

# Bonhams

MAGAZINE | MOTORING



## **Super charged**

How Mercedes-Benz  
powered its way to success

## **Vantage point**

Andy Palmer takes the  
wheel at Aston Martin

## **Rapide reaction**

A British classic rescued from a skip

# News & forthcoming sales

## COMING DOWN THE TRACK FOR SPRING SEASON 2015

• Bonhams' record-breaking motoring department is gearing up for 22 sales across the globe in 2015.

• This year's Mercedes-Benz sale will take place in March. The auction, which had its debut last year in Stuttgart, returns after a string of recent successes for single-marque sales. In May, for example, enthusiasts will once again gather at Aston Martin's spiritual home, Newport Pagnell, for the annual Works Service Sale, showcasing the best from the legendary British marque. This spring also sees Bonhams launch two new auctions: the Amelia Island Auction in Florida, and the Goodwood Members' Meeting Sale.

• In this issue, Richard Holt describes how Mercedes-Benz drove its way to pole position; Richard Williams talks to Andy Palmer, the new CEO of Aston Martin, about his strategy for the brand, and finally, it's hard to believe anyone would throw away one of the world's rarest motorcycles, but that's exactly what nearly happened to a 1939 Vincent-HRD Series-A Rapide. Read all about it on the opposite page.

## SALES DIARY

### THE CARRIAGE COLLECTION

7 March  
Oxford, UK

### THE AMELIA ISLAND AUCTION

12 March  
Florida, US

### GOODWOOD MEMBERS' MEETING SALE

21 March  
Chichester, UK

### THE MERCEDES-BENZ SALE

28 March  
Stuttgart, Germany

### THE SPRING STAFFORD SALE

26 April  
Staffordshire, UK

### THE ASTON MARTIN WORKS SALE

9 May  
Newport Pagnell, UK

### THE SPA CLASSIC SALE

23 May  
Brussels, Belgium

### THE AMELIA ISLAND AUCTION

Thursday 12 March

#### *The last US-Specification example built*

1992 Ferrari F40

Estimate: \$1,200,000 - 1,400,000

One of just 213 US-delivery F40s ever built, this is a flawless example of a Ferrari Classiche certified supercar.



### THE GOODWOOD 73RD MEMBERS' MEETING SALE

Saturday 21 March

1955 Frazer Nash Le Mans Coupe

Estimate: £550,000 - 650,000

Rewind 50 years and this beautiful sea-green coupe could have been spotted racing at Members' Meetings.



### THE GOODWOOD 73RD MEMBERS' MEETING SALE

Saturday 21 March

1939 Frazer Nash-BMW 328 Roadster

Estimate: £650,000 - 750,000

This beautiful roadster has never been fully restored and so retains its original character. In present ownership for over 40 years, the car has now been recommissioned for the road.



### THE MERCEDES-BENZ SALE

Saturday 28 March

1900 Benz Ideal 4 1/2 hp

Estimate: €230,000 - 280,000

The 115-year-old Ideal was the successor to history's first combustion-engined motor car. One modification included an impressive 4 1/2 horsepower single cylinder power engine.



### THE ASTON MARTIN WORKS SALE

Saturday 9 May

#### *The Marsh Plant*

Aston Martin Works Service DB7 DP002

Estimate: £55,000 - 75,000

This DB7 was one of 6 cars used by Aston Martin for development purposes. After retiring as a development car, it went on to compete in several races including the Super GT.





# Rapide reaction

**Simon de Burton** explains how a very special Vincent Rapide was saved from certain destruction not once, but twice

If you love classic bikes, but are also inclined to bristle when told by old-timers that “£10 was a lot of money in those days”, perhaps you should avoid reading on. Because a £10 note plus an Amal TT carburettor of indeterminate value was all it took for the late Harry Lloyd to become the lawful owner of what is now considered to be one of the most covetable of all British motorcycles: a Vincent-HRD Series-A Rapide.

Admittedly Lloyd did the deal in 1959 when, according to one of the internet’s fascinating ‘historic inflation calculators,’ a tenner was the equivalent of £204.33 today. So was it a lot of money? That’s probably a matter of circumstance. But a quarter of a million in 2015 certainly is – and that’s roughly what the Rapide is likely to fetch when it comes under the hammer at Bonhams annual spring motorcycle sale in Stafford.

