



## Porscheshop

# Work in progress

Words: Paul Davies Photography: David Wigmore

Ian Heward is standing precariously on the edge of a yet-to-be-completed upper floor of the industrial unit, some 20 feet above the workshop, where a number of Porsches are being fettled. 'This will be the coffee shop with viewing area, so owners can see what's happening to their cars. Our aim is to give our customers the complete shopping experience.'

Heward is one half of Porscheshop. With fellow director Paul Taylor, he's built what began as a used spares business into one of the country's leading accessory and replacement parts organisations, dealing solely in products for Porsches. Now the company has outgrown its original home in the Halesowen area of the West Midlands, and moved no more than 6.3 seconds by 930 Turbo down the road to new premises.

It's still work in progress. The move to the bare building on Shenstone Trading Estate took just six months to plan and get into up-and-running mode, but there are still things to do: like the

coffee shop, even more storage space to complete the already impressive rows of racking, and the extra workshop lift to add to the existing three. Give it another six months and Porscheshop will be truly impressive.

It all started, says Ian, when he and Paul met as university students in the mid-'80s. Paul raced in karts and then tackled sprints and hillclimbs in a 924; Ian campaigned both a 911 E and 924 in the Porsche Club race series. They helped each other out and started a part-time business by both breaking their 924s for spares and selling the parts through adverts in magazines like *911 & Porsche World*.

The early '90s (as it was then) was not a particularly good time to be starting out for some, financial depression after the excesses of the 'yuppie' years causing many businesses to fail. But for others – namely Ian and Paul – it was an opportunity. Not the least because the then local Porsche dealer suffered and closed its doors. 'Quite a few owners were looking for

somewhere to take their cars, and staff were also looking for employment,' recalls Ian.

Porscheshop came into being in 1992, in a small industrial unit not far from the new premises, with Ian and Paul taking on some of the old Porsche dealer staff (Mark Millard is still with them) and buying some of the dealer's surplus, but all-important, service equipment: 'We had good quality, Porsche trained people from the beginning, and also took over many of the specialist tools.'

At first, supplying and fitting replacement parts was the mainstay of the business – and it was not until the internet was everywhere that the accessory side of the operation started to take off. The advent of the world wide web, says Ian, coincided with a change in the profile of the Porsche owner. 'The yuppies were buying Porsches as status symbols, but they gave way to people who bought cars like the 993 and Boxster because of what they truly were. And the new owners were far more interested in



Paul Taylor (left) and Ian Heward are friends who started Porscheshop by breaking their own 924s and selling the parts through specialist publications. Now they've got 12,500 sq ft of retail and workshop space

'The cappuccino machine goes over there.' Ian Heward (right) shows Paul Davies the layout of the coffee shop, which will allow customers to watch work in progress on their cars in the workshop below

'Everybody wants wheels and tyres,' says Ian. 'We have a big range because customers are very specific about what they want. We have to be competitive on prices - but owners don't want the cheapest, they want quality

personalising their vehicles, adding accessories and upgrading,' he adds.

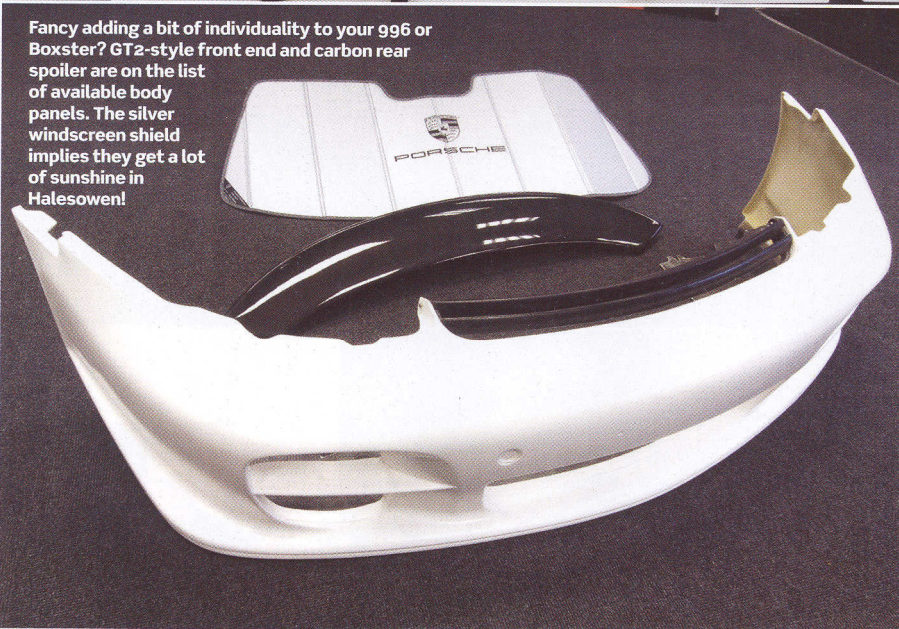
Now our business is split three more or less equal ways - accessories, upgrades and general mechanical work, and original equipment parts. Many customers now buy a car from, say, a Porsche specialist and then bring it to Porscheshop to have upgrades and accessories fitted (as they would 'spec' a new car), regarding the whole cost as part of the car purchase budget. Usually cars are pre-owned, but with the arrival of block exemption (the European directive that means a new car does not have to be sold or serviced by a dealer), the very latest models are appearing in the Halesowen workshop.

