



44

FRONT

4 THE MONTH IN PICTURES

Were you and your car there? Our photographers were

8 NEWS

Latest classic motor sports news, market trends and events, plus opinion from Simon Kidston (p11), Quentin Willson (p17) and Martin Gurdon (p23)

30 THE RIGHT STUFF

New goodies reviewed, including some you can win

38 DISCOVERED

Send us your stories and photos of fascinating finds – you could win £100

43 LETTERS

Share your views with us – you could win a Chopard roller pen

FEATURES

44 WHY EVERYONE WANTS A BENTLEY CONTINENTAL

Plus how to buy the right R-type or S-series

54 C111 BACK IN ACTION

At speed in the Mercedes record breaker

60 JOHN LYON: 50 YEARS A SPEED GURU

Insight from a man who made a career of driving fast cars for BSM's High Performance Course

64 ALFA CODA TRONCA: SHORT AND SWEET

To appreciate its magic you really have to drive one

72 SUPERSPEED V6

Driving the king of Ford Escort Mk1s

76 THE LOTUS 72 DEBATE

Engineers expose its strengths and weaknesses

82 LANCIA 2000 BERLINA

How this sophisticated Flavia derivative made European rivals seem archaic

84 SMALL WONDER

Secrets of one of the most glorious-sounding motors ever to hit the road – the Dino V6

88 THE FIRST ASTON DB2

Testing David Brown's prototype

94 BRISTOL BRIGAND

First test of the turbo heavyweight

98 AUSTIN 7 BUYING GUIDE

Experts reveal the path to pre-war happiness

102 CLAIM YOUR BATTERY CHARGER

worth £39 when you subscribe to *Classic Cars* by direct debit

BACK

104 ADS ON TEST

On-sale classics driven and assessed

114 TALKING SHOP

Inside Blakeney Motorsport's workshop

116 OUR CARS

What we've been up to over the past month

121 YOUR CARS

Richard Phillips' Aston Martin V8 S3

122 PRICE GUIDE

Values for more than 1200 cars

226 NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE/CONTACT US

ADVERTISING

128 DEALER ADVERTS

181 CARS FOR SALE

200 INSURANCE

208 SERVICES

222 CLUBS



THIS MONTH'S CARS

Alfa Romeo SZ Coda Tronca	p64
Alpine Renault A110	p106
Alvis TE21 DHC	p108
Aston Martin DB2 prototype	p88
Aston Martin DB5	p104
Aston Martin V8 S3	p121
Austin 7	p98
Bentley R-type Continental	p44
Bentley S1 Continental Fastback	p44
Bentley S2 Continental coupé	p44
Bentley S3 Continental Park Ward FHC	p44
BMW 1800Ti	p116
Bristol Brigand	p94
Daimler SP250	p117
Ferrari 308 GTB	p112
Ford Anglia 105E De Luxe	p117
Jaguar E-type S1 3.8 FHC	p119
Jaguar E-type S1 4.2 OTS	p110
Lancia 2000 Berlina	p82
Lotus 72	p76
Mercedes-Benz C111-IID	p54
Superspeed Ford Escort V6	p72



ASTON MARTIN DB2 PROTOTYPE

It is the familiar blended with the unfamiliar. Differences are subtle yet... Oh look, it's no good, I can sense you're distracted because I experienced similar thoughts when I first saw those big 18in wheels on an Aston Martin. Cynics might speculate that 'UMC 272' once appeared on an austerity precursor to *Pimp My Ride*, but the truth is those 18in wires are original equipment and not down to the over-exuberance of a previous owner with a penchant for trials.

The DB2 represents a pivotal moment in David Brown's ownership of Aston Martin. If the 2 Litre Sports - retrospectively referred to as the DB1 - saw Brown guide Aston Martin out of the primeval pottage, its successor is the next rung up on the evolutionary

ladder - when Aston Martin grew legs, quickly mastered walking and deftly learnt to run.

Despite being based on chief engineer Claude Hill's innovative 'Atom' chassis from 1939 and spawning the successful one-off 2 Litre Sports 'Spa Replica' that took Jock Horsfall and Leslie Johnson to victory in the 1948 Spa 24-hour race, the 1948 2 Litre Sports was not a success.

