

The Art of DECEPTION



Seen any good motors recently? Peter Morgan has and they range from clocked 997s to 996s with fake ID labels. Here's what you should be looking out for on water-cooled Porsches...

Story: Peter Morgan Photography: Various

Many years back, a mate showed me how easy it was to wind back the odometer on a 1980s Ford Fiesta. It involved an optician's miniature screwdriver and some deft finger work on the rollers. In a matter of minutes the job was done and the car was showing some 10k less than at the start. The change was impossible to see and (quite illegally) added a few hundred quid to the value of the car.

Today, you would like to think that in this electronic age such fraudulent activities were no longer possible. Sadly, that is not the case and anybody involved in the used Porsche business

should be aware of the sometimes very sophisticated deceptions being practiced by a small minority.

It's a problem for both owners and legitimate traders alike and it covers every era of Porsche manufacture. The early, collectible Porsches have long been subject to those who alter engine numbers or give fake identities to orphan cars but here I'm just going to share some of my experiences on the later models – the water-cooled Porsches built after 1996.

Now I don't want you to get over anxious about this issue because we are talking about a very small number of cars and it's important to

say that many of the more experienced independent Porsche resellers are aware of most of the methods used. Their own buying procedures often include authenticity checks. I know that because it's a subject that comes up regularly when I visit them. It's when you move away from the experts and out into the world of non-specialists and private sellers that the risk increases. While the forums have raised the profile of buying a post-'96 model with a worn out engine, there are individuals who boost their returns by deceiving their buyers using faked documentation and 'clocking'. And they are often very good at it.

WPOZZZ98ZBU75

987 111

MA120 G8710

LC9Z AN

C16 342 419 446 567

635 810 P4M P4R X70

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635 810 P4M P4R X70

XLS XYB



The difference in value of a Porsche with and without a service history is significant and is certainly measured in thousands. Consider the fairly frequent scenario where a finance company repossesses a car from a defaulting keeper. The service book gets 'lost' in the forced return and the car becomes an orphan with no history. Such a car won't be attractive to any official or leading independent specialist and it will likely be sold off by trade auction at a discount to the regular book value. It's also probable that the car could also be damaged in some way. A faker will aim to turn a healthy profit on such a car, often by appearing to offer a bargain. He will repair the car as cheaply as possible and completely fabricate a new service history. The first step is to obtain a blank Warranty and Maintenance booklet. The faker may have access to a real OPC service stamp to create a new service history, but even replicas of these can be obtained using the internet. With a little effort, the result appears convincing.

The final item - and so far most difficult to replicate - is the Vehicle Identification Label (VIL), found with the supplying dealer stamp on

page four of the book. This is the paper label that shows all the production specification on the car, including factory options. The VIL is how most fake histories can be identified.

Porsche has been progressively improving the VIL backing and printing methods to make the fakers' job even more difficult, but it has so far been very difficult for the fakers to reproduce the correct dot matrix style, print shade and font style of even the originals. This comment also applies to the VILs that can be found under the bonnets of pre-2004 models. The bonnet VIL is different from the service book VIL in that the data has bold print title legends before each data line. If you see a different VIL style in the service book, the latter has been remanufactured.

The fakers have, so far, been unable to correctly reproduce the other labels found on these cars either. Unfortunately, Porsche stopped fitting the VIL under the bonnet from the start of the 2004 model year and stopped applying a paint code label to the nearside front inner wing around the same time. Previous to this, and with the introduction of the water-cooled cars, the paper barcode label on the 993's nearside B-pillar had

disappeared. This increasing lack of unique factory decals attached to the original bodyshell make it all the more difficult for the inexperienced buyer to assess the originality of the car.

The one label to have survived is the black VIN label on the driver's side B-pillar. This also is a key authenticity indicator and is sometimes removed if the car suffers major side or rear damage. The 993 and early 996/Boxster black VIN labels have a distinct print font and style. The duplication task became much more difficult when Porsche began using an enhanced backing for the label that included a watermark. The first style was a contrasting and repeated 911 or Porsche logo running through the background, which later evolved to a full Porsche crest. With a casual glance you won't spot the difference between fakes and originals but on a collectible limited edition a fake label can point to a complete reshelling or duplication. And for the ultimate fakers, it is only one more step to replace the engraved VIN on the bodyshell if the whole car's identity is to be changed.

Engine number changes are more frequent not least because a significant number were





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GERMANY

A genuine VIN such as this one incorporates a watermark that is difficult to forge

The European Union vehicle type approval number appears here

 1,0 %

996.701.101.70

DR.ING.H.C.F.PORSCHE AG

e13*98/14*0059

WP0ZZZ99Z4S695098

1730 kg

kg

1 - 700 kg

2 - 1080 kg

The chassis number includes data on place of manufacture, build year and engine type

This is nothing more than the part number for the label itself

DIN vehicle kerb weight, excluding occupants but with oils and fuel etc



We are unrealistically obsessed with ours cars having low mileages, and the mark-ups for supposedly little used cars show the dealers know it too

changed on the Gen 1 era 997 Carreras due to reliability issues. The authenticity of an engine number takes on far greater importance when you are considering a limited edition, such as a Turbo with the 'S' or Powerkit options. Supporting documentation or a Porsche authenticity check are essential.

However, we still haven't discussed what may be the most widespread deception in the Porsche marketplace: clocking. In Britain, we are unrealistically obsessed with ours cars having low mileages, and the mark-ups for supposedly little used cars show the dealers know it too. For the casual buyer, the best protection against a car having significant mileage removed from the odometer is a thorough history file. You'll get little help any more from the DVLA's free VOSA history service, as they've stopped showing the mileages from MoTs earlier than 2012, which is disappointing. It makes spotting a car with a corrupted mileage very difficult if you do not have access to the right diagnostic equipment and an experienced eye to gauge the car's general wear and tear.

Many leading dealers now check the ECU mileage (rather than just taking the dash reading as true) using sophisticated diagnostic kit such as Porsche's own PIWIS or Autologic's aftermarket solution. The ECU/DME distance travelled is much more difficult to adjust and can reveal any significant mismatches.

It's a 15-minute job for a man-in-a-van to come to your 996/Boxster/Cayman/997 etc and change the odometer reading on the dash. It is illegal to sell a car knowing its mileage is false. This isn't something only practised by the 'dark side' of the trade. Unscrupulous private owners run cars without spending any money at all on servicing and go past the service points without a care. When the time comes to sell the car on, they have the mileage pulled back so that it appears the car is within its service zone.

This is a problem that has grown noticeably since the service intervals were extended to 20k miles or two years for the 2004 models. In the first instance, it was small traders who clocked the cars to pull them back inside either the 20k- or 40k-mile windows (so again making it look as

if a service wasn't due). But as these cars reach later life, it becomes less obvious when the odd 4k or 6k has been removed from the dash and some might say that doesn't matter. When the mileage goes over 50k, the mileages come off in multiples of 10k. For a seller it can mean an extra £1-2k on the bottom line as mileage is a key driver of selling price. That does matter.

The deception game has taken a further turn recently with an allegedly UK-based outfit offering to edit records such as over-revs from the ECU. At worst, this may be nothing more than a scam which owners should certainly avoid. The doctored over-rev records I have seen are immediately obvious and it is very difficult to see any honest intention from such a so-called service.

It's a sad fact that we live in a world where some set out to deceive or mislead. Service history, mileage or whatever, it is also a sad fact that deceptions succeed because many punters simply can't resist what appears to be a bargain. Technology has indeed superceded the optician's screwdriver but good old fashioned due diligence often still pays ●

