



PAST MASTERS

Look past its water-cooled GT cred and you'll soon discover RPM Technik offers air-cooled expertise for original and upgraded classic Porsches alike...

Words **Emma Woodcock** Photography **Dan Sherwood**

Stroll into RPM Technik's Hertfordshire headquarters and you'd be forgiven for thinking water-cooled Porsches are the sole focus. The main workshops and adjoining showroom bristle with the best examples of GT2, GT3, GT4 and any Stuttgart-crested car with an RS suffix. A hugely respected maintainer and modifier of these German joy toys, RPM Technik boasts membership of the Porsche Partner Network (PPN) and stands as the very first British marque specialist authorised to construct Manthey-Racing models.

The company's Technical Director, Ollie Preston, leads a twenty-four-strong team with a reputation for cutting-edge performance, but this is just one side of business. Cross into the firm's dedicated Projects workshop or its air-cooled engine room and you'll be dazzled with the company's best-kept secret: RPM Technik knows classic Porsches. Moreover, it offers them the same perfectionist treatment as modern Porsches. "When RPM Technik was established in 2001, air-cooled cars were our backbone," Ollie tells us. Back then, of course,

there simply wasn't the same number of water-cooled Porsches on the road as there is today.

He founded the company after serving an apprenticeship with one Porsche specialist and working in restoration for another. A humble lock-up garage formed the first RPM Technik premises, but as the team started to grow, relocation to a large former cowshed followed. Another move and two on-site expansions took the company to its current footprint of 12,000ft² in Tring.

The most recent growth spurt took the company back to its roots, creating space for separate air-cooled restoration facilities. Equipped with two ramps, a rotisserie and easy access to the geometry rig its shares with the main workshop, the facility packs a wide range of renovation talents into its 3,000ft² and is staffed by a three-strong team who focus solely on classic Porsche projects. Key among the trio is Chris Boys, who came to RPM Technik after guiding Ollie through his apprenticeship years earlier.

"Our business is built entirely around our people," says Commercial Director, Darren Anderson. "We have some of the best team members imaginable and benefit from

Below and facing page
RPM Technik's extensive facility near Tring includes a dedicated facility for the restoration of air-cooled Porsches and houses a dazzling array of sports cars





their absolute technical expertise. Chris is one of those people. He can tell you the part number for almost any component on sight! He's been around these cars so long he remembers the period Porsche training for all manner of complex mechanical systems. Our Projects Manager, Simon Maxted, also worked alongside Ollie in previous role, as well as serving as junior technician to Chris back in the 1990s."

Such experience is invaluable when facing the challenges created by aging and often irreplaceable

components. "Take the Bosch K-Jetronic mechanical fuel injection system Porsche fitted to cars between 1974 and 1983," says Ollie. "New replacement parts aren't available and there are very few people who know how to

repair the system. RPM Technik is something of a rarity because we have the both the in-house knowledge and testing equipment to get the system running again." A gigantic period Bosch motor tester with

built in microfiche reader and four-gas exhaust analyser dominate a corner of the room, allowing RPM Technik to find faults in K-Jetronic systems and test the efficacy

Above White 959 is one of two examples of the technological trailblazer currently taking up residence at RPM Technik's premises

RELENTLESS ATTENTION TO DETAIL IS GUIDING RPM TECHNIK THROUGH THE RECOMMISSIONING OF TWO 959s





Above Though the company is widely known for its custom water-cooled 911 builds, the firm started out working with Porsche's air-cooled output and continues to do so, with huge expertise in the field of engine and transmission work, spearheaded by senior technician, Dave Lee (below)

of used replacement parts. The company also boasts extensive experience retrofitting electronic fuel injection for clients who'd rather fit updated kit.

