

A practical PORSCHE

Phil Lynch never planned a full resto for his **Porsche 914**, but the car had other ideas. Phil hit sky-high standards without breaking the bank

WORDS NIGEL BOOTHMAN PHOTOS MATT HOWELL

THE RESTORER

Phil Lynch has had a long history with fast cars, right the way up to single-seat hillclimb weapons. Having completed the Porsche, he's now welding up a Commer PB camper van, while a BMW '02 Touring is next in the queue.

It began at a birthday party. Or rather, shortly after a birthday party, at which gin had been plentiful. Phil Lynch came home, turned the computer on and looked again at that Porsche 914. He'd contacted the vendor in California, offered a price to buy it now, been rejected and decided to move on. But there it still was... so he put in a bid. He woke up the next day with a sore head and a new car.

'This was November 2014,' says Phil, 'though it didn't actually arrive until May 2015. The shipping process turned into a bit of a nightmare. But I finally had my 914! Yes - truth be told, it all began much earlier, when Phil was 19 and kept a car magazine hanging around the house because of a very low, very cool German sports car on the cover. It got lodged in my mind, and I needed something to fiddle with after fixing up a younger

Porsche, so I found this. It was a non-runner, but it looked pretty solid.' And so it was, in most of the areas you'd expect to find rot. Sure, the battery box was gone - they all do that, sir - but the sills, inner wings and closing panels were pretty good. Yet there were strange signs elsewhere.

'The crossmember under the seats - that's inside the car, mind - had rotted,' says Phil. 'I discovered the wiring was stuffed as well... and I couldn't turn the engine - it was seized solid.'

Phil would later discover another strange instance of corrosion, right up on the supporting structure for the dashboard, somewhere that should never normally get wet. After a lot of head-scratching, he eventually concluded that this dry-state car had been in a flood at some point.

'I even found tidemarks halfway up the inside of the cabin. I think the engine must have filled

AS FOUND



Phil's new Porsche is seized solid and painted to nursery school standard. At least it isn't rusty... isn't it?



THE BIG RESTORATION /

with water, or else someone had tried to start it when everything was soaked and pulled water into one cylinder,' he says. 'It clearly hadn't run since.'

Phil's first plan was to get the engine running, re-build the brakes as necessary and use the car as budget sporting transport – this was before the time when 914s followed other four-cylinder Porsches into bigger money, and it hadn't cost much.

'There were a few other bits to see to, like a missing door card and rough carpets, and the paint was a typical American respray... you could strike a match on it. But it wasn't till later that I decided this would be a full restoration.'

Getting stuck in

The engine was in a horrible state. Phil actually had to cut one cylinder barrel right through to remove it, as no amount of subtlety or violence would shift the piston within. Five years later, the stylish little key-fob he uses for the 914 is a slice of this barrel's cooling fins, prepared by his garage buddies. Which makes this a good time to introduce Mark Roberts.

'I was sharing my unit with two other car nuts, Mark and Gavin. Mark is a skilled restorer who was working at the restoration business next door – and doing a few after-hours jobs in our unit,' says Phil. 'He agreed to give me a hand with the major welded repairs because I was new to welding and wanted everything to be structurally sound and correct.'

Phil stripped the car with great care, filling hundreds of zip-lock bags with carefully-labelled contents. Repairs were completed to the crossmember, battery tray area and other easy-to-reach spots, but in 2016 Phil bought a rotisserie frame. This was £500 very well spent because it allowed the bodyshell to be attached front and rear and then rotated like a chicken on a spit, giving unrivalled access to the underside.

'At this point I was still thinking we'd get the floor finished and re-sealed, then build the engine and put it on the road,' says Phil. 'But Mark convinced me that it was time to get serious and paint the whole car.'

The underside was lovingly covered in a two-pack 3M product that cost Phil around £600 in materials, including lacquer and body-colour paint. It's as shiny

'Mark convinced me to get serious and re-paint the whole car'



Restorer of the Year 2021

Later this year you will be able to vote for your favourite restoration featured in PC via practicalclassics.co.uk. Then you can look forward to the 2022 Practical Classics Classic Car and Restoration Show where we will present the most popular restoration.