Ian and Paul believe very much that the business exists to satisfy the customer. There's more than a touch of glamour to accessories, and they believe the whole purchase process and, if necessary, fitting should be something to remember. 'It comes from the heart. We both

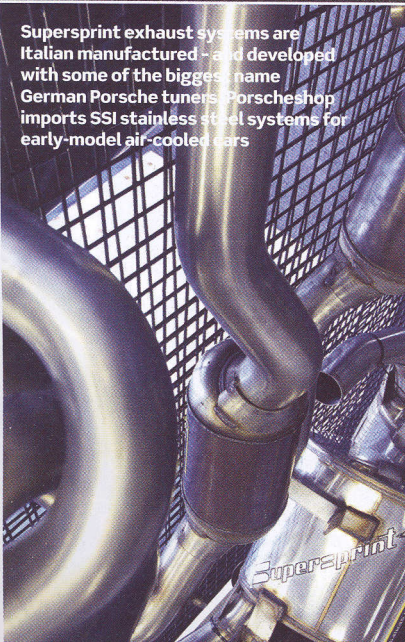
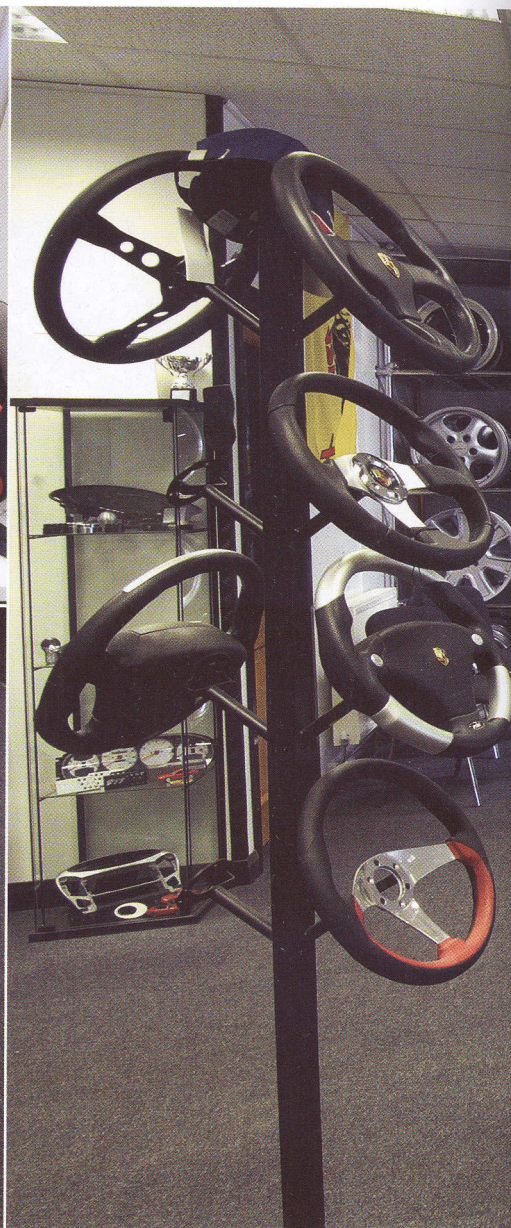