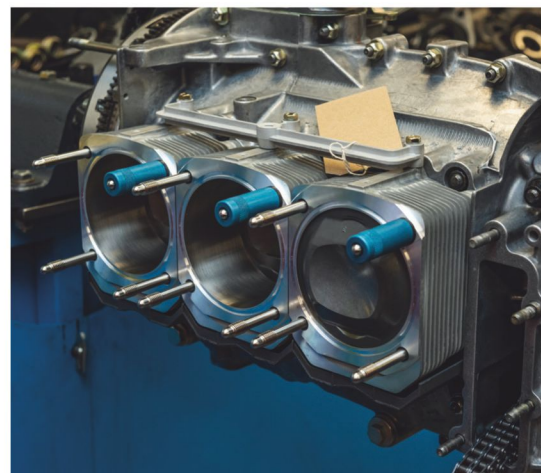
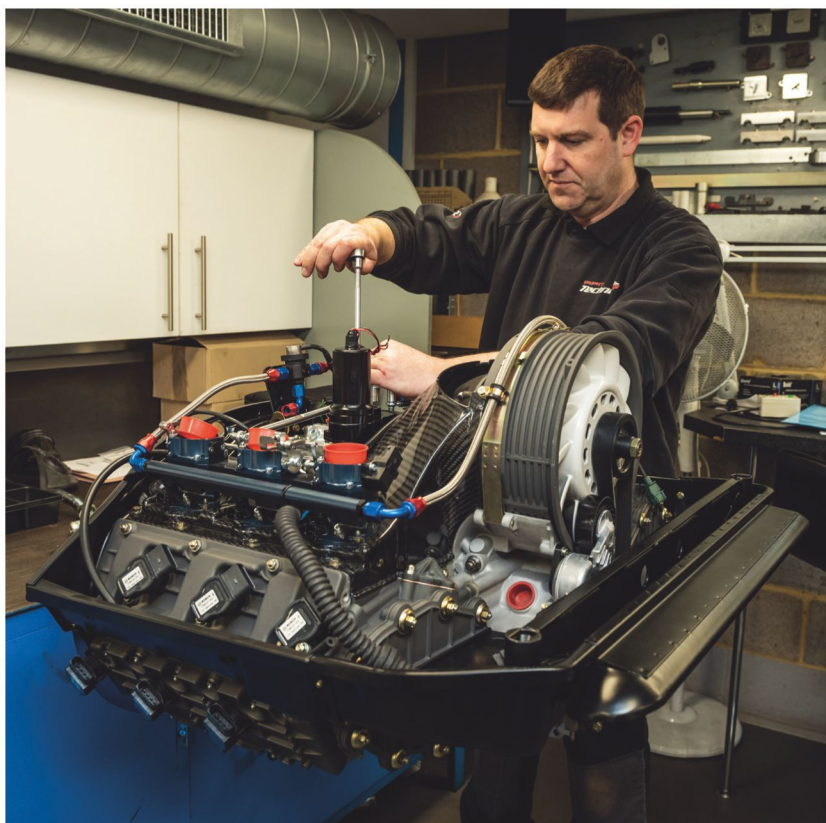
The same relentless attention to detail is guiding RPM Technik through the recommissioning of not one, but two 959s. "We'd never worked with the model until we were asked to inspect one around five years ago," Ollie reveals. "It taught us a lot. The basic shape might look like a 911, but the anti-lock braking system is like nothing else, the engine is unique and not one part of the hydraulic system corresponds with other Porsches." He was unbowed. Investing in original workshop manuals and model-specific maintenance tools prepared the company for the day a 959 next rolled through the doors.

In 2020, the silver 959 in our pictures arrived for

an engine rebuild. The two-year project — slowed by coronavirus restrictions — demanded resourceful thinking. "It'd be easier to find a unicorn horn than most of the engine components for a 959," laughs Ollie, "but solving problems is what keeps the job interesting." In response to an increasingly fruitless search for replacement parts, the company had both turbochargers rebuilt, commissioned the custom fabrication of a new wastegate and employed a specialist motorsport firm to create replacements for the fatigued titanium rods. "We've had them remade from a modern alloy, which is almost identically light, but should offer far greater longevity than the original components."

