

CLASSIC DRIVER

1935 Aston Martin 1½ Litre 'Ulster': Return ticket to the racetrack

Lead

The name 'Ulster' joins 'DB4GT Zagato' in the lexicon of true greats built by the legendary British company, now in its centenary year. Both were born on the racetrack, and both are suitable for wealthy privateers to drive to the circuit, be raced and then be driven home again...

This particular car – a production 1,495cc Ulster built in 1935, chassis D5/570/U – is one of the rarer versions, one of four with '2/4' bodywork on the standard short chassis. They have relatively generous accommodation for two in the front, with a small area behind these seats for extra luggage and only occasional use by (small) passengers. Four-seaters they are not.

Of this quartet, one has been converted into a two-seater, one now has a two-litre engine and another is the famous 'Club Ulster' owned by the Aston Martin Owners Club.





The name 'Ulster', of course, comes from the company's success in the Tourist Trophy at the Ards course in Ulster, Northern Ireland. In 1934, Aston Martin had entered three Team Cars (LM15, LM16 and LM17), all newly painted red in an effort to counteract the team's perceived bad luck at Le Mans that year when finished in British Racing Green. Whether by good fortune, or most likely fine driving, good preparation and an inherently well-designed and fast racing car, the team finished in the top seven, taking the first two places in their class and winning the team prize.

Thus the Ulster legend was born, and the name was then applied to a series of 21 replicas (the word used in its truest sense, please note), mostly two-seaters, with four 2/4s, as we have already seen.





All featured tuned, 85bhp engines and offered 100mph performance. For their capacity, these were fast cars with very fine handling. And, quite properly, many were raced from the time they were delivered right up to today.

This car, now for sale and superbly 'race ready' as you'd expect from THE marque expert Ecurie Bertelli, was raced at Brooklands and Donington pre-War. In the 1950s it distinguished itself as part of a three-car AMOC entry at the Bol d'Or at Montlhéry. In 1951, pitted against much more modern machinery, it came 11th overall, sixth in class.

From then onwards it has been raced on a regular basis, giving its then owner Bill Burton the Aston Martin Owners Club St John Horsfall Trophy in 1974.



Today, equipped with a 100bhp, steel crank/steel conrods, 'shell-bearings' engine, it's a spritely performer. A short passenger ride with Andy Bell shows the car to its best. The acceleration is snappy, while the handling

and grip from the Blockley tyres is surprisingly good. The one-piece windscreen folded flat and running with aero-screens only, it's real wind-in-the-hair/flies-in-the-teeth stuff.

Bell declares that he'd happily drive the car to the 2014 Le Mans Classic, compete in it and drive it back again, confident in the car's abilities all the way, with just a bag of tools in the back to be on the safe side.

In other words, exactly as the privileged owners of these cars once did in the 1930s.

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Ecurie Bertelli's website: www.ecuriebertelli.com

Pre-War Aston Martins for sale at Ecurie Bertelli in the [Classic Driver Marketplace](#).

Photos: Simon Clay

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