

PROJECTS

WE DON'T JUST WRITE ABOUT PORSCHES, WE DRIVE AND LIVE WITH THEM, TOO

THE TEAM

STEVE BENNETT

944 LUX

I've recently done a couple of trips to Porsche Cars GB near Reading in the 944. You might have thought the people there would have welcomed the old stager, but sadly its presence was largely ignored. The driver's door electric window is still broken, and the new motor is still in its box in my office. I will get round to it, I promise!



JOHNNY TIPLER

964 C2 (PEPPERMINT PIG)

Keeping faith with the 16" D90 wheels, the Peppermint Pig's long-suffering Nokian winter boots have been replaced by a fresh set of ContiSports, regaining that fantastic grip, yet still allowing me to exploit the lively chassis dynamics liberated by the smaller, lighter alloys, previously masked by the heavier 17-inch Cups.



PAUL DAVIES

911 CARRERA 3.2 TARGA

The Targa has passed the 100,000-mile mark, and 38,000 of those are down to me. Not bad going in the four years that I've owned the car. In light of that it was awarded a major 12,000-mile service at Jaz. Aside from the usual oil change and valve clearances, there were a couple of smaller niggles. More on page 102!



JOHN GLYNN

CARRERA 3.0/944/911T

Following awful customer service from Flybe, abandoned plane to Nürburgring 24-Hour and drove the orange car instead. The run there and back was fantastic: you forget how much fun old 911s are when you don't use them enough. Almost bought a 944 S2 daily driver last week but went M3 instead...



CHRIS HORTON

924S, 944, 996 CARRERA 2

Nothing hugely 'sexy' this time, I'm afraid. But some simple DIY has cured a number of long-running issues, and more recently than the period covered by this issue's report I have finally changed the now rather worn front brake pads. Other than that it's business as usual, piling on the miles. And that works fine for me!



GOING UP IN THE WORLD

Project 996 GT3 might look ultra-cool, being also ultra-low, but Antony Fraser has almost completely worn away the lower part of the car's front apron. The solution for everyday driveability? A Cargraphic Airlift kit

Out of the driveway and onto the road: Skrrrrrrrr. Round the corner, and over the speed bumps: Krrrrkkk...krrrrkkk...krrrrkkk. Into the filling station: Krrnnnk. The perils of driving a GT3 are manifold, but by far the most annoying is its abject lack of ground clearance. It's a small crumb of comfort that I'm not alone. When was the last time you saw a first-series GT3 with the little clip-on chin spoiler still in place? But the day you realise that it's impossible even to leave your own home without scraping one more tiny bit off the front of your best (ever!) car is the day you decide that something must be done.

As it turns out, filling the gutter in front of your house with concrete is frowned upon by the authorities. And having an excavator precede you everywhere, scooping up speed bumps, tends to impede rapid progress to an unacceptable degree.

Looks like it'll have to be changes to the car, then.

Porsche, of course, now offers a nose-lifting option for new GT cars, but what about the earlier offerings? Or, indeed, the non-GT models? Step forward the good people at German tuner Cargraphic, with their Airlift kit. It is, in essence, a remarkably simple concept. Operating only on the front wheels, it raises the car by 55mm at the wheelarches, which extrapolates to around 72mm at the very front of the car – which should be plenty.

So, how does it do it? Clue in the title, really. The system uses impressively compact rubber bellows units, which slide over the tops of the existing struts, but beneath the camber plates, and expand at the push of a button to raise the car by effectively pushing the entire strut downwards. The whole system is remarkably unobtrusive, requiring, in the case of our car, no drilling of bulkheads (thanks to generous grommets), with the compressed air coming

ANTONY FRASER

996 GT3

Occupation: Freelance photographer
Home town: Chichester, West Sussex
Previous Porsches owned: 1
Car: 911 GT3
Year: 1999
Mileage: 60,000
Owned for: 16 months
Mods/options: Fuchs-like wheels and Yokohama tyres, plus Cargraphic exhaust system and DMS remap
Contact: antonyfraser@mac.com

THIS MONTH IN BRIEF: Well, it's mainly been about the fitting of the Cargraphic Airlift kit. Next up we're going to sort out the suspension, and have a look at fitting some better brakes

Now that's what you call an intelligent wheel-free lift. At Parr, no messing about with oily blocks of wood to get low-slung Porsche chassis over bulky support arms – and with Cargraphic Airlift kit fitted Fraser will even be able to exit and enter his own driveway without fear



