

CLASSIC DRIVER

[This Porsche 718 RSK is your ticket to the world](#)

Lead

When James Turner from Sports Purpose told us about this stunning 1958 Porsche 718 RSK, we just had to come and see it for real, photograph it and find out about its 63-year history.



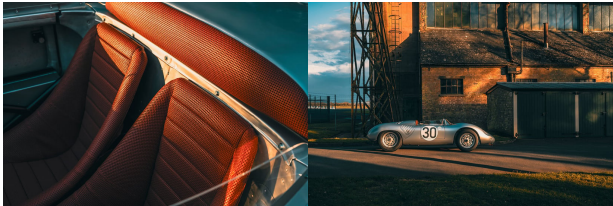
For any true Porsche fan, arriving at [Sports Purpose](#) at Bicester Heritage is always an exciting moment, whether it's the cars in the showroom or the ones carefully tucked away under covers, everything here is special and has a fascinating story. Today, though, we're here to delve into the [Porsche 718 RSK](#) that sits quietly in the showroom – but not for long...

James opens up the doors and we carefully push the car outside, ready to warm it up. The 718 RSK barks into life. Wow – it sounds absolutely fantastic. After a long, tough winter, just hearing a car this special warm up is a sign that things are finally starting to look a little more positive. As it warms up, we're joined by consultant Philip Basil, who's a font of knowledge on this car and can help me delve into its fascinating history.



Chassis 718-004 is a 1958 factory team car and one of the second series of works cars to be built. The 718 RSK is an evolution of the 550A RS, and a total of 34 cars were made over three years, with 10 of those being works examples like this. These were treated to continual development, most notably the longer nose that housed the spare wheel behind a panel at the front, while the bonnet surface was used to cool a complex oil system, which is a work of art.

Built in May 1958, the finished car was quickly put to work at the Le Mans 24 Hours in June, where it recorded a DNF after being pushed off the circuit by a Ferrari in treacherous weather. Its next outing was a hillclimb in Germany where the car sustained damage to the front. Porsche saw an opportunity, and the car was used by the factory to develop a front-mounted cooler that would be rolled out on customer RSKs for 1959.



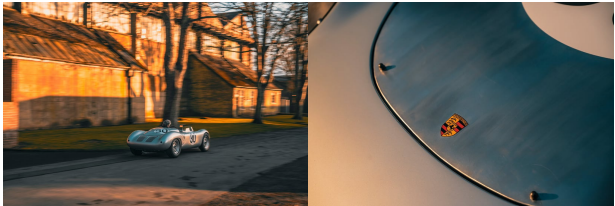
After a few more events, the car was sold to a gentlemen driver in Argentina – and this is where the story gets really juicy. After campaigning the car in the US – including a run at the first-ever sportscar race at the newly opened Daytona – Anton Von Dory’s last competitive event with 718-004 was the Buenos Aires 1,000km; perhaps not the world’s most well-known event. It’s thought that there was a clear motive for this move, however.

Basil explains: “Von Dory had managed to acquire the famous Cisitalia Type 360 Grand Prix car on behalf of Porsche from the collection of General Peron, however he didn’t have a way of exporting it from Argentina to Germany. So he used the shipping crate and documents that had been used to import 718-004 for the race in order to ship the Cisitalia back to Stuttgart – where it remains to this day in the Porsche Museum.”



Over the course of the 1960s, the car changed hands several times in Portugal. These gentleman-racer owners struggled to keep the 718 RSK in fine form, as the car’s notoriously complex four-cam engine was difficult to keep reliable at club racing level without access to experienced Porsche technicians.

Looking at the car in the fading sunlight, it’s hard to imagine discovering this car in the ’70s with its engine missing and wearing sections of fibreglass bodywork. Peter Kaus eventually purchased the car for his famous Bianco Collection in Germany, which at its peak ballooned to over 250 cars. In 2006, the collection was closed, and the Louwman Museum in the Netherlands purchased a large portion of it, including 718-004, which remained in part-restored, non-running condition.



Three years later, this silver slice of history was finally treated to a faithful restoration at the hands of Albert Westerman, who added the car to his extensive Porsche collection. Carefully chosen specialists in Germany gradually pieced the car back together and it was returned to its 1958 specification with a nose-mounted oil cooler. Work was completed in 2013 and the car has been used sparingly since, with the occasional outing such as the 2019 Goodwood Revival, where it took part in a 1959 Tourist Trophy celebration.



For the 2020 Goodwood Speedweek, the car was invited to participate in a celebration of Porsche's first Le Mans win in 1970. Sport Purpose director James Turner was privileged to be in command of 718-004 over the weekend. "To climb into the cockpit and settle into the red vinyl trim used on works cars is indeed to follow in the footsteps of giants. One is always conscious of the responsibility of driving this car," he comments.

He continues: "On the fast sweeps of Goodwood, the car gamely kept up with the 1970 Le Mans winning 917 and a 3.0RSR as part of the high-speed demonstration. It is, without doubt, a car that one can imagine racing or demonstrating comfortably and with confidence."



As George Williams finishes up his last few photos, the sun has set and yet the Porsche 718 RSK still seems to glow, attracting whatever light it can to reflect off the gloriously patinated body work. Rolling it back in to the Sports Purpose showroom, I can only imagine what it's like to drive such a car; the way it rolls so freely, you know that it'll be gloriously light steering around your favourite roads.

Cars this special open the door to participating in some of the greatest motoring events in the world – and as we stick our heads outside for the first time in months and listen to the glorious song of the 718 RSK, can't you just imagine attending some of those? Just don't be surprised if your diary quickly fills up with invites!

Photos: GF Williams © 2021

Gallery

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