

Bulldog history and background

The Bulldog is a one-off concept car produced in 1979 by Aston Martin and styled by William Towns. It gained its distinctive name from the Scottish Aviation Bulldog, the aeroplane flown by the then managing director, Alan Curtis. It was also codenamed DP K9 in the Newport Pagnell factory.

Work started on the Bulldog project in 1977. The initial engineering work for the Bulldog was conducted by the then chief engineer of Aston Martin, Mike Loasby. However, he moved to DeLorean soon after, so Keith Martin was given the task of finishing the job. Which he did over a three-year period.

Aston Martin designed the Bulldog to be the fastest production car on the road and reach speeds of 200mph. The Bulldog was powered by a 5.3-litre 90-degree V8 with two Garrett AiResearch T04B turbochargers bolted on. Compomotive split-rim alloy wheels were fitted with Pirelli P7s. Around the circumference of the wheel's blades provide direct cooling air to the brakes.

The Bulldog was officially launched 27th March 1980 at the Bell Hotel at Aston Clinton. In late 1979, the Bulldog recorded a top speed of 191mph at MIRA (Motor Industry Research Association) test track.

Originally 15-25 Bulldogs were going to be produced, but when Victor Gauntlett took over Aston Martin in 1981 the project was shelved as he deemed it too costly. The prototype Bulldog was used for a while to test future technology, but in 1984 Aston Martin sold the Bulldog to its first owner, a Saudi Prince, for £130,000. But on his first drive the engine blew up.

The Bulldog then became rarely sighted. In the late 1980s it was spotted in a lock-up in Arizona, it was back in the Middle East in the 1990s. It was then shown at the Goodwood Festival of Speed in 2009 by Mastercard when it featured in the Cartier Style et Luxe concours. Next it was seen at Aston Martin's 100th anniversary celebration at Kensington Park Gardens in July 2013.

Auction house RM Sotheby's classic car specialists tracked the Bulldog down in Asia where its specialist Alexander Weaver managed to convince the owner to part with the bulldog and sell it to Philip Sarofim.

Sarofim asked Richard Gauntlett, son of the former owner of Aston Martin Victor Gauntlett, to manage the restoration of the car with the aim of reaching the 200mph it never achieved when it was built.

Early in 2020 a nut and bolt restoration began at Classic Motor Cars in Bridgnorth to reach this goal. The car was completely stripped down and more than 6,000 hours and 18 months went into the restoration. While it was important to restore to original condition, changes were made to make the car more robust in preparation of its 200mph run.

The Bulldog's original silver colour was restored, as one of its previous owners had painted the car a metallic green shade. The interior leather and carpet trim was also restored to its originally intended appearance.

On Friday 3rd September 2021 – the restored Bulldog was unveiled at the Hampton Court Concours of Elegance, by air engineering apprentices from the Royal Naval Air Station at Yeovilton. The world-famous Corps of Drums from the Band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines, Portsmouth (The Royal Band), carried out a "Mess Beatings" to announce the Bulldog's presence.

On 8th November 2021 – Bulldog was hoisted onto the flight deck of the HMS Prince Of Wales (R09). Days before, a crane with a specially built sling was manoeuvred into position alongside the aircraft carrier to enable the Aston Martin Bulldog to be placed on the 65,000-ton ship.

On 19th November 2021 – Bulldog won 'specialist of the year', followed by the RAC historic restoration of the year award on 26th November.

27th November 2021 – the Bulldog hits 162mph on its first shake-down session at private testing at the Royal Naval Air Station at Yeovilton in Somerset. This was the first time in more than 40 years the car had been driven at speed.

14th December 2021 – Bulldog was put on public display at Saville Row, which serves as an introduction for the 2022 June Concours.

28th January 2022 – Bulldog was driven across the frozen lake Zell in Zell Am See, Austria. Richard Gauntlett drove and later skied behind the car.

23rd April 2022 – Bulldog featured at the Classic Motor Cars' open day for JEC, XK Car Club and Aston Martin Owners Club members. It was undergoing maintenance ready for some action-packed events.

Friday 25th March 2022 – Bulldog joined more than 80 supercars at the Yeovilton air station in Somerset to raise money for Chief Petty Officer Steven Munday's family and the Royal British Legion.

On 24th May 2022 Bulldog wins the Coppa d'Oro award at the Concorso D'Eleganza at Ville D'Este, this trophy is one of two top awards and is voted for by other entrants to the Concours. It was the youngest ever car to win this award.

3rd-5th June 2022 the Bulldog was present at the Aston Martin Owners Club concours in Loseley Park, near Guildford, Surrey.

23rd-26th June 2022 – Bulldog visited Goodwood Festival of Speed supported by CMC technicians. It successfully tackled the famous hill climb along the five-mile estate track.

14th August 2022 – on the day of the Aston Martin Heritage at Brooklands Museum in Surrey, the Bulldog met Concord, another British icon. The event also celebrated the 100th birthday of A3, the oldest surviving Aston Martin and the third car built back in 1921.

Technical detail

- It's a Tadek Marek designed V8 displacing 5.3 litres.
- Engine internals are rebuilt using forge steel crankshaft, forged steel connecting rods and forged pistons.
- A block girdle has been added to aid stiffness and main cap location.
- There are two G25-660 Garrett Turbos flowing through two charged coolers .
- There are two large displacement inlet manifolds holding 1,000cc injectors.
- Stainless steel exhaust manifolds dump into stainless steel turbo exhaust housings with integral wastegates flowing into a 76mm stainless steel exhaust system.
- Fuel rail, inlet and exhaust manifolds were custom made by CMC.
- Engine is controlled by custom calibrated fuel injection system.
- Gearbox is a ZF unit as found in many sports cars of the time such as BMW M1 and a DeTomaso Pantera. It's a 5-speed dog leg first gear. The ratios are custom for this car.
- Brakes are AP Racing 320mm discs and four-pod callipers as used on classic GT 40s.
- Chassis is back bone multi tubular hybrid with CMC added roll-over protection and stiffening.
- The suspension rides on custom coil-overs with original specifications, but better adjustability and an incorporated hydraulic lift system.
- A CMC built rear axle was made to original spec incorporating the latest bearing technology and lateral locating device to reduce vertical loads.
- The interior is upholstered by CMC in Connolly hide matching the original sample from the 70s.
- The electrical system is now fully integrated with diagnostic control.
- Doors are actuated by the original hydraulics with added safety devices.
- All work was carried out in-house by Classic Motor Cars.