



Wheel base

Jasmine Porschalink UK is the new name for an established independent specialist which has built itself an enviable reputation for supplying both new and refurbished Porsche wheels. Paul Davies pays a visit, and discovers that there's much more to it than just wheels. Photography by Michael Bailie

Commercial success is – for the most part, anyway – down to spotting a gap in the market. Sometimes this can be a niche that others have either not considered, or have tried but done badly. Jasmine found that all-important market, and did it properly.

Like many specialists, Jasmine Porschalink UK has its roots in motorsport. Founder Brian Goff has long been a keen rally-car co-driver, and discovered, almost by chance

between events, that there was a surprisingly lively market for wheels for all kinds of Porsches.

Jasmine's mission statement is to offer what it calls 'genuine Porsche parts at genuinely discounted prices.' And it delivers the goods, too, both figuratively and literally. It is also, from the customer's point of view, a refreshingly high-quality retail experience.

In fact, Jasmine has recently moved to new premises in a converted cotton mill in Lancashire. Walk through the door and you don't

The Jasmine Porschalink team (above). From left to right: Emma Jackson (office assistant), Frank Metcalfe (stores manager and fitter), Susan Goff, proprietor Brian Goff

find the threadbare carpet and greasy, dilapidated shelving of many a wheel-and-tyre emporium.

The floor coverings are immaculate, there's a chrome-plated display rack stacked with a mouth-watering selection of alloys, a collection of motorsport trophies, another of Porsche pin badges, and a cabinet full of Porsche-branded items including mugs, valve caps and paperweights.

The waiting area (actually, it's rather more like a lounge) has sumptuous leather seats and a smart coffee table, complete with free sweets and (of course!) copies of *911 & Porsche World* to cosset the customer while his or her car gets a new set of wheels in the fitting bay just around the corner. As Brian Goff says, 'People can come in here and feel comfortable, whether they're in an old 944 or a brand-new 996 Carrera or Boxster.'

Cleverly, the full 5000 square feet of storage space is visible from the waiting area. Wheels, tyres and body panels fill the racking, showing how orderly things are – and the immense amount of stock, too. Indeed, Goff estimates that Jasmine's inventory runs to around 800 wheels at any given time.

Jasmine Motorsport began as a part-time operation in 1997, with Brian's wife Sue (whose middle name gave the company its name) handling the day-to-day business from the family home, while Brian worked overseas helping to build oil and gas pipelines. The couple took the plunge in 1998 to make it a full-time occupation, and moved to premises in the small town of Barrowford in Lancashire.

In the summer of 2002 the company moved to its current location just a few streets away in order to accommodate the ever-

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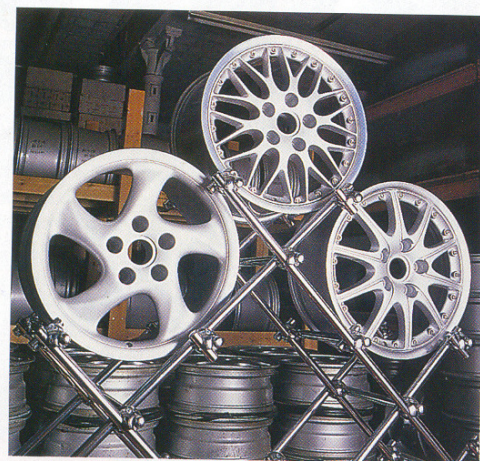
Brian Goff (above) with some of his rally trophies that decorate the reception area at Jasmine

growing stock of wheels. At the same time Goff began stocking a range of bodykits and panels for later-model Porsches, from the 964-model 911 Carrera right up to the current cars. Lights and mirrors are also available to add to – as Brian calls it – the ‘complete styling enhancement’ process.

The move also saw a change of name, the original Jasmine Motorsport being dropped in favour of Jasmine Porschalink, which Brian and Sue feel more accurately reflects their business, and also emphasises their commitment to supplying only genuine Porsche, or Porsche-approved, parts.

