

CLASSIC DRIVER

Driven: Aston Martin DBS and V8 Volante



For those attending the annual Bonhams Aston Martin Works Service sale, here's a little tip. By all means bid on the barn-finds, and enjoy the once-in-a-lifetime experience of embarking on a full restoration project. But...

...within the catalogue lie two Astons, one of which has already benefited from a £190k total restoration by Works Service itself and the other has – in the words of the catalogue – received a “most extensive” restoration, again at Newport Pagnell and this time to the tune of £176k.

Both cars carry perfectly reasonable estimates, and are as ‘on the button’ as you could ever ask for. Oh, and they both have something in common – but I’ll leave that to the postscript. I was able to drive the pair at their Newport Pagnell base this week. First up was Lot 330, the Works Service-converted to ‘Prince of Wales’ specification, 1986 Aston Martin V8 Volante (estimate: £70,000 - 100,000). Starting life as a LHD, Series 1 car built for the American market, all bar body-off work it’s a comprehensive restoration with LHD/RHD conversion, new Weber carburettors, Ronal alloy wheels, a higher-final-drive rear axle, a re-trimmed interior and superlative new (back to bare metal) paintwork in that most attractive Aston colour: Cumberland Grey. ▫ The black leather interior, fine veneers, discreet ‘POW’ looks and gorgeous browny graphite paint finish do sort of say “buy me”, I have to admit. X-pack, 6.3-litres and Vantage performance be blown; as a standard Aston Martin V8, this doesn’t half look good. ▫ It drove well, too. Which is *sort of* as you’d expect, with the work that’s gone into the car, but should never be taken for granted. No creaks permeate the cabin, the steering is smooth, the brakes firm (although I would hanker after the [Works Service conversion](#)... but you’ve got to be allowed a little personalisation post-purchase, haven’t you?) and the silky engine is more than capable of three-figure cruising, top-down into the sunset. Built to a strict specification from a very particular owner, this V8 Volante has remained in storage at Newport Pagnell since its completion and, in all honesty, does genuinely feel ‘new’. ▫ ▫ ▫ As does the other Aston, Lot 317 — £50,000 - 70,000 — an early 1968 DBS (six-cylinder, naturally, but you’d know that a V8 would have been a ‘DBSV8’) to ‘Vantage’ specification. This car has really benefited from ‘the full works’ — by the Works themselves. Unleaded conversion apart, a time-travelling employee from Newport Pagnell in the 60s would clearly recognise this as a car fresh from the production line. It is in simply immaculate condition; as you’d expect from the comprehensive restoration completed in 2008 that included replacing the automatic gearbox with a correct 5-speed ZF, rebuilding the engine to unleaded specification with new Webers, re-trimming in black hide and repainting to luscious Olive Green metallic.

Compared with the later car, this late-60s Aston feels a touch livelier. The radial tyres are narrower. There’s no power steering, but at just a few miles-per-hour the large-diameter, studded wooden wheel is easy to turn. And on the move at motorway speeds it’s rock-solid, with no play in the steering and a steady bank of instrument needles in front of the driver.

