

45 YEARS OF CARRERA 3.0

THE UNSUNG HERO

In production for just two years, the Carrera 3.0 is rare, yet it stands as a cornerstone of the 911 dynasty, consolidating the impact-bumper generation and a bulwark for its SC and Carrera 3.2 successors...

Words Johnny Tipler Photography Dan Sherwood



Here's a rare bird, and we kind of owe it a debt of gratitude. That's because the Carrera 3.0, introduced for the 1976 model year and currently enjoying its forty-fifth anniversary, lifted the 911 dynasty onto a slightly higher plain. How come? A sort of stepping stone from the flighty 2.7 models, the bigger-displacement Porsche harboured mechanical as well as panelwork upgrades. That's to say, it featured slightly broader rear wheel arches and was implanted with the 911 Turbo

(930) model's stronger die-cast aluminium engine componentry (minus the turbocharger, of course), plus a fresh 915/44 gearbox. Essentially, the Carrera 3.0 was the precursor of the latter-day air-cooled 911. Endowing the Carrera 3.0 with a naturally aspirated three-litre lump was a pragmatic move, since the 2.7-litre unit was, by then, nearing the end of its development life.

Porsche's line-up for 1976 comprised three 911s, designated *I-Programme* in the company's alphabetically evolving specification roster. This trio was the Carrera 3.0, the 930 and the entry-level 2.7. The latter was



sold in Britain as the 911 Deluxe, a 165bhp model with electronic fuel injection, and was the last of the classic narrow-bodies, yet was configured with then new accordion-style impact bumpers. To put these cars in the context of a fast-moving and jumbled era of Porsche production, our favourite manufacturer was in the process of hedging its bets with front-mounted versus rear-mounted engines, unveiling the conventionally laid-out 924 in 1976 and its V8-powered sibling, the 928 'land shark', coming into the picture not long after. And let's not forget the mid-engined 914 in production from 1970

to 1975, proving very popular in the USA. Meanwhile, on the race track, nothing stood still and, as an example, the 936 (a Group 6 sports prototype introduced as spiritual successor to the 917) won Le Mans in 1976. The 935 also dominated its class.

Back on public roads, the Carrera 3.0 and its successors, the SC and Carrera 3.2, represent the bedrock of 911 history — certainly its air-cooled epoch. With a reputation for being bomb-proof, these cars combine classic looks and driving traits with modern manners and modest maintenance costs. Launched



against a world background dominated by a Middle Eastern oil embargo, fuel shortages and power cuts, however, prospects didn't look good for the new generation of 911s in the mid-1970s. Suddenly, gas guzzlers were far from cool, and Porsche showroom sales cascaded from 15,000 911s invoiced in 1973 to just 8,000 in 1975. The earlier figure would not be overtaken again until 1986. Despite this, it was a time of consolidation, and the fact Porsche stuck to its guns and kept faith with the 930 (and then went on to release the 928) says much for its ambition and self-confidence.

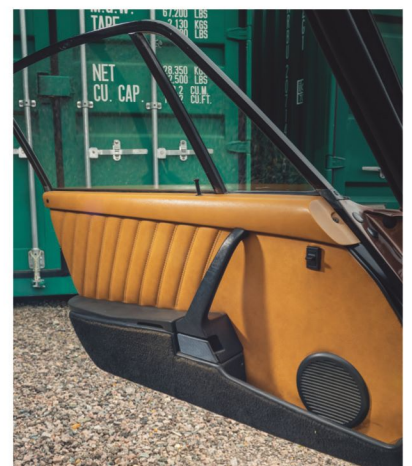
COOL, CALM AND COLLECTIBLE

Despite this ambiguity of Porsche's front-engined, mid-engined and rear-engined products, the middle years of the 911's life story (from 1975 to 1989) turned out to be a model of stability as far as specification was concerned, never mind events in the Zuffenhausen boardroom. The frenetic changes in chassis dimensions, body styling, adoption of fuel injection and, most of all, shifts in engine capacity (2.0, 2.2, 2.4) characterising the late 1960s and early 1970s settled into a pattern enduring with mild evolutions, and just three significant introductions. First in the canon is the 1974 2.7, with three models on offer: the basic 911 (replacing the entry-level 911 T), the 911 S (taking over from the 911 E) and the Carrera 2.7 (superseding the 2.4-litre 911 S and using the 210bhp unit from the outgoing Carrera RS 2.7). As well as the controversial impact bumpers and thicker swage lines below the doors – design cues calculated to appease American road safety regulators – the cars destined for Uncle Sam were humbled by stifling emissions equipment.