Brian explains. ‘Why only genuine Porsche wheels? Well, Porsche makes a very good product. There are so many replica wheels on the market, but they have different offsets, people don’t understand how they fit, and the wheels can be very heavy and sometimes of dubious quality, too. Heavy wheels increase unsprung weight, and can adversely affect the car’s handling.’

Brian also points out that some replica wheels can actually devalue



10.0J x 18-inch (above) is the most popular Porsche option for rear wheels. This is Technology (left), Sport Classic II (top) and Sport Design (right)

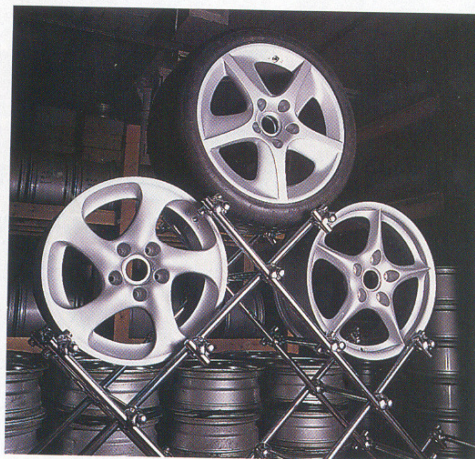
a Porsche. Indeed, Official Porsche Centres are unable to sell cars equipped with anything but genuine Porsche rims. It’s yet another reason, he firmly believes, for concentrating on the real thing.

‘Our aim is to stock at least one set of every wheel made by – or for – Porsche from 1964 to the present day. What’s more, I reckon we’re up to at least 95 per cent of that target.’

The same maxim applies to the body parts stocked at Barrowford.



Refurbished Fuchs wheels of varying sizes (above) for early Porsches. Prices vary from £200 for a 6.0J x 15-inch (bottom) to £700 for the super-rare 7.0J x 15-inch 911R fitment (left)



Porsche’s latest rim (above) is the Techno (top), shown here with the Turbo 2 (left) and current-model 996 Carrera (right)

Goff says he believes it best to stay with Porsche quality, safe in the knowledge that items will fit properly.

While a significant quantity of the parts available at Jasmine are new – usually retailing at between 20 and 50 per cent below prices at Official Porsche Centres – a fair proportion of the wheel stock is second-hand, either bought in to satisfy what appears to be an ever-increasing demand for older Porsche rims, or else taken in part-

exchange on wheel upgrades.

Much of Jasmine’s business is mail order, but Brian has found there’s a steady demand either for wheel changes to take place at Barrowford – hence the very well-equipped fitting bay (see also Philip Raby’s project-car report, *The ‘X’ fillings*, starting on page 72) – or on site. Indeed, every couple of weeks or so Goff loads the company van with wheels and tyres, and heads

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Before and after (above). Jasmine provides a refurbishment service for original Porsche and good-quality after-market alloys

Genuine Porsche light-alloy wheels have their size stamped on the outer rim, and a unique part number inside the spokes (right)



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out to meet some customers.

'We charge £50 for mobile fitting. More often than not it means a trip to London or the Thames valley area. I once changed a customer's 17-inch wheels and tyres for new 18-inch rims in the middle of Hyde Park,' smiles Brian. 'He only needed to leave his office for about an hour.'

The other side of the business is alloy-wheel restoration. Jasmine provides a refurbishment service for Porsche wheels and also what Brian refers to as good-quality after-

market items, such as those marketed by TechArt and Ruf. Wheels are cleaned by bead-blasting and marks machined out, before they're polished, or painted with polyurethane or lacquer.

Full refurbishment of a modern light-alloy wheel starts at around £80, but varies depending upon its size, type (two- and three-part rims can be harder to restore) and condition.

'In the case of the old Fuchs alloys we can polish or anodise both the rims and spokes,' says Brian.

'The original wheels were anodised, but to carry out that process is expensive, at about £200 a wheel, so most people go for polishing, which is about £80 a corner. We don't lacquer them because this gets broken down by stone-chips, and then you get accelerated corrosion beneath the lacquer.'