DEVIL IN THE DETAIL

The white 959 — delivered to RPM Technik after two decades standing in a warehouse — requires matching sensitivity. Preservation is paramount and Ollie aims to recommission the car without leaving any hint of the work carried out. "It's a slow process, but we want to strike a balance offering the best of both worlds. Though the engine will be rebuilt, the body is receiving nothing more than a thorough detail. Additionally, we've made plans to wax and re-coat every part of the car to factory specification during the process of reassembly. It'll run well once we're finished, without losing its place





in history." It won't be the first Porsche to roll out of the facility with originality enshrined. Ollie grins as he recalls a Maritime Blue 964 Carrera RS N/GT entrusted to the business by a curious owner who wanted to confirm his hunches about the car's history. Inviting ex-racer and Porsche Carrera Cup Deutschland administrator, Jürgen Barth, to inspect the air-cooled speed machine confirmed it as the N/GT prototype and period press car, informing direction of the restoration which followed.

GREEN MACHINE

Another 964 draws stares in the workshop today, its denuded but original wide body glistening in a fresh coat of Amazon Green Metallic. It's a period colour, befitting a 911 which will be rebuilt to original specification. Almost. "The owner wants a 1990s 911 he can use every day,"

Darren confirms. "We've advised on subtle modifications for usability, such as KW suspension, which makes any classic Porsche feel far more modern through improved ride quality. We'll also be fitting a Classic Retrofit electric air-conditioning system, resulting in an efficient and highly effective climate control system."

Every suggestion RPM Technik makes is built on several years of restomodification experience — and the company didn't start small. "A client asked if we could build him a backdate. He'd been looking at Singer's output, but wanted a narrow body car." Ollie didn't hesitate. The 964 donor shell was quickly transformed, its floors reshaped to accept bespoke carbon-fibre bumpers and sills remade by hand to reflect svelte pre-1973 styling while hosting the plumbing for twin oil coolers. A lavish bespoke interior, newly developed

Above A small sample of what's on offer in the RPM Technik sales showroom: 1991 964 Carrera RS, 1989 Carrera 3.2 Speedster and 1998 993 Carrera 4S

Below Amazon Green Metallic 964 is being restored with choice upgrades suited to the car's intended use its owner's daily driven Porsche

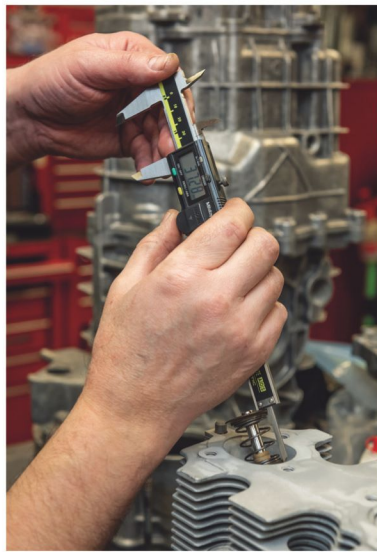




Above The 959 engine is quite unlike any other air-cooled Porsche powerplant, necessitating specialist expertise and equipment

Top right Air-cooled department manager, Chris Boys, mentored Ollie during his apprenticeship days

Below right Special Projects department manager, Simon Maxted, oversees RPM Technik's bespoke builds



LumeTechnik LED headlights and a screaming 385bhp engine were just some of the highlights of the showstopping transformation.

Mounted on the workshop rotisserie is proof Ollie practises what he preaches. The Riviera Blue bodyshell belongs to a 964 Carrera 2 the company founder bought fifteen years ago with dreams of recreating the iconic Carrera RS 3.6.

The car soon proved troubling. "It leaked oil. A lot of oil!" he cries. "When I was out on track, a river of fluid flowed behind me." Removing the flat-six for full rebuild encouraged him to recondition the engine bay, which tempted him to strip the shell completely and set to work creating his dream Porsche.

