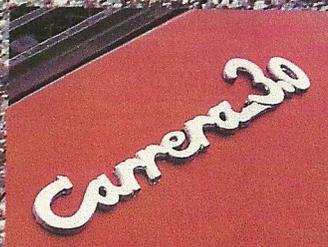


You'd think that any 911 – except, perhaps, a chocolate-brown 2.0-litre Targa Sportomatic – would be a car to cherish. But for over 25 years now the 200bhp, 145mph Carrera 3.0 seems to have been the one that for some strange reason we've all managed to forget. And David Sutherland, for one, finds it all rather mysterious. Photography by Graham Harrison



Lest we forget

In just about any field of human activity you care to think of there's likely to be the Forgotten One.

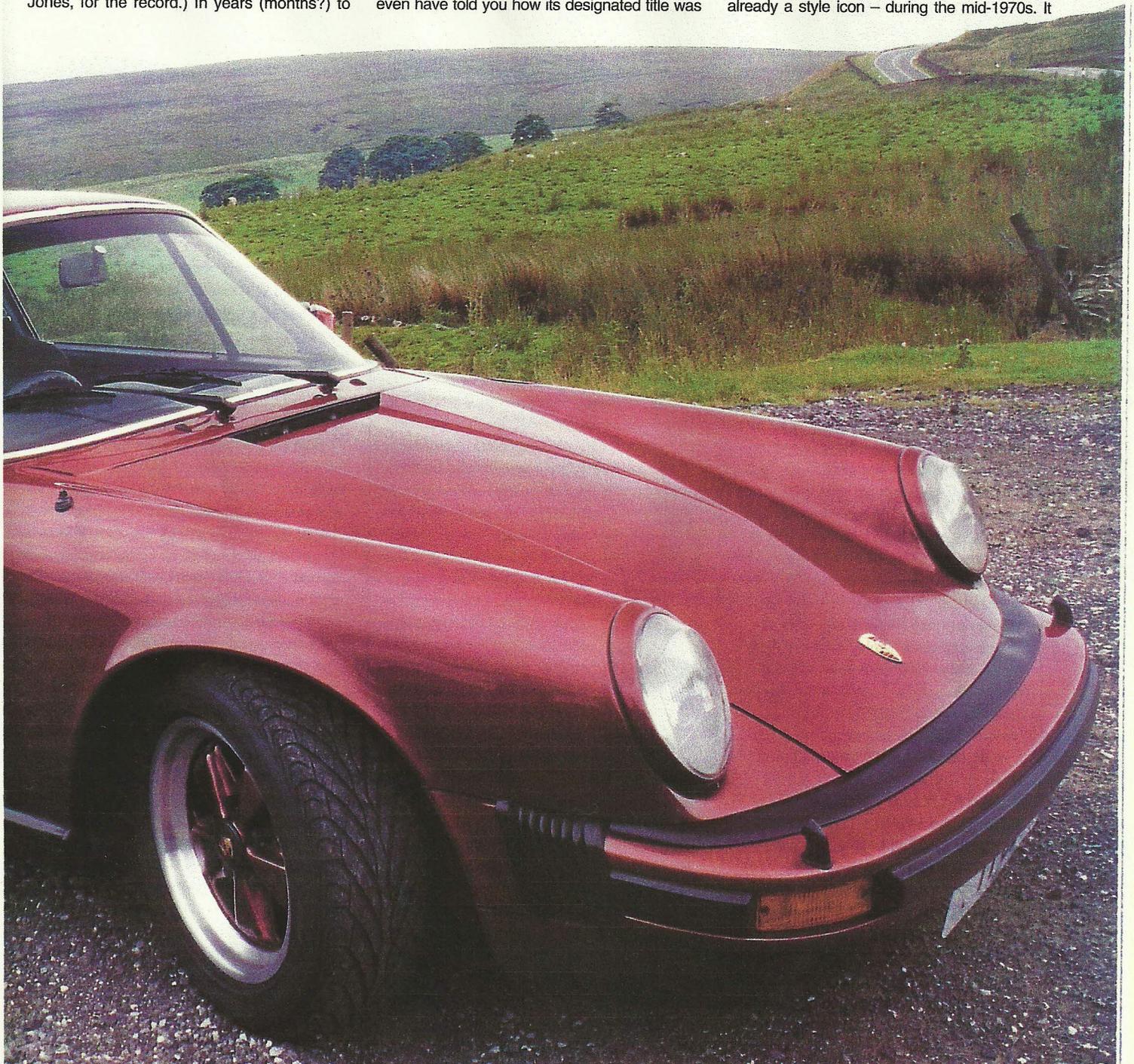
Those of a certain age and corresponding record collection can probably name rock band Led Zeppelin's singer, lead guitarist and (deceased) drummer (Robert Plant, Jimmy Page and John Bonham, respectively), but how many remember the bass player? (John Paul Jones, for the record.) In years (months?) to

come how many people will remember the Conservative Party's current leader, Iain Duncan Smith? And could you place Greenland without looking at a map of the world?