The absence of lacquer means that owners have to spend a little more time keeping their wheels clean, admits Brian, but he says that extra attention is worthwhile to

Contacts book

Jasmine Porschalink UK,
Lower Clough Business
Centre, Pendle Street,
Barrowford, Lancashire
BB9 8PH;
tel: 01282 697171; fax:
01282 691911; e-mail:
jasmine.motorsport@virgin.
net; website: www.jasmine-
motorsport.co.uk

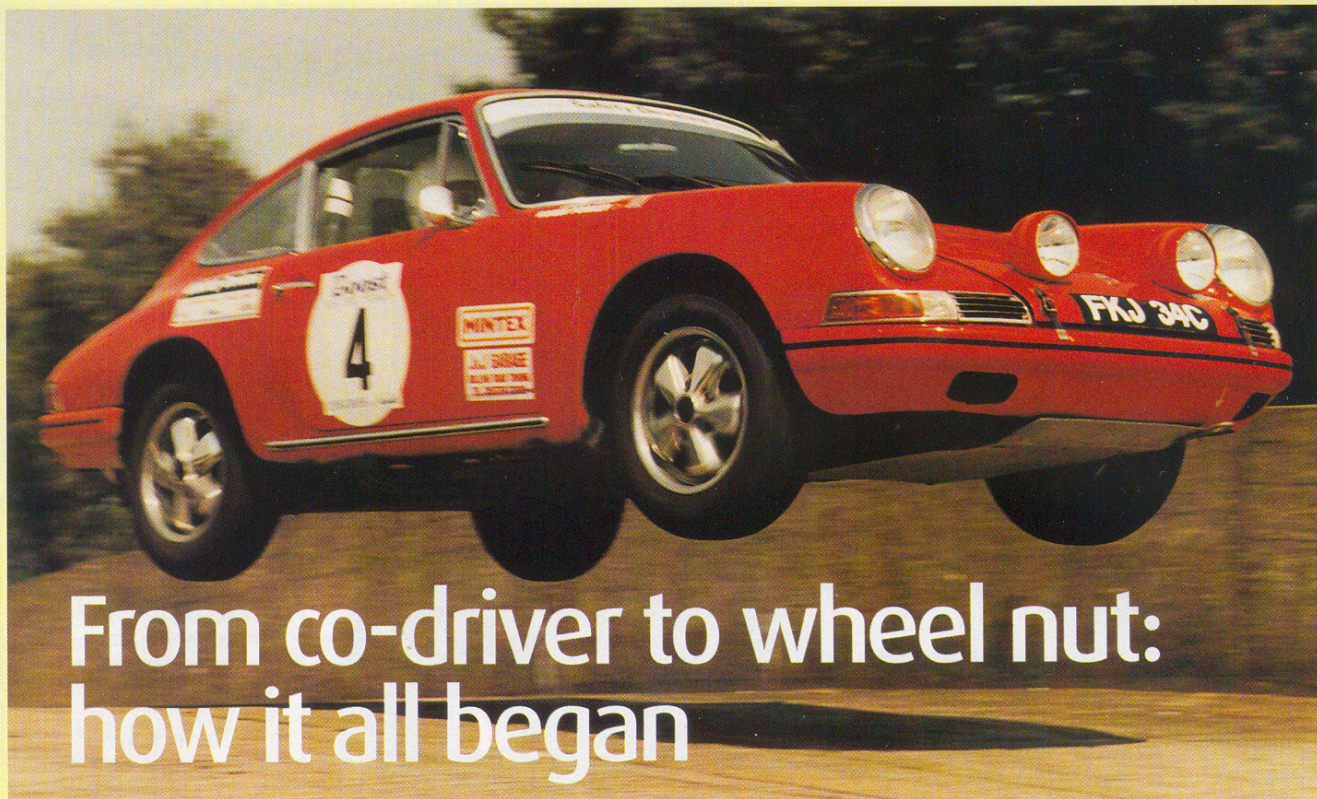
Fitting bay has all the latest equipment. This Boxster (left) will be upgraded with 2003-model front and rear panels plus clear lights to show what can be achieved with body panels from Jasmine

prevent corrosion of these older rims.

