

## LONG TERMERS

# EXPENSIVE BRANDS?

Track day virgin Ian Hunt puts his fears behind him to take a leap of faith at Brands Hatch with his trusty 964 C4.



### Porsche 911 Carrera 4

Alright, I'll admit it. I'm weak. I crumble under peer pressure and buckle like a belt. What I said would never happen, happened. I took the Carrera 4 on track – and loved it.

After not very much persuasion at all by *GT's* esteemed editor, I took up the offer of an RMA track day on the Brands Hatch GP circuit. Don't get me wrong, I like to drive, and have always wanted to get on a track day, but for obvious reasons I've always been somewhat reticent about doing one in my own car.

I know the 911 is fairly bomb-proof, but aside from the usual wear and tear inflicted on the car



Ian listens to the words of wisdom imparted by head man Graham Clarke, while editor Gallagher seems more than a little concerned.

during a few hours on track, the fear of spinning off or being collected by some out of control nutter has always stopped me from signing up.

The prospect of putting both the car and my abilities to the test has always appealed; however, it's never seemed worth the risk somehow. But after being assured that I would be in the company of experienced drivers at the RMA track day and be able to go at my own pace, I felt that if I was ever going to take the Porsche on track, this would be the ideal opportunity.

Learning the circuit was a daunting prospect, but luckily enough race instructor Scott Stringfellow was on hand to show me the lines. Scott took the helm for the first few laps, just to show me where the braking and turn-in points were (RMA track days are for the experienced driver, so there's no need for marker cones), and which gear each corner should be taken in before swapping seats and letting me take my first drive on track. I must admit, it was the weirdest sensation having Scott hold the wheel, stopping me from turning in too early. But it was an effective learning tool though, and I learned the circuit fairly quickly.

Whilst we were circulating, Scott explained the effects of cornering forces on weight distribution, and how the key to fast track work was being smooth and keeping the car balanced. All of which

gave me a good feel for what was going on when I was finally unleashed on my own.

Alright, so I wasn't exactly setting lap records and did cock up quite a few corners, but I was definitely making progress and learning more as the day went on. I couldn't believe how different circuit driving is compared to driving on the road. I really had to throw out the rule book, forget everything that I'd learned previously and start again. But it was a great experience, and a really good day.

I have to admit that my enjoyment of the day was hampered by having to constantly check my mirrors for faster drivers. The RMA lot don't hang around, and there's no set rules for passing, so I was a bit worried about getting in someone's way and causing an accident.

As I expected, the car took a bit of a pounding. I was quite surprised at how quickly the brakes and tyres cooked, but then neither are suited to track work. Aside from that, the car performed flawlessly.

### PORSCHE 911 CARRERA 4

**Total Mileage:** 123,961

**Mileage this month:** 197

**Cost this month:** £600

## Track days the RMA way

To say RMA is passionate about its work is a bit like saying Chinese school girls think David Beckham is alright looking. Its events – of which there will be at least 28 during 2003 – are only open to RMA club members (you need to be hand-picked to be asked to become a Paddock Club member), and are run to an open pit lane policy with RMA-imposed limits on the number of participants. Clerks of the Course are some of the most experienced in the land, briefings are kept to a minimum but specific to each venue, and the instructors on hand are of the ex-racer variety whose interest lies with making your driving better, rather showing you how good they are (or were).

"We want our customers to come and enjoy themselves, and go home at the end of the day eager to book their next event," explains Graham Clarke, RMA's head man. And enjoyment is something that RMA is keen on providing, which is why erratic, dangerous or just plain aggravating driving is frowned upon, with repeat offenders asked to leave.

We've been to a handful of RMA days this season, and they really are premier league days out. The standard of driving is like nothing we've experienced at track days before. Even on Paddock Club days, where the standard 'overtake on the left and not in a corner' rules are dispensed with, driving standards are exemplary. And then there is the machinery. Porsches fill the bulk of the paddock, rubbing shoulders with hybrid Caterhams, a handful of Radical racers, Ferrari F355s, 360s and F50s. But we also spotted a delightful D-Type Jag and at Goodwood, on the eve of the Festival of Speed, a McLaren F1. Track days don't get much better than this!

For more information on how to join the RMA Circuit Club, contact RMA on +44 (0)1628 779000, e-mail [enquiries@rma-limited.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@rma-limited.co.uk) or visit [www.rma-limited.co.uk](http://www.rma-limited.co.uk)



RMA Circuit Club lifts the track day experience to another level. Driver instruction is some of the most attentive and expert you can get, while the variety of exotica on the track is simply out of this world.