It's much the same for the poor old Porsche 911 Carrera 3.0. It was launched in 1976, and discontinued in 1977 after just 3691 had been assembled, and even when it was part of contemporary Porsche history few people could even have told you how its designated title was

correctly written (see above, and below left).

Today, of course, you're probably looking at the highly presentable example shown here and wondering why on earth this should have been so. It's a 911, isn't it? How can it possibly be forgotten? Well, call it selective amnesia, then. The fact is that Porsche enthusiasts have long memories, and they didn't like one bit what Stuttgart was doing to their beloved car – already a style icon – during the mid-1970s. It



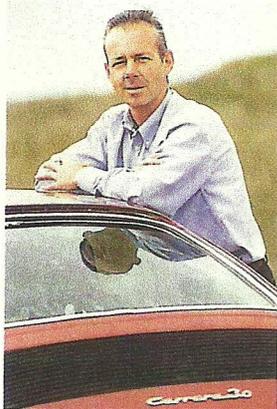


Porsche enthusiasts have long memories, and they didn't like one bit what Stuttgart was doing to their beloved car during the mid-1970s

Owner's view

Carl de Vera Davey (below), who runs a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre in Cheshire, thought he was happy enough with his 928S, which he bought in 2000. He loved its luxury, and its high-speed cruising ability, and even though it had proved not exactly cheap to run he considered the potential running costs of a 911 an unknown quantity.

But 911s are alluring machines that have a habit of getting beneath the skin of those who try their hardest to resist them, and it wasn't long before Davey found himself taking an increasing interest in the breed. And when in July 2002 this rare Sienna Red 1976 Carrera



3.0 came up for sale at Cambridgeshire classic-Porsche specialist Transend, he finally took the plunge. 'I bought it to feel the 911 experience,' he says with a smile.

Carl doesn't want to say what he paid for the car, other than that it was 'very reasonable'. But this is certainly a very special machine, not only because its bodywork is in excellent condition (and galvanising notwith-

standing, mid-1970s' 911s aren't renowned for their resistance to rust), but also due to the part it played, albeit indirectly, in winning a popular UK racing championship. More on this in the sidebar opposite.

With a heavy workload and BMW ZM coupé also in his garage, Carl admits that the Carrera 3.0, now with the personalised registration plate that's been in his family for many

years, doesn't work hard for its living. 'It's purely for pleasure,' he concedes. 'I don't take it out in winter, and even in the summer it gets mainly dry use.' But when he does get time to drive it he enjoys it to the full. 'It's a great stress reliever,' he adds.

In fact, Carl says he loves the Carrera so much that he plans to keep it for a very long time, indeed. And yet, as is so often the way, here's the owner of a tidy but mod-

est 911 already thinking about what lies further up the Porsche range. If he could raise enough funds, he says, including chopping in his BMW, to raise enough cash for a 993-model 911 Turbo, then he'd be quite happy to pass on custody of this now rare middle-period 911 to an appreciative new owner. Call us if that sounds like you, and we'll gladly pass on your number. ■

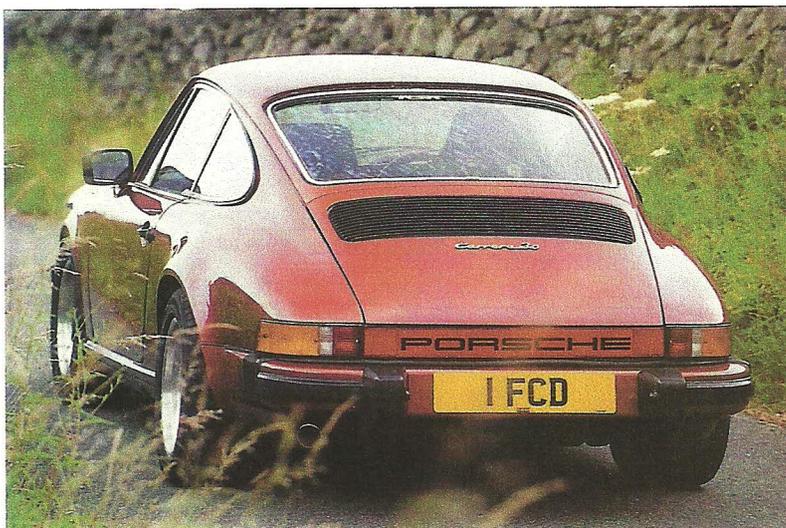
still leaves a bad taste, and that's almost certainly why the Carrera 3.0 is only now beginning to gain acceptance as a true 911 classic.