Wheels can be crack-tested, if required, either with a special dye, or by using a special ultrasound process. This is particularly important in the case of rims used for motorsport, or those that are known to have taken a hard knock.

Although Brian accepts that light-alloy wheels have a limited lifespan, he reports that 30-year-old Fuchs have proved to be sound when tested. Magnesium wheels, however, tend to degrade more with age and need to be checked regularly. Jasmine does not, he adds, approve of welding cracks in any wheel.

There are no plans to expand into general mechanical work or car restoration, simply to grow the current business and to continue to offer a top-quality service combining genuine Porsche parts and reasonable prices with the all-important knowledge that only experience can bring. Well, why change a winning formula? ■



From co-driver to wheel nut: how it all began

I had the picture on my office wall for some time, writes Paul Davies. The red 911 is flying six feet – that's nearly two metres – off the ground, all four of its Fuchs light-alloy wheels dangling on the suspension, the undershield clearly visible. It's a great photograph, made even more appealing by the fact that I was there, and I know what happened next!

The event was a round of the 1995 Historic Rally Championship, the venue a military test-track in Surrey. And immediately after cresting the steep incline that launched the cars into the air, drivers had to turn 90 degrees right to continue the special stage.

Except, on this occasion, the Porsche flew just a little too far. The car landed heavily and, before the driver could turn the steering wheel, ended up with the rear end firmly lodged on a very solid steel manhole cover standing some 12 inches clear of the concrete.

The Porsche stuck firmly on the cover and had to be lifted clear by several strong rally marshals. Once more in contact with the ground the car made slow progress off to the service park with the rear wheels askew, displaying considerably more negative camber than Porsche

AG had ever intended.

Brian Goff – co-driver on the day, sitting alongside Roger Powley, and now managing director of Jasmine Porschalink UK – takes up the story seven years later.

'Both swinging arms had been bent by the force of the landing. So we got a very long scaffold pole and levered them more or less straight so that we could continue the rally.'

Goff's introduction to the Porsche wheel business began from his rallying roots. A Porsche owner in the 1970s (starting with a 924 and then a 911 Carrera 3.0) he began navigating for Powley in a 911E on Welsh Championship events, the duo progressing to the 1978 *Motoring News* series, the top-level navigational road-rally championship of the period.

At this point Goff toyed with the idea of becoming a professional co-driver, but resisted the temptation.

A drought in his sporting career ended in the early 1990s when Brian took to the tracks, with modest success, in a 911 Carrera 2.7RS. The call to return to rallying came soon, and saw our man reading the pacenotes alongside Chris Mellors in a Ford Sierra Cosworth – and then Escort Cosworth – to win outright the Mintex National Rally Championship in 1994, 1995 and 1996.

Three rally titles is a hard act to

follow, and so Brian drifted back to Porsches, Historic rallies, a renewed association with Roger Powley, and – ultimately – that close encounter with the manhole cover at the army's proving ground at Longcross, Surrey.

Nowadays Goff is a 'retired' co-driver, but the many trophies on display at Jasmine are evidence of his competition background. He owns a genuine 2.7RS that occasionally goes out on trackdays, but most of his clearly considerable energies now go into developing Jasmine.

'Having raced and rallied Porsches for years we'd collected

Brian Goff and Roger Powley fly high at the Longcross Stages Rally in 1995. Their aerobatics ended when the Porsche landed on a raised manhole cover (Photo: Mark Writtle)

quite a number of wheels, and we decided to place an advert to sell about 40. I was amazed at the response. The phone never stopped ringing,' he recalls with a smile.

'I was looking for a career change and thought that if people are so desperate to find good Fuchs wheels, then maybe we ought to make a business out of it!'



A somewhat younger Brian Goff alongside Roger Powley in their 911E during the Cambrian News Rally, a round of the 1978 *Motoring News* road-rally championship (Photo: Speedsports)