600rpm to 85bhp @ 5500rpm **Max torque** 70lb ft @ 2400rpm to 99lb ft @ 3500rpm **Transmission** four-speed manual/Manumatic or three-speed auto, RWD **Suspension: front** independent, by wishbones, coils, anti-roll bar **rear** live axle, semi-elliptics; telescopic dampers f/r
Steering worm and nut/recirculating ball
Brakes drums f/r (later front discs; servo)
Length 12ft 5½-13ft 6½in (3797-4128mm)
Width 5ft ¼in (1543mm) **Height** 4ft 10in-5ft 1in (1473-1549mm) **Wheelbase** 7ft 2in-8ft (2184-2438mm) **Weight** 2080-2352lb (945-1069kg) **0-60mph** 27.7-14.1 secs
Top speed 77-95mph **Mpg** 22-35
Price new £722-1042 (1960)

CLUBS

Singer Motor Club singermc.club **Singer Owners' Club** singerownersclub.co.uk
Hillman OC hillmanownersclub.co.uk
Sunbeam Rapier OC sunbeamrapier.com

SPECIALISTS

Macs Factors macsfactors.co.uk **Alpine West Midlands** sunbeam-alpine.co.uk
Kip Motor Co kipmotor.com **Elliotts Restoration** elliottsrestoration.co.uk
Sunbeam Spares sunbeamspares.com
Rootes Parts rootesparts.com **Forest Custom and Classics** forestcustom.co.uk

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
Minx	£400/2500/10,000
Gazelle	£1000/3500/15,000
Rapier	£1500/6000/20,000
Convertibles	£1500/5500/17,500
Husky, Cob	£1000/4000/12,000

OUR VERDICT

The Hillman Minx, Husky and Singer Gazelle are cheap, so it is definitely worth buying the best, most original and complete example that you can find. Estates are super-rare, so if you want one you may have little choice. Sunbeam Rapiers (and all soft-top variants) are priced higher, but are still good value for what they offer against their contemporaries – and Rapiers make excellent historic rally cars.

FOR
All models are still eminently usable today; comfortable seats and ride; good availability of mechanical parts; fine value for money

AGAINST
Sluggish performance from early/lesser models; rust can be extensive, and costly to put right; some trim parts are difficult to find



ALTERNATIVES



BORGWARD ISABELLA
1954-'61, 202,861 built
Offered as saloon, estate, coupé and cabrio, the pretty Isabella was a success, with good performance from the TS. Rot and parts supply are the enemies. **Price now** £1500-35,000



PEUGEOT 403
1955-'67, 1,214,121 built
Offered worldwide, outselling the Audax, with petrol or diesel engines. Well engineered, with neat Farina styling for saloon, estate, drop-top and two-door. **Price now** £1500-60,000

ROVER P4

Despite its staid image, the 'Auntie' Rover is a practical and satisfying saloon to own

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



The Rover P4 is now seen as old-fashioned, but when it was launched in 1949 the marque was an innovator that had just introduced the Land-Rover and was experimenting with gas turbines. The new car's advanced specification included independent front suspension by wishbones, telescopic dampers all round and a transmission freewheel (for clutchless gearchanging). The styling was up-to-the-minute and the overhead-inlet, side-exhaust layout separated the carbs from the heat of the exhaust and gave efficient crossflow breathing.

The bewildering array of P4 model numbers is easily understood, because each represents the power of its engine (though some give a bit more) and indicates its place in the hierarchy.

During the Rover's 14-year production life, it moved steadily towards the 'retired bank manager' market; combined with progressive durability improvements, this helped later models to survive exceptionally well. The downside of that durability is that examples that have endured decades of neglect will be costly to sort. They prefer not to be hustled, though run-out models – notably 110s – have decent acceleration and a stiffer front anti-roll bar will reduce the strong understeer endemic to the 'sixes'. The 80 handles best, compensating for its rougher (Land-Rover) engine.

The full-length chassis is extremely strong and (until March 1963) an aluminium bonnet, doors and bootlid reduce visible rust – though they can corrode, too. However, hidden rot can be extensive and complex to rectify, especially at the bottom of the bulkhead where it meets the A-posts, inner wings and handbrake box; the area around the B-posts; and the rear wheelarch/door-hinge pillars. With all cars now MoT-exempt in the UK, take care when checking for rust. Inspect the front apron; wings around the indicators and headlights, rear edges and to the rear of the front wheel; chassis by the steering idler, over the axle, behind bump-stops and all six outriggers, especially the offside front; roof guttering; door bottoms on the 95/110; sills; body mounts; rear wings around wheelarches and fuel filler; boot-floor corners; and valances.

Parts availability is very good – both new and secondhand – although unique components found on early cars are inevitably hard to find.



Listen for worn synchros; dip the clutch in neutral – if noise reduces, bearings are worn and a rebuild is due. Early cars had freewheel, most later had overdrive



All have leather trim: patterns varied and a front bench was standard until late. Undamaged original seat sets are rare and skilled retrimming is costly







Avoid cars with cracked windscreens or poor seals because replacing them is difficult



The beautifully crafted interior is one of the P4's finest attributes. It also featured advancements such as column-stalk switchgear and childproof locks – the latter a wise innovation on its rear-hinged back doors. Earlier examples are much rarer, but all versions are highly practical, comfortable, refined and relaxing to drive



Look for excessive oil breathing (blue smoke on the overrun suggests worn valve-stem seals and guides) and leaks. Listen for rattles (notably on pre-'60 units prone to cam/follower wear, which reduces performance) and rumbles indicating bottom-end wear. Check for oil/water mixing and overheating that can distort the alloy head



Kingpins must be oiled, not greased; suspension-bush fatigue gives poor directional ability. The steering box and its idler wear: watch for excessive play



P4s came with matching wood trim, but may have been swapped over the years: a full factory set in good order is highly desirable. Look for rot/damage



Servo was optional from 1955. New Lockheed ones are available. Brakes should feel powerful: if not, seized calipers and wheel cylinders are likely



Inspect for weak rear leaf springs and unwinding front coils (low rear, high front). Most now use radial tyres, which make steering heavy at parking speeds



Classless and finely constructed 'Auntie' Rover will fit in at any classic-car gathering

Before you buy

The 95, 100 and 110 have the strongest engine, with a seven-bearing crank plus roller rockers to minimise cam/follower wear, a weakness on pre-1960 units. The 2013cc engines up to 1954 have white-metal bearings and bypass filtration, meaning a shorter life and higher rebuild costs. With the 90 came siamesed bores and smaller bottom-end bearings, which were standardised across the range. They require oil changes at least every 3000 miles to guarantee long life and tolerate unleaded fuel, though some will need the ignition retarded.

An overdrive-equipped Rover P4 – or a non-overdrive car with the high, 3.9:1 rear axle ratio, as on all 95s and optional earlier – will cruise all day at 70mph-plus, quite quietly if the window and door seals are still sound. The 60, though charming, feels underpowered. The 90 is the best low-indicator model, while the 105 and 105S blend its features with higher indicators and more power. The 100 has chrome-rimmed instruments and alloy panels, plus the stronger engine, so is the most sought-after late model, but the 110 is notably quicker.

All P4s are prone to understeer, but they should handle tidily enough and the steering should be light on the move. Vague, wallowy progress suggests wear in the steering box and/or the front suspension, both costly if full rebuilds are needed. There are 1½ tons to stop, so the brakes need to be in tip-top fettle. With discs (from 1959) came dished wheels and a wider rear axle, along with a lower-ratio steering box from 1960. P4s were constantly developed, so parts are not as interchangeable as you might expect. The steering is heavy on radials, making electric assistance a worthwhile (if costly) modification.

OWNING ONE



"Why did I buy a P4?" laughs retired air-traffic controller **Sam Parkin**. "Because it was there! I found it by chance in a scrapyard in 2001, and realised that it was far too good to be there, with a lovely original interior, just two owners and full history. It was very rusty around the wheelarches; I did all the restoration work, including an engine rebuild, except for the final painting – and I have driven it 15,000 miles since.

"I bought and sold a few Rover P4s back in the 1970s when I was still in the Royal Air Force – starting with a 100 that I bought for £60, cleaned up and polished, then moved on for £160 – and this car takes me back to my early driving days. I have had a lot of fun out of it and have met a whole new bunch of interesting people through the Rover P4 Drivers' Guild."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1949 P4 75 introduced: 2103cc IoE 'six'
1952 'Cyclops' central headlight deleted, new front-end design, wider back window, more rear room
1953 Four-cylinder 1997cc 60 and 2638cc 'six' 90 (both on single SU); floor change replaces column; 90 has wider front brakes
1955 Rear squared up with larger back window, lights and boot; servo and overdrive optional
1956 Individual front seats optional
1957 108bhp, twin-carb 105S (high compression) and 105R (Roverdrive) added; both have servo brakes
1958 105R dropped, 105S becomes 105
1959 77bhp 2.2 ohv 'four' 80 and 104bhp 2625cc 'six' 100 only; overdrive standard
1962 95 (102bhp, no o/d) replaces 80; 110 (P5-derived Weslake head) replaces 100
1964 Production ends

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1949-'64/130,342
Construction steel chassis, steel body with aluminium/steel panels
Engine iron-block, alloy-head, IoE 2103/2230/2638/2625cc 'six', twin/single SU H4/H6/HD8 carbs; IoE 1997cc 'four', SU H4; or all-iron, ohv 2286cc 'four', single Solex
Max power 60bhp @ 4000rpm to 123bhp @ 5000rpm **Max torque** 101lb ft @ 2000rpm to 152lb ft @ 2500rpm
Transmission four-speed manual with freewheel or overdive, or two-speed auto with overdrive, RWD
Suspension: front independent, by wishbones, coil springs, anti-roll bar **rear** live axle, semi-elliptic springs; telescopic dampers f/r; 1949-'52 rear Panhard rod
Steering Burman recirculating ball
Brakes drums (1949-'50 mechanical rear; front discs from '59) **Length** 14ft 10in (4520mm) **Width** 5ft 6in (1675mm)
Height 5ft 4in (1625mm)
Wheelbase 9ft 3in (2820mm)
Weight 3106-3382lb (1412-1537kg)
0-60mph 23.2-15.9 secs
Top speed 77-100mph **Mpg** 18-29
Price new £1298-1696 (60-105R, 1956)

CLUBS

Rover P4 Drivers' Guild roverp4dg.org.uk
Rover Sports Register thersr.co.uk

SPECIALISTS

John Wearing johnwearingp4parts.co.uk
JR Wadhams jrwadhams.co.uk
Barry Kent barry@oreganouk.plus.com
Richard's Rovers roverp4parts.co.uk
Adrian Bailey Classics roverland.eu
Stone Classic Cars stoneclassiccars.co.uk

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
Four-cylinders	£750/3750/10,000
Six-cylinders	£1000/5000/15,000

OUR VERDICT

Find a really good Rover P4 and you really can't go wrong. It will cosset you in traditional British wood and leather, offering armchair comfort and a relaxed driving experience from another age. P4s offer outstanding value for money – with prices held down by the cars' strong survival rate – but they offer timeless, lasting quality, wide recognition and you are unlikely to lose money. Just be wary of rot and neglect.