The Carrera 3.0's problem – if it can be called that – is that both it and its immediate predecessors were effectively sandwiched between two generations of 911 that, then and now, are widely regarded as far more desirable.

Both the 2.4-litre 911s of the early 1970s and (of course!) the glorious 1973 Carrera 2.7 RS were justly celebrated for their dynamic qualities, and were always going to be hard acts to follow. So when in 1974 the 911 gained its weighty and then much-criticised 'impact' bumpers, and a K-Jetronic fuel-injected 2.7-litre engine (cleaner and more economical than the previous mechanical injection, but less responsive), there was dismay among enthusiasts. They felt that Porsche was content to aim 'their' car purely at the 'soft' US market, with little consideration given to European tastes, which were generally for cars that held true to the spirit of minimum weight and maximum power.

You think we're overstating the case? Well, just think about some of the other storms in teacups we've had in more recent times. Should Porsche return to racing? Should it have even considered building a water-cooled 911? And let's not even start on the Cayenne question, or the merits (or not...) of the front-engined, water-cooled cars!

Thus by the time the Carrera 3.0, with less power than its 2.7-litre-engined predecessor (200bhp against 210, in fact), appeared in autumn 1975 for the 1976 model year, the 911



It may date from the 1970s, but this Carrera 3.0's cabin (left) is both beautifully preserved and not even remotely tacky; note non-standard seats. Rear view (above) shows clean, classic 911 lines with no wing to interrupt their flow. Engine (above right) briefly saw service in a Porsche Classic race car, and was subsequently shown to be producing 208bhp

was at probably its lowest point in its now 40-year history. During that period it even looked likely that it might be killed off altogether, given that the front-engined, water-cooled 924 and 928 were on stream. Likewise some truly awful brown and beige body colours, together with loud chequered and tartan interior trims, might have been of their time, but they dated more quickly than a betting slip during the dying seconds of a steeplechase.

The 911SC that replaced it in 1977 – making the Carrera 3.0 one of the shortest-lived 911s – was much better received. It, too, had less power than the first-generation cars (180bhp, later rising to just 204bhp) but was in most other respects a far better machine. Improved brakes, more effective body-shell galvanising, improved reliability, and not least smarter colours, all helped broaden the appeal of the 911, and arguably salvaged its reputation.

An estimated 3691 Carrera 3.0s – including 1125 Targas – were built (for Europe only) between 1975 and 1977. All used the then recently introduced (and very strong) type 930 engine that was also seen in the contemporary 911 Turbo – here normally aspirated, of course – and as well as its 200bhp (at 6000rpm) offered 188lb/ft of torque at 4200rpm. It was optionally available in Sport form, too, with Bilstein suspension and wider wheels.

On paper, then, it's no ball of fire. But just as one can hardly condemn John Paul Jones' musical talents purely on the basis of the whims of history (and IDS may yet astonish us all by becoming the next Tory prime minister...), so we felt we ought to give the Carrera 3.0 a second chance; a retrial, if you like. So when at one

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A sporting life

Carl de Vera Davey's Carrera 3.0 was originally a Sportomatic model registered on 19th October 1976 by Porsche dealer Dick Lovett in Swindon, Wiltshire (now Porsche Centre Swindon). It was subsequently looked after by various well-known independent specialists, including Charles Ivey in Fulham, London, and Autofarm, in Buckinghamshire at the time, who gave it a full respray during the late 1980s.

By 1992 it had fallen into the hands of RSR Engineering, then in Bagshot, Surrey, but now near Hindhead in the same county, and that's how it came to play its small but notable part in UK Porsche motorsport.

RSR proprietor Russell Lewis had accepted the car in lieu of payment for restoration work on a 356 Speedster, and passed it on to his wife, Judi – also a 911 enthusiast – as everyday transport. Mrs Lewis used it – and liked it, too – although as time passed the Porsche's bodywork steadily deteriorated. Thus it might well have ended up as the traditional rusty old heap at the back of the workshop waiting to be restored at some unknown point in the future, had it not been for an overnight crisis with RSR's race car.