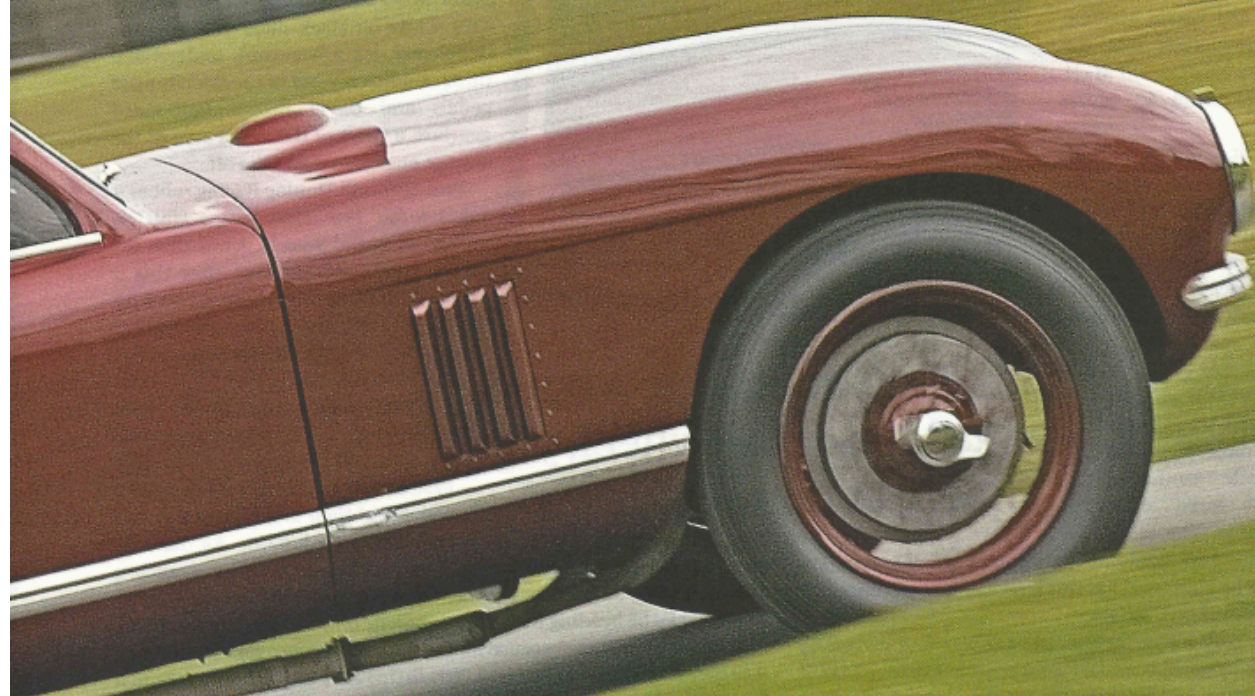
In open form it lacked rigidity - 13 of the 14 cars were dropheads - and despite the long bonnet promising much, it only covered a 1970cc four-cylinder motor.

After Brown's 1947 acquisition of Aston Martin and Lagonda his influence was quickly felt. Given his fondness for racing horses, polo, flying and motor sports, it was no surprise that under his ownership



Several years later (the original series went up to number 2000) the production of Aston Martin Works Series in 1952 was a major step forward for the company. The DB2 is the first of a series of cars that would become the backbone of the Aston Martin brand.

in the early 1950s



The prototype DB2 road car had a hectic life, first with David Brown then tackling the Targa Florio and Mille Miglia. This is the story of the car that would influence every subsequent Aston Martin

WORDS SIMON CHARLESWORTH
PHOTOGRAPHY LYNDON MCNEIL

In the beginning...

ASTON MARTIN DB2 PROTOTYPE

Aston Martin embraced the virtues of performance, sportiness and competition.

