

906

APPEAL

Porsche's Carrera 6 - otherwise known as the 906 - was born out of Porsche's determination to beat Ferrari in the mid-1960s. Stunningly beautiful, it owes its origins to the 904 GTS and the cars built by Porsche to tackle the European Hillclimb Championship

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Porsche had shone in motorsport throughout the 1950s, especially in areas which tended to favour smaller, lightweight machines where a good power to weight ratio was more beneficial than outright horsepower - hillclimbing, for example. In fact, Porsche had tended to dominate this area of sport until 1965 when Ferrari's Dino 206 burst onto the scene and sent Porsche packing, its tail between its legs.

You can read the full story of this period in Porsche history in Delwyn Mallet's feature in issue #16 of *Classic Porsche*. It's a fascinating tale of how the factory responded to this invasion of its 'territory' by creating the infamous 'Kangaroo' - a flat-eight-powered ultra-lightweight machine built from a 904 with the sole intention of reclaiming the European Hillclimb Championship. It handled badly but was quick. Hot on its

heels was the 'Ollon-Villars' hillclimb car - a radical departure with a full tube chassis, and suspension and wheels from a Lotus.

Hillclimb competition had further demonstrated that the production 904, with its pressed-steel chassis, was too heavy as an all-out race car. It had been conceived as a dual-purpose machine, for use on road and track, and as such had been something of a compromise. Although the 904 was extremely successful in its role, and an essential stepping stone in the development of the successful hillclimb cars, it did not represent the future as far as Porsche racing was concerned. The Kangaroo had only served to prove the point... But these purpose-built specials were ultimately responsible for spawning an entirely new model: the Carrera 6, or 906.

To accomplish what the race department - or more

specifically Ferdinand Piëch - wanted to achieve, it was clear that designing a new car around a purpose-built tubular chassis was the only way to go. This decision has been regarded as indicative of the 'new wave' flooding through Porsche at the time, headed by Piëch. For the new young designers and engineers, the past was just that: the past. Or so they thought.

In truth, the whole concept of using a fully-spaceframed chassis was anything but new. After all, as you can read elsewhere in this very issue, the Porsche Spyders, starting with the 550 back in 1956, relied on a tubular frame. It was only the 904 (and production-based race cars, such as the Carrera-Abarth) that deviated from this path. Another advantage in using a tubular frame was that it was deemed easier and quicker to build - or modify - than the pressed-steel frame of the 904.



Gullwing doors were necessitated by the shape of the roof - it would have been impossible to use conventional doors with such a curved roof and wide sills. The Cd figure was 0.35 - slightly higher than the outgoing 904...