Do I need to spell out why it's named Carrera 3.0? I doubt it, but let's not confuse this seldom seen 911 with

the competition-oriented Carrera RS 3.0. Unsurprisingly, the 3.0 suffix refers to the cubic capacity of the corresponding flat-six engine, lifting it 300cc from its immediate 2.7-litre predecessor. There's something to be said for crossing the psychological three-litre threshold, whether any great performance gains are made or not. Kind of grown-up, don't you think? "There's no substitute for cubic inches," ran the authoritative US advertising slogan, and with its road-going flat-six attaining three litres of displacement, the 911 finally joined the big league. As for *Carrera*, this is the nomenclature

Above Seldom seen, the Carrera 3.0 was produced in low numbers prior to the arrival of the 911 SC





Above Typically 1970s interior features the same steering wheel Porsche introduced to the transaxle line on launch

annexed by Porsche to designate its most sporting models after Hans Herrmann scored a class win with the 550 Spyder in the 1953 outing of daring Mexican road race, La Carrera Panamericana. Though used on the 356 from 1955 (the first such-badged model being chassis 53456, built on 3rd May that year and first registered to Porsche engineer, Reinhard Schmidt), the name made a comeback with the Carrera RS 2.7 in 1973, the epithet slipping seamlessly onto the more competition-focused Carrera RSR 2.8 and Carrera RS/RSR 3.0. Obviously, there was mileage to be had in dealer showrooms from all this, and the man-in-the-street (could be you, certainly me!) was seduced by the availability of a Carrera-badged 911. In short, the arrival of the Carrera 3.0 marked the first time a road-going 911 was dubbed *Carrera*.

This new 911 was available from the outset with either Coupé or a Targa body styles with a black roof panel and offered with a choice of three transmissions (four or five-speed manuals or a three-speed semi-automatic Sportomatic). It's not a stretch to say the Carrera 3.0 is the least well-known of the impact bumper 911s. Its predecessor was certainly a hard act to follow, but the normally aspirated, K-Jetronic-loaded three-litre boxer (as mentioned earlier, the same basic engine as that of the turbocharged 930), features Nikasil cylinders, developed for the three-litre RS engine. In other words, this particular flat-six is virtually unburstable. The Carrera 3.0 engine casing was even stamped as a 930/02, but this doesn't mean it was merely a low compression alternative to the 911 Turbo's beating heart – compression ratio was raised from 6.53 to a much higher 8.521, and the ports were redesigned, too.

The Carrera 3.0 produced 200bhp at 6,000rpm – nice, round numbers – and 188lb/ft of torque at 4,200rpm, accelerating to 60mph quicker than the outgoing Carrera 2.7. It could even run on low octane 91-RON petrol.

RING THE CHANGES

The Carrera 3.0 was also lighter than its successors, tipping scales at 1,093kg, which is six percent less than the later SC (1,160kg) and almost ten percent lighter than the Carrera 3.2 (1,210kg). For its suspension, the Carrera 3.0 was offered with a thicker 18mm front anti-roll bar, larger diameter torsion bars (19mm front and 23mm rear), Bilstein Sports gas dampers, stronger rear wheel bearings, and forged aluminium-alloy semi-trailing arms, which were stiffer and significantly lighter than

the previous fabricated steel versions. But wait! We're getting slightly ahead of ourselves. Let's backtrack to 1974. More specifically, the transitional moment from pre-impact bumper 911s to what

HAD THE MODEL BEEN SEEN IN NORTH AMERICA, IT'S EXTREMELY LIKELY TO HAVE SOLD WELL

came next, when Porsche moved the 911 into its new phase of design, driven by safety legislation in the crucial US market, which ushered in the now famous rubber-fronted snout and tail.

The concertina-rubbers and raised impact-bumper look was greeted with a certain amount of derision at the time, mainly on the grounds of aesthetics. "What have they done to the pretty 911?!" asked traditionalists. The new styling and what lay beneath, however, was imperative for the 911 to comply with stringent new US road safety legislation in the USA and Europe, which meant all cars had to be able to withstand a 5mph impact without sustaining any damage. Something



far more fundamental was afoot, too: Porsches were just as prone to rust as any other steel-bodied cars, and few precautions had been taken to prevent it. Porsche tackled the problem by introducing zinc-dipped galvanised steel for all body panels and was the first manufacturer to offer a six-year corrosion warranty on a main body shell, excluding the wings.