The story that will be passed on with it is a quintessential tale of eleventh-hour rescue following the decision by the machine’s previous owner to junk the bike after wrecking the gearbox and, somehow, managing to lose its wheels – and one or two other key components.

When word reached Lloyd that the motorcycle was languishing in a Liverpool garden earmarked for scrap, he quickly stepped in and added it to his existing pair of Vincents – a Meteor and a Comet – cannibalising bits from both to expedite getting the Rapide back on the road.

After that, he attached a sidecar and covered 20,000 miles prior to 1968 (with the occasional interlude for repairs) before deciding to strip the Rapide down for a comprehensive rebuild.

But, as is so often the case, life got in the way and Lloyd’s beloved Vincent spent the next dozen years laid up in a rented lock-up – which was unexpectedly cleared by council workers whom he interrupted just as they were preparing

to throw the bike into a skip.

The Rapide spent a further 17 years in the safer haven of Lloyd’s spare bedroom before being entrusted to marque specialist Glyn Johnson of the Vincent Workshop who, in 2013, finally completed a meticulous restoration of this rare thoroughbred, which is one of only 60 Series A examples thought to have survived and the penultimate to have been produced.

There’s a sadness to the story, however, because Lloyd died in 2008 before ever seeing his two-wheeled companion of 50 years emerge into the sunlight, resplendent in freshly-

**“He interrupted council workers just as they were preparing to throw the bike into a skip”**

applied stove enamel paint, its powertrain rebuilt and improved, its ancillaries replaced or meticulously restored and with every nut, bolt, screw and washer upgraded with stainless steel substitutes, finished to the appearance of the originals.

Now, still carrying the registration mark it was issued with in 1939, the mighty, 1,000cc v-twin with 110 mph potential is set to be among the stars of the Stafford sale. It’s described by Ben Walker, International Director of Bonhams motorcycle department, as, quite simply, “One of the Holy Grails of the motorcycle world.”

And wouldn’t you like to think that in 50 years time, whoever buys it might just say to an awe-struck grandchild: “I paid £250,000 for it back in 2015. And that was a lot of money in those days, I can tell you ...”

*Simon de Burton writes about cars and watches for The Financial Times.*



All images courtesy of © Morton's Archive

**Above left:** The Vincent-HRD Series-A Rapide  
Estimate: £220,000 - 260,000;  
Vincent staff out testing a HRD Series-A Rapide

Sale: The Spring Stafford Sale  
Staffordshire County Showground  
Sunday 26 April  
Enquiries: Ben Walker  
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## Andy Palmer, Aston Martin's new chief executive, explains to **Richard Williams** how he plans to steer the company to success

Of the 70,000 or so Aston Martins built over the 102 years of the company's history, from the pre-war Ulsters through the DBR1 that conquered Le Mans to 007's various playthings, more than 90 per cent are still on the road. In the mind of Andy Palmer, the company's new chief executive, that statistic represents a confirmation of the value of a brand for which he has big plans.

Palmer left Nissan, where he had spent 24 of his 51 years, to take over at Aston Martin's headquarters in Gaydon, in the West Midlands, last September. He has a sweeping mission for a company whose future prosperity will require a combination of vision and pragmatism. But the traditions of a company famous for making fast cars for James Bond and the Prince of Wales remain a cornerstone.

It takes little encouragement to get Palmer reflecting on the vital role still being played by the old works in Newport Pagnell, where the great six-cylinder cars were built between 1955 and 2007. It is there that owners can still take their classic models to be restored and refettled or simply laid up over the winter months, looked after by staff who understand every nuance and detail of the machinery.

"A brand is basically a mark of trust," Palmer says. "You can't measure it by price or volume. And it's not something, unless you're very lucky, that you can get overnight. What's being done

at Newport Pagnell represents everything that Aston Martin is – the epitome of craftsmanship."

The challenge for Palmer is to rejuvenate a company with an illustrious heritage but an unhealthy balance sheet. An injection of funds from Aston Martin's owners – a consortium including Kuwaiti investors and an Italian private equity fund as well as Daimler AG, the parent company of Mercedes-Benz – will allow him to update a range of well-regarded but now ageing models while increasing sales in untapped markets, notably China and Japan.

