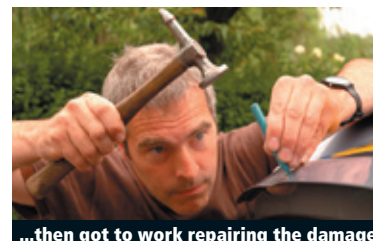




Audi A4 Avant



Martin 'The Dentman' Leach assessed dink...



...then got to work repairing the damage



Craftsman made panel look as good as new

Pictures: Derek Goard

A4's smash hit

David Johns

A PIPE dream! That's the only excuse I can give for doing the unthinkable and dinking the bootlid of our long-term Audi A4 Avant.

Starting work at the crack of dawn – as all good editors should – I must have been still half-asleep as I reversed into the space in our underground car park. Seconds earlier, I had opened the boot to get a few bits and pieces out for the day ahead – and, well, I was convinced I had shut the tailgate as normal. Imagine my horror to hear a nasty clang and then a thud as the still-open lid thwacked against a substantial overhead pipe!

Thankfully, it sounded much worse than it was. But the panel still needed attention. So, step up please The Dentman himself, Martin Leach. I found Martin on an Internet search, and got his details at www.dentman.co.uk – you can contact him by phone, too, on 07774 812512.

Based in Twickenham, London, Martin asked me to E-mail him a couple of digital pictures of the damage, and then came back with a quote within a few hours. After we agreed to £85 plus VAT, Martin arrived a day later to do the repair.

He is also known as the 'Flying' Dentman, because he carries all his gear around on a nifty motorbike, liveried up with his company logos. Two hours later, the dink was gone – and the finish perfect. "It was a tricky job," said Martin, "because you caught the bootlid right on the double seam. That's fiddly to knock out. I think I've done a pretty good job, though!"

I'd second that. And I would also agree with Audi that its latest A4 Avant is a brilliant lifestyle estate. Over the past few weeks I've had it loaded up with flatpacks of garden furniture, barbecue



Bang on! Self-inflicted parking mishap aside, A4 has been a fantastic driving companion, and is very practical, too.

Second opinion

PRISING the key for the A4 out of the editor's hands isn't easy, and those of us who have driven the Avant can see why. It's a great long-distance cruiser which also manages to feel much more at home in the city than a larger executive load-lugger. There's still a decent amount of space for luggage, and with all the options fitted to this car, everyone travels in luxury.

Chris Thorp, dep motoring editor

gear, as well as various items to take to the local tip. While it's not as roomy as a 'workhorse' estate such as Vauxhall's Vectra, it has swallowed all my stuff. And loading is simple thanks to the low lip. A robust yet nicely finished bay resists scuffs well.

The A4 driving experience continues to impress, with cruising on long journeys being its strongest suit. It is a car that eats up the miles and gets you to your destination feeling comfortable and relaxed. This is due in no small part to the excellent seats and driving position, torquey 2.0-litre turbocharged engine (shared with the VW Golf GTI no less), plus optional tiptronic automatic transmission.

We are around 8,000 miles away from the Audi's variable first service, when I will get the car's thirst for oil looked at. So far it has required two one-litre top-ups in the first 10,000 miles!

report card



AUDI A4 AVANT 2.0T QUATTRO SE

On fleet since	December 2005
Price when new	£36,055
Engine/power	2.0 litre turbo/197bhp
Options fitted	Tiptronic auto (£1,400), Lifestyle pack, inc sat-nav (£1,950), alloys (£650), heated front and rear seats (£450), adaptive headlights (£325), xenons (£775), Comfort pack inc elec seats (£1,600), Bose audio and CD changer (£800), TV (£705)
Trade-in value now	N/A
Running costs	62.7ppm
Insurance group/quote	15/£476
Mileage/mpg	11,100/29.0
Costs	Dent repair (£85 plus VAT)
Any problems?	Vast appetite for oil!
We like	Torquey engine, stylish looks, load bay, fabulous cabin design and quality, excellent long-distance companion
We don't like	Expensive options, slight lag through transmission on acceleration... and editors who don't wake up properly!
Previous report	Issue 901

Insurance quote provided by AA (0800 107 0680) for a 42-year-old male living in Banbury, Oxfordshire, with three penalty points