THE GRAND TOUR

The cabin of the Carrera 3.0 was better appointed than the more austere classic models it replaced, making it a better proposition as a touring car. It featured 'tombstone' seats, of which, the backrests resembled the outline of an, er, tombstone, upholstered in a variety of materials from leather to velour (the latter good for hot climates). These pews provide good support on long journeys. The dashboard contained the familiar 911 hotchpotch of switches, with the centrally mounted rev counter and a chunky leather rimmed three-spoke steering wheel dominating the driver's view. Heater regulation was improved by means of a constant-running fan system, in part thanks to an upgraded 70-amp/980-watt alternator, while externally, there were black window trims and, more significantly, an electrically operated driver's door mirror. The Turbo's whale-tail rear spoiler and rear window wiper could also be specified – the ducktail was now very passé.

Just 3,687 examples of the Carrera 3.0 were built. Compare this number with the 58,000 911 SCs made between 1978 and 1983. Of course, such rarity ought to impact on values, but in reality, it doesn't, largely because the Carrera 3.0 is something of an unknown quantity and it's much easier to find an SC or Carrera 3.2. One reason for low-volume production is the simple fact the Carrera 3.0 wasn't available in the USA, despite its

bumpers complying with the necessary safety legislation and K-Jetronic injection being cleaner than carbs. Had the car been seen in North America, it's extremely likely to have sold well in a market then restricted to just the de-tuned 2.7-litre 911 and the 930. Nevertheless, good examples of the Carrera 3.0 do seem to have hardened up at around £68,000 (€80,000) in the current climate. Some fetch slightly less, a few for rather more.

The Carrera 3.0 was dropped, along with the 2.7-litre 911, for 1978, making way for the SC. A short production life meant it became a sought-after model among

Above Mick spends his days sourcing and restoring some of the world's rarest and most valuable air-cooled Porsches, but his personal ride is this gorgeous brown Carrera 3.0





collectors, even though the SC it spawned bore all the same physical attributes and running gear. Introduced in late 1983 for the 1984 model year, the Carrera 3.2 went on to replace the SC, though used the same body-chassis unit with a few detail improvements. The major alteration to 3.2 specification was the substitution (in 1987) of the Getrag G50 gearbox for the long-in-the-tooth 915 unit. Like the SC, there were Coupé and Targa body styles, plus Cabriolet, Club Sport and Speedster versions – the stage was set for Porsche’s multi-platform 911s, which have burgeoned into the present day.

SILVER BULLET

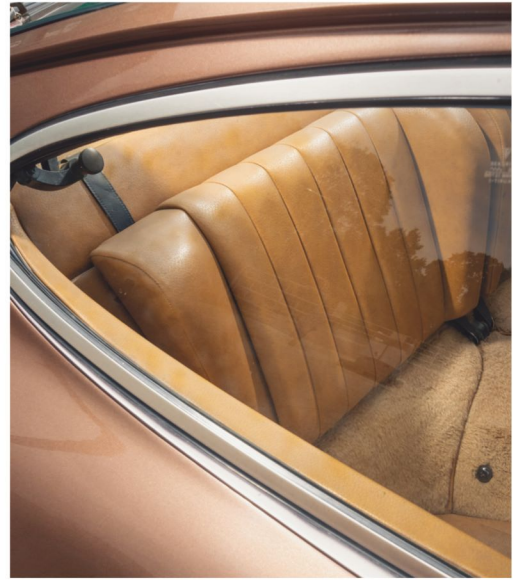
In 1975, the company also marked its twenty-fifth anniversary of big-scale production with 1,063 special edition Carreras, a handful with Carrera RS 2.7 engines. These cars are known as the 25th Silver Anniversary specials, kitted out and badged at the factory to mark the firm’s silver jubilee and are the earliest examples of Porsche’s commemorative special editions. Zuffenhausen produced 664 Coupés and 399 in Targas in this guise. All were finished in Diamond Silver Metallic, with cockpits and cabins upholstered in an extraordinary silver-and-black tweed, with a numbered plaque fixed to the glovebox lid or passenger dashboard. A large percentage of both body styles were made to US-satisfying spec (510 and 249 units respectively), based on the regular 2.7-litre, 150bhp 911 and the 175bhp 911 S. Quicksilver Messenger Service? A handful received the by-now deified Carrera RS 2.7-litre flat-six, enabling a very healthy 210bhp. In the case of the Targa, sixteen cars were fitted with RS motors, and close to thirty Coupés ran the RS powertrain. Crucially, the *I-Programme* saw quarter-light and rear three-quarter windows no longer opening, but electric windows were standard across the range instead. The previously hardcore S was becoming more civilised, and this was the last incarnation of the