"The brand is at a difficult point in its history," Palmer says. "If we're being very honest, most of the 102 years of Aston Martin have been very difficult. What I'd love to do in the 15 years ahead of me is to use that tenure to make the next 102 years much more stable – and create something great. We're going to replace the portfolio of cars, and extend it."

In the short term, starting at the Geneva Motor Show in March, the headlines are likely to be provided by models produced in limited numbers by the company's Special Projects department. The DB10, built in an edition of 10 for *Spectre*, the next Bond film, caused a stir last year, as did the Lagonda Taraf, a new luxury saloon reviving a marque long associated with Aston Martin.



At the other extreme is a prospect to delight enthusiasts stirred by the appearance last year of a virtual mid-engined supercar design called the DP-100 Vision, created by Marek Reichman, the company's chief designer, for a video game. Palmer's words hint that something like it might become reality: "Do I think the brand deserves what we might call a 'halo' supercar? My answer would be yes - when we've got the portfolio moving in the right direction."

Hybrid powerplants will eventually make an appearance, helped by the company's new partnership with Daimler, who will supply engines and electronic systems. "You can't be in the car industry of the future and not address the issue of low-emission technology," Palmer says. "But it's extraordinarily expensive, and the relationship with Daimler gives us access to it. It's interesting not only for fuel consumption but for supplementing power, which is what you'd expect from Aston Martin."

Last year the company produced just under 4,000 cars, about half the factory's flat-out capacity; (Bentley, by contrast, sell around 10,000 cars a year, Ferrari about 7,000). Palmer aims to increase sales – he will not be specific, but perhaps by around 50 per cent – before imposing a cap.

Women customers represent another area of potential expansion. "Less than 4 per cent of our customers are female," he says, which will not surprise those who think of Astons as the epitome of an understated but self-confident masculinity. Women love them, Palmer adds, but mainly through the warmth of their approval when their husbands or partners acquire one. He plans to change that. "The empowered female is the biggest car segment in the world, and the opportunity is huge. But it's not a marketing exercise. It has to be reflected in the cars that we deliver."

"It's not about painting them pink and adding a hook for a handbag. That's demeaning. Women are looking for a car that invites them in, that has the right ergonomics. It's also about making sure that the cars are not intimidating to drive – or to buy. If a couple go in and a dealer talks to the guy but not to the woman, automatically we're going to alienate her from the brand."

Is he at the stage of identifying a Philippa or a Marcia, to match the male customer archetypes around which product decisions are made? "Yes, I am. She's the profile of the customer for one of the cars that I've got coming in the future. Her name is Charlotte."

Not Kate, then, although probably the most celebrated example of a woman in an Aston was the newly wed Duchess of Cambridge, driven away from Buckingham Palace on a fine spring day in 2011 by her husband, who had borrowed his father's one-owner DB6 Volante Mk II convertible for the occasion, its navy blue convertible coachwork buffed to perfection. The next time a famous woman appears in an Aston Martin, Palmer would like her to be in the driving seat.

*Richard Williams has written several books on motor racing including Enzo Ferrari: A Life and The Last Road Race.*



**Left to right:** Aston Martin's Newport Pagnell works; Andy Palmer, the company's new CEO

To be offered at:  
Bonhams Aston Martin Sale,  
The Marsh Plant/Anthony Reid  
1980 Aston Martin V8R EVO 4  
Estimate: £50,000 - 80,000

The Aston Martin Works Sale  
Newport Pagnell  
Saturday 9 May  
Enquiries: James Knight  
+44 (0) 20 7447 7440  
james.knight@bonhams.com

Further ahead lie more profound changes to the basic lineup, clarifying the distinctions between the present hierarchy of Vanquish, DB9 and Vantage, with their assortment of V8 and V12 engines. "We need to give greater degrees of separation," Palmer says, "so that it's apparent to more than the connoisseurs of the brand who already understand the differences."

A more scientific approach to the task involves creating a series of fictional but rigorously researched customer identities.

"For the next generation of DB9, it's a gentleman by the name of Philippe. We know who Philippe

is, we know where he lives, we know how much he earns, where he is in his life and what his lifestyle and basic needs are.

When it comes to the difficult decisions and trade-offs that you inevitably make, we ask ourselves, 'What would Philippe want?'

