

CLASSIC DRIVER

Aston Martin V8 Vantage Volante Special Edition

Lead

With a drive in Aston Martin's latest limited-edition convertible an enjoyable recent memory, our minds turned to another very special open car built by the famous British company, the 'V8 Vantage Volante Special Edition'.

The name might be a bit of a mouthful (and that's leaving off the oft-quoted 'short chassis' bit), but the rare – only eight were commissioned by Aston's very best clients – cars were the very last V8s built at Newport Pagnell, in the year 2000. As such, they represent a defining moment in the company's history.

For the regular V8 Volante, the engineers at Newport Pagnell had lengthened the coupé's wheelbase by 200mm. An elegant design, the longer car allowed the power roof mechanism to be accommodated while maintaining good luggage space and adequate leg-room for rear-seat passengers.

All cars were powered by Aston's familiar fuel-injected V8, coupled to a four-speed automatic transmission. The cars were effortlessly fast, but did not have the brutal destructive power of the twin-supercharged coupés.

However, the idea of all the high-performance componentry of the fastest coupé (on its standard, or 'short', chassis) but with open, 'Volante' bodywork was one hard to resist for the Special Projects Division of Works Service, headed by Steve Bolton and Shaun Rush.

The decision was taken to build cars for a very select group of the company's most loyal and enthusiastic clients, eight of whom ordered one. Each car was slightly different – as you'd expect from such a bespoke process – three being LHD, five RHD. All were fully type-approved and homologated and the basic price was a cool £230,000.

The colours ranged from Cumberland Grey (the first car delivered) through Coniston Sand (one that also packed many V600-specification improvements) and Antrim Blue, to the very last, finished in Balmoral Green.

'Balmoral', with its connections to the Royal Family, and 'green', the colour of British cars racing abroad: it's all very 'Aston Martin' of the Newport Pagnell era and a fine end to a family of cars with hand-built V8s that was introduced in the late 1960s.

Today, a V8 Vantage Volante Special Edition is highly prized and a rare car indeed, with a well-deserved, 'chapter-closing' reputation as one of the company's very last truly bespoke cars.

Photo: Aston Martin

Gallery