CONTACTS

Cargraphic
www.cargraphic.com
The Airlift is a genuinely useful piece of kit, we reckon, allowing an ultra-low stance combined with real-world driveability. Not to be confused with those crazy low-rider custom-car creations

Parr
www.parr-uk.co.uk
Thanks again to UK Cargraphic dealer, Parr, for manfully overcoming the myriad seized fixtures and fittings and installing the Airlift kit. Next up they will be carrying out a full geometry check and suspension overhaul. Lucky chaps...

from the car's own tyre inflation pump, which stays in its storage position in the front compartment. Short of pulling up the floor, or removing plastic panels, there's no visible evidence of the system at all. In terms of operating the system, a built-in switch is available, but we've opted for a key-fob remote, meaning no wiring threaded around the cabin, and no drilled dash.

We went to Parr Motorsport for fitting. It couldn't really be classed as DIY work, unless you're very competent and well equipped. And rather like the saga of our exhaust, the difficulties all lie in the issue of working on a car that's 11 years old. Everything you touch is an absolute bugger to undo.

As an aside, it's interesting that the market for these cars is very wary of higher-mileage examples that have been regularly tracked, but provided they've been properly looked after most of the components likely to give trouble will have been apart several times, and there's every chance that the car will be in rather better shape than one that has sat around for most of its existence. I can't help but think that a little more track time and some regular tinkering would have done our car a power of good, as we shall see...

Our mechanic for the day

is Mark – the same determined soul who battled so resolutely under the car when we replaced the exhaust. He starts with the spring platforms. If they're free-running, the Airlift units can be fiddled on within the confines of the wheelarch, but if they won't budge, his experience in these matters tells him to give in early and remove the entire damper unit to the convenience of a workbench. You're ahead of me, I just know it.

I would be standing with my head in my hands at this point, but Mark's been here many times before, and he's straight in there, removing the brake calipers and pulling the struts out. Sounds simple, eh? But even with the pinch bolts removed, the hub carriers must be wedged apart before the rather corroded lower part of each damper will finally pull through to freedom.

Once they're on the bench, with the camber plates off and the springs out of the way, Mark sets about the platforms with a cutting disc. There's no point struggling, he says; it just causes more damage. Having vanquished the little blighters, he cleans the threads of scraps of aluminium and other debris that would impede the fitting of the new rings. He's made careful measurements before removing the old ones, and

the new rings go on with an allowance of only around 6mm for the Airlift units. It's well within the available range of adjustment. Springs, Airlifts and camber plates seem to fly back on in a matter of moments, then it's back to the car for refitting. Again this is a very quick process, because all the hard work has been done at the dismantling stage. Mark has previously highlighted the positions of the camber plates, so they're millimetre-perfect when they go back together.

With suspension reassembled, all that remains is to connect the bellows units to the control box, connect that to the tyre pump, and wire it all up. The control box hides on top of the fuel-tank housing, behind plastic panels, and takes its power from the ABS supply. This cleverly gives it an idea of road speed, lowering the car automatically above 30mph. The power supply for the pump comes via the control box, through a trailing cigar-lighter socket, which would allow you to use it for its original purpose, should you be unlucky enough to get a puncture.

With assembly complete, it's time to hold our breath and push the button. Marvellous – perfect operation first time. The pump makes a bit of a buzzing noise, but with the

engine running you wouldn't really notice. The lifting process takes a few seconds, but there's no need to hold down the button; a pressure switch cuts the power at the appropriate moment. To lower the car, simply push the second button and down she goes, accompanied by a light, gassy sigh. And it's as simple as that!

I'm keen to get the car on the road, so I take my leave from Parr, with much gratitude for another job well done. I'm not expecting any noticeable difference in the driving experience, as there's no increase at all in unsprung weight, and the whole system weighs in at a low-cal 3kg. Sure enough, the car drives identically. Until, that is, a few yards from home, when I push the Up button. The nose visibly rises, and I swing into the drive, to the sound of...well, silence.

For the first time ever, I can now arrive home with exactly the same amount of car that I had when I left. And I can't begin to tell you what a difference that makes to the overall experience of GT3 ownership. The system's by no means cheap, at 2895 euros plus VAT and then fitting, if necessary, but with most urban roads designed to attack your cherished Porsche, it's the perfect way to come out on top. And smiling. **PW**

Hardest part of installation is getting the old bits off – see also this issue's DIY how-to story. But Mark Nightingale, here posing for a static shot without his customary 'Elf & Safety' goggles, is a determined sort of chap. Airlift units simply slot in between strut top and inner wing, raising nose about 70mm at the touch of a button