FOR
Exceptional durability, especially late models; comfortable, refined and practical; good parts availability; great value for money

AGAINST
Some body corrosion is costly to fix; heavy, so can be thirsty; early four-cylinder and rare Roverdrive automatic versions feel sluggish



ALTERNATIVES



DAIMLER CONQUEST/CENTURY
1953-'58, 9739 built
Traditional British styling and a standard 75bhp from the 2.4-litre 'six', 90bhp on the Century. An obvious P4 rival, but it failed to catch on and, with many rust traps in the pressed steel body, few remain. **Price now** £250-7500



HUMBER HAWK/SUPER SNIPE
1949-'67, 165,561 built
Transatlantic styling came to Humber in 1949, but sidevalve units made it sluggish until the overhead-valve 4.2-litre 'six' and 2.3-litre 'four' arrived in 1953; the 3-litre 'six' from 1960 was best of all. **Price now** £750-15,000

SUNBEAM-TALBOT

Traditional and elegant yet capable of remarkable rallying results, this fine post-war thoroughbred deserves wider appreciation

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



Full marks to Rootes for rushing out a modern-looking car after the war that didn't slavishly follow transatlantic trends. At least, not on the outside. While the Sunbeam-Talbot 80/90's 'Streamstyle' body, complete with curved 'screens, was the work of an Englishman, Raymond Loewy's London studio influenced the interior design.

But styling is skin deep. Materials were in short supply and the country was crying out for cars to export – so while it had to keep pace with design, there simply wasn't the time or money to change everything. Consequently, these gloriously swoopy-looking cars started with a beam axle and cart springs at the front – probably the last new car design to have them – mounted on a traditional, square-tube ladder chassis that made the car narrow.

The convertible was a proper drophead that could be set in the Coupé de Ville position: its body was made by Thrupp & Maberly. With its stiffened chassis and extra length, the dollar-hunting Alpine 'sports' model was actually heavier than the saloon and drophead; despite its beauty, it did not sell well.

Advanced features included the move to overhead valves (a Rootes first) as well as the four-speed, column-change gearbox. The cars also boasted an automatic choke and door-top-button internal locks, plus instruments marked in metric and imperial. The 80 was expensive and quite heavy for a 1200cc car at the time, so it found few buyers and was soon phased out. It's sluggish by modern standards, which is fine if you want a relaxed cruiser, but a 90 is a better bet if you want to keep up with traffic and maybe take part in occasional competition.

Rally success began with a Coupe des Alpes and a class win in 1948. Highlights included second on the 1952 Rallye Monte-Carlo, two team prizes and three Coupes des Alpes on the '52 Alpine, another four Coupes in '53 and the Alpine Gold Cup in '54. Per Malling and Gunnar Fadum won outright on the '55 Monte.

Rot is the killer, so inspect carefully. Start with the front valance to wing join, then inner/outer wings, particularly in the rear corners. Sills and footwells are also susceptible, along with door bottoms; front chassis mounts; rear spring hangers; rear inner arches; chassis main rails under the back axle; top of the petrol tank; base of the rear wings; and boot floor.



Luxurious trim isn't cheap to renovate due to the cost of leather and labour involved, but it's straightforward for a professional upholsterer to recreate



The gearbox is the car's Achilles' heel. Column change was standard, but floor shifts were popular, via a kit offered by Castles. Overdrive was optional on MkIII







Sunbeam-Talbots were offered in a stunning range of 'Metachrome' metallic-paint finishes



This lively, late-model MkIII dhc handles well and is fun to drive. A sign of the times was that the sunroof was standard on saloons, but a heater was optional. It was a worthwhile accessory, though, being unusually powerful for its time. Full toolkits were fitted, both in the bootlid and on the scuttle, or in a cubby in the front footwell



Engines are simple, sturdy and long-lived if regularly serviced, but oil leaks can be an issue. Seven-port heads (on all cars pre-MkIII/Alpine) are liable to crack around cylinders two and three, into the exhaust valve seats; check for poor running and/or overheating or water loss. The eight-port (as here, check inlet manifold) is stronger



A Zenith carb was used throughout, growing in size up to the Alpine Special, which had a twin-choke version. Spares are available and a full rebuild is c£250



The steering ratio was progressively tightened during production; early cars can be updated to a later spec. A worn steering box can be rebuilt for c£400



Maintenance is key to long suspension life – look out for recent lubrication. Inspect the rear dampers for leaks; they can be reconditioned for c£100 each



Crownwheel carrier is prone to cracks, exacerbated by rough gearshifts: best to match revs when changing down. A rebuild can be £2k+ including parts



Elegant soft-top version was coachbuilt by Thrupp & Maberly, with a three-position hood. Spare lives in a neat slot behind the folding numberplate panel

Before you buy

Early cars with beam front axles are not particularly wieldy, but the independent front end and anti-roll bar that arrived with the MkII transformed the car into a chuckable and forgiving performer. It pulverised the opposition when driven by Stirling Moss on ice on the 1952 Rallye Monte-Carlo. If it feels wayward and unpredictable, new swivels, joints and bushes are probably needed.

The engines are straightforward, but parts for them are now getting scarce – 80 manifold gaskets, for example, are unobtainable, plus main bearings and pistons are hard to find. Excessive oil leaks and breathing, rattles and knocks are the usual signs of a tired unit, as well as the head-cracking issues. The head can be welded – at a price – if you can't track down a good secondhand one. Hartwell tuning kits offered up to 84bhp with twin carbs, close-ratio gears, stiffer springs, uprated dampers and brake linings, plus various trim and coachwork modifications. The factory Alpine Special was even more powerful.

The gearbox is the weak link of these cars, struggling to cope with the extra power of the later models. The layshaft cluster is prone to wear and can break up, the teeth getting chewed off or badly pitted. If it's noisy, budget £1000-plus (£1750 with overdrive). A popular alternative (requiring modified parts) is to switch to the excellent Hillman Hunter floor-change unit with overdrive.

Some examples have been converted to power steering and front disc brakes, although the standard specification is adequate if it's well maintained.

The Drophead's hood is complex and thus costly to rebuild, especially if the wooden frame is rotten, which adds c£1000 to the refurbishment cost.

OWNING ONE



Roy Reynolds was looking for a four-seater convertible that would keep up with modern traffic when he came across this rare MkIII dhc: "It had been given a 12-year restoration by the previous owner, who had rescued it from a scrapyard in 1979, but the paint wasn't right so I stripped it totally, analysed the original shade and had it resprayed. I bought three hides and re-did the leather. There was enough left for the door cards so I did those, too. I try to keep it to the original style; it has the optional Castles floor change, heater, overriders, overdrive and a badge bar. I've had the gearbox apart and put it back together properly. This year I fitted new springs on the rear; last year it had a new clutch and a windscreen. We do 3000 miles a year: it's been to France and Spain several times."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1948 80 and 90 saloon, plus dhc launched
1950 80 (3500 built) and 90 (4000) replaced by 2267cc 90 MkII: cruciform chassis bracing, independent front end, anti-roll bar, higher lamps, taller diff ratio
1951 Water temperature gauge, clock moves to above 'screen; Hartwell builds two-seater Sports Special
1952 Hartwell tuning kits introduced; MkIIA: wider brakes, ventilated wheels, spats deleted
1953 80bhp two-seater Alpine introduced, with stiffer chassis and suspension; saloon and dhc get high-compression head, 77bhp
1954 Alpine Special: twin-choke carb, 97.5bhp, 0-60mph 16.8 secs, 104mph (90 built); Sunbeam MkIII: eight-port head, bigger inlet valves, manual choke, two-speed wipers, overdrive optional; dhc build ends, followed by Alpine (1582 built)
1955 Two-tone paint available on saloon
1956 Saloon production ends
1957 Castles offers tuned MkIIIS with floor change, overdrive, Halda Speedpilot

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1948-'56/29,139
Construction steel chassis, steel body
Engine all-iron, ohv 1185/1944/2267cc 'four', single Zenith carburettor
Max power 47bhp @ 4800rpm to 80bhp @ 4200rpm **Max torque** 61lb ft @ 3000rpm to 124lb ft @ 1800rpm
Transmission four-speed, three-synchromesh manual, RWD
Suspension: front beam axle (MkI) or double wishbones, coil springs **rear** live axle, semi-elliptic springs (Panhard rod from MkII); lever-arm dampers f/r
Steering Burman Douglas worm and nut
Brakes Lockheed hydraulic drums
Length 13ft 11½in-14ft ¼in (4255-4274mm)
Width 5ft 2½in (1588mm)
Height 4ft 8in-5ft ¾in (1422-1543mm)
Wheelbase 8ft 1½in (2477mm)
Weight 2604-2968lb (1182-1347kg)
0-60mph 31.4-18.4 secs
Top speed 74-96mph **Mpg** 20-36
Price new £1347/1394 (saloon/dhc, 1952)

CLUB

Sunbeam-Talbot Alpine Register
sunbeamtalbotalpineregister.com

SPECIALISTS

Sunbeam-Talbot Spares
sunbeam-talbot-spares.co.uk
Kip Motor Co kipmotor.com
Graham Brooks 01362 688371
Rootes Parts rootesparts.com

WHAT TO PAY*

	Resto/Average/Show
90 saloon, MkIII	£1000/3750/12,000
90 dhc	£4000/9000/20,000
Alpine	£7500/35,000/55,000

*RARE 80 WORTH MARGINALLY LESS THAN 90

OUR VERDICT

Attractive, remarkably practical for their age and luxuriously appointed inside, these cars now offer excellent value for money, especially in saloon form. Check carefully for disguised rust and for a worn or damaged engine, gearbox and rear axle if you want to avoid costly restoration work. Find an excellent example and cherish it, and it will be sure to give you many decades of charm and driving pleasure.

