



PARTS AND PARCELS

A little-known but vital building just down the road from Works Service is keeping owners of cars spanning half a century well and truly mobile. Simon de Burton visits Parts Operations in Wolverton Mill to witness one of the automotive world's most comprehensive and efficient spares facilities





Most people would agree that every Aston Martin is far greater than the sum of its parts – but who should you turn to if any one of those parts needs replacing, upgrading or remaking? The answer is to Philip Eaglesfield, General Manager of Aston Martin Parts Operations, a 48,000-square-foot facility based at Wolverton Mill in Buckinghamshire where you'll find everything from a cigar lighter for a DB6 to a Sportspack handling kit for a V8 Vantage. Part of Aston Martin's commitment to its customers has always been to provide a comprehensive spares back-up, but since Parts Operations moved from Newport Pagnell to its current, purpose-built headquarters back in 2001 the service has grown into an international operation that promises to provide the best possible care for owners of both current and classic models wherever they are in the world.

There are a staggering 35,000 different parts available off the shelf at Wolverton Mill, with a further 15,000 being obtainable at short notice. Every model dating back to the DB4 of 1959 is catered for, and Parts Operations even has the facility to reproduce especially rare components to the exact specifications of the original.

'This is very much a business of two halves,' says Philip. 'On one side we are providing everything from basic service kits to major bodywork components for the current range, while on the other we are ensuring that anything that the owner of a heritage car could possibly need to keep it on the road is readily available. Parts Operations is intended to demonstrate our clear commitment to our customers both past, present and future.'

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'Since the introduction of the DB7, the profile of the Aston Martin owner has changed considerably. While the older cars were often kept for occasional use, the modern ones are invariably regarded as daily drivers which are expected to be on the road all the time. This means that we have to be able to supply service and repair parts as quickly as possible, and we usually manage to get them there within 24 hours regardless of where in the world they are needed.'

'There is also much more emphasis on upgrading and personalisation with the newer cars than there used to be,' adds Philip. 'As a result, we have a strong demand for accessories and performance-enhancing parts such as the Sports Pack handling kits for the V8 Vantage and DB9 or the V8 power upgrade that adds 20bhp to the 4.3-litre engine.' The Heritage side of the business, meanwhile, enables owners of classic Aston Martins to drive them as often as they like without having to worry that they might not be able to replace a vital component if it wears it out.

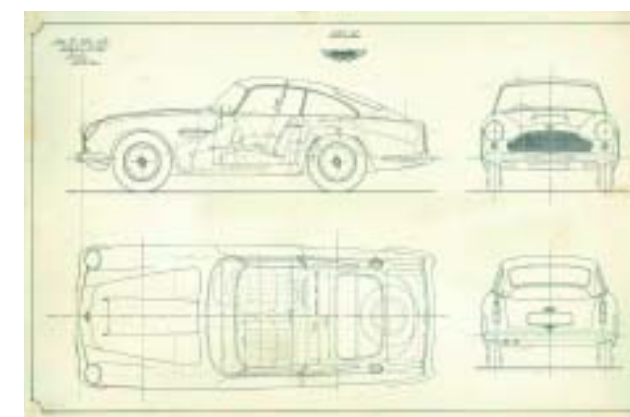
'One of the most enjoyable parts of the job is providing the back-up that enables the heritage cars to be used and driven enthusiastically both on the road and on the track,' explains Philip, 'and it is widely recognised that, because of the parts' availability, Aston Martin Heritage models have become both very sought-after and have steadily increased in value. When restoring an Aston Martin it's very reassuring to know that parts' availability is not going to be an issue, and this confidence is reflected in both the interest and market values of the various models.'

'There is really nothing for any car made by Aston Martin during the past 50 years that we can't supply. In some cases we can obtain original, new-old stock parts such as Lucas electrical items and we can re-source others using original drawings, patterns and data to ensure that they are a perfect fit.'

Aston Martin is unique in having kept hold of all its old tooling, jigs, body bucks and technical information. But although all catalogues and parts manuals covering the last half-century of production are now incorporated into a comprehensive computer database, the old, hand-written parts buying cards are still on hand. 'We can supply full sets of glass for every car dating back to the DB5 and we have recently started to offer brand-new, fully machined cylinder heads and engine blocks for the DB4GT because the popularity of racing them has led to a demand,' remarks Philip. 'We can also hand-craft a front grille for a 1960s DBS or supply a windscreen for a V8 Zagato.'

But the business is not just about stocking those vital bits that keep an Aston Martin running smoothly for decades to come. As one customer recently discovered after buying a V8 Vantage as a gift for his partner, given just 24 hours notice, Parts Operations was able to add a bit of extra icing to the cake: a set of custom-made sill plaques engraved with a personalised, laser-cut message.

Now *that's* what you call service.





CAPITAL ELEGANCE



PHOENIX FROM THE ASHES

After 85 years, one of the most famous Aston Martins – and officially the oldest in existence – has re-emerged from Ecurie Bertelli's workshop after a lengthy rebuild, resplendent in new bodywork, chassis and a meticulously restored engine. A tribute to the Aston Martin Heritage Trust and its generous benefactor

Aston Martin enthusiasts the world over will no doubt be delighted to see 'A3' back to its former glory. And, as the world's oldest surviving Aston Martin, the story leading up to its unprecedented restoration should serve to inspire and educate many newer fans of the modern brand. Prototype, demonstrator and notable Brooklands racecar, A3 was the third of five development cars built by Aston Martin's founders Bamford & Martin and first saw the light of day in 1921. Sadly, its two predecessors are known to have been broken up. As was the practice in the early days of motoring, prototypes of most manufacturers were continuously developed over several years and A3 was known to have been fitted with a streamlined two-seater racing body at one stage, as well as a sporting two-seater touring version. The car also featured several different engines, varying from a 16-valve single overhead camshaft, to a racing version of Bamford & Martin's side-valve unit. But it was the recent discovery of A3's historic importance that really fires the imagination.