911 S until the once much vaunted S-suffix was revived on upgraded versions of the turbocharged 964, 993 and 996 models, including the 996 Carrera 4S. By this time, however, so many other Porsche performance embellishments existed, the formerly significant S moniker had become rather overlooked.

Today, the Carrera 3.0 contrives to look newer than its forty-five years, and that’s due, partly, to the impact bumpers, which are more readily associated with the 911 SC and Carrera 3.2 (last produced in 1989 prior to the arrival of the 964) than classic long-bonnet 911s. Considering model lines encapsulating the 356, 911, 912 and 914, it does seem incredible Porsche had only been

Above It might not be as powerful as later impact-bumpered 911s, but the Carrera 3.0’s low production volume affords owners an air of exclusivity



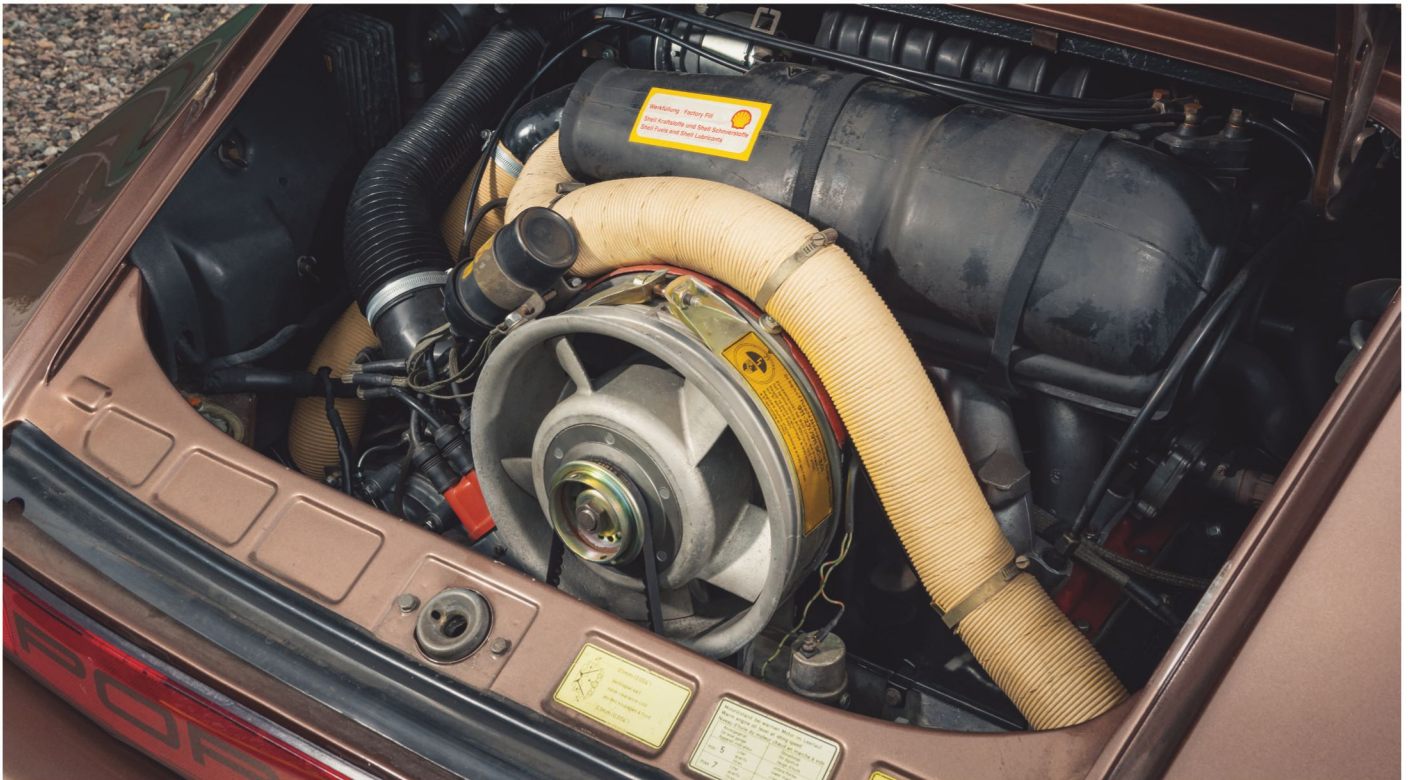


Above Cinnamon interior is the perfect match for the paintwork – we wouldn't change a thing about this car