TECH SPEC

Engine 1679cc/4-cyl/OHV

Power 76bhp@4900rpm

Torque 95lb ft@2700rpm

Gearbox 5-speed manual

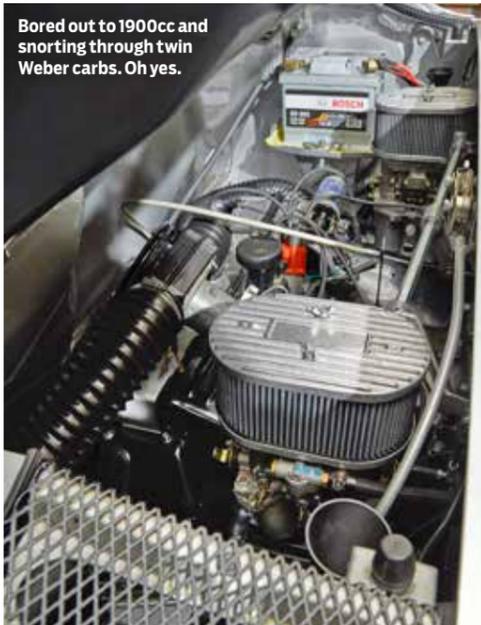
Top speed 96mph

Fuel economy 30mpg

Price new (1969) £2261

Value now £25,000

Bored out to 1900cc and snorting through twin Weber carbs. Oh yes.



This became a zone of much careful fettling.

as the topside! But with the cost of prep and paint and the engine still in bits under a sheet – plus foreign trips for work and the task of moving to another unit on the same site – the key steps were spaced out a bit. The front and rear boot covers were painted first in early 2017, while Phil carried on with the huge job of stripping the rest of the old paint. He cleaned and rebuilt the suspension with powder-coat, fitting fresh bushes and new or re-plated fixings – something that became a minor obsession.

'I got into a good routine with the local platers – I'd send stuff to them on a Sunday night and they'd have it zinc-plated for me ready to fit by the following weekend. It meant that I never had to settle for re-fitting bolts or brackets that could rust.'

Building up to the engine rebuild

By now there was no going back – the little Porsche would be as good as Phil could possibly make it. With the immaculate suspension back on the shell, the car could be removed from the rotisserie and put back on its wheels. And painted in its original silver. That left the small matter of the engine, and the total build-up and re-fit of the rest of the car. Phil had been assembling parts for the engine rebuild which he intended to give the original 1700cc, using standard fuel injection. But there was a significant distraction just round the corner. An independent Porsche specialist called Zuffenhaus had opened its doors in an adjacent unit, and there was a very tasty 914 parked inside... running a pair of chunky Weber 40 carburetors.

'I loved the rorty noise it made,' says Phil, 'so I was thinking of changing the spec. Then Mike, the boss, announced that he was going away for a few weeks and needed to make sure that his guys were busy – would I like his engine expert, Peter, to build up my engine? For the price he quoted I couldn't say no. So I got a professionally-built 1900cc engine on twin Webers.'

Here's how Phil did it

1 SEPT 2015 When all else fails

One piston was so tightly seized that Phil had to chop into the cylinder barrel. That's what comes of drowning in a flood!



2 MARCH 2016 Steelwork begins

Phil grinds out the rot and Mark replaces it with new metal in the battery tray and floors; a crossmember goes in, too.



3 SEPT 2016 Spit roast

The rotisserie allowed superb access but led to a total strip and re-paint. Now the project really grows legs.

OCT 2017 From steel to silver

Phil bare-metals the whole thing before Mark preps and paints the surfaces, back to the car's original Silver Metallic.



5 MARCH 2018 Fresh power

Phil's engine is re-built from 1700cc to 1900cc and converted from injection to carburetors for a more sporty character and rortier sound.



APRIL 2019 Coming together

A long build-up sees the car come to life. Phil gets the 914 on the road with an MOT in September 2019.



6



Fitting rebuilt rear lights was one of Phil's last jobs before the Porsche hit the road once more.



