

CLASSIC DRIVER

What's in a name?



Even for a company known for bespoke motor cars just 37 examples is small, that's the number of the first DB6 convertibles based on DB5 chassis; and of those only 3 were Weber-equipped.

In actual fact for many years it was thought that only two Vantage-engined cars existed (chassis DBVC/2322R and DBVC/2307R) but a third (DBVC/2320R) was uncovered by Charlie Prince of Paradise Garage at the height of the 1980s 'classic car boom'. The car you see here is DBVC/2322/R and forms one of the feature lots in Bonhams forthcoming all-Aston Martin Sale at Works Service, Newport Pagnell on 4th of June.



Shame on anyone who refers to

convertible Astons prior to the DB6 as 'Volantes', the name was coined by company man Kent Monk and has been given to drophead coupés ever since. The first cars were built on the last of the DB5 chassis and therefore had the 249cm wheelbase of the earlier car, rather than the lengthened (258.5cm) one of the DB6. Neither did they have the Kamm tail of the later car - just the split front and rear bumpers, re-styled rear lights, revised oil cooler opener and of course a 'Volante' badge on the boot lid. Like the very last convertible V8s of the late '90s the shorter chassis gives the car a more sporting look and feel, and of course rarity factor.

Most cars were fitted with the 3 x SU carburettor set-up carried over from the DB5, but the Vantage (Weber) tune was an alternative that found favour with many DB6 coupé owners and was duly specified for just the three chassis mentioned.

This particular car came into the current owner's hands from the estate of the late Ernest Smith, a successful businessman who had founded National Breakdown, which he later merged with Green Flag Rescue, before selling it to Cordiant (R.A.C). Smith's passion for cars included owning - amongst others - a 1897 Daimler VCC and a 6 ½ litre Bentley Speed Six. Marque specialist Adrian Johnson of Post Vintage Engineers had carried out a restoration in 1999/2000 for the Guernsey-domiciled Smith and today the car is in its original California Sage with tan leather and green hood.

A drive out into the Northamptonshire countryside, roof up and down, revealed just how nice these cars are, and why many people are talking about them being the 'Aston of the moment', very much on the way up in price. Bonhams have estimated the car at £160,000 - 200,000, and potential buyers should contact Marcus Ross who is handling the Bonhams Aston Martin Sale. He can be contacted on +44 (0)20 7468 5805, or by email marcus.ross@bonhams.com

And what will the current owner be doing post-sale? Well he already has a fine collection of classic and new cars and there can be only one modern replacement for the DB6 Short-chassis Vantage Volante - one of the very first DB9 Volantes, in California Sage with a green hood of course...







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