going twenty-seven years when the Carrera 3.0 was launched. One could be tempted by the rarity factor, but, as I say, this air-cooled 911 is getting on for half a century old and, inevitably, surviving Porsches of this age will have gone through the corrosion-stemming process. The upside is that someone else has likely paid for the privilege, but it's important – as well as interesting – to learn where that restoration work was carried out, and how extensively. You want to know if it was a full, back-to-bare-metal nuts-and-bolts job, or a hand-to-mouth superficial makeover. A renovation done in the 1990s may already need re-doing. The upside is that cars like these usually belong to enthusiasts, so there's every likelihood everything is mechanically sound – you'll know immediately, primarily because a neglected 911 drives like a bag of nails. If shopping for a Carrera 3.0,

you need to see the bills and receipts for engine and gearbox maintenance (e.g. worn second-gear synchro replaced), fresh clutch, fuel and brake lines, silencer and heat exchangers, reconditioned Fuchs and appropriate tyres, the correct Bilstein dampers, new brake discs and calipers, suspension and roll-bar bushes, wheel bearings and so on. Maybe the upholstery is worn or split? Budget accordingly. High miles needn't be a deterrent, providing the engine has been looked after and serviced properly.

The feature car on these pages belongs to our old friend, Mick Pacey, head of classic Porsche sales and restoration specialist, Export 56, located in rural Bedfordshire. Mick bought his Carrera 3.0 three years ago. He'd gone to auction to buy a Carrera RS 2.7 for an Export 56 customer, but the car he'd set his sights on was "in pretty awful condition" and, instead, his eye



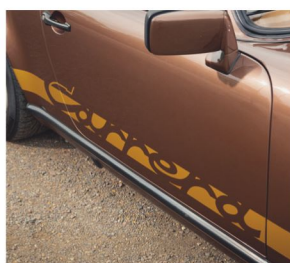


was taken by the Copper-Brown Metallic Carrera 3.0 in attendance. "I thought it was absolutely stunning and spent twenty minutes looking over it," he recalls. "It's not really a car I wanted, but I loved the colour combination, the Cinnamon interior, the fabulous history and the original service books. The late Chris Turner had carried out most of the engine work. The flat-six itself was good, as was the body, though I've just had it detailed and changed the tyres. It's such a fun 911 to drive, and I've always used it at weekends, for shopping, going down to Goodwood and the like." The brown beauty augmented a collection Mick had built up, including a 1974 Carrera 2.7 Targa and a 1976 930. "This is a really cool window for Porsches," he reckons. "It's quite overlooked. Put it this way, everyone goes bonkers over pre-1973 stuff, but there were some really good 911s built between 1974

and 1977. Experimental stuff, obviously. Homologating three-litre Turbos for the first two years, low production numbers and a range of cool colours." And his Copper-Brown car, complete with Cinnamon interior, doesn't get more 1970s.

Mick reckons he's owned eight Carrera 3.0s over the years. I wanted to hear where he thinks the model fits in the grand lexicon of air-cooled 911s. "They're huge value for money," he replies. "The Carrera 3.0 is effectively a narrow-bodied, naturally-aspirated 930 with the turbocharger taken off. This model runs on the same block as a three-litre Turbo and is equipped with a 915 gearbox, which makes it an incredibly great package to drive. It's a very torquey, very revvy engine. It's worth saying, I think you get more out of the turbo block in a Carrera 3.0 with a five-speed box than you do with a four-

Above Though Mick's car is a rare right-hand drive Carrera 3.0 coupe, buyers are afforded a choice of Targa body style and left-hand drive





Above Fabric-centred 'tombstones' are very comfortable, making the Carrera 3.0 an ideal tourer

speed Turbo cog swapper, primary because you never quite know when the turbocharger is going to kick in. Moreover, UK market cars qualified for Porsche's Sport package, which gave you Turbo enhancements, including the whale-tail wing, a smaller three-spoke steering wheel and upgraded upholstery. Only ten percent of Carrera 3.0 buyers optioned the kit, but his particular car has it."