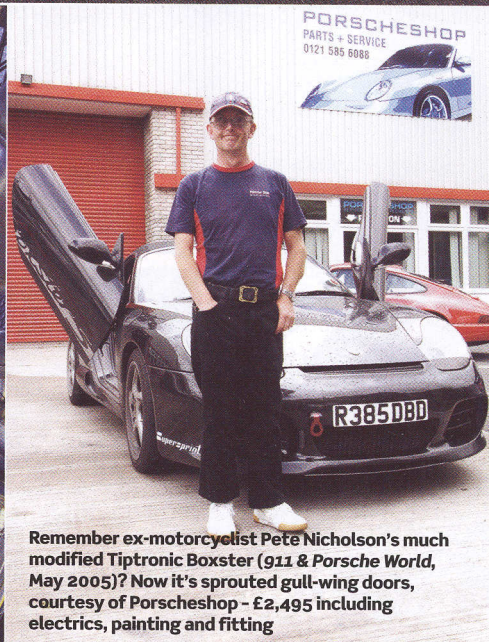
Dad's got one, so every toddler needs a Recaro! The Porsche owner is often also a family man, says Ian Heward, and so a complete range of kiddie seats (from £150) is on display in the Porscheshop showroom



Fancy adding a bit of individuality to your 996 or Boxster? GT2-style front end and carbon rear spoiler are on the list of available body panels. The silver windscreen shield implies they get a lot of sunshine in Halesowen!



Supersprint exhaust systems are Italian manufactured – and developed with some of the biggest name German Porsche tuners. Porscheshop imports SSI stainless steel systems for early-model air-cooled cars



Remember ex-motorcyclist Pete Nicholson's much modified Tiptronic Boxster (911 & Porsche World, May 2005)? Now it's sprouted gull-wing doors, courtesy of Porscheshop – £2,495 including electrics, painting and fitting

enjoy doing what we do and our customers give us our goals. We are driven by other people's enthusiasm,' says Ian.

The duo's desire to get things right, and make the new shopping experience customer-friendly, extends to ensuring that areas are accessible to wheelchairs, baby changing facilities are available, and the staff are trained in first aid and mobility issues.

The new Porscheshop, with a total of 12,500 sq ft when it's complete, has been created to be customer-friendly. The wide-open shop area is large enough to accommodate a display car – currently the ex-Michele Alboreto Footwork Porsche Grand Prix car of 1991 in our pictures – which will be changed at regular intervals, and there's plenty of space to display products and room for a sit and a chat. (That lady from the 'Mary Queen of Shops' programme on TV would be impressed, if you know what I mean.)

Says Ian: 'Porsche owners don't mind travelling some distance to places – it's often a good reason to use their car – and we want to feel that once they've got here, they will know



The ex-Michele Alboreto Footwork FA12 Grand Prix car of 1991. Not one of Porsche's best (the engine was so heavy and unreliable it was replaced by a Cosworth DFR), but a great talking point for the new Porscheshop

they've arrived.' The layout and presentation of the new premises has been designed to cater for a changing market, in part brought on by the increased use of websites, he explains.

'Our role has changed significantly. We still have to have all the technical knowledge of parts, and need to know model year changes and the like – we don't expect the customer to know these things. But in terms of accessories and upgrades, most people already know exactly what they want, even down to which cleaning products they want to use.'

'The customer comes and tells us what they want, they've already done their research, perhaps on the internet, and know what brand of tyre, polish, chip tuning they want. They are a lot more informed these days, and it's our job to support this both in terms of price and product knowledge.'

Along with the expansion of its new premises, Porscheshop's product range has evolved. The company is now the franchised agent for a number of top brands, including Revo Technik electronic upgrades, Supersprint exhaust


systems and both Zymol and Autoglym car care products. Porsche Design items are also available.

The move to the new building has also allowed the company to increase its capability to undertake mechanical work, whether it's fitting upgrades or accessories they have supplied or carrying out general repair and servicing work.

One of the workshop lifts can handle the heaviest Porsche (Cayenne) and two are baseless to accommodate cars with extra-low ground clearance. Engine rebuilds are undertaken (a 930 SE top end rebuild was underway during our visit) but Ian points out that with post-'98 cars, Carrera or Boxster, the most cost-effective route is often to replace a complete unit if an engine or transmission unit fails.

While spares and parts are available for models of all ages – a 356 front suspension repair kit appears on the excellent web site – Porscheshop is not into the early Porsche restoration business, says Ian. The emphasis is

on impact bumper 911s and the front-engine cars (which he puts into a 'Pre-'90' category), the 964, 968, 993 era (Modern Classic) and the more recent Carrera and Boxster ranges (Modern).

It's all a business, of course, but it's interesting to note that their customers – like Pete Nicholson with his Boxster and Andy Tomkins with his Carrera 3.2, who appeared, eager to be in on the photoshoot – seem to be regulars and friends. With the right products, service and surroundings, they and many other Porscheshop customers will keep coming back to enjoy the new experience. Guess that coffee shop will be well used when the work in progress is complete... 

#### CONTACT

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