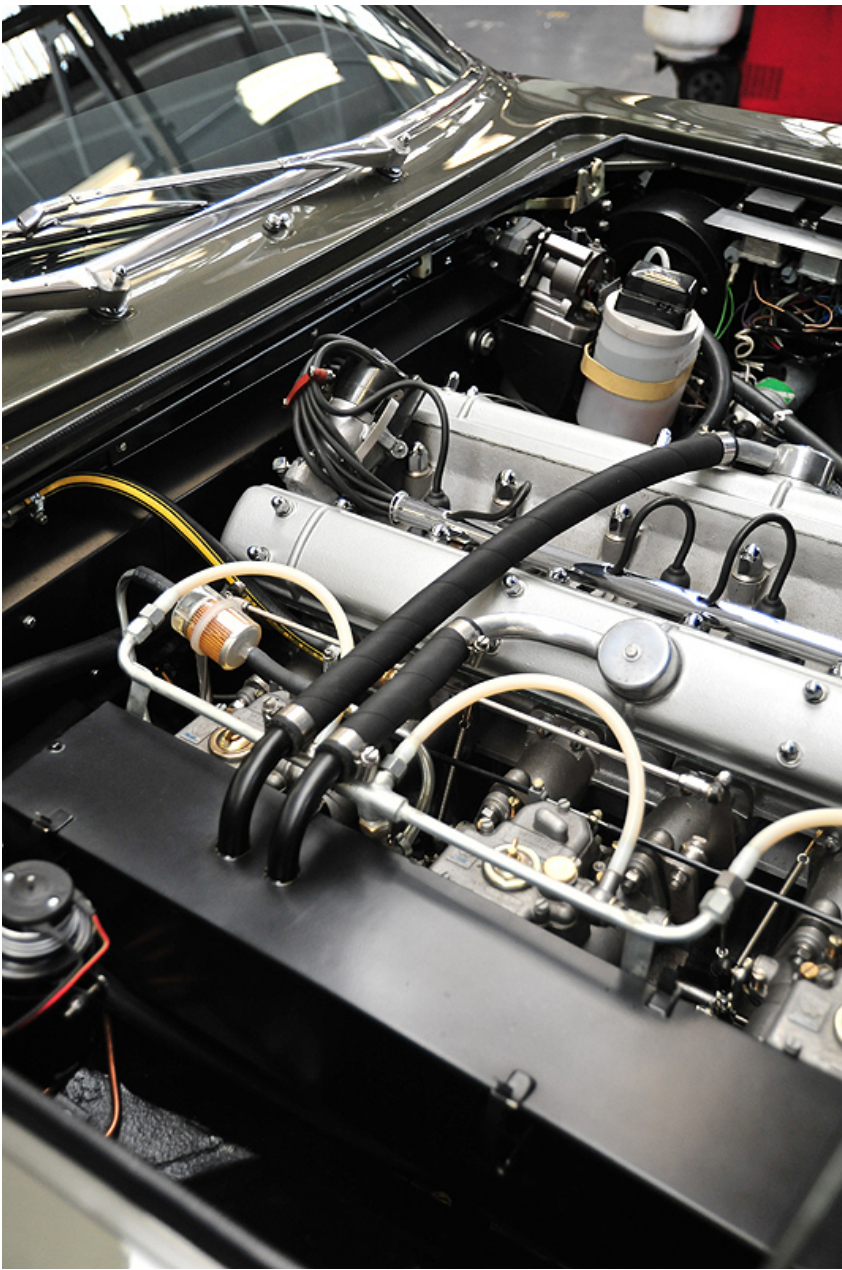


As the car warms up, it settles into a nice loping stride that DB4/5/6 drivers will recognise. The ZF 'box is easy to use, with the overdriven fifth gear a real bonus on long journeys. We were travelling three-up and it really does provide reasonable 2+2 accommodation.

Visually, the William Towns body with styling that was to be used throughout the 70s to late-80s in the famous 'V8' looks at its best in this very early form. The perfect chromework complements the lines well. The sparkling wire wheels, the last time they'd be used in an Aston, go nicely, too.

For so long one of the more affordable classic Aston Martins, it's unusual to see a DBS in such fine fettle. Like its younger brother, this car has seen very little road work since its restoration and I felt, mile by mile, the car breaking itself in and starting to come alive again.







So, come 21 May, have fun with the barn-finds but do consider either of these, fresh-from-restoration (at Works Service, no less) Astons that will be as 'new for you' as you can get.

And, even better, someone else has footed the bill.



Postscript: *You might have noticed something familiar about the specification of the two Astons. If not, "pay attention!", please, as I can report that both are to 'James Bond 007' specification and represent one enthusiast's dream of owning a replica of the George Lazenby 'On Her Majesty's Secret Service' DBS and Timothy Dalton's 'Living Daylights' 'POW' V8 Volante.*

The reason I leave this to the end is a simple one. As a possible buyer I would not give a jot about the 007 connection, if anything it would be a bit of a turn-off. I would, however, be greatly interested in buying the best possible car, in the most desirable colour specification with impeccable service and restoration history. With either of these Aston Martins, a prospective Aston owner's world would be complete. Which is more than enough.

Both cars will be offered for sale at Bonhams' 21 May, all-Aston Martin and Lagonda auction at Works Service, Newport Pagnell. You can see all motor car entries in the [Classic Driver car database](#), or visit www.bonhams.com.

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