FOR
Curvaceous styling; fantastic rally history; comfortable and easy to drive; good performance from 90 models

AGAINST
Limited parts availability; restoration costs outweigh value of saloons; sluggish acceleration of underpowered 80; beam front axle on MkIs



ALTERNATIVES



RILEY RM
1946-'55, 22,909 built
First out after WW2, the traditional-looking RM scored with its superb high-cam engine and torsion-bar front end; 1½-litre was livelier than 80, and 2½ than 90. Soft-top models are now highly valued. **Price now** £1-35,000

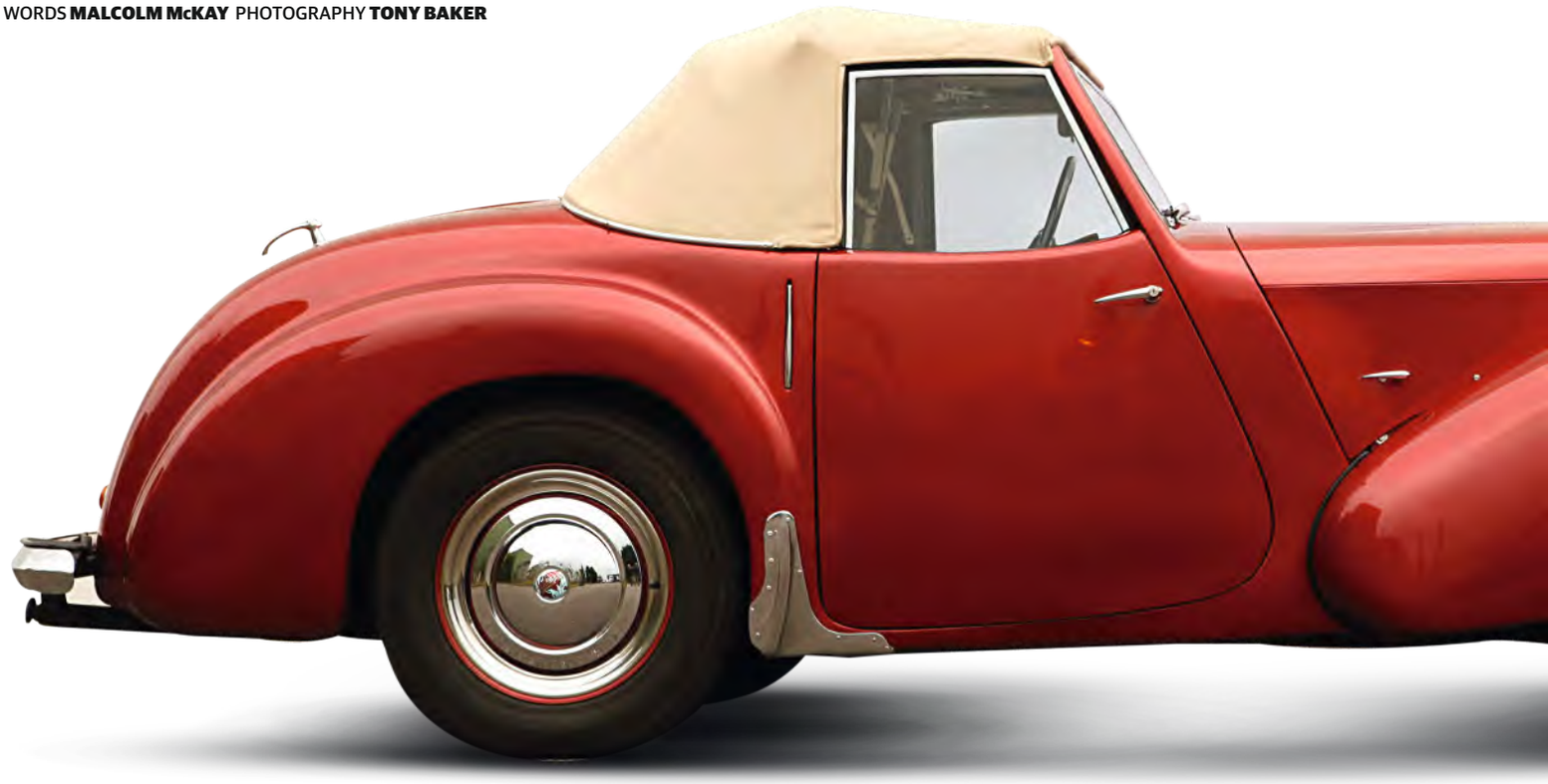


WOLSELEY 4/50 & 6/80
1948-'54, 34,206 built
'Big Minor' styling wasn't as elegant as the Sunbeam, but unitary build and torsion-bar front suspension helped these cars make the most of their 1.5- and 2.2-litre ohc units. Rare, but good value. **Price now** £1-10,000

TRIUMPH ROADSTER

The first of a brilliant post-war sporting line, the Roadster is a fascinating blend of old and new

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



The Roadster was Standard-Triumph boss Sir John Black's first attempt at a 'world car' to generate export sales (and cash) in the post-war years of desperate shortages. It was a peculiar mixture: the last production car with a dickey seat, but also the first regular British model with metallic paint and one of the earliest to feature a manual column change.

The styling was an amalgam of '30s trends – perhaps because the front end was styled by Frank Callaby and the back by Arthur Ballard. The mechanicals were also an odd fusion – an engine developed from pre-war Standard units modified for SS Jaguars, independent front suspension with a transverse leaf spring, plus powerful, self-adjusting Girling drums of a type only used by Triumph and early Land-Rovers.

Standard-Triumph's war aircraft production inspired the choice of 3½in round tubes for the ladder chassis and a Birmabright aluminium-alloy body. The compound-curved dickey-seat windows were reputedly aviation surplus, while the front wings – resembling aircraft nacelles – took two men two weeks to make.

The launch colours were dark metallic grey, maroon or black, with blue, red or beige trim and a black, grey or fawn hood. More were added, including metallic blue, green and gold. The 2000 came in Lumina shades of green, grey or Champagne, with green, red, rust or grey trim and a Champagne, green or grey top.

The condition of the wood is critical, because full replacement is costly. Check the A-posts, 'screen frame, sill rockers, rear body frame, and door/bootlid frames. The B-posts, too, are wood, but with a steel strip attached, around which alloy is folded. As for the steel elements, inspect the chassis crossmember under the radiator and main rails, notably the 'sledge' stiffeners; jacking points under the bumpers, front and rear; and inner and outer wings. Check, too, for cracks in alloy door skins.

Black wanted the Roadster modernised and Americanised. The streamlined TRX of 1950 was a 2000-derived concoction, with twin SU carbs and 71bhp giving a claimed 90mph. The three-abreast cabin had a hydraulically operated hood, with the windows, bench seat, aerial and lamp covers also powered. Unlike Austin with the Atlantic, Black saw the error of his ways before putting the car into production.



If lined mohair hood is not easy to put up and down, its springs may be seized or broken. Leaks at 'screen frame have been solved by fitting a leather seal



Fold the dickey seats away and the boot is large; raise them and there's room for five adults – as long as it's dry! Make sure all parts are present and correct







The Triumph Roadster Club does a great job of making sure that most key spares are available



Roadster seats three up front in luxuriously appointed cabin, plus two in the dickey. Other novelties included individually controlled triple wipers, a reversing light and a telescopic fuel filler hidden under the flap; but the only heater was an optional 'fug-stirrer'. Body frame is ash – and other timbers when ash was in short supply



The 1800 engine is particularly labour-intensive to rebuild; the Vanguard is simpler (and easily uprated to TR2-4 spec). Check for head-gasket leaks – oil in the water, water in the oil, water blown out – and signs of overheating. Listen out for knocks or rumbles from the bottom end, and check for healthy oil pressure at speed when hot



Leather trim (even door panels) is plush and comfortable; if driver's seat seems low, it can be rebuilt with new springs. A retrim is costly, but straightforward



Column shift isn't as precise as a floor change, but shouldn't be too difficult to use. Check for gearbox noise, leaks and weak synchro; 1800 parts are scarce



Front suspension is sturdy and should give good ride and handling, but needs lubrication every 1000 miles. Thumps, rattles or wandering indicate wear



The brakes should be superb but rarely are: they need precise adjustment of the correct springs and shoes – not Land-Rover items, even though they fit



The Roadster isn't sporty, but it makes a marvellous tourer

Before you buy

Based on Standard's pre-WW2 12/14hp sidevalve engine, the 1800 motor was bored to its limits and converted to overhead valves, leading to a tendency to blow head gaskets – inspect for the usual telltales of oil and water mixing or signs of water being pushed out of the overflow under load. An additional expansion/overflow bottle is not a bad sign, but a useful addition. Otherwise, the engine is sturdy and needs only the normal assessments for wear, such as excessive oil breathing and knocks. It is costly to rebuild, though most items are available.

The Standard Vanguard 'four' is better supported parts-wise and easily uprated. If that has been done, hopefully a higher axle ratio, overdrive or four-speed 'box has been fitted, too. Oil leaks from the engine, gearbox and diff are not unusual: check they're not too bad. Water in the oil on 2000s may be failing wet-liner seals.

Unusually for a car of this era, the Bugatti-designed braking system should be powerful. The unique master cylinder gives a 25:1 mechanical advantage, but precise set-up is essential for them to work properly. At most, half an inch of pedal movement is ideal. Watch for fluid leaking into the footwell where the pedal pushrod enters the master cylinder.

As you would expect, there are lots of points to oil or grease every 1000 miles: enquire if this has been kept up. If not, deterioration in the componentry can be rapid. Steering boxes rarely wear, as long as they are full of oil: some play is acceptable, but excessive waywardness warrants further investigation.

Waymaster 5.75/6.00x16s are the nearest available rubber to the original 5.75x16 size. Taxi tyres are commonly fitted, but they tend to make the Roadster both look and feel heavy.

OWNING ONE



"I've owned this 1800 for more than 12 years and I spent the first decade restoring it," explains retired railway signal engineer **Bob Wyatt**. "I used to see Roadsters when I was at school in the 1950s and liked them, so I bought this one as a project. The car had been in the USA and the engine had been poorly rebuilt there – it sucked water in and burnt the piston tops.

"You can take the floor out to work on it, and it is sufficiently modern to not be too unsophisticated. It needed new B-posts, which are difficult to get at – you have to lift the body off or cut it. I had the car retrimmed, the dash re-veneered, the gearbox rebuilt and all the chrome replated. I've spent years sorting out the misunderstood braking system: now, with the correct-tension springs, it works very well."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1944 Standard Motor Company acquires the moribund Triumph marque
1946 1800 Roadster launched alongside the 1800 razoredge saloon; folding door-window frames replaced by frames fixed to the glass
1948 2000 Roadster replaces 1800 (2500 made), with larger engine and three-speed, all-synchromesh gearbox (otherwise largely unchanged)
1949 Roadster production ends
1950 TRX Roadster with all-enveloping bodywork launched at Paris and London shows; only three prototypes built

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1946-'49/4500
Construction tubular steel ladder-frame chassis, aluminium body over wooden frame, steel front wings
Engine all-iron, ohv 1776/2088cc 'four', single Solex carburettor
Max power 63bhp @ 4500rpm to 68bhp @ 4200rpm
Max torque 92-108lb ft @ 2000rpm
Transmission four-speed manual (synchromesh on top three ratios on 1800, all-synchromesh on 2000), RWD
Suspension: front independent, by transverse leaf spring, upper wishbones
rear live axle, semi-elliptic springs, anti-roll bar; lever-arm dampers f/r
Steering Marles cam and roller
Brakes hydraulic drums
Length 14ft ½in (4280mm)
Width 5ft 4in (1625mm)
Height 4ft 8in (1422mm)
Wheelbase 8ft 4in (2540mm)
Weight 2534-2541lb (1152-1155kg)
0-60mph 30.6-27.9 secs
Top speed 75-77mph
Mpg 20-25
Price new £991 (1949)

CLUB

Triumph Roadster Club
triumphroadster.org.uk
Club Triumph
clubtriumph.co.uk

SPECIALISTS

West End Classics
westendclassics.co.uk
AM Restorations
amrestorations.co.uk
MEV Spares mevspares.co.uk
Simon North Restoration
simonnorth.co.uk
Vintage Supplies
vintagecarparts.co.uk
Triumph Roadster Club Spares
triumphroadster.org.uk

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
All	£3000/10,000/28,000

OUR VERDICT

Attractive, characterful and practical to use if they are properly rebuilt and maintained, these Roadsters have a dedicated band of followers who rarely part with their cars. Find a good one, with sound chassis and body frames, plus a well-maintained engine and running gear, and cherish it. Prices have moved little in recent years and are surely destined to rise – especially following the return of *Bergerac*...

FOR
Dramatically different looks; pre-war character with post-war practicality; usable performance and brakes; five-seater convertible sporting car

AGAINST
Many parts – including troublesome brakes – are shared by few others; leisurely cruiser rather than a sports car; dickey is impractical in rain



ALTERNATIVES



AUSTIN A90 ATLANTIC
1948-'52, 7981 built
Austin boss Leonard Lord thought rounded styling, bright colours and a powered top would sell in the USA, but it was a flop. Faster than Triumph and cheaper new, but many have rusted. **Price now** £1250-30,000

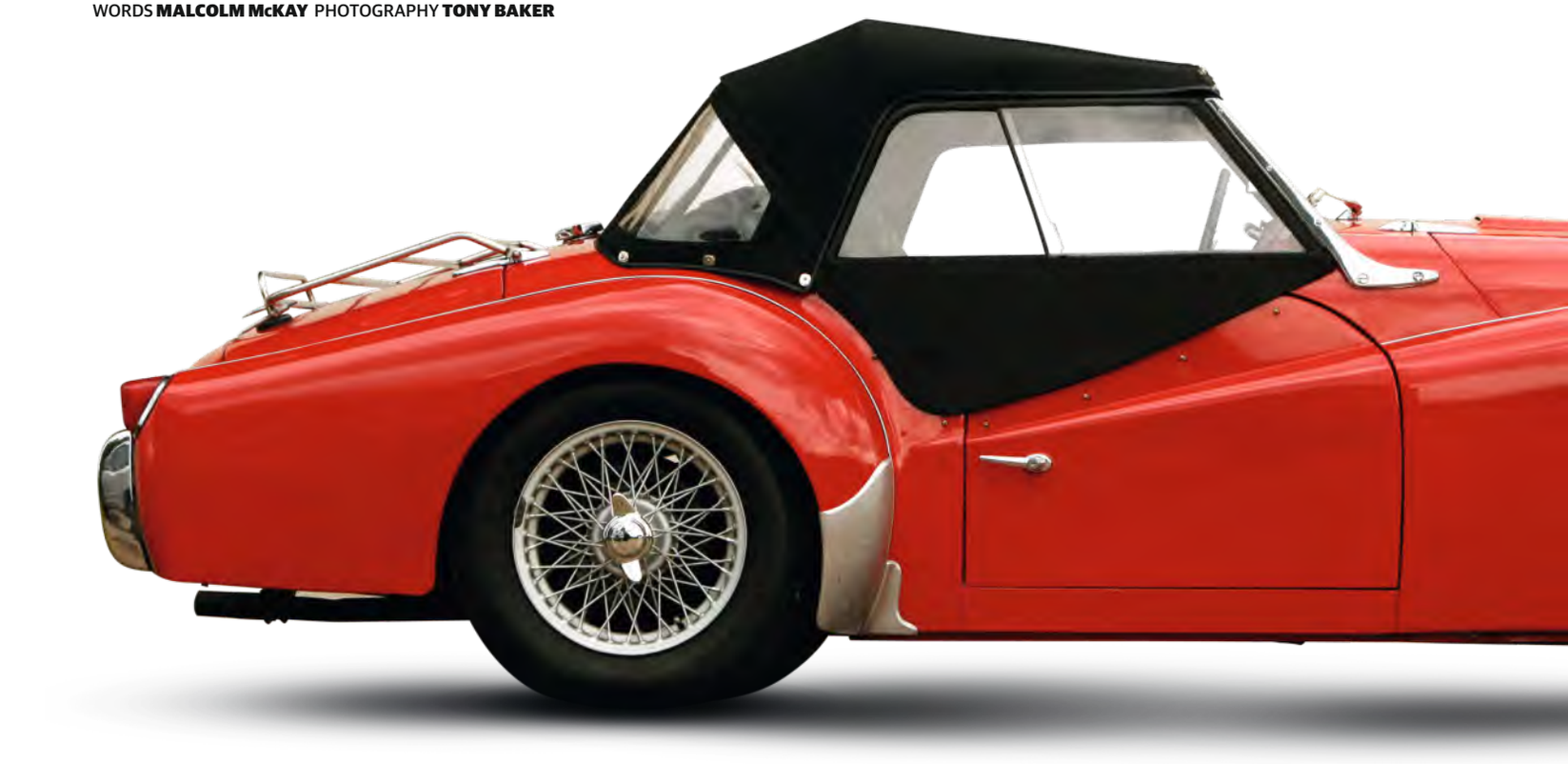


SUNBEAM-TALBOT 90 DHC
1948-'55, 22,631 built (all)
Sluggish at first, the 90 found its form in 1950 with independent front suspension and 2.3-litre pushrod power. Handsome and practical, the roomy two-door dhc was rot-prone and few survive today. **Price now** £4-20,000

TRIUMPH TR2-3A

The original 'sidescreen' TRs have all the hallmarks of a truly great sports car

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



When you drive an early Triumph TR, it is hard to believe that the design dates back to 1952. The car cruises happily at the legal limit (and above, especially if overdrive is fitted), it returns remarkably good fuel economy, it handles tidily and accelerates briskly. The cockpit gives more clues to its age, because it is small and you feel rather exposed – but no more so than in a Caterham Seven.

And if pedigree counts, the early TR has it in spade-loads. One of the most rallied cars ever, it scored dozens of victories and put up a good showing in the Mille Miglia and at Le Mans. Almost every early TR has done a club rally, a sprint or some competitive event in its life.

Some people like to uprate them, and parts are widely available to boost performance, handling, steering and comfort, though others prefer to drive 'sidescreen' TRs just as they were meant to be. I do just that and have covered more than 25,000 enjoyable miles on rallies in my standard-specification TR2, with crossplies, rubber bushes, Lockheed axle and all.

Standard-Triumph chairman Sir John Black was determined to raise dollars by selling cars in the USA, but the Triumph Roadster and TRX of the late 1940s were misguided. Finally, in '52, Walter Belgrove was given a small, light sports car to style. His initial beetle-backed design with an exposed spare was almost right – just the tail was changed to give a decent boot, with the spare wheel in its own compartment below.

The road manners and performance of the prototype were not so impressive and Ken Richardson was recruited from BRM to sort it. He did a superb job, and the TR2 ended up as one of the finest dual-purpose road/race cars. The sturdy chassis protected the sump and exhaust, it had good performance for the time, lively handling and, before long, an optional overdrive on second, third and top that gave it seven speeds – ideal for rallying.

Although rugged, TRs do rot so a detailed inspection is key: check the wings around the rear seam and the join to the front panel; inner wings; body/chassis mounts; battery box and lower front bulkhead; sills and floorpans; door bottoms; outriggers and spring mounts; rear wings, notably the lower edges and join to the inners; and boot floor, wheel well and bootlid.



All-drum brakes on early cars are fine if properly adjusted, but they fade before long if racing or rallying in mountains. Discs completely solved the problem

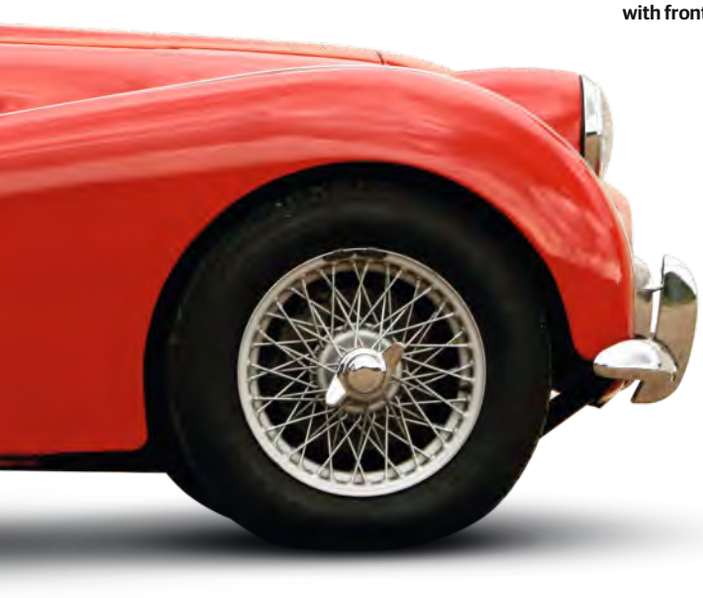


Properly retrimmed (not over-stuffed) seats are surprisingly comfortable and form a key part of the '50s suspension set-up; retrimming kits are inexpensive



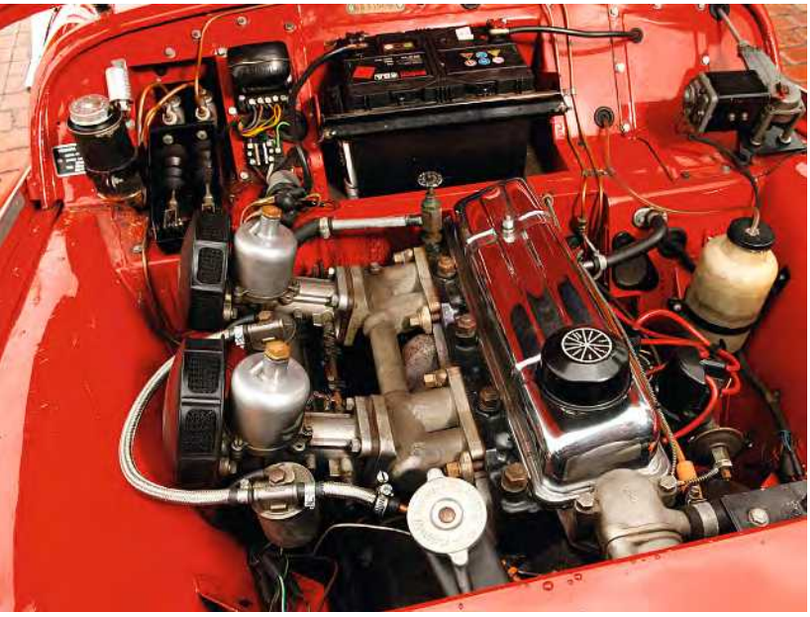


In late 1956, the TR3 became the Britain's first mass-produced car with front disc brakes