Encouraged by the success of the 2 Litre Sports at Spa, the new DB MkII made its debut at 1949's Le Mans 24-hours. Even though Hill had left the company, the new model used a shortened, strengthened (by Ted Cutting) version of the 2 Litre Sports chassis and 1970cc engine; but this time Hill's legacy sat beneath a two-seater fixed-head coupé of far more modern appearance. Once again styled by the DB1's designer, Frank Feeley, the DB MkII (as it was then called) represented a huge aesthetic step forward for Aston Martin; Feeley had clearly been taking notes on a recent trip to northern Italy.

Three DB MkIIs took part in the 24-hours: chassis LMA/49/1 ('UMC 64') driven by Arthur Jones and Nick Haines (the only car to finish, achieving seventh overall); LMA/49/2 ('UMC 65') driven by Pierre Maréchal and Taso Mathieson (which crashed, fatally injuring Maréchal); and LML/49/3 ('UMC 66') driven by Leslie Johnson and Charles Brackenbury (which retired after three laps).

Spa in 1949 was far better for Aston Martin with Johnson and Brackenbury driving UMC 66 to an impressive third overall and Haines and Lance Macklin finishing fifth. Indeed, such was the improvement that the 2.5-litre DB MkII, or DB2, got the go-ahead for series production.

Strangely enough it was the initially disappointing UMC 66 that made the biggest impact on Aston Martin's future. David Brown insisted on fitting the Lagonda LB6 six-cylinder engine to the car and it was this decision, effectively ending development of his 1970cc overhead-valve unit, that had sparked Hill's resignation.

UMC 272 is the fourth chassis, LML/49/4, and the first six-cylinder DB2 built to complete road specification. A little confusion surrounds the car's build sheet because two are on file. The more comprehensive of the two contains particulars of non-standard equipment and states 'Le Mans car', but this is probably a reference to it featuring similar bodywork to UMC 66.

Completed in July 1949 just after Spa, the car was first owned by David Brown. Essentially packing almost ideal provenance for a DB2, it represents Aston Martin getting into its gentlemanly stride as a builder of bespoke sporting GTs. Moreover, you can state without any hesitation that UMC 272 represents the Aston Martin DB range's 'big bang' moment.

Its first recorded trip was with Brown to the BRDC International Trophy at Silverstone, where it tackled a lap of honour with Macklin. It was also used for public relations work, Laurence Pomeroy driving it to Paris, Brussels and Le Mans for *The Motor*. It remained with the factory until 1950 when Macklin was invited to compete in the Targa Florio; no works car was available so he bought and entered it as a works-supported entry. Mid-journey he entered the Coppa Inter-Europa at Monza, finishing fourth at an average 85mph behind a works Alfa and two Ferraris and winning the concours d'élégance too.

The Aston was then shipped from Naples to Palermo for the Targa. But after a 3am start in dreadful weather its race ended when Macklin, co-driver John Gordon and UMC 272 plunged into a ravine at speed while chasing Alberto Ascari's Ferrari. Luckily only the car was damaged and a new front was dispatched from England. A month of repair work meant Macklin missed the start of the Mille Miglia in Brescia by five hours, which didn't put him off joining the event mid-course. When Macklin finally got home - after stopping off to visit his mother in Monte-Carlo - the repair bill was so big that he had to scil UMC 272 to a John Watkinson to settle the account.

Several owners later (its original service record goes up to number six) and after restoration at Aston Martin Works Service in 1992 followed by nearly 20 years of storage hibernation, *Classic Cars* is the first UK magazine to drive UMC 272.

A generous ride height, those vast wire wheels and a roofline 4in lower than a production DB2 are immediate eye-catchers and contrive to give UMC 272 an almost street-rod feel. The effect is enhanced by the metallic finish of the 1991 paint; its build sheet does say maroon - but metallic paint in the Forties? Then there's that vast clamshell bonnet, which looks like hybrid of a production DB2 and the car's four-cylinder experimental sisters.

