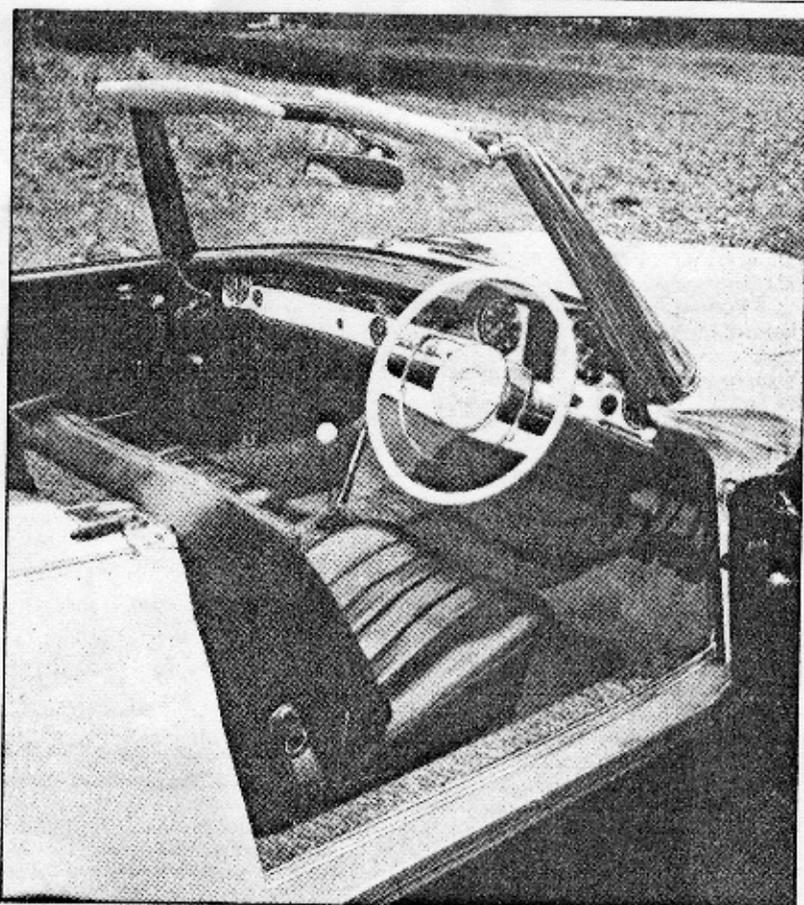


duction of the New Generation saloons in January 1968. This change was much less radical than that from 230 to 250. This time the stroke remained the same, at 78.8 mm, and the engine capacity was increased by enlargement of the bore diameter to 86.5mm.

There was no great increase in power, which was given as 170 bhp on the then-current net rating, but the engine offered much more torque and answered the criticisms that the previous SLs were fussy cars that had to be driven very hard through the gears to get good acceleration.

Examples of the SL with automatic transmission featured a selector having the lower gear positions forward, and the lever was moved back for the Park and Reverse positions. This was not changed to the current Mercedes pattern in which the lever is moved back to change down, and the Park and Reverse positions are forward. Similarly, although a torque converter automatic was introduced in overlap with the 280SL on other models, the SL series retained the four-speed automatic with fluid coupling, right to the end of production, in February 1971.

