
1961 Austin-Healey Sprite

Lot sold	USD 22 663 - