

Lanchester L. D. 10 Buyer's Guide Part 2

This guide is a follow up to part 1 (so please read that first for the basics) and is based on my experience of the later Barker bodied car; the earlier Briggs type may have slightly different issues.

Checklist of things you will need.

1. Disposable rubber gloves
2. Trolley Jack
3. Axle Stands
4. Basic Toolkit including a spark plug socket
5. Compression Tester
6. Small oil can containing engine oil
7. Torch
8. Paper towels and wet wipes (you will get dirty)
9. A knowledgeable friend
10. Safety goggles
11. Practical Classics Magazine Price Guide
12. Cash!



So you have found a car and hopefully you are able to look at it outside on a dry day. First of all have a walk round and inspect the car from all sides. Does it sit squarely on the road or is it down on one side or one corner indicating suspension problems. Don't worry if it seems to look a bit low at the rear and high at the front however as they always do. Does it have a full set of original hubcaps with 'Lanchester' stamped on them? Check if all the body panels fit and that the doors shut properly. Wind the windows up and down, the felt in the window channels may be worn and the velvet weather-strips perished but these are repairable and the windows should wind up and down freely. Open each door in turn; see if it lifts up and down on its hinges and check for scuff marks on the top of the sills and anywhere else on the frame. Twisted or floppy feeling doors are bad news indicating possibly rotten woodwork or other damage. Barker front doors may have been sprained backwards by strong

winds leading to a twisted door frame and a broken weld near the bottom hinge. This will then cause the door to tilt up slightly on closing scuffing the top of the frame. It is usually an easy fix, so don't worry too much.

Open and close the boot, the lid is quite heavy and has an ash frame. It should shut tightly and the hinges should not be loose. There is a thin steel moulding round the underside of the edges of the lid which will probably be rusty but it is not a serious issue.

Check the front and rear window seals. If original they will be perished, not a problem if the car never sees rain but you will need to take remedial action if the car is going to get wet. Replacement seals are available but can't be fitted without causing some damage to the interior trim.

Make sure the car is not missing any lights or electrical items such as trafficators as they are expensive to replace. I have seen rear lights selling for approaching £100 a pair on EBay. If the car has electrical power check to see what does and doesn't work.

Check the underside of the sills for rust as they are steel. Check the condition of the chassis outriggers and jacking points. Jack up the car, support it on axle stands and inspect the chassis. It is unlikely to have rusted much towards the front end due to oil leaks from the engine and gearbox but the wing support brackets may be corroded. Towards the rear of the car check the chassis around the suspension mounts. While doing this, inspect the leaf springs for wear indicated by ridges being worn where the end of a leaf rubs against the one above and also check the rear shock absorbers for leaks. You will also be able to look at the brake linkage for corrosion and wear. There should be small rubber bellows which act as dust covers where the brake linkage enters the back of the brake-plate, if missing replacements are available. Also take the opportunity to check the tyres, if you are lucky they may be OK. If they are worn or perished, replacement Avon Tourist tyres cost approaching £150 each when new tubes and VAT is taken into account, alternatively Waymaster Premium budget tyres are OK and about half this price. As you check the tyres, rock one of the rear wheels back and forth, if the transmission is worn you may be able to detect excessive play and hear unusual clonking noises issuing from the differential or

universal joints on the propshaft. While you are there also check the state of the exhaust.

Going back to the front of the car, get your knowledgeable friend to turn the steering wheel from lock to lock while you feel for play in the steering linkage and steering box. Grasp the road-wheels top and bottom and check for wobble. If there is any then get your friend to apply the footbrake (assuming it works). If the wobble stops expect that the bearings are worn, if it persists suspect worn king pin bushes or worn pedestal ball joints, or worn transverse and top link bushes or a combination of factors. All these defects are fixable but you will need to spend money. Do not panic if the front bearings have a tiny amount of play as they are of a taper roller type and 0.001" to 0.005" end float is essential.

If the vendor allows, remove the front wheels, check for play in the steering box drop link and the damper arms and check for fluid leaks in these areas. A leaky steering box is no big deal but leaky dampers must be reconditioned which is costly. If everything appears dry it may be due to the car having been unused for a long time and all the fluid might have leaked out and dried up. So don't assume things are OK and check carefully. Also check the rubber bushes on the dogbone links and on the anti-roll bar. While under the front of the car also look at the brake cables and linkage, it should all be well greased and move freely.

With the car back on the ground open up the bonnet; if the car runs then great! But even if it does don't get it warm before you have carried out some other checks or you will suffer burnt fingers. First have a look at the engine bay, it may be clean or filthy but what you are looking for is missing parts. The most common parts to go



missing are the air silencer and Bakelite spark plug cover. Check the radiator and pipework for leaks anywhere, a common area seems to be the joint where the top

hose meets the top radiator tank. Another point is a leak due to corrosion of the steel pipe section in the bottom radiator hose. Remove the radiator cap and check for frothy coolant or greasy deposits that may indicate a blown head gasket.

Going back to the engine take out the dipstick and check for sludgy looking oil that may indicate the presence of water, then remove the oil filler cap and see if there is any sludge on it. Again if the owner will allow, remove the spark plugs and check for thick oily deposits indicating a badly worn engine. It goes without saying that you should be suspicious if brand new plugs have been fitted. While the plugs are out it is worthwhile doing a compression test. Anything over 100 p.s.i. is good. If low readings are obtained, squirt a bit of engine oil into the spark plug hole and try again, a rise in pressure indicates worn piston rings, no change indicates worn valve seats.

If the engine will start, have a look in the water in the radiator and check for bubbles, suggesting a blown head gasket and listen for any unusual clunks, rattles or knocking sounds from the engine. On the instrument panel the green oil pressure warning light should go out when the engine is running, if it doesn't you have a car with a worn out engine. I have read that it may be normal for the green light to flicker on tick over, but that has not been my experience. If the red ignition light remains on then there are charging circuit problems. While the car is ticking over, have a look at the exhaust smoke, it should be fairly clean. After a while ask your knowledgeable friend to press on the accelerator pedal, a sudden cloud of smoke probably means that the valve guides are worn. If it doesn't clear quickly then start worrying about the state of the piston rings and cylinder bores; expensive repairs are needed.

If the car runs it is time to see if it will move/drive. If it (apparently) won't engage any gear then the likelihood is simply that the fluid flywheel is empty of oil. If it will only engage some gears, then there are probably minor problems in the pre-selector linkage. If the car runs and drives, you may be taken for, or allowed, a test drive. The car should pull strongly, change gear smoothly and have good road-holding and comfort levels and be fairly quiet. If the doors squeak and rattle a lot, be prepared to replace window felt, weather-strips and possibly do repairs to the plywood panel in the door structure which holds the lock mechanism, but these repairs are simple enough.

While the car is driving along position your friend to watch the exhaust for smoke issues that may not have been apparent before. A classic sign of worn valve guides being a cloud of smoke on acceleration after the car has run down a steep hill with the throttle closed. The vacuum created in the engine tends to suck oil past worn valve guides and into the engine.

As a final point, be prepared to find a few faults with the car. No old car is ever perfect and it is simply a matter of deciding how much work you are prepared to do to get the car into a condition you are happy with.