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Next up for the Carrera 4 is the Porsche Club GB national event at Eynsham Hall, where it will be displayed on the *GT Purely Porsche* stand. I noticed a while back that the headlight surrounds were starting to bubble, so I got in touch with Porscheshop who supplied new ones for £35 each. The surrounds needed spraying, so while the Porsche was in the shop I took the opportunity to have the bonnet sprayed too, as it was badly stonechipped and let the car down at the last concours event I attended. I was really pleased with the job done by Chandler Stewart of Tonbridge, the paint was perfectly matched and seamlessly blended in. All it took was three days and £450, job done.

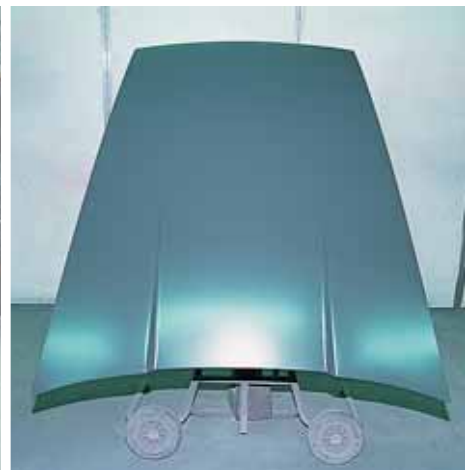
Last, but not least, I had the tatty old floor mats replaced with bespoke grey and black Premier mats from Autostyle (01488 689400). They match the colour of my seats perfectly, and are an exact fit – not bad for £80. Things are looking pretty good for the Porsche Club concours...

*Ian Hunt*

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Porscheshop  
**Tel:** 0121 585 6088  
Chandler Stewart of Tonbridge  
**Tel:** 01892 539111



Chandler Stewart of Tonbridge applied its expertise to the 964's bonnet to eradicate the stonechips.



## Porsche 928 S

Thankfully it's not often that I have to call upon an Official Porsche Centre for anything, as so far my experiences with them have frankly left me cold. I shouldn't need to be spending 80 grand on a new Cayenne Turbo to be treated like a valued customer. For the few bits and pieces I have needed in the past few months, I have always tried my OPC first – just to see if it will offer me service with a smile instead of a grimace.

Last week I noticed the coolant warning light was illuminated and upon inspection the header tank cap was in a poor state, leaking steam when the engine was hot. Upon ringing my nearest OPC, a distinct lack of interest was obvious and after hanging on the phone for what seemed like months, the following facts emerged:

None in stock. It would have to be sent from Germany. A tenner plus the VAT. It would take a week. A week? Sorry sir, nothing we can do.

Not good enough I'm afraid, so I called an independent specialist (Malton) and the difference in approach could not have been more obvious. It took down the details and instead of keeping me on the phone, promised to ring me back in a couple of minutes. It wasted no time at all in calling back with the news that

although it didn't carry them in stock, one could be with me within 48 hours – now that's more like it.

What is it that causes this difference in approach? Perhaps it's because independent specialist companies are made up of enthusiastic staff – Porsche freaks. It's probably the same reason for me no longer buying hi-fi equipment from huge superstores such as Comet or Currys. Smaller, independent dealers are more knowledgeable, more helpful, more friendly and as anyone in business will tell you, a happy customer will come back for more.

Again, not many miles under the 928's belt this month but they have been enjoyable ones. This relationship is no 'one night stand' and as the 928 builds trust in me, I can use her to get what I want. If this all sounds a bit sordid, it is. The more I drive this car the more I love it. I find myself wanting to be in two places at once – inside, driving it, and outside, looking at it.

I recently had a fair bit of involvement with a Classic Car Rally in North Wales and the three days

I spent co-driving a German photographer for the event really opened my horizons as far as roads in my own area are concerned. Ashamed as I am to admit it, I discovered places I didn't know existed and travelled across truly breathtaking routes. Since the rally I have taken the 928, Ruth and the lad along the same routes, the car never letting itself down no matter how much hill climbing or stop-start driving we do.

Another thing I did recently was visit the Porsche in the Park event at Castle Howard. Whilst it was very nice to be able to drool over a 959 and loads of classic 911s, the real treat was the track event. Seeing all those Porsches being driven at break-neck speed was pretty amazing and the couple of 928s that were hurtling around the track have got me thinking about perhaps 'having a go' myself. Headroom in the 928 isn't exactly generous so it should be interesting trying to squeeze into the car with a crash helmet on...

*Kevin Hackett*



### PORSCHE 928 S

**Total Mileage:** 131042  
**Mileage this month:** 311  
**Cost this month:** £13.25