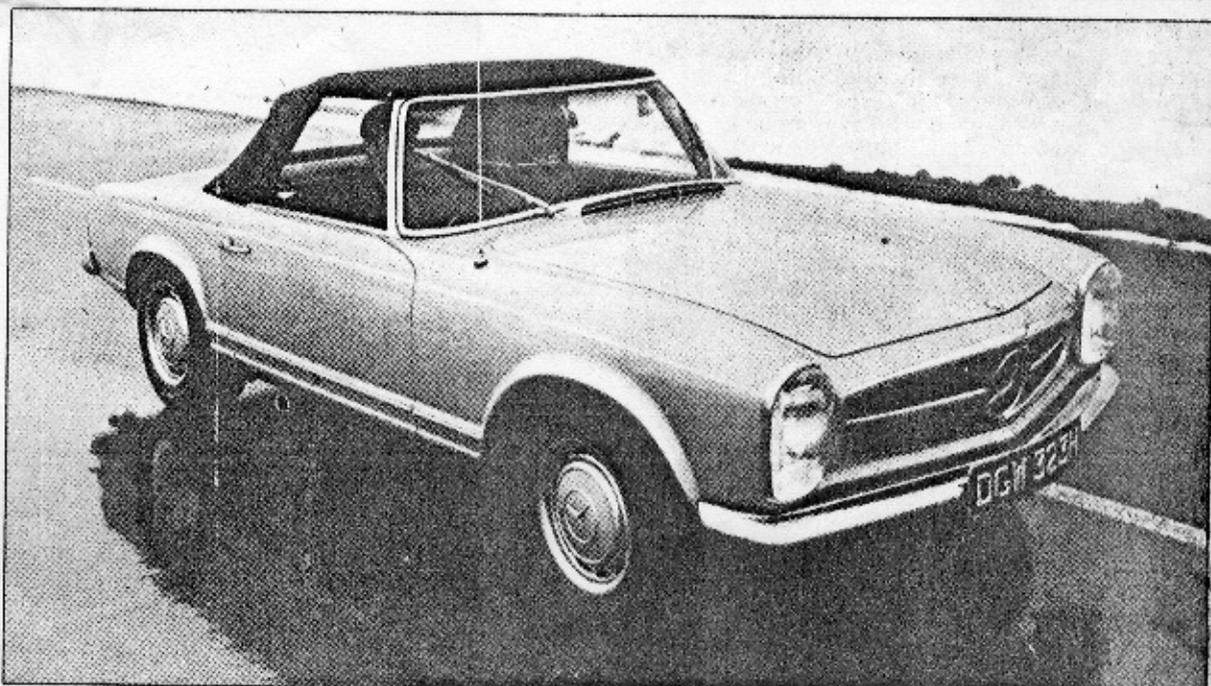
As far as Britain is concerned, the glory of the six-cylinder SL series ended then, because the replacement with the wider and larger body, introduced first as the 350SL in June 1971, and later joined by the



Performance data

	230SL	230SL	280S
		Auto	Auto
Road Tested in			
Autocar of	4 Sept 1964	7 May 1965	3 Sept 1971
Mean maximum speed (mph)	120	118	121
Acceleration (sec)			
0-30	3.7	4.6	3.7
0-40	5.5	6.1	5.1
0-50	7.5	8.4	7.1
0-60	10.7	11.4	9.3
0-70	13.6	15.1	12.4
0-80	17.8	20.0	16.1
0-90	24.8	26.9	22.4
0-100	34.4	34.9	30.6
0-110	46.0	49.2	—
Standing 1/4-mile:			
(sec)	17.5	18.1	17.0
kilometre:	—	—	31.3
Top gear acceleration (sec)			
10-30	—	—	—
20-40	10.4	—	—
30-50	10.1	11.7	8.8
40-60	10.9	12.1	8.8
50-70	10.8	13.2	9.3
60-80	12.4	14.3	10.0
70-90	14.3	16.1	10.8
80-100	16.3	17.9	13.2
90-110	20.8	22.3	—
Overall mpg	22.3	17.7	19.0
Typical mpg	27	23	20
Dimensions			
Length		14ft 1in.	
Width		5ft 9 1/4in.	
Height		4ft 3 3/4in.	
Kerb weight			
(cwt)	26.2	—	27.8

Opposite page: 280SL hardtop. Above: 1964 230SL in roadster trim. Note unusual vertical instruments between circular speedometer and rev counter. The 230SL (left) is outwardly identical to the 250SL (right) except for badges. Below: 280SL can be distinguished from 230/250SL by different wheel trims.



280SL at the Geneva Show in 1973, is always a V8 in Britain. What may not be generally known is that there is still a 280SL on the Continent, featuring the current body with the six-cylinder 2.8-litre twin overhead camshaft engine. Presumably SL sales in Britain are insufficient to justify addition of this model to the range.

What to look for

We have spoken to Owen Williams, sales director of Woking Motors, who is himself an enthusiast owner of a 1964 230SL manual which we were privileged to drive a way of reacquaintance; and we have spoken to several other owners. What we cannot find is anyone to say a bad word about the SL. In retrospect, we recall that extended test we ran on a 280SL, including a trip to Italy to Roadster the Lamborghini Miura, gave us absolutely faultless service.

It is also reassuring to know that spare parts are available — at a