Early TRs are well served by specialists and parts are widely available, but quality varies. Experience shows that it isn't worth buying cheap ones: genuine original spares are the best. Having said that, as the cars' values increase and owners are prepared to pay more, specialists are improving the quality of pattern components



Though sturdy, the TR 'four' won't last for ever. It reveals weakness with low oil pressure (below 50psi at speed or 20psi at tickover), excessive breathing and rattles. Internal silting can make the heater useless. Wet liners don't like being disturbed by a head rebuild or gasket change, so check for water loss. A full rebuild kit is £959



Check for layshaft noise (dip the clutch in neutral), weak synchro and jumping out of gear: parts are scarce. Overdrive, if it's fitted, should engage smoothly



Steering box/suspension soon wear if not regularly lubricated: properly set up, they work well. Feel for any stiffness or excess play; all parts are available



Early rear axles are often criticised, but many are still working perfectly – only abuse with overly grippy tyres breaks halfshafts. Listen for rumbles or clonks



A clever cantilever ensures a tight-fitting, drum-free hood; sidescreen fit makes the difference in the cold and wet. Hardtops look good for rallying



TRs are fun even in grim weather, and comfier than you might expect

Before you buy

Thrashed engines may ultimately need hardened valve seats for unleaded petrol, but cars used normally will go on for years without needing to be touched. It is better not to remove the cylinder head until you have to, because it may be more worthwhile to do a full rebuild. The fanbelt should be run at low tension to avoid damaging water-pump bearings; an alternator conversion with a narrow belt can cause problems.

Put the hood up or the hardtop on for the test drive, better to hear any untoward noises from the engine and drivetrain. The motor should feel lusty and lively under power, pulling strongly from low revs. TR2s were surprisingly economical, too; the payback for the extra 5bhp from the larger carburettors of the TR3 was a hefty increase in fuel consumption, but it was still not a thirsty sports car by 1950s standards.

Though these cars are very drivable without overdrive, it is a highly desirable addition – especially when operating on second, third and fourth gears – that enables the light and torquey Triumph to keep up with much more powerful sports cars along a twisty road.

The heavy back axle with limited travel is the car's only real drawback, making the rear-end handling unpredictable at times. Carefully set up with soft, original springs and new crossply tyres, however, it can be thrown around on driving tests with complete control and great fun; making it harder is unwise for normal use. Lockheed TR2 axles are only weak if very grippy tyres are fitted, or if used halfshafts are swapped from side to side.

The front suspension and steering should work effectively if they are correctly set up and should feel light, with just a little free play.

OWNING ONE



Sold new in Edinburgh in April 1958, **Malcolm Bristow**'s TR3A was properly restored over a nine-year period during the 1980s and '90s.

"I had several TR2s and TR3s when I was a kid," recalls Malcolm. "I have had closed cars for years, but then I fancied a last fling in an open car when I sold my Datsun 240Z in 2010. TRs are much better value than Austin-Healeys and are better cars in my opinion – I've owned both."

"We found this example locally," he continues. "It had hardly been used since the completion of the rebuild, and the more I drive it, the better it gets. I took it around Millbrook Proving Ground recently and am planning to take it to a track day at Goodwood circuit soon.

"I will keep it until I can no longer get into it, and then I'll probably pass it on to my son!"

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1952 Sports launched at Earls Court show
1953 TR2 introduced at Geneva; 124mph record run at Jabbeke, Belgium
1954 Short doors fitted with sills below, external bonnet releases, optional hardtop, bigger rear brakes, optional overdrive
1955 TR3 replaces TR2 (8636 built): forward grille, chrome hinges, stainless-steel wing beading; 1¾in carbs add 5bhp; optional rear seat
1956 Front disc brakes fitted, stronger rear axle, high-port cylinder head adds 5bhp
1957 TR3A replaces TR3 (13,377 built); wide grille, external handles, improved trim
1959 150bhp 'Sabrina' twin-cam engine makes its debut at Le Mans
1962 Last TR3A made (58,309 built); TR3B built for US market: 530 TSF-series as TR3A, 2804 TCF-series with TR4 brakes, 2.2-litre engine, all-synchro gearbox

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1953-'62/83,656
Construction steel chassis, steel body
Engine all-iron, ohv 1991 'four', twin 1½in or 1¾in SU carburettors
Max power 90bhp @ 4800rpm to 100bhp @ 5000rpm
Max torque 117lb ft @ 3000rpm
Transmission four-speed manual with optional overdrive, RWD
Suspension: front independent, by wishbones, coil springs, telescopic dampers **rear** live axle, semi-elliptic springs, lever-arm dampers **Steering** cam and lever
Brakes Lockheed drums f/r (front discs from October 1956)
Length 12ft 7in (3840mm)
Width 4ft 7½in (1410mm)
Height 4ft 2in (1270mm)
Wheelbase 7ft 4in (2240mm)
Weight 1848-1988lb (840-904kg)
0-60mph 11.9-11.4 secs
Top speed 107-114mph **Mpg** 25-38
Price new £1049 (1959)

CLUBS

TR Register Car Club tr-register.co.uk
TR Drivers' Club trdrivers.com
Club Triumph clubtriumph.co.uk

SPECIALISTS

Revington TR revingtontr.com
Moss moss-europe.co.uk
Racetorations racetorations.co.uk
TR Bitz trbitz.com **TRGB** trgb.co.uk
TR Enterprises trenterprises.com
TR Shop trshop.co.uk **Southern Triumph Services** southerntriumph.co.uk
Enginuity enginuity.co.uk

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
TR2	£6000/12,000/25,000
TR3	£7000/16,000/35,000
TR3A	£5000/14,000/30,000

OUR VERDICT

If you want luxury, look elsewhere, but if a deceptively capable and comfortable sports car with maximum fresh air and fun appeals, then one of these 'sidescreen' TRs could be for you. Any decent-looking example will have been rebuilt by now: make sure that it has been done properly, and with quality components. If you are tempted by an uprated car, find one that has been thoroughly sorted.

FOR
Torquey, durable 'four' gives lively performance; overdrive makes it flexible; great, cheap spares supply; remarkable fuel economy on early cars

AGAINST
Draughty with sidescreens; separate chassis means rattles, especially on slightly tired cars; antiquated rear suspension



ALTERNATIVES



MGA *1955-'62, 98,970 built*
Priced just beneath the TR, the pretty and sweet-handling MGA couldn't match the Triumph on power or pace, though it did shift more units across the same production life. Corrosion is more traumatic to fix than in the simpler TR. **Price now** £3-50,000



AUSTIN-HEALEY 100 *1953-'59, 30,078 built*
Only in 100/6 form could the Healey compete with the TR on performance, and the much cheaper Triumph outsold it. Pretty looks and low build numbers mean higher prices today, but costly to restore due to the complex construction. **Price now** £12-90,000

VAUXHALL PA-PC

Britain's mini-Yank sedan makes a great classic – that's if you can find one

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



In 1957, the Vauxhall PA Cresta was a sophisticated machine, with an all-synchromesh gearbox (albeit only three speeds) and state-of-the-art front suspension with an anti-roll bar and telescopic dampers. It could be specified in eight single colours and four two-tone. In PADX form, the optional overdrive on second and top in effect gave five speeds. An optional Hydramatic auto 'box offered more modern characteristics and livelier performance than contemporaries.

The straight-six, with a single downdraught Zenith carb, was in the American tradition: torquey, smooth and flexible. Vauxhall's stylish monocoque design made no attempt to hide its US General Motors parentage. The bodyshell was stiff and light but devoid of rust protection, leading to low survival rates. It needs careful inspection: check the crossmember under the radiator; bonnet, notably the edges; inner/outer wings around the headlights, arches and rear edges; A-posts and bulkhead; inner and outer sills, particularly the ends; door bottoms; floors; main chassis rails and outriggers; rear wings, especially inner/outer arches; spring hangers; rear valance, bootlid and floor.

The more subdued PB also followed US trends but looked less out of place on British roads. Spacious and with good road manners – thanks to a longer wheelbase and little more weight – it sold steadily but rapidly disappeared once its days were done, despite much better rust protection. The final, 3.3-litre PB was distinctly lively, the same also applying to the 'Coke-bottle' PC, which was one of the first cars with bonded 'screens (but it still had a three-speed column shift). In Viscount form it gained power steering and electric windows, but with (initially) a disappointing two-speed auto 'box.

The upholstery in '57 was leather, nylon and the wonderfully named (but not very durable) Elastofab material, which was dropped on the PADX. Hide continued to feature on wearing surfaces throughout PB/PC Cresta production, although it was optional by the time of the PC.

All models are now rare, and finding parts can be a challenge because the small volume of surviving cars makes it uneconomic to remanufacture them. Joining the Cresta Club is vital, its members having hoarded secondhand parts. Rust remains the big worry, but most survivors have long since been rebuilt and, hopefully, better protected against future rot.



