



PT2
THE OPEN
ROAD

PORSCHE PERFORMANCE UNLOCKED

It's where you'll do most of your driving, so mastering the art of car control on the public road will prove beneficial every day, as Editor Lee Sibley discovers...

Photography by **Alisdair Cusick**

The open road: there's more than 262,000 miles of it in the UK alone, connecting communities, delivering efficient travel and, most importantly for the likes of you and I, providing a platform in which to enjoy a Porsche 911.

If you think about it, the open road is a needle that threads your life together. Your first journey as a newborn will very likely have taken you along one, for example, while asphalt will likely have led you to your first date, your wedding, or the ground of your favourite sports team. Then there are the more hedonistic experiences such as road trips or early morning drives, with hairpin bends, heavenly elevations and sweeping cambers all providing memorable moments for a petrolhead in a sports car.

Yet the public road is also full of dangers, and that same stretch of tarmac which can give you the greatest moment of your life could also be the scene of your demise. Not something you'll like reading here, granted, but it's a fact nevertheless.

Moving swiftly but safely is key, and certain skills are required to achieve this – which is why I've enrolled in a two-part Total Control Masterclass with performance driving coach, Ivan Thompssett, of Total Car Control. You may remember part one in last issue took us to ➔



Thanks

For more information on Ivan's services at Total Car Control, visit total-car-control.co.uk or call +44 (0) 1953 459565.

Millbrook Proving Ground where, under Ivan's tutelage, I gained a better understanding of the 911's unique dynamics and how to use these to get the best out of Porsche's iconic sports car. Day two of the course sees us head out on to the public road to apply these skills where it matters most: the real world.

In case you're wondering, the proving ground is used first because it's a suitable place to explore the 911's limits in a safe environment. Once this has been mastered, it's useful to head out on to the open road where, let's face it, most of us carry out at least 95 per cent of our driving. However, the open road presents many hazards that can make sports car driving taxing and tiresome, even in a Porsche. Boring, repetitive drives (such as the commute to work) can also see weak habits creeping in to our own driving, which saps even more enjoyment from the modern-day driving experience.

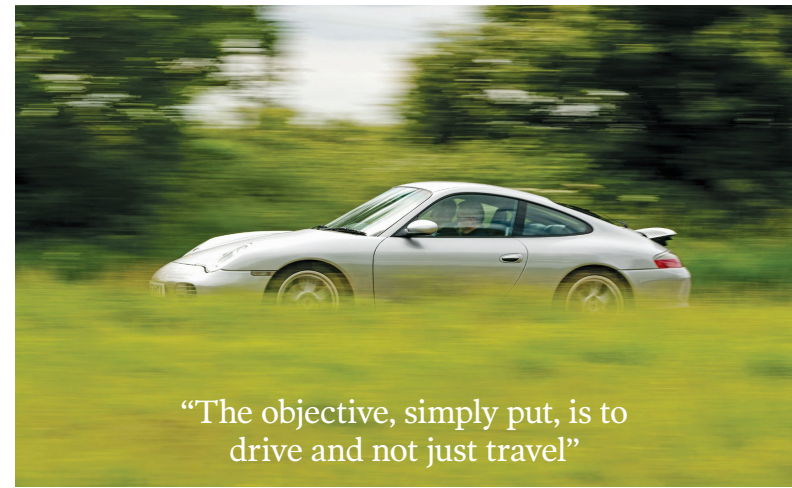
To combat this, Ivan helps administer a fresh, new approach. You'll view your environment and move through it in a completely different way, focusing on judgement, dynamics and speed to achieve that ultimate goal of moving swiftly yet safely. The objective, simply put, is to drive and not merely travel, and you'll be a safer driver, too. Better yet, the focus is on you first, and your car second. This means performance coaching is a true investment in yourself, with all skills learned being transferable from car to car, for the rest of your life.

While driver inputs and dynamics proved a large focus of day one at Millbrook, we begin day two on the road by focusing on a core skill which comes into play before any of that: vision. This establishes how we interact with the environment before we get there, our resulting inputs being proactive rather than reactive, our mission to 'see and be seen' for swift yet safe progress.