There's a knack to getting in - a standard DB2 is a tight fit for a 6ft 1in driver, so lower the roofline by 4in and it's like pot-holing. At last I'm in and experiencing a nice scalp massage from the woollen headlining, with rationed legroom dictating a driving position resembling a yogic flyer in mid-bounce. The instrument layout owes a lot to the 2 Litre Sport, and in many ways it makes more sense than the production DB2's central binnacle; the biggest difference is that it wears wood rather than leather. Dotted with white-on-black dials and Bakelite switchgear, it's a beautiful, understated thing. A quick try-out of the floor-hinged pedals and David Brown four-speed gearbox, a twist of the key, a stab of the starter, engage first and I'm off...

Riding on soft Dunlop Racing rubber it takes a fair few miles before UMC is riding on round wheels. Until then it's shake, rattle and toil. But after this it doesn't take long to come to terms with driving this car and you're soon relaxed enough able to admire the cabin's Forties ambience.

UMC effortlessly duels with swarms of black cabs, motorcycle couriers and blinkered cyclists. The cast iron 12in Girling brakes need a shove, but their stopping power and feedback are just-so. As for the

steering, if only production DB2s had managed to come to such a pleasant compromise between the warring demands of feel and weight.

Ideally I'd be heading for La Sarthe, Sicily or the Mille Miglia circuit, but time is against me because tomorrow UMC's new owner is shipping it to Switzerland. So instead it's only fitting that UMC should take in a few of its old haunts around Middlesex and Surrey. Property developers and councils have foiled any attempt to revisit the car's Feltham salad days, so instead let's go hunting for suitable rural roads to get a feel for what this car was like in 1949.

The steering box is good for its type, but there's a horrible numb void in the middle that only serves to make driving on beaten-up motorways even more edgy thanks to tyres that yearn to go sideways. Yet I'm highly impressed by the LB6's ability to cope with traffic, because you can be lazy and let the torque do the hard work; given its age, the docility and flexibility of this engine are considerable.

In typical Aston style the big Smiths 120mph clockwise speedometer and anti-clockwise tachometer needles mirror one another. At 3000rpm the 2.6-litre unit hits its sweet spot and the deliciously bronchial mild-mannered engine note alters. Losing all decorum, it becomes louder and less inhibited, building up to a goosebump-coaxing oral apogee.

But I promised the car's custodian, Nicholas Mee, that I would treat it with due care and respect, so reluctantly I select top gear; after all, Laurence Pomeroy may have written 'The six-cylinder Aston Martin DB MkII stands worthily in the pedigree of real motor cars stretching back through the 4.5-litre Bentley to the 30/98 Vauxhall,' but in period the LB6 wasn't terribly reliable. You only have to look at UMC 272's service record to see it has experienced plenty of engine issues.

Eventually I stumble across some clear roads devoid of nonsensical



DB MkII 'UMC 66' was the first Aston fitted with the Lagonda LB6 six-cylinder engine

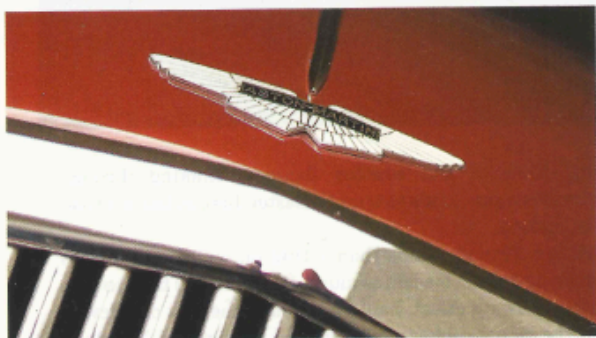
'You don't gobble up a bend in one lock of the wheel, you nibble at it in segments'