"Then there is Mark, who is our proxy customer for the Vantage. Mark is a little younger, he has a more adventurous lifestyle and tends to enjoy more action-type sports. So eventually you have a portfolio where that allows all the people who admire the brand to understand the differences."

That product ladder will be extended at both ends. To a question about persistent rumours that Aston will launch an SUV, Palmer gives a guarded response: "An SUV in the classical sense? I don't think so. An SUV is a very utilitarian type of vehicle. There are ways and means of transforming the traditional sports car and GT market without making an SUV."

**"Do I think the brand deserves what we might call a 'halo' supercar? My answer would be yes"**



# Super charged

The merger between two German car makers in 1926 set the scene for decades of automotive dominance, says **Richard Holt**

Gottlieb Daimler and Karl Benz were engineers with a shared vision. They saw a motorised future, and each wanted to be the one to make it happen. Which of them took the most important first step is a matter of debate: Benz's three-wheeled Motorwagen of 1886 is considered the world's first automobile; Daimler's motor carriage later that same year was the first with four wheels.

Safest to say that they burst out of the blocks at the same time, founding car companies that enjoyed considerable success making both commercial and personal vehicles, as well as testing their creations in the deadly and exciting new world of motor sport.

Daimler and Benz cars competed in racing events all around the world, breaking speed records as they kept pushing forward the frontiers of automotive design. Their success looked set to continue in parallel, but when the burden of repaying Germany's war debt in the 1920s led to hyperinflation and economic crisis, the companies began to collaborate in a bid to ride out the tough

times, and a full merger followed in 1926. Daimler had already used the brand Mercedes – the name of a board member's daughter – for some racing models, and it was decided that cars from the newly merged company would be sold under the name Mercedes-Benz.

With the merger came a simplification of model range and an increase in production efficiency, putting the company in better shape to weather further turmoil that was to come following the 1929 Wall Street crash.

Having consolidated its reputation for technological excellence with pure sports cars like the fearsome SSK, in the early 1930s Mercedes-Benz began to produce a series of grand tourers, the ultimate evolution of which was the 540K, which came out in 1936.

The K stood for Kompressor, or supercharger, a device that Gottlieb Daimler had patented back in the 1880s, yet which was still years off being brought into mainstream use. In the 540K, the compressed air which was fed into the car's 5.4-litre engine increased power



**Above:** 1961 Mercedes-Benz 300SL Roadster  
 Estimate: €1,100,000 - 1,400,000  
 (£800,000 - 1,000,000)

**Opposite:** 1937/1938 Mercedes-Benz 540K Cabriolet A  
 Estimate: €2,000,000 - 2,500,000  
 (£1,500,000 - 1,800,000)



**Above:** Formerly the property of Alfred Krupp, 1960 Mercedes-Benz 300SL Roadster  
 Estimate: €900,000 - 1,200,000  
 (£600,000 - 900,000)

production cars of its day, and the combination of looks and performance captivated the public. When the Roadster version appeared in 1957, it was more popular still, the convertible bodies making up the majority of 300SLs sold, many of them finding

from a respectable 115bhp to an all-galloping 180 horses, unleashed with an unholy supercharged wail.

The performance this delivered was nothing short of astounding for such a large, comfortable car in that era, giving a top speed in excess of 110mph. This, combined with the stunning bodywork lovingly crafted over a range of chassis sizes, made the 540K the car of choice for anyone who wanted the very best and had access to the necessary small fortune. Notable customers included the Hollywood mogul Jack Warner as well as various senior members of the Third Reich, who ordered theirs in long-wheelbase, armour-plated form. The 540K established Mercedes-Benz as the pre-eminent maker of cars that were luxurious as well as fast. And it was also the first project for a young designer who would sculpt the bodywork of Mercedes for the next 40 years.

Friedrich Geiger joined the Daimler-Benz coachbuilding department in 1933.

As an unassuming young man working as part of a team, it is not possible to be sure to what extent he personally sculpted the 540K's beautiful body. But by the 1950s things were different: Geiger was now in charge of the styling department and his first – and possibly greatest – achievement at the helm was the 300SL, of which two models will be offered in Bonhams Mercedes-Benz Sale in March alongside a 1938 540K Cabriolet A – which comes complete with a covered spare wheel.