In 1996 Lewis was campaigning a Carrera 3.0 in the Porsche Classic Championship, but on the Saturday of a race weekend its engine blew. Undeterred by the small matter of distance – it's a good 200 miles from the circuit in question, Pembrey in Carmarthenshire, south Wales, to Bagshot – Lewis trailered the car back to base, pulled the engine out of Judi's car, binned the Sportomatic hardware, and in a five-hour flurry of activity installed it, with suitably adapted transmis-

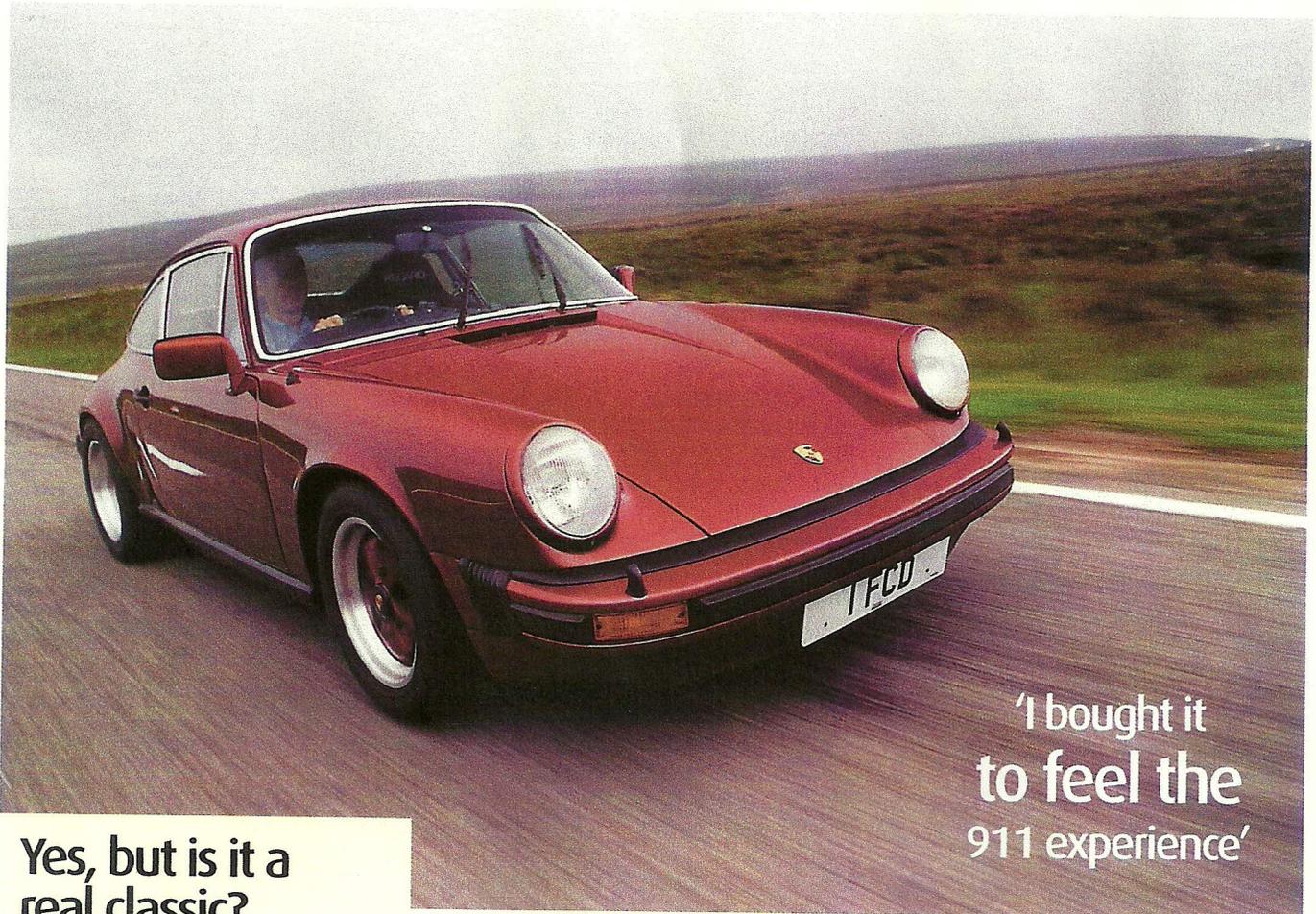
sion mounts, into the race car with its type 915 manual gearbox.

It proved to be a sensible and certainly fortunate decision. On the Sunday the Carrera, driven by Paul Edwards, set the fastest lap, and then went on to win Class 'A' of the championship. Under the rules the winning car's engine had to be examined by Porsche Cars Great Britain, and it was found to be giving a healthy 208bhp, very close to the maximum permissible.

