

1991 944S2 Cabriolet

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It was purely by chance that I spotted a copy of the December 2000 edition of 911 & Porsche World at my local newsagent. I hadn't bought the magazine since 1994, when I owned a 924 which, I'm sorry to say, came to a sad end when a Ford Sierra failed to give way to me on a busy roundabout and sent me spinning backwards onto the grass verge.

I was grateful in a way, though. The car had been nothing but trouble for the six months I'd owned it – and the insurance company gave me £600 more than I had originally paid for it. And as it was a third party write-off I got to keep the car, which I sold for a further £400 to a breaker. So that was the end of my Porsche ownership – at least, until I saw that copy of *911 & Porsche World*.

As I left the shop I began thumbing through the pages and saw the car I had always dreamed about. For me it has stood the test of time, and is still one of the best-looking cars around – a 944S2 Cabriolet; this one was in Guards Red with Linen leather interior.

The last time I had checked the prices these cars were around £19,000, but you can probably imagine my excitement when I found numerous examples around the £12,000 mark. Actually owning my dream car was now a real possibility.

After about a week searching the Internet I found the website of Hanley Porsche in Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire. And there it was – a red Cabriolet, with Linen leather, for sale at £10,950. Within minutes I was on the phone and found that the car was still for sale. We struck a gentleman's agreement, and three days later my brother and I drove to Stoke with a building-society cheque in my pocket.

The car was exactly as stated. I pulled out of the showroom for a test-drive and put the power down a little soon, much to the horror of an elderly couple coming in the opposite direction who, for a brief moment, saw the car heading towards them sideways. However, a lot of opposite lock and an embarrassing wave soon had things under control, and I drove back with a lot more caution – but still with a huge grin on my face.

I was soon heading home in my dream car. My only disappointment was that it didn't have a stereo system, but I was told that if I bought one locally Hanley would pay up to £80 towards the cost.

The journey was uneventful, except that the air-conditioning was stuck on freezing cold, which really wasn't too clever in early January. I later discovered that the cockpit air-sensor hose had become disconnected from the small vent on the dashboard, tricking the sensor unit into thinking the temperature was a lot

higher than it actually was.

Having fought the urge for most of the journey, I could hold back no longer, and as I reached a familiar stretch of dual carriageway close to home I floored the accelerator and watched my brother behind struggle to keep up. Within half a mile or so he was just a speck in my mirror, and a glance at the speedometer told me to slow down.

I have to admit it was one of the most exciting automotive moments I've had in years. My BMW isn't exactly a slow car, but by comparison this was incredible. My brother later told me that there was no way whatsoever the 320i could keep up – which, of course, was exactly what I wanted to hear.

I have owned the car for around two months now, but due to my work commitments have only done about 300 miles; at the moment everything seems OK. After going over the car with a fine-toothed comb, I realised that at some point it has been resprayed. This is quite worrying, of course, but all the panels seem to fit correctly, so I hope it was just repainted for aesthetic reasons, as opposed to accident damage.

At the end of the day the car looks good and drives really well, and as a bonus the engine is clean and tidy with no signs of any oil leaks. Judging from the vast amount of receipts and other documentation that came with it (including the original sales invoice, which is always nice to have), the car seems to have been looked after by its previous eight owners. It has a complete service history, most of which is main dealer, with a few independent specialists in more recent years.

The only problem I have found so far is that

the door windows don't seem to want to shut fully. I have to open the doors and physically pull the glass up the last inch or so, which is a bit of a pain. I suspect that the rubbers have become dry, or that the mechanisms need cleaning and greasing.

My only other complaint is that the brakes don't seem to be quite as good as I think they should be. The discs, pads and fluid seem OK, and the pedal isn't spongy, but I need a lot of pressure to stop the car – and they don't improve when warmed up. I haven't had a chance to investigate yet, but I suspect that the brake hoses may be the cause. If so, I'll replace them with stainless-braided ones.

I have made a few modifications to the interior, by way of fitting a walnut dash kit, a Momo F16 gear knob and gaiter, and a set of Linen-coloured dials to match the seats. I think this really enhances what is otherwise a slightly dull cockpit. Hanley Porsche also kept its promise regarding the stereo, so I now have a JVC CD player installed.

Future plans are for a set of 17-inch Cup alloys and a Momo Millennium steering wheel. If anyone knows where I can buy an alloy gear-lever surround I would be extremely grateful – I've searched everywhere.

I am also planning on having a new camshaft belt fitted. I know the car had a new one around 30,000 miles ago, and according to Porsche they should be changed every 45,000 miles, but I'd rather play it safe and have it done a little sooner. As the car has covered 101,000 miles I may get the tensioner mechanism replaced as well, because I had one shatter while driving a friend's car a few years ago, resulting in some very expensive cylinder-head damage.

I'm not sure whether the S2 has the same set-up as the earlier cars, but I will certainly get some advice, because changing the tensioner when doing the belt is going to be far cheaper than having the head rebuilt. ■

