

CLASSIC DRIVER

Focus on Heritage: 'Aston Martin Works'

Lead

In the first of a new series examining the way manufacturers maintain and promote 'heritage' operations, we spent some time in Newport Pagnell, visiting Aston Martin's legendary service department, now known simply as 'Aston Martin Works'.

It was something of a shock to drive along Tickford Street, Newport Pagnell and find, instead of a glazed building set back from the road with a row of Astons on display, extensive building activity that will result in 'Aston Martin Works Newport Pagnell', a brand-new dealership opening this spring.

Rest assured, service and restoration work carries on as normal, as it has done for so many years in the only service department owned by a manufacturer. Unlike other companies' fleets of historic cars and glossy museums, Aston Martin Works is a living, breathing (with firm foundations of commercialism) division of the famous British marque. It operates from the very same premises that housed craftsmen building DB6s, V8s and Virages, right up to the Vanquish, the last Aston to be constructed at Newport Pagnell.





To demonstrate its commitment to the business, Aston Martin has initiated a two-year development plan with the modernisation of the contemporary car servicing and restoration facilities and the building of a brand-new showroom.

On its completion in May this year, it will allow, for the first time, Aston Martin Works to become a dealership selling new and used Aston Martins, including the heritage models - something the team at Aston Martin Works has long wanted to do. A long-established and successful business dating back to Aston Martin owner David Brown and the 1950s, it provides the perfect base for an Aston Martin one-stop-shop 'Centre of Excellence'.





It surprised me to learn that 90% of all the Aston Martins ever made at Newport Pagnell are running on the road today. Did someone say “a car for life?” With pre-War cars handled professionally by experts such as Ecurie Bertelli, the company itself (via Aston Martin Works at Newport Pagnell) caters for the rest, from DB2 onwards.

All of this is made possible by the Parts Operations located close by at Wolverton Mill. Many seemingly hard-to-get parts are ordered or re-manufactured in-house: for example, there has been an issue with 1970-1989 series V8 steering racks, yet in the next few weeks, Parts Operations will deliver brand-new racks for the many cars awaiting them. Over the years many small parts - DB4/5/6 bumpers, grilles and engine blocks - have been made again to meet worldwide demand, very often coming from original suppliers.







Highly experienced when it comes to the current new models, the team (having built some of the current and heritage cars in the first place) both service and restore them, which means Aston Martin Works can carry out pre-purchase inspections for potential owners, too.

One would think that just about all the 'barn finds' have been prised away from the farmyard. But the annual Bonhams sale, planned to be held at the new Works premises this year on 19 May, always seems to turn up new ones, and you can add to these a constant stream of older refurbishments that are now 'coming home' for total restoration (including 70s/80s V8s) and an increasing level of interest in the William Towns 'wedge' Lagonda.

And, slipping effortlessly from 'new production' to 'heritage' in recent years is the mighty Vanquish - a 'crossover', if you like, but one that best symbolises the 'living heritage' of Aston Martin in the metal.



Photos: Aston Martin

Gallery