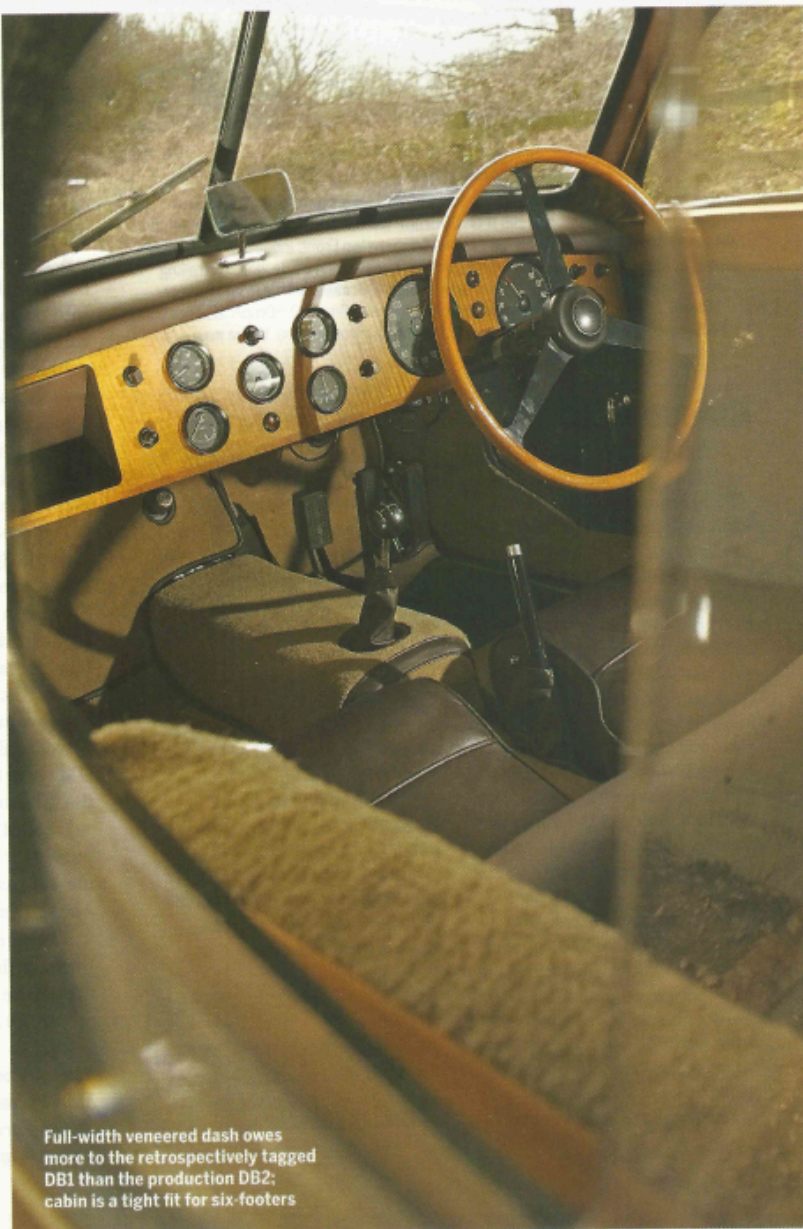
Double overhead camshaft LB6 straight-six was originally designed for Lagonda by WO Bentley and Willie Watson



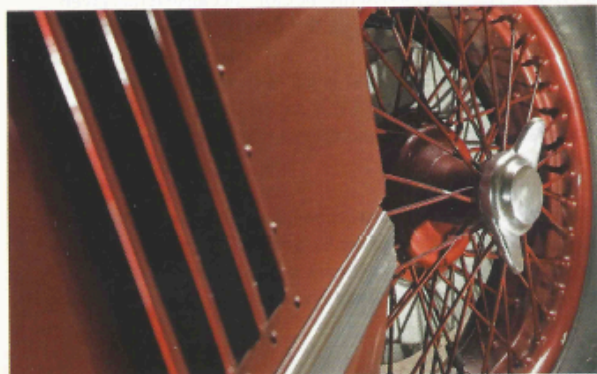
Three-piece grille made way for a single casting in production DB2s



Rear end is often likened to a Jaguar E-type coupé or Zagato's 1948 MG 1500 Panoramica



Full-width veneered dash owes more to the retrospectively tagged DB1 than the production DB2; cabin is a tight fit for six-footers



ASTON MARTIN DB2 PROTOTYPE

Vast 18in wheels were replaced by wider 16in rims and the roofline was raised by 4in when the DB2 went into production