THE WILD WEST

I've a soft spot for the Carrera 3.0, too. My first acquaintance was in Devon, more than two decades ago, when I went to see an example I'd thought of buying. It had been imported from Europe and was a high-spec Sport-optioned car equipped with air-conditioning, though I can't recall if it was original factory equipment or installed at the dealership. The black Blaupunkt rear speakers were quite unusual, and the seats featured perforated black leather centres. Bilstein Sports shocks and fifteen-inch Fuchs shod with Pirelli P6000s formed part of the package – later examples of the Carrera 3.0 sometimes rolled on 'Cookie Cutter' wheels. There was a 380mm competition steering wheel, headlamp washer nozzles on the front impact bumper, power windows, an electrically operated sunroof and black window trim instead of chrome. I also recall *Carrera* sidewinder graphics along the lower flanks. The headlamp bezels were colour-coded as opposed to chrome, but there were no driving lamps beneath the bumper (these would come as standard kit with the arrival of the SC). There was also a novel cruise control

arrangement, dubbed *Tempostat* in European cars and, more logically, *Automatic Speed Control* in the United States. Not my cup of tea.

And the reality? In a Dartmoor village setting, I eased myself aboard to take a turn behind the wheel. It immediately felt like a modern – let's say, mid-period – 911. Previous (unfulfilled) attempts at 911 ownership had involved raucous 2.2-litre models, loaned to me by Josh Sadler, founder of independent Porsche maintenance and restoration specialist, Autofarm. The Carrera 3.0's high-back tombstone seats with their integral headrests and longer seat squabs provided better leg and back support every which way, and the

Carrera 3.0 cabin is thus a more relaxed and better composed environment than that of any previous air-cooled 911. Inertia-reel seat belts were standard by now, too, while door handles

HIS COPPER-BROWN CARRERA 3.0, COMPLETE WITH CINNAMON INTERIOR, DOESN'T GET MORE 1970s

and bins took on the modern aspect.

The object of my desire had covered a modest 69,000 miles. Personally, I loved the fact it was a left-hooker. Even the way the doors shut and the more opulent door furniture impressed, as did the delicacy of the 915/44 gearshift, while the three-litre flat-six seemed flexible and torquey, able to dispense power at lower rev range than its 2.7-litre ancestors. Gearing seemed longer, too. The car felt hunkered down, well planted compared with earlier 911s. The steering felt nicely weighted, light, with good turn-in on the Dartmoor backroads, the blaring boxer providing decent acceleration when getting off the line at crossroads. I thought it was a well-rounded,



relatively lively car which hung onto some of the sprightlier aspects of its 2.7-litre predecessors. Having driven a few of those over the years, it's worth recalling the 2.7's 175bhp engine delivered brisk performance, excelling in the 4,000-5,000 rev band. It seemed livelier, taut, vivacious, well-balanced and more planted than the even daintier Carrera RS 2.7, with a lovely weight to the steering, even though it's non-assisted, and easy to control in a tight turn-in situation. By comparison, the Carrera 3.0 is a wee bit more stolid, though that's not meant as a put-down, just an observation.

My Dartmoor drive was educational – it helped me choose my first 911, and it wasn't the Carrera 3.0. My mind was made up on that score during a subsequent visit to see Adrian Crawford over on the other side of the Moor, when he introduced me to a Prussian

Blue Carrera 3.2. At the time (before the founding of Adrian's dealership, Williams Crawford, in Saltash), he was importing many cars from Europe when the pound was stronger than the euro, and so my Carrera 3.2 was left-hand-drive. I loved it dearly and it did several runs from Norfolk to Portugal until the car was stolen and I swapped the repaired 'cherished salvage' for my 'Peppermint Pig' 964, which is a whole other story. Should I have bought the Carrera 3.0? I don't think I'd have been disappointed, but I would have soon moved on to something quicker and less mild-mannered. And that, in conclusion, makes it an agreeable introduction to air-cooled 911s – the Carrera 3.0 is out there if you look hard enough, and it's a brilliant 911, especially if you don't mind settling for left-hand-drive or a Targa top. Exclusivity awaits. Enjoy! **CP**

Above The perfect stance and that exaggerated rear end give Mick's car a serious amount of road presence

