


# CLASSIC DRIVER



## 1955 Frazer Nash Le Mans Coupé

Lot sold	<b>USD 535 151 - 591 483</b> GBP 380 000 - 420 000 (listed)	Lenkung	Links
Baujahr	1955	Zustand	Gebraucht
Chassisnummer	421/200/206	Standort	
Zahl der Sitze	2	Kraftstoff	Benzin
Antrieb	Zweirad	Außenfarbe	Sonstige
Losnummer	8	Motornummer	100B/2/3285

### Beschreibung

1955 Frazer Nash Le Mans Coupé

Registration no. ROB 888

Chassis no. 421/200/206

Engine no. 100B/2/3285

'A production Le Mans Coupe Frazer Nash was quite a smooth looking car for its time. It was evolved from fitting a "hard top" to a Targa Florio body style and took its name from the success of the prototype at Le Mans in 1953.' Denis Jenkinson, 'From Chain Gang to Turbocharger'.

According to the Frazer Nash Archives, only nine (one prototype and eight production) Le Mans fixed-head coupés were built between April 1953 and October 1956, this particular car being the penultimate one completed. The Frazer Nash cars of the late 1930s had been re-badged BMWs (parent company AFN Ltd were the official importers) but after WW2 the firm returned to producing the kind of uncompromising, competition-orientated sports car that had forged its reputation in the 'chain gang' era of the 1920s. Frazer Nash had used a variety of different proprietary engines in pre-war days and when production proper resumed in 1948 it was with the 2.0-litre six-cylinder Bristol power unit, a particularly appropriate choice given the latter's BMW origins. By the time production ceased in 1957, Frazer Nash had completed a little over 400 cars in some 33 years yet had acquired a reputation and a fanatical following out of all proportion to the paucity of its output.

Introduced in 1953, complementing the company's successful open sports cars, the Le Mans Coupé

was the first closed Frazer Nash to enter production. It used the new parallel-tube chassis frame, around which was wrapped a beautiful full-width alloy body that, with its curvaceous lines and horizontal front grille, hinted at the forthcoming Sebring roadster. The chassis boasted independent front suspension, rack-and-pinion steering, torsion bar rear suspension and twin-leading-shoe brakes, while the engine was, of course, the 1,971cc six-cylinder Bristol. Of the nine cars completed, three would race at Le Mans, the most successful being chassis number '186', which finished 13th overall in 1953 (winning its class) and 11th overall in 1954.

Completed in January 1955, chassis number '421/200/206' was delivered new in Birmingham to one J A C Edwards carrying the registration 'ROB 808'. Its subsequent history is unknown, though the celebrated motoring journalist and Frazer Nash historian Denis Jenkinson once observed that the majority of the Le Mans Coupés were 'used as normal every day touring cars'. A list of 'Post-War Nash Owners' on file records ownership by someone called Sheppard (1964), Howard (in the USA, 1979-1978) and J Tallis (1979). Proprietor of John Tallis Motors Ltd of Bath, Somerset, the latter purchased the car from well-known classic racer and specialist motor dealer Nigel Dawes (invoice on file).

In February 1993 the Frazer Nash was offered for sale at Brooks' Olympia auction (Lot 124) where it was purchased by Gordon Willey. The catalogue description stated that the 'barn find' Le Mans appeared to have been laid up since it last changed hands in 1979; its survival in remarkably original condition was noted and the car was described as 'an attractive restoration project for the dedicated marque enthusiast.'

Gordon Willey's dedication to the task of restoration is evidenced by the substantial quantity of related invoices on file from specialists including Classic & Performance Cars, Lorenzini Autosports, Bill Roberts, Brian Barlow and Jonathan Wood (close inspection recommended). The car appears to have been made roadworthy again by February 1995 when one of the two MoT certificates on file was issued; the other expired in November 1999, there being a difference of only 53 miles between the mileage totals recorded. The file also contains the 1993 auction invoice, a selection of restoration photographs and a V5C registration document. It should be noted that a new fuel tank has been installed but is not connected, and thus the car is currently not running.

It could be argued that Frazer Nash's reputation is scarcely justified based on the number of cars built. However, it is greatly to the firm's credit that despite a lack of resources it achieved so much in international competition in the immediately post-war years. This well-documented Le Mans model affords the opportunity for the discerning collector to acquire part of the legend. Additional, it has the most important cachet of being eligible for all the most prestigious motor sports events including the Tour Auto, Mille Miglia, Goodwood Revival and, of course, Le Mans.

Bonhams 1793

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