The 300SL was first conceived in the early 1950s when an American importer convinced Mercedes that there was a market for a road-going version of the W194 racing car. Geiger stretched out some gorgeous curves over a lightweight tubular aluminium frame and the 300SL was unveiled in breathtaking gull-winged form at the 1954 New York Auto Show.

With a top speed of 135mph it was one of the fastest

their way to the boulevards of California.

The 540K and the 300SL are two of the most desirable cars from a company that has produced far more than its fair share. The rarity and historical significance of these models means that their desirability is increasing with every year that passes. As an example of the legacy left behind by Daimler and Benz, you couldn't do much better than these two cars.

*Richard Holt writes about classic cars and fine watches for The Daily Telegraph, The Wall Street Journal and Motor Sport.*

Sale: The Mercedes-Benz Sale  
 Stuttgart  
 Saturday 28 March  
 Enquiries: Philip Kantor +32 476 879 471  
 philip.kantor@bonhams.com  
 bonhams.com/cars

**“Geiger stretched out some gorgeous curves over a lightweight tubular aluminium frame”**



# Horse power

Carriages are the key to understanding the early history of motoring, says **Andrew English**

Would Charles Dickens have achieved the same memorable effect he did in *A Tale of Two Cities* if his Dover mail-coach passengers had been waiting on a station platform instead of trudging up Shooters Hill to relieve the horses? “There was a steaming mist in all the hollows,” wrote Dickens, “and it had roamed in its forlornness up the hill, like an evil spirit.”

Fair makes you want to tug your muffler tighter round your neck, don't it? And where would Sherlock Holmes be without a trusty Hansom cab to evade the clutches of his arch nemesis, Professor Moriarty?

Dickens and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle lived in the age of steam, but banked on the atmospheric and romance of the horse-drawn carriage at its apotheosis for their novels. But the carriage is more than an evocation of a snow-dusted stage pulling into a warm coaching inn. It's a missing link between horses and automobiles and overlaps the development of the motor car.

Long before carriages begat their name in shortened form as ‘car’, those earliest motors were known as ‘horseless carriages’. What's more, the names; cabriolet, landau, boot, dashboard, shooting brake and limousine, not to mention coupé, hearse, volante and brougham, all owe their lineage to the carriage trades.

Not convinced? Well, have a look at Bonhams sale of a Private European Collection of Victorian Carriages and Coaches in March. The sale allows us to imagine what life must have been like when horse power was a literal term. There's a gem from the Royal Mews, an 1835 Travelling Landau built

for King William IV. It was restored by Stolk of Holland, and the paint, burnished with pumice powder, is said to be as deep as glass. Again, this quality of coachwork was seen on the very first motor cars as carriage workers found new trades. The Landau also comes with the irresistible extra of a postilion harness so your coachman cannot overhear your private conversations.

**“Where would Sherlock Holmes be without a trusty Hansom cab to evade the clutches of his arch nemesis?”**

Or what about the 1870 barouche originally commissioned by champagne house, Veuve Clicquot? This is a favourite of Rob Hubbard, Bonhams Senior Specialist, who catalogued this extraordinary Dutch collection of carriages for the Oxford saleroom.

He acknowledges that this is a specialist sale with highly esoteric appeal. “You don't have to own horses to enjoy these,” he notes. “I suppose the closest links are with veteran cars, especially in the style of the early models. These are the sort of things you buy for the person who has everything - the ultimate accessory.”

*Andrew English writes about motoring for The Daily Telegraph.*

Sale: A Private European Collection of Victorian Carriages & Coaches  
Oxford  
Saturday 7 March  
Enquiries: Rob Hubbard  
rob.hubbard@bonhams.com  
bonhams.com/cars

**Left:**  
Travelling Landau, c.1835  
Ex-Royal British Mews,  
ex-James Coson Collection,  
Coachwork by Adams &  
Hooper, London, England  
Estimate: £200,000 - 300,000  
(\$320,000 - 500,000)



**Top right:**  
Barouche, c.1870  
Commissioned by Veuve  
Clicquot  
Coachwork by A Blin,  
Toulouse, France  
Estimate: £20,000 - 25,000  
(\$32,000 - 40,000)

**Bottom right:**  
Concord Coach, c.1878  
ex-Pemberton Carriage  
Collection, Canada  
Coachwork by Abbot  
and Downing Company,  
Concord, USA  
Estimate: £160,000 - 180,000  
(\$260,000 - 300,000)