1949 ASTON MARTIN DB2 PROTOTYPE

Engine 2580cc in-line six-cylinder, dohc, two SU H4 carburettors **Power and torque** 105bhp @ 5000rpm; 125lb ft @ 3100rpm **Transmission** Four-speed manual, rear-wheel drive **Steering** Worm-and-roller **Suspension** Front: independent, trailing arms, coil springs, lever-arm dampers, anti-roll bar. Rear: live axle, parallel trailing arms, oil springs, Panhard rod, lever-arm dampers **Brakes** Drums front and rear **Weight** 1112kg (2452lb) **Performance** Top speed: 110mph; 0-60mph: 12.4sec **Fuel consumption** 17mpg **Cost new** £1915 (production saloon) **Value now** n/a

Claude Hill: life after Aston Martin

CLAUDE HILL WASN'T the only person to fall out with David Brown – Harry Ferguson was another, following a disagreement over tractor sales.

After resigning from Massey-Harris-Ferguson Ltd, he established Harry Ferguson Research Ltd in 1950 with the aim of producing a safe family car with a four-wheel-drive transmission. This had been inspired by a vehicle nicknamed 'the crab' that had been put together by Freddie Dixon and Tony Rolt, who joined the new company as directors. Dixon left the company shortly after, but Hill was hired to work with Rolt as the crab progressed.

The concept was eventually binned and replaced by the first of the R-cars, which culminated in the R5 prototype – a ground-breaking five-door hatchback with four-wheel drive and ABS brakes. Ferguson had hoped that a major manufacturer would be interested in series production, but it was not to be.

Only Richard Jensen showed an interest in the R5...

In 1960 while working on a new 4x4 racing car, 'Project 99' – the car would eventually win the 1961 Gold Cup Race at Oulton Park with Stirling Moss driving – Ferguson collapsed and died on October 25. Sadly, he never saw a production car use his four-wheel drive and ABS systems but the technology found its way into the Jensen Interceptor FF and the never-raced 4x4 1964 F1 BRM P67.

Hill stayed with Ferguson Research until retiring in 1972, serving as a consultant until his death in September 1982 – a truly great engineer who, given his work at Aston Martin and Ferguson, deserves far more recognition.



Groundbreaking Ferguson R5 4x4

traffic-calming obstacles and weather damage. Snaking through woodland and with no side roads to tempt disaster, here at last is a road we can both appreciate.

UMC is wieldier through bends than a DB2 on wider 16in wheels because the steering doesn't load up as much. However, you have to take into account the sideways effect: haul on lock and the lack of sidewall rigidity means the racing rubber won't respond like a radial. You don't gobble up a bend in one application of lock, you nibble at it. Inch the steering around the bend, divide it into segments, wait for the tyres to settle, grip and respond, before turning the steering again and repeat until you're around.

Work the engine and enjoy the gearbox: it has real gravitas and is well engineered. Understand UMC's dynamics and the sense of satisfaction isn't merely palpable, it's highly effective therapy against the electrically assisted fly-by-wire this, that and the other of 2010.

Did Aston make the right changes when it put the car into production? Yes, given *The Autocar's* 1950 review of the DB2: 'It is difficult to give too much praise to the handling and performance...' Both the extra leg and headroom aid comfort, as do the wheels normally found on production DB2s (though early road tests quoted a nine per cent performance improvement using 18in wheels) because stability is boosted considerably. The same has to be said of the styling. As for the interior, UMC's is far more functionally and aesthetically successful, if not as flexible for left-hand drive as the production DB2's.

UMC 272 is charming and characterful, but I won't remember it purely for that. Instead it's stamped in my memory because it has given me an insight into the development of the first true David Brown Aston Martin.

At the end of the journey, only one word is in my head: smitten. I hope this won't be the last we see of this car in the UK and that its departure for a new life in Switzerland marks not a fond farewell but merely *au revoir*. ☞

Thanks to: Daniel A Waltenberg (www.legendaryastons.com), Aston Martin Heritage Specialists Nicholas Mee & Co (www.nicholasmee.co.uk), James Forshaw at Aston Service Dorset (www.astonservicedorset.com), Anne Wright at the Aston Martin Heritage Trust (www.amheritrust.org)