The column change was one of the best of its kind, but joints need lubrication. Check for worn synchros, and that the (desirable) overdrive works if fitted



A good trimmer can recreate original upholstery (bar Elastofab), and you can recolour secondhand items with vinyl paints. Missing solid trim is expensive







The PA's rock 'n' roll styling and bright colour schemes appealed to younger buyers



There is a transatlantic feel inside – note the ceiling-mounted clock. Advanced for its time, the PA had two-speed windscreen wipers with vacuum-powered washers, flashing indicators, fused electrics and a fresh-air heater. Ingeniously, the ribbon speedo changed from green to amber on exceeding 30mph, then to red past 60mph



Vauxhall's straight-six lasts well, but irregular servicing and age both take their toll. Watch out for excessive oil breathing, leaks (especially the rear crank seal), bearing knocks or timing-chain rattles. Rough running may be caused by a perforated inlet manifold, which can be plated; 2.6 pistons are hard to find, 2.2/3.3s no problem



Single downdraught Zenith carbs were fitted to all models. They benefit from a service kit, or a full rebuild kit if worn; most parts are available from Burlen



Check that instruments and all electrics work – spares are generally hard to find. PB/PCs have walnut veneered dash, so check for cracks/damage from damp

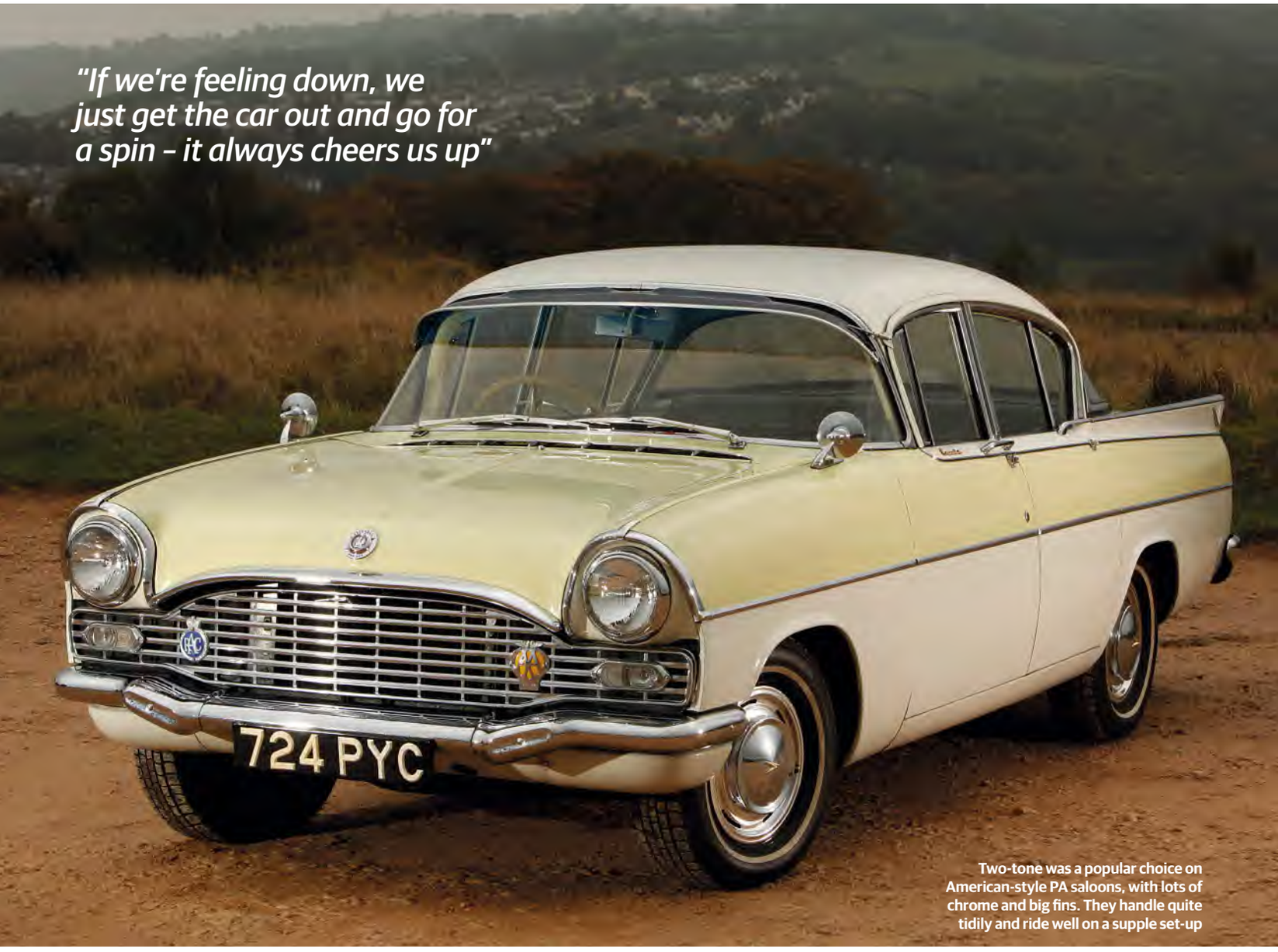


PA had 17 points to oil every 1000 miles; the PADX had 17 to grease every 2000; on PB/PCs it was only every 30k. Joints wear if neglected, as do steering boxes



Axles can whine but are long-lived; new rubbers, bushes and seals keep it under control. Telescopics were a bonus when many UK cars were on lever-arms

"If we're feeling down, we just get the car out and go for a spin – it always cheers us up"



Two-tone was a popular choice on American-style PA saloons, with lots of chrome and big fins. They handle quite tidily and ride well on a supple set-up

Before you buy

These large, six-cylinder Vauxhalls were widely appreciated for their exceptional flexibility and comfortable ride. The engine was larger than those of most equivalent UK cars of the time, but it was lower-powered. Its strengths were its smoothness and high torque from low revs – with its low overall gearing, many owners would get into top gear at 15-20mph and leave it there. Being understressed, the units are extremely long-lasting, providing they receive regular basic maintenance. Vauxhall did experiment with using twin Zenith carburettors, giving 110mph on a PC, but fuel consumption was too high.

The transmission that is fitted, and its condition, will make a big difference to driving pleasure. For just pottering, the three-speed column-change manual is perfectly adequate, but for pressing on, the overdrive offered from 1959 makes a significant difference. From 1964 it could be specified with the optional four-speed floor-change manual: it is the ultimate driver's choice, because the overdrive switch is sited on the opposite side to the gearlever on a column shift. The automatic gearboxes are all strong, and, being US-derived, parts are available, but the two-speed Powerglide (from 1965 to '69) makes the cars feel sluggish.

The original PA brakes were relatively small and soon faded if the car was driven hard. The larger, 10in (254mm) front drums from 1960 were better, but it's possible to convert to front discs with a servo; the set-up gives decent enough braking for modern road conditions.

Mechanically, most service items are still available new, while specialists and enthusiasts keep stocks of secondhand spares. Some parts such as synchros and gears, however, can be hard to find new.

OWNING ONE



"I have a photo of me by Dad's PA when I was four or five," recalls **Wendy Hogarth**. "We were into classic cars, and we were looking for one when my husband Mark's colleague said he had bought an early '58, but it was in worse condition than he had thought and he wanted to sell it. We found out more about its history and decided we had to have it. We used it until the door came off in my hand, then we rebuilt it together, spending every evening in the garage. Mark made all of the repair panels and did all the welding. Everyone said it was too far gone, but a lot of love went into it and we finished it in the end. It has been pink and white since the 1970s: it's known as The Pink Lady.

"If we're feeling down, we just get the car out and go for a spin – it always cheers us up."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1957 PA Cresta and Velox replace E-series: 2.3-litre 'six', three-piece rear window
1959 Abbot estate, built by Friary to '61; wraparound rear window, new cam, larger radiator/grille, new seats, overdrive option
1960 Engine to 2.6 for PADX (Cresta) and PASX (Velox): new rear fins, larger wheels; optional brake servo, three-speed auto
1961 Front discs with optional servo
1962 PB Velox and Cresta replace PA (173,764 built): front discs standard
1963 PB estates built by Martin Walter
1964 Engines now 3.3, 123bhp; new grille, optional floor-change four-speed 'box
1965 Two-speed Powerglide auto; PC Cresta replaces PB (87,047 built), with standard three-speed 'box (four optional)
1966 Viscount added: auto, vinyl roof, PAS, electric windows, plush cabin, wider tyres
1967 Martin Walter estate (to Feb '68)
1969 All get four-speed floor change and four headlights; GM three-speed auto option
1972 PC production ends (53,912 Cresta, 7025 Viscount)

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1957-'72/321,748
Construction steel monocoque
Engine all-iron, ohv 2262/2651/3294cc 'six', Zenith carb **Max power** 76bhp @ 4400rpm to 123bhp @ 4700rpm
Max torque 175lb ft @ 2200rpm (3.3)
Transmission three/four-speed manual, overdrive option, or two/three-speed auto, RWD **Suspension: front** independent, by double wishbones, coil springs, anti-roll bar **rear** live axle, semi-elliptic leaf springs; telescopic dampers f/r; tie rod on PB
Steering Burman recirculating ball
Brakes drums, self-adjusting rear on PC; optional front discs **Length** 15ft-15ft 7in (4572-4750mm) **Width** 5ft 8½-9¾in (1740-1772mm) **Height** 4ft 9½-10½in (1460-1486mm) **Wheelbase** 8ft 9-11¾in (2667-2737mm) **Weight** 2632-2998lb (1196-1363kg) **0-60mph** 17.1-12.5 secs
Top speed 90-103mph **Mpg** 18-30
Price new £822-1116 (Velox-Estate, '63)

CLUB

Vauxhall Cresta Club
vauxhallcrestaclub.co.uk

SPECIALISTS

Burlen burlen.co.uk
Vauxhall Green Parts vauxhallgreenparts.co.uk **Classic Restorations** classicrestorations.org.uk
Frankie P's Autos 01252 314635

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
PA	£4-5000/12-15,000/20-35,000
PB	£1-1500/3-4000/8-10,000
PC	£1-1500/2500-4000/9-12,000

Price range covers Velox to Cresta/Viscount

OUR VERDICT

A well-kept Cresta, Velox or Viscount, with all of its original chrome and interior trim, offers bags of character, durable running gear and rarity, and all for relatively little money. Rusty cars are still around, but most survivors have been rebuilt. If the work has been done well, with careful attention paid to sealing to keep moisture at bay, they can make satisfying and practical classic transport.

FOR
Big, torquey engines, great for cruising; stylish cars that always turn heads; simple, reliable mechanicals; now scarce but still superb value

AGAINST
Non-service parts hard to find; excessive rust on early cars, which had virtually no rot protection; two-speed autos are generally disliked



ALTERNATIVES



AUSTIN A90-A110 WESTMINSTER
1954-'68, 101,634 built
Sharing its 2.6-litre (later 2.9-litre) 'six' with the Austin-Healey 100/6 and 3000, this was a distinctly British saloon offering, with sharper Pininfarina styling from 1959. Weight sapped its performance. **Price now** £3-30,000



FORD ZEPHYR/ZODIAC MkII-IV
1956-'72, 635,259 built
Ford's big saloon range mirrored Vauxhall with its new models. Thirstier and slightly pricier, they shared big, lazy 'sixes', but later V6s with independent rear suspension were more developed. **Price now** £1500-28,000

VOLKSWAGEN KARMANN GHIA

The everyman Beetle's svelte cousin offers stylish and practical everyday glamour

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



The Karmann Ghia was 80kg heavier than its Beetle sibling and had no more power – yet this sheep in wolf's clothing sold well for almost 20 years. Wilhelm Karmann's firm was already producing the Beetle cabriolet and wanted to base a coupé on the same platform. Luigi Segre at Ghia had similar ideas, so produced drawings for Karmann, who persuaded VW to support the project. The timeless design was influenced by Virgil Exner's 1952 Chrysler d'Elegance Coupe, but is credited to Mario Boano at Ghia.