A very simple example of how this is executed is as follows. We're driving down a B-road when we come to a village. It's relatively busy, with parked cars lining the carriageway on one side, interspersed by semi-detached houses with driveways leading to lowered kerbs at the roadside. We drop to the required 30mph before proceeding.

"Looking around, which type of vehicle has or will drive down this street today, but didn't do so yesterday, and won't tomorrow?" Ivan asks. The question completely throws me. I look at road signs for clues, but they offer nothing. A couple more seconds go by, then I have to concede I don't know.

"The bins?" Ivan hints, at which point I notice the large, blue plastic trash holders placed at the end of driveways, all the way up the street. In fact, now they're pointed out to me, it's hard to miss them - yet my brain had completely glossed over this useful information as we entered the village, which points to the fact that a bin lorry, and therefore council employees, could be around the corner. ➔



ABOVE Instructor Ivan Thompsett points out the finer points of entering and exiting a bend to Editor Lee

FAR LEFT The goal is to move swiftly yet safely, unlocking the full performance potential of your Porsche 911

LEFT The Cambridgeshire countryside provides ample opportunity for Ivan to pass on his many years of driving knowledge to enthusiasts

“The objective, simply put, is to drive and not just travel”



The lesson in deep observation continues. "Looking at the bins, would you say the bin lorry has already been through this village, or not?" Ivan asks. I find myself answering that because the bin handles are facing into each driveway, rather than out into the road, this points to the fact the lorry has already been through, and council employees have wheeled the bins back on to residents' driveways. "Correct," Ivan confirms. "It's an educated observation, and not fact, but the point is you've noticed, and are now better prepared for what may lie in the road ahead."

And that's the point: not 30 minutes into our on-road session and Ivan is repurposing my synapses to view the space ahead differently, and better prepare myself accordingly. It's an approach which feeds into that intended goal of moving swiftly and safely, with vision and observation a key aspect of achieving this.

Leaving the village behind us, our road breaks back out into the Cambridgeshire countryside, with a national speed limit and a glorious section of fast, flowing asphalt. We push on, opening up the throttle on my 40 Jahre 911 to a glorious flat six soundtrack.

Vision is still key here, but vehicle placement now plays a part too. Ivan splits the road up laterally into sections P1 through to P5 (you'll learn precisely what and where these are when you book your own course), with this dissection of the road offering a more controlled, precise placement of the 911 through all manner of bends, whether sharp or soft, ever mindful of what's next, reading the road as far ahead as practical.

After vision and placement, we then look at vehicle dynamics, bringing forward the lessons previously learned from Millbrook's handling circuit. Each of Ivan's courses are tailored for the individual, but for me this involved holding power in my 911 on approach to a fast corner and then lifting at the right moment to bring weight to the front of the

vehicle. With this, the nose tucks beautifully into the turn, the 911 feeling stable and planted as we make rapid progress through the fast, flowing corner. I'm acutely aware of the 911's unique dynamics and what's required from me to make the best of it, but Ivan's lessons on technique really bring this to the fore and, most impressively, a better result is achieved with relatively little input to the wheel.

In fact, as the day goes on, the feeling of driving my 911 just gets better and better: we're going faster, but doing less. The car is talking to me in ways I've not experienced before, despite the many miles I've already enjoyed with it. I realise previously I was just travelling with it – now, I am truly driving my Porsche 911!

It's a highly rewarding experience, noticing these results develop in front of me as the masterclass progresses. By the end I feel more confident in my own abilities as well as that of the car (how did I

ever doubt the latter?) but crucially, I feel more in control, too.

After a highly fun and informative day with Ivan by my side, the one-to-one class is at a close. I realise there's much more to learn (as a wise man once said, you should never stop learning) and luckily, Ivan is happy to explore that journey with me, pointing out that many of his customers have benefitted from many hours of tuition over a number of years.

The journey home takes in my usual network of roads. However, my approach to them is completely different. Familiar they may be, but with a new and more disciplined approach to my vision, inputs and execution, they're now driven down – and enjoyed – in a way I'd not experienced before. And this was just the journey home: the idea of taking my newly honed skills and applying them to the 262,000-miles of road in the UK alone is a tantalising prospect. I've never been more excited to go driving! **911**