Entered in the annual Bonhams auction at Aston Martin Works Service in 2002 was a very tired Bamford & Martin car, thought to be just another early model – important enough but not of international significance. But Stewart Skilbeck of Bonhams was his reliably inquisitive self, and a very close examination revealed the stamping 'No.3' on the front edge of the right chassis member – a critical clue that led Neil Murray, then a Trustee of the Aston Martin Heritage Trust, to positively identify 'A3' as the oldest surviving Aston. Soon enough, supported by the world's biggest collector and owner of Aston Martins and a great friend of the Trustees, the car was secured for the Trust and plans were immediately made for a total restoration.

The whole meticulously researched project was spearheaded by Andy Bell, whose Ecurie Bertelli workshop is a leading authority on pre-war 'Bertelli' era Aston Martins. The chassis showed evidence of early failure and repair, having fractured behind the main cross member. The engine was in a very sorry state and has now been the subject of a lengthy rebuild by marque specialist Bruce Young & Company, and the running gear was rebuilt precisely how it would have been in 1921. Sankey-type wheels were specially cast in aluminium and fitted with the correct beaded-edge tyres. The Trust decided that the new body frame and coachwork should be modelled on the road-going version the car had in the early 1920s. The resulting ash frame and hand-crafted aluminium body is a tribute to the painstaking work of Bodylines of Olney, who had no drawings to work from.

A3's splendid re-emergence was accelerated by a further substantial donation by the same long-standing AMOC Member who enabled the Trust to purchase the car some four years previously. The Trust will now ensure that A3 appears at many appropriate events – including Bonhams' auction on Saturday 9 May 2009 – where it will occupy pride of place in the Aston Martin Works Service Reception.



THE ART OF ASTON MARTIN

Fans of classic Aston Martins can now buy a range of photographs, technical drawings and advertisements, which form part of the newly released Heritage Art range. Works include individually numbered technical drawings of the DB4 and DB5 signed by former Chief Engineer Harold Beach and of the DB4GT signed by the racing department's former Chief Development Engineer Ted Cutting. Original factory publicity images include one of a DB5 shown outside London's Hilton Hotel and factory advertisements for the DB4 and DB5 models, while a superb photograph taken by Brian Joscelyne at the start of the 1959 Le Mans 24-Hours shows the three Aston Martin DBR1s lined up on the grid prior to the epic race in which they claimed first and second places. A black-and-white shot of a DB4 entitled 'Thunder Through the Woods' by the celebrated automotive photographer Louis Klementaski is also available.

The Heritage Art range is limited to editions of 25, 50 or 75 pieces depending on the work. Prices range from £97.50 each for historic advertisements to £196.50 for photographs and technical drawings (both plus VAT, post and packing) with 15 per cent discounts being available to AMOC and AMHT members. For availability and ordering information please contact +44 (0)1908 305530



AMOC EVENTS APRIL–JULY 2009



The Aston Martin Owners Club have another busy year ahead. To find out how to take part in any of this spring and summer's motoring events or join the Club, call Membership Secretary Carol Bradley on +44 (0)1865 400400, e-mail hqstaff@amoc.org or visit www.amoc.org

- 04 April Annual General Meeting (HQ, Oxfordshire, UK)
- 17 April Mallory Park Track Day (Leicestershire, UK)
- 18 April Unveiling of A3 (HQ, Oxfordshire, UK)
- 18–19 April Simeone Museum Tour (Pennsylvania, USA)
- 27 April Tour de L'Art (Bruges, Belgium)
- 04 May Donington Park Race Meeting (Leicestershire, UK)
- 09 May Bonhams Auction at Works Service (Newport Pagnell, UK)
- 09 May International Dinner (HQ, Oxfordshire, UK)
- 10 May Spring Concours at Rousham Park (Oxfordshire, UK)
- 10–19 May Viennese Whirl (Austria)
- 16–17 May Tour to the Pas-de-Calais (Belgium)
- 16–17 May Mille Miglia (Italy)
- 21 May AMOC Germany's Tour of UK
- 24 May Curborough Sprint (Staffordshire, UK)
- 06 June DB7 Day at Works Service (Newport Pagnell, UK)
- 13 June Classic Sportscar Concours d'Elegance (Helsinki, Finland)
- 10–14 June Le Mans 24-Hours and Camping (Pyrénées-Atlantiques, France)
- 25–27 June Lime Rock Classic (New York, USA)
- 03–05 July Goodwood Festival of Speed (W Sussex, UK)
- 10 July Goodwood Track Day (W Sussex, UK)
- 11 July Goodwood Sprint (W Sussex, UK)
- 10–12 July British Classic Car Meeting (St Moritz, Switzerland)
- 18–19 July Snetterton Race Meeting (Norfolk, UK)
- 24–26 July Silverstone Classic (Northants, UK)