

CLASSIC DRIVER

Talking collector car trends with Simon Gregg of Bramley Motor Cars

Lead

With more than 50 predominantly modern collector cars for sale ranging from Volkswagen Golf Rs to Ferrari V12s, Bramley Motor Cars has capitalised on market trends for 40 years to offer beautifully specified modern luxury and sports cars at competitive prices. We met its astute helmsman Simon Gregg...

Founded 40 years ago, Bramley Motor Cars is something of an institution in the British collector car world. Nestled in the tiny and charming village of Bramley, just a stone's throw from London, it is one of the original specialist dealerships in the country and perhaps best known for its magical showroom, which teems with old English character and, despite its logistical challenges, is a brilliant space for displaying precious motorcars.



Today, the dealership is owned by Simon Gregg, an astute businessman who rose through the ranks at Guy Salmon Jaguar and Jack Barclay Bentley before acquiring Bramley in late 2005. "I'd bought cars from Bramley and always perceived it as one of the best specialist dealerships in the country," he tells us as we wander through the deceptively big complex of showrooms that are completely hidden from the roadside façade.

"I always loved the character of the site and the eclectic mix of cars it offered for sale. At the market high point in the 1980s, you could find all the then-current poster cars such as the Ferrari 288 GTO and Peugeot 205 T16 here." Though it's ebbed and flowed, Bramley's 50-strong inventory of cars today comprises predominantly low-mileage modern collector cars with ultra-high specifications – think Ferraris, Porsche 997s and 991s, Mercedes AMGs, BMW M cars, Bentleys, and Range Rovers.



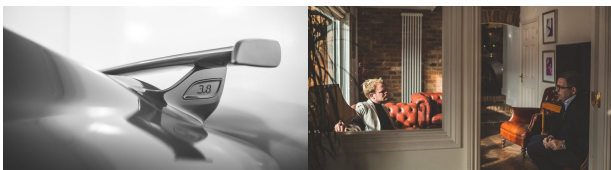
"At the point I entered, Bramley had previously been following the market and selling late Porsches and Mercedes' with great success, much like we do today," continues Gregg. "But at that point, supply was dwindling and because I was a big lover of Aston Martin, we pushed DB9s, V8 Vantages, and DBSs and sold a lot of cars until the financial crisis struck in 2008." Well ahead of the curve, he also dipped his toes in the classic Aston market, buying project cars and using the best specialists to comprehensively restore them before the values became too inflated for it to be worthwhile.

Gregg's experience at what he calls 'old-school' firms such as Guy Salmon led him to forge Bramley's policy of actually owning virtually all the stock it offers, thus increasing trust and transparency. "In that respect, it's been tricky for us over the last five years because the UK market has exploded with guys selling cars on consignment. But the market now seems to be changing in our favour in that we have sellers who really want a realistic view of what their cars are worth."



Another issue Gregg and his team currently face is market saturation. Volume is definitely the magic number and in a market that's now driven almost entirely by price, competing with tens of other sellers, including main dealers offering ridiculous finance initiatives, on regular BMWs, Audis, and Mercedes' is near impossible. And it's a market-wide problem. "Those marques with which we've historically performed well we're now rather wary of. We're looking for unusual colours, the highest specifications, and ultimately the price we can sell at - if we're going to be among 35 other cars, we need to be the cheapest in this price-driven market."

As a result, there are serious discounts to be had on virtually new cars ranging from Volkswagens to Rolls-Royces. Gregg leads us past a beautifully specified [Jubilee Silver Rolls-Royce Dawn](#) that's less than two years old and shows just 900 miles on the clock. Its list price was over £320,000, but Bramley is offering it for a whisker over £200,000. And it's a similar story with the fabulous looking Onyx Black Aston Martin DB11 V8 Volante, which is offered around £40,000 under list.



So, what is hot right now? "Ferraris are definitely still good news if the price is right and I think values of the last 3.8-litre Porsche 911s are holding up. A top-spec 911 GTS is a very good place to park some money and have some fun at the same time." By personally buying new cars from many of the manufacturers he deals in, Gregg is able to closely monitor their activity and anticipate the knock-on trends. It's of no surprise that there's a [Ferrari 458 Speciale](#) tucked away in a corner of the showroom - Gregg owns both a Speciale and an Aperta, cars he reckons are certified future classics.

We're also keen to quiz Gregg on another contentious issue at the moment: Brexit. More specifically, whether it's had a noticeable effect on business thus far and if he foresees any drastic changes over the coming months. "With the product we're selling here, I don't think it's ultimately going to affect us too much," he comments. "If there is a supply shortage from manufacturers in the short term, that's only good for the used market because there are fewer cars. In a microclimate way, that might be good for us, but then we still need people to still be taking delivery of new cars."



Bramley Motor Cars is a longstanding business but one that's constantly evolved in line with the trends of the market, and Gregg's approach is refreshingly straightforward. For four decades, its gorgeous showroom and ever-changing selection of stock have charmed enthusiasts and collectors both locally and across the country. Gregg is even meeting customers who remember visiting Bramley as star-struck teens and are now old and wealthy enough to return and indulge. "Our unwritten rule is that we'll always buy back anything we sell - we'll have a cheque waiting!" We don't doubt it, Simon.

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