Built on a widened (by 80mm) VW floorpan, it was considerably more expensive than the Beetle. The curved, frameless door windows were expensive to make, as was the handbuilt bodywork. Karmann could only justify simple tooling, fabricating several panels that had to be welded together and leaded just to make the nose. With extra bracing in the sills and rear bulkhead, the Cabriolet was 30kg heavier still.

In 1960, in the UK its price was on a par with an Austin-Healey 3000; in 1970, it compared with a 3-litre Capri or Morgan Plus 8. Few right-hookers were sold, and 80% went to the USA.

There was a large number of updates during production; only the major changes can be included here. The early 'lowlight' cars are the prettiest, but later models from August '66 are the most usable. Alongside the curvy Type 14, the 'razoredge' Type 34 was introduced as part of VW's upmarket 1500 notchback/fastback/Variant range, with differences including the low-built 'pancake' engine with a small boot above, and balljoint suspension with full-width torsion bars. Even an electric sunroof was offered. Designed by Ghia's Sergio Sartorelli, it was expensive; sales were 10% of the Type 14's.

Corrosion is the main worry here, so inspect carefully, including the entire structure, especially the sills and the front end, and use a magnet to look for filler. Working from front to back, check the nose, including for accident damage; spare-wheel well; front wings, notably above the headlights and in the rear corners; inner/outer wheelarches; torsion-bar mounts; front footwells; sills and the heater channels within them; door bottoms; T34 rear air ducts; battery tray; base of the engine cover; and rear lower valance. On soft-tops, look for expanding door gaps from the heavy engine; these can be adjusted but may indicate structural weakness.



Virtually all of the interior trim parts can still be found if needed, so simply adjust the price if the seats and the upholstery are not in optimum fettle



Watch for weak synchromesh (VW had it on first from 1960) and dip the clutch in neutral to listen for worn layshaft bearings, precipitating a rebuild







Eye-catching style and low running costs were the twin appeals of the Karmann Ghia, which went down a storm in the United States



Minimalist cabin is comfy; most Karmann Ghias now in the UK are left-hand-drive imports brought from the USA. If you do find a right-hand-drive car, it is probably a converted import – the job can be done highly competently today, because all of the dashboard parts have been remanufactured to a high standard in Australia



The air-cooled engine's rugged nature makes it hard to distinguish wear from usual noise, while an aftermarket exhaust can also mask it. Check crank pulley for fore/aft movement (anything significant is a cause for concern) and ensure the oil-pressure light goes out quickly on start-up. Parts for 1600s are cheaper than for earlier units



The throttle spindle can wear and leak fuel: if it does, there is a real danger of the car going up in flames, so fix it quickly if you discover this problem



Electrics are generally simple and readily available; lighting on pre-1968 6V cars is poor by modern standards, so a conversion to 12V is common



Frequent greasing is needed to keep the suspension and steering supple and unworn, notably pre-'66 kingpins; look out for signs of regular maintenance



Karmann specialised in hoods – top-quality, multi-layered items that are pricey to restore when worn out, split or distorted (£500-750 for top layer)



Curvaceous styling of original KG was barely altered over the years, with just detail tweaks

Before you buy

Before starting the engine, grab hold of the crank pulley to see if it moves in and out. If it shifts noticeably, expect a rebuild soon – especially if the motor growls under load. Beetle flat-fours are thrashy when started from cold, but it should settle down after 10 minutes or so; if not, check the automatic choke is working as it should. A new Weber carburettor is a good substitute for a worn Solex. Parts for late engines are cheap and plentiful, and they are still being produced by specialists.

On the test run, put on the heater to make sure it works – if no warmth comes through, the chances are that the channels have rusted inside the sills, which is costly to repair. Exhaust fumes indicate damaged heat exchangers, which are quite complex to fix.

For early cars, period tuning gear is very desirable: look for twin carbs and 'Okrasa' cast into the special twin-port cylinder heads, and/or a supercharger. Later models perform better, especially the final twin-port 1600s, and engine swaps are not unusual. If you're buying a modified car, make sure that the job has been done competently and that the running gear has been uprated to match – and alert your insurance company.

Suspension and steering need to be kept well lubricated, notably on pre-1966 cars. Crashing over bumps may well be caused by partial seizing due to lack of lubrication; if the car wanders, it – and the steering – is probably worn out.

The brakes in any model should pull the car up evenly. If not, you will have to rebuild or replace seized wheel cylinders or calipers. Disc brakes are the most effective and early Karmann Ghias can be been converted, though the original drums are fine if well maintained.

OWNING ONE



"I bought a 1970 Cabriolet after seeing one in my local rag in around 1998, before I even knew there was an owners' club for them," says **Peter Skinner**. "Since then we have really enjoyed the car. It's a real head-turner, while embodying the Volkswagen design ethos of 'Evolution not Revolution'. It's practical: all of the mechanicals are Beetle-based, so they're easy to work on. The only hard-to-get parts are the special body items.

"It's a joy to drive and cruises at respectable motorway speeds – or it's happy just to pootle around town. Regular bucketfuls of Waxoyl keep the corrosion at bay, and I have been able to maintain the running gear in good order at minimal cost. Most of all, though, it's fun!

"The KGOC is a great club and we have really enjoyed the social aspects of ownership."

THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1955 Type 14 launched at Frankfurt show
1957 Fuel gauge, new steering wheel, wider front brakes; Cabriolet introduced
1960 Oval tail-lights replace rectangular
1961 Type 34 added on T3 1500 chassis – Coupé and Cabrio shown, but only Coupé built (27 prototype Cabrios), 87mph
1963 Twin-carb 54bhp T34; RHD '64-on
1965 1300 40bhp T14 engine, 78mph, front suspension balljoints replace linkpins; T34 becomes 1600, front disc brakes
1966 1500 T14: 44bhp, 80mph, wider rear track, higher top gear; T34 goes 12V
1967 T14 12V, external fuel filler; T34 gets twin-port heads, optional EFI, auto 'box
1968 Glass rear window in Cabriolet
1969 T34 production ends (42,498 built)
1970 1600cc twin-port: 54bhp
1974 Type 14 manufacture ends

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1955-'74/444,300 (Type 14) **Construction** steel platform chassis, steel body **Engine** alloy-crankcase/head, iron-barrel, ohv 1192/1285/1493/1584cc flat-four, single/twin Solex carbs or Bosch injection **Max power** 30bhp @ 3700rpm to 54bhp @ 4000rpm **Max torque** 56lb ft @ 2000rpm to 87lb ft @ 3000rpm **Transmission** four-speed manual or three-speed semi-auto (from '67, or full auto on T34), RWD **Suspension** independent, by transverse torsion bars, parallel trailing arms, telescopic dampers f/r; front anti-roll bar **Steering** worm and nut (worm and roller from Jun '61) **Brakes** drums f/r (front discs on T34 from Aug '65, T14 from Aug '66) **Length** 13ft 7in-14ft ½in (4140-4280mm) **Width** 5ft 4in (1630mm) **Height** 4ft 4-5½in (1325-1363mm) **Wheelbase** 7ft 9½-10½in (2375-2400mm) **Weight** 1782-1994lb (810-906kg) **0-60mph** 28.8-21.3 secs **Top speed** 73-85mph **Mpg** 30-40 **Price new** £1166 (Coupé, 1960)

CLUB

Karmann Ghia Owners' Club GB
kgoc.org.uk

SPECIALISTS

Karmann Ghia Centre kgcentre.co.uk
Bughaus Volkswagen bughaus.co.uk
Cool Air VW coolairvw.co.uk **Karmann Konnection** karmannkonnection.co.uk
Justaircooled justaircooled.co.uk
Heritage Parts Centre heritagepartscentre.com
Airhead Parts airheadparts.com
Sewfine Interiors sewfineproducts.com

WHAT TO PAY

	Resto/Average/Show
Type 14 Coupé	£4000/13,000/40,000
Type 14 Cabrio	£4500/15,000/50,000
Type 34	£4000/14,000/40,000

OUR VERDICT

A good Karmann Ghia is a practical, stylish and reliable classic car that is unlikely to let you down – but it shouldn't break the bank even if it does. Body restoration is the most expensive challenge, followed by hood replacement on a Cabriolet. Inspect a potential purchase carefully to ensure that the specification is correct or, if modified, that it is what you want, has been properly executed or is easily corrected.

FOR
Exceptional durability, especially late models; elegant, timeless styling; simple, cheap and rugged running gear; economical and practical

AGAINST
Rot-prone bodywork is costly to restore; performance is limited, especially on early models; modifications are not always done well



ALTERNATIVES



RENAULT FLORIDE/CARAVELLE
1958-'68, 117,039 built
Chic Frua design (for Ghia) transformed the Dauphine to compete with Karmann Ghia for the lucrative US market. With better spec and performance, it sold well. Parts supply not as good as for VW. **Price now** £3-38,000



BORGWARD ISABELLA COUPÉ/CABRIOLET
1955-'61, 202,862 built (all)
Launched the same year and to a similar clientele, Borgwards outperformed Karmann Ghias but cost more. Elegant and attractive, but rust and poor parts availability mean the survival rate is low. **Price now** £5-35,000

VOLVO AMAZON

Durable in every sense, the surprisingly sporting 120 series makes a great choice for both rallying and everyday use

WORDS **MALCOLM McKAY** PHOTOGRAPHY **JAMES MANN**



The car that established Volvo's popularity – and its reputation for both safety and durability – was known as the 120 series in most markets due to a prior claim on the Amazon name. Its appeal at launch included modern looks, comfortable individual front seats and a strong but surprisingly light body (38kg less than a P1800). This gave it lively performance for the engine size. The unusual use of exposed air filters on twin-carb models gave a healthy growl when accelerating, loved by enthusiastic drivers but later criticised on road tests; the single-carb model had an enclosed filter so was much quieter. Twin-carb cars were quiet enough when cruising, even at 75-80mph. From the start, the Amazon was said to exceed 100,000 miles without major overhaul.

Whitewall crossply tyres were standard at first, and interiors featured no-nonsense PVC trim with rubber floormats, although later models graduated to carpets. Safety was always an important consideration, with a roll-over bar built into the roof pressings. In 1959, the Amazon became the first car to be fitted with standard three-point front seatbelts. In the mid-'60s it was surely one of the first 'everyday' cars to offer lumbar support in the front seats and a gas strut to raise the upper tailgate of the Combi estate. The wagon was a chunky 300kg (or 30%) heavier than the saloon.

Nordic features included a superb heater and a radiator blind controlled from the dash. The five-bearing 1800 (B18) unit introduced in 1961 kept the Amazon ahead of the pack, and the performance, economy, easy gearchange, and multi-adjustable and very comfortable seats were all still loved. By '66 the thick 'screen pillars and shallow glasshouse were considered positively antiquated, and the handling and ride not much better – but let's not forget the Morris Minor was still selling strongly. The upgrade to B20 power gave a further boost while the 140 series gradually took over.