WHAT'S IT LIKE TO DRIVE

It's a proper sports car, that's for sure. But before you can enjoy it you need to get used to 914 ergonomics: a very low dash line makes for an even lower wheel, so your legs are splayed as they aim your feet towards off-set pedals. This is a bit

awkward because it causes your right thigh (all 914s are LHD, bar a few conversions) to get close to the gear stick's dog-leg first. These worries soon fade and I find a loud, lively car – it likes being revved and feels a deal quicker

than most period Brit roadsters of similar capacity; you'd need a Jensen-Healey rather than an MGB to keep up. The steering is classic Porsche, bobbing and weaving over bumps while offering perfect feel. *Einfach klasse!*

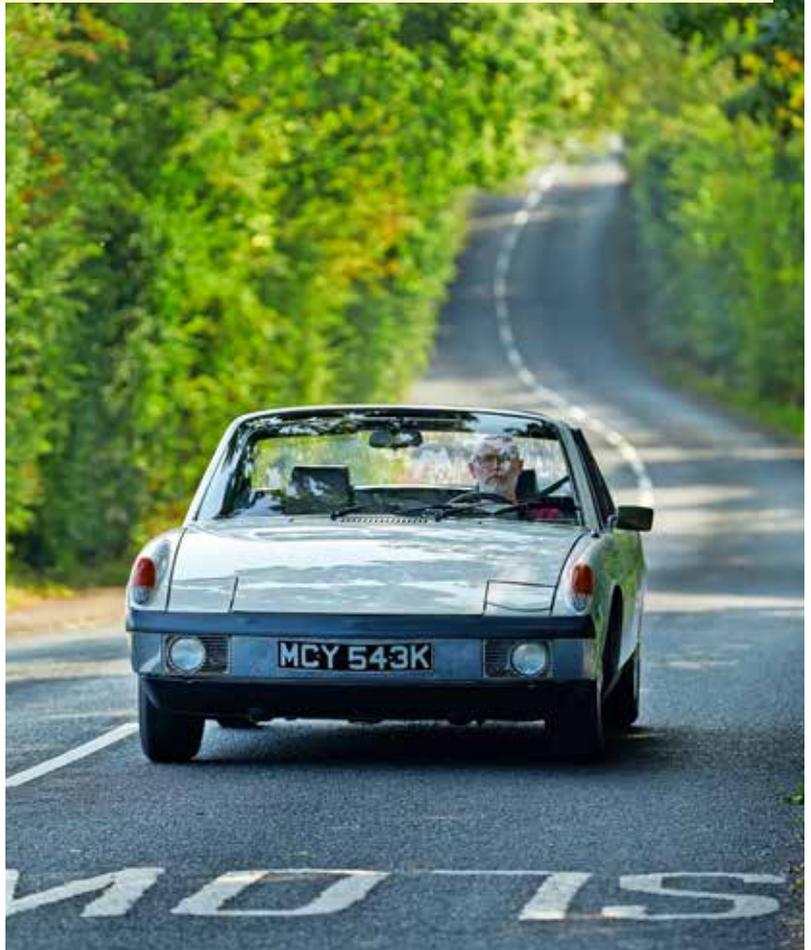


Phil and his pals actually pushed the 914 round the corner to have the fresh engine bolted in – easier than carrying the engine to the car. Phil continued with his highly exacting standards for re-assembly, rebuilding the wiring loom and steering rack and replacing the steering arms with those from a 911 Turbo to give a ball-joint instead of a universal joint. He re-made the brake lines and re-built the calipers, now zinc-plated, of course.

Phil was amazed to find that the seats cleaned up pretty well, though he had to fill in many cracks in the dash-top, sand them flat and re-paint the lot in vinyl paint, which only looked right once Phil had the idea of warming the whole thing with a space heater. This last phase of the restoration, from early 2018, dragged on as it so often does... new door and window seals needed fettling, the heater ducts inside the sills had to be checked with an endoscope and all the control cables and fans needed sorting.



Knackered carpets were the least of Phil's concerns...



Original seats scrubbed up a treat, but the dash top needed a lot of work.

'Re-fitting the heater box meant taking the fuel tank out and squatting in the front boot for four hours as I discovered it wouldn't fit with the new Boxster wiper motors I'd tried.' Finishing touches went on into 2020; a first gear issue turned out to be a knackered dog ring – cue Phil pulling the transmission to bits. But finally, with new RHD lamps and rebuilt rear lights, the 914 was ready.

'It's been eye-opening,' says Phil, 'not least for the amount of stuff you can still get direct from Porsche, and usually at not-too-crazy prices. I hope I'm disproving the idea that all Porsches are expensive to restore. The information and the parts are out there, if you're willing to have go.' ■

USEFUL CONTACTS

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