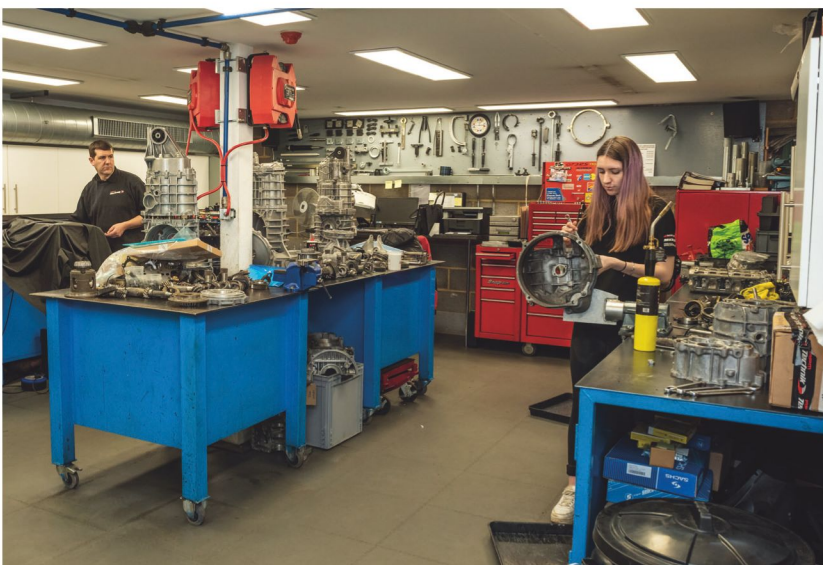
Innovation drips from every angle. Overhead spans a carbon-fibre sunroof delete panel — iterated on the blue 964 and now available through the RPM Technik online store, along with the aforementioned LumeTechnik headlights — with new ideas as varied as electric power

SALES OF CAREFULLY SELECTED CARS FORM THE FINAL PART OF AN EXACTING AIR-COOLED OPERATION

steering, heated front and rear screens, and a redesigned wiring loom with deletion of the original fuse box, ready to be implemented as the car comes back together. Once they've been proven on the project Porsche, all three upgrades will start appearing on client cars.

Model-specific stainless steel brake and fuel line kits, the latter capable of withstanding the raised ethanol content of E10 petrol, are also on the way. Having said all this, we're most excited about the sting Ollie is about to mount in his project car's tail.

"We've built a 3.8-litre air-cooled crate engine to our own design, an engine that'll rev hard and still idle in traffic. It'll be on the dyno in weeks and we'll start offering it for sale soon after, complete with its own ECU and wiring loom, meaning it will fit in almost any classic 911." CNC-flowed cases and cylinder heads host custom rods, barrels and pistons, with a GT3 crankshaft and bespoke cams bolstering the specification of internals. Add individual throttle bodies operated by





a drive by wire system, coil-on-plug ignition and a carbon-fibre air box and you've got a classic engine with undeniably modern performance.

AROUND THE WORLD

It'll be constructed in the RPM Technik air-cooled engine and transmission department, under the watchful eye of section head, Dave Lee. "He's extremely talented and must have rebuilt every Porsche gearbox you can imagine. He's even reconstructed 935 Le Mans race car transmissions," says Ollie. "If you showed him the pieces of a 915 five-speed, I can guarantee he'd be able to name every part and tell you exactly where they went." Straying away from factory originality, Dave has also developed a kit transforming the 964 Carrera 4 transmission into a pure rear-wheel drive installation. The finished product has found favour as far afield as New Zealand.

Continued investment ensures the three-strong team can keep doing their best work on classic Porsche drivelines. On-site machining equipment allows RPM Technik to overhaul cylinders heads, while a tumbler helps refinish engine cases without risking oil system contamination, which can be caused by more aggressive media blasting techniques. An engine room redevelopment will soon provide space for an additional four powerplants, each mounted on a dedicated yoke.

Sales of carefully selected cars form the final part of an exacting air-cooled operation. Taking the same approach as when filtering for the finest modern GT Porsches, Greig Daly, RPM Technik's Sales Director, confirms the company sources the very best classic models for its showroom. "We cherry pick cars which either stand out in Porsche history or benefit from extensive attention in our workshops. For example,

we've just sold a factory-type restored 964 following completion of work by our team, and we recently offered a right-hand drive UK market 964 Carrera RS 3.6 Touring, one of only eight examples. We've never shouted about it, but air-cooled cars have always been a big part of our expertise." Despite growing to become one of Europe's leading independent Porsche specialists, it's good to know RPM Technik has stayed true to its roots, serving owners and buyers of air-cooled Porsches with the same top-tier service pilots of modern Stuttgart sports cars have come to expect from the firm. Long may the company's success continue. **CP**

Above A veritable Aladdin's Cave of rare air-cooled Porsches in the process of redevelopment or restoration