Many cars have been modified, so check the type number on the commission plate: 1959-on the first figure was body type (1 for saloon, 2 for estate), the second was doors (2 for four, 3 for two), the third engine spec (1 for single carb, 2 for twin, 3 for a GT). Genuine 123GTs have type number 133352 (RHD) and 133351 or 133951 (LHD, the latter built in Canada or Belgium).

TROUBLE SPOTS

RUST Floors, sills (especially at the rear, including jacking points), bulkhead from windscreen surround down (look up behind dashboard), structure below battery box, rear suspension mounts, bonnet front lip, front wings around arches, inner wings and headlights, door bottoms, boot floor, rear arches and inner wings, bootlid lip, both halves of estate tailgate, bumper corners

BRAKES Check for seized calipers, slave cylinders and handbrake; optional servos can fail (look for white exhaust smoke from brake fluid entering the engine)

TRIM Dashboard tops are prone to cracking, but can be recovered

ENGINE These units are strong, but they do wear eventually and will need hardened valve seats if driven hard on unleaded fuel

TRANSMISSION Look out for clutch slip (caused by oil or wear), vibration (usually propshaft), leaks, axle whine, gearbox noise





Designed by Jan Wilsgaard, the 120 series was handsome and modern in 1956. Strong but light, its all-round ability and safety-conscious design kept it popular through the 1960s





The Amazon offers a surprisingly lively drive, especially in twin-carb and B20 forms, with competent handling, and it's hard to believe the age of the design. It feels solid and comfortable, and makes an excellent historic rally car – indeed, it's getting tricky to find a nice example that hasn't been converted for rallying



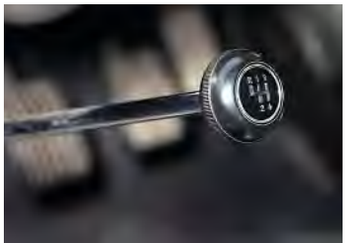
The four-cylinder engine is very durable and pulls strongly, aided by well-chosen gear ratios. Most were sold with single carburettors (and boxed air cleaners), but many survivors now feature twin carbs with exposed air filters. Our featured car's engine bay is best described as 'honest', and a tidy-up is in the offing



Water gets in at the corners of the windscreen as the rubber cracks and shrinks; rust then attacks the footwell, A-post, inner wing, bulkhead and sills



The steering should be light on the move, without excessive play: over-adjustment makes it stiff off-centre. Check for rust where the box mounts



Worn prop centre bearing and gearbox mountings cause vibrations. Listen for layshaft noise; check the synchros and for jumping out of gear on the overrun



Amazon seats are very comfortable and highly adjustable for the time; specialists can source correct vinyl for retrimming, with matching door cards



B20-engined 131 is one of the very last Amazons, with the later grille style and two-door bodyshell giving a sportier look

"It was Dad's before me. We knew the previous owner and hassled him for seven years to sell"

Before you buy

The five-main-bearing B18 four-cylinder engine was tougher than the earlier three-bearing B16, but neither unit is weak. Worn engines generally suffer from the fibre timing gear breaking up, while lacklustre performance can be due to worn camshaft lobes. Smoking is often down to failing valve stem seals; worn carburettors can also sap power, but the problem may be as simple as a maladjusted linkage.

Rebuild time for this simple, honest engine is announced by low oil pressure (look for at least 40psi at speed once it has been fully warmed up), excessive oil breathing and smoke, rattles and knocks. The rear crankshaft seal is prone to leaking, so check for drips and clutch judder; the felt seal can be replaced with rubber. Ruddspeed-tuned B18s in the UK gave 118bhp, 100mph, and 0-60mph in 12.4 secs from estates, more from saloons. Up to 132bhp was available with two twin-choke Weber carburettors and a high-lift camshaft; most cars adapted for historic rallying have been tuned to a similar level, and some of them may have a limited-slip differential. Later engines with fuel injection or even an overhead cam are also found.

The manual transmission is tough and should be a pleasure to use, with the long lever offering a very positive change – if that's not the case, new mountings may help. Some cars have been converted to a Volvo 240 or Ford Sierra five-speed 'box, but the four-speed with overdrive is a much more versatile transmission and it keeps things original.

Suspension bushes wear and go soggy, and coil springs can break, but all parts are readily available. Polyurethane bushes give firmer control, but at the expense of some refinement.

OWNING ONE



"It's the most reliable car I own," says **Dave Corke** of his 1970 B20 131. "It has been in the family for 15 years, it was Dad's before me. We knew the previous owner and hassled him for seven years to sell. It used to go to the south of France every winter, up to the 1980s. There was some rust in the wings, into which new sections had been brazed: I fitted full new front wings during lockdown; they cost £1000 direct from Sweden. I've added an electronic distributor, electric power steering, and overdrive on third and fourth.

"I just love driving it. The chrome trim around the door on the driver's side is missing and the window drops into the door unless it's wedged in place. The window winders use a curious chain system, which wears out. I plan to keep it for ever and work through the bits that need doing."







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THE KNOWLEDGE

TIMELINE

1956 P120 Amazon 4dr (deliveries Feb '57): 1.6, 60bhp, three-speed 'box, 6V electrics
1958 Four-speed, all-synchro 'box in UK; twin-carb, 85bhp 122S added
1959 Three-point seatbelts standard
1961 B18 engine: 75bhp 121, 90bhp 122S, 12V, disc front brakes, optional overdrive
1962 P220 Combi estate, 68bhp only in UK
1963 Belgian Coune convertible (five built)
1964 Borg-Warner 35 automatic option
1965 P130 two-door added; 75bhp 131
1966 132S 2dr: spotlights, rev counter
1967 123GT: 95bhp, reclining seats, alternator, fog/spotlights; 4dr dropped
1968 Collapsible column, front headrests
1969 B20 2-litre; estate phased out
1970 Amazon production ends

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1956-'70/359,918 (2dr), 234,208 (4dr), 73,169 (estate)
Construction steel monocoque
Engine all-iron, ohv 1583/1778/1986cc 'four', single Zenith/SU or twin SU carbs
Max power 59bhp @ 4500rpm to 99bhp @ 5500rpm **Max torque** 82lb ft @ 2500rpm to 112lb ft @ 3500rpm
Transmission three/four-speed manual, optional overdrive, or three-speed auto, RWD **Suspension: front** independent, by double wishbones, anti-roll bar **rear** live axle, radius arms, Panhard rod; coil springs, telescopics f/r **Steering** cam and roller
Brakes drums/discs front, drums rear, optional servo (std on estate) **Length** 14ft 6¼-7¼in (4426-4451mm) **Width** 5ft 4¼in (1632mm) **Height** 4ft 10-10¾in (1473-1492mm) **Wheelbase** 8ft 6½in (2604mm)
Weight 2324-3013lb (1056-1369kg)
0-60mph 17.8-10.2 secs
Top speed 90-109mph **Mpg** 24-30
Price new £1090-1366 (1967)

CLUBS

Volvo Owners' Club volvoclub.org.uk
Volvo Enthusiasts' Club volvoenthusiastsclub.co.uk

SPECIALISTS

Brookhouse Parts classicvolvoparts.co.uk
Nordicar nordicar.com **Classic Volvo Restoration** classicvolvorestoration.com
Scandcar classic-volvo.com
VP Autoparts vp-autoparts.se
Scandix skandix.de **Charlwood Volvo** charlwoodautomotive.com
Volvo Spares volvospares-uk.com
Classic Swede classicswede.org
MTM Motors mtmmotors.com

WHAT TO PAY*

	Resto/Average/Show
B16	£1000/6000/15,000
B18	£1000/7000/17,000
B20	£1500/8000/18,000
123GT	£2500/10,000/22,000

*ADD 15% FOR TWO-DOOR, 20% FOR ESTATE

OUR VERDICT

Don't let the reputation for impregnable solidity fool you: Amazons will eventually rot severely if neglected, and not all get properly repaired, so inspect carefully. Seek out the well-preserved, well-maintained and properly restored cars: condition is more important than specification, and modifications may enhance values. Unlike many classic cars, Amazons revel in adverse conditions and usually get you home: the more you drive them, the more you love them.

FOR
Well served by specialists and parts suppliers; enduringly popular as a family classic and for rallying thanks to strength, comfort and good performance; prices remain reasonable

AGAINST
Rot can be severe and is sometimes covered up by new external panels; some parts are becoming difficult to find



ALTERNATIVES



PEUGEOT 404 *1960-'75, 2,885,374 built*
Pininfarina-styled with estate, Cabriolet and Coupé options (plus pick-up), the 404 had 1.6 petrol (95bhp with optional injection) and 2-litre diesel engines, and was a huge success worldwide. **Price now** £3-23,000



FIAT 1800 *1959-'68, c30,000 built*
Designed by Dante Giacosa and available as a Familiare estate, with a straight-six giving up to 91mph. From 1961, four-wheel discs were fitted and an automatic clutch was optional. Rare today. **Price now** £3-15,000

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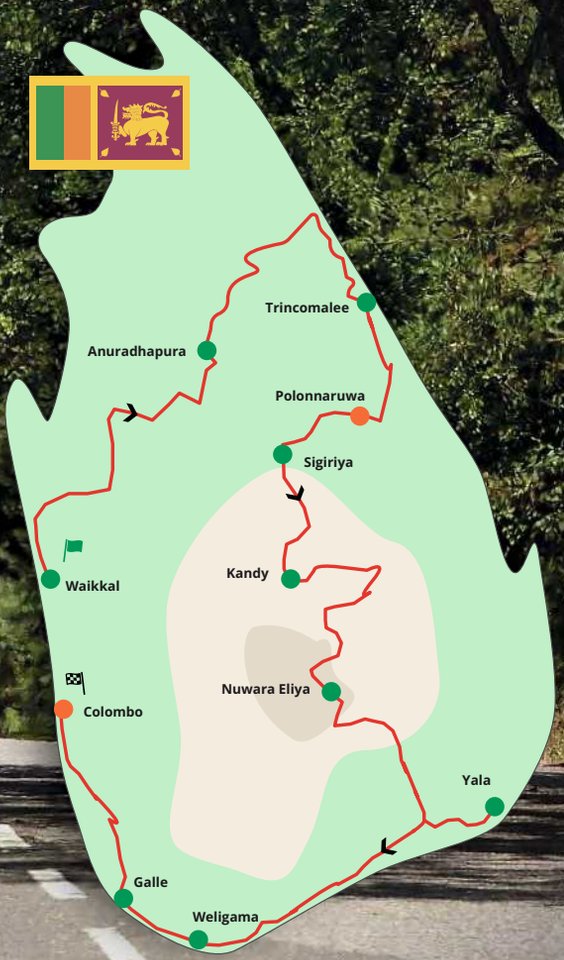

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