At the end of the season the winning engine went back into Judi Lewis's Carrera. Part of the deal to persuade her to let it be cannibalised had been the promise of a replacement manual gearbox, and luckily there was one of the exact type needed lying around in the workshop. But once this was fitted, with a few suitable RSR tweaks to strengthen it, Lewis decided to give the rest of the car a once-over. Well, you would, wouldn't you?

Thus a limited-slip differential was fitted, as were Carrera 3.2 front brakes, Bilstein dampers, and brand-new, race-specification torsion bars. The six- and seven-inch-wide wheels, then wearing 70-series tyres, were replaced with the seven- and eight-inch Fuchs rims you see on the car today, together with 205/55R15 front and 225/50R15 rear tyres. Russell even carried out some more work to the engine, fitting a more efficient cooling fan, upgraded timing-chain tensioners, and not least a set of SSI heat-exchangers.

In this form the car spent a few more years as everyday transport, but when the Lewis children finally grew too big to fit in the back seat it fell out of daily use. By this time there was rust in the left-hand front wing and the right-hand rear wheelarch. The 911 spent the period around 1999–2002 in storage, after which it was sold to Transend, and emerged last summer in its present, immaculate state. ■



'I bought it
to feel the
911 experience'

Yes, but is it a real classic?

The Carrera 3.0 isn't generally considered a 'classic' 911, and by that we mean, for the sake of argument, that it doesn't command big money. While they're not exactly being given away, you'll still see them advertised for £10,000 or less.

But it surely can't be too long before the collectors start taking more interest. After all, it'll soon be 30, and age alone will rehabilitate the car in Porsche history. And there's simply no such thing as a very old, cheap 911, unless it comes as a box of bits (in which case it will almost certainly be prohibitively expensive to put them all back together again).

Early-911 expert Mark Waring, who runs Surrey-based World-Wide Classics (020 8643 0456) and who takes a keen interest in Porsche values, calls it 'an emerging classic'. But he points out that values will have to climb quite a lot higher than they are today in order to kick-start the economics of restoration.

'Carrera 3.0 prices are rising,' he concedes, 'but at the moment there would be no point in stripping and rebuilding one.' The highest Carrera 3.0 price he's aware of was £18,995 being asked for a silver, manual coupé in April 2003. ■

of this summer's Porsche events Carl de Vera Davey asked us if we'd like to try his superbly preserved car we needed little encouragement.

A few weeks later, as I stepped into Carl's car for the first time, I wondered immediately if it really is the turkey that it's often claimed to be, or whether with the benefit of hindsight the problem was simply a bunch of loyal but generally misguided enthusiasts being just a little too passionate about what they saw as the ethnic purity of their favourite car.

And I have to say that as far as the Carrera 3.0's appearance is concerned I'm definitely *not* with the purists. Yes, the aluminium 'impact' bumpers are heavier than the earlier and slimmer plated efforts, but to me they were both superbly designed and blend perfectly into the shape of the body. They enhanced and modernised the Porsche's looks, giving the 911 a far more purposeful beginning and end. Look at the dreadful devices that some other cars were saddled with in the name of Californian safety legislation (think MGB...), and you'll probably agree that, in fact, Porsche did a pretty neat job.

And no-one can seriously argue that the Carrera 3.0 is somehow soft. It takes you right back to the days when being lazy at the wheel of a 911 just wasn't an option. The clutch is heavy and not exactly progressive, and the type 915 gearbox is hard work, too, each ratio requiring to be slotted firmly, carefully and deliberately into place. And in this particular car the competition bucket seats remaining from its

days with RSR Engineering (see sidebar on page 103) hold you in tightly and restrict your movement. No, it's definitely not soft.

Much the same can be said of the engine. This one has had the talented hands of Russell Lewis of RSR Engineering rummaging around inside it (again, see page 103), giving it some welcome additional horsepower (and reliability) in the process, but it's delightfully free-revving and generates the classic 911 howl, and it can't be *that* different from an original unit.

In the handling department, too, the Carrera 3.0 is a reminder of the way they used to make Porsches in the good old days, long before Porsche Stability Management had even been thought of. The ride is choppy to the point of discomfort, and the steering both light and extremely direct. Compared to a modern 911 the car feels nervous and fidgety. I thought it likely that the brakes needed attention, because these are Carrera 3.2 stoppers and they ought to work better than this...but then, old cars do need constant attention, don't they?

So does the Carrera 3.0 deserve to be the forgotten 911? The automotive equivalent of John Paul Jones? I think not. It may (unlike the plainly talented Mr Jones) have been something of a disappointment at the time compared to what had been before, and a reflection of Porsche's temporarily wobbly fortunes. But it's still a Porsche 911, and still one of the best – if not *the* best – sports cars of its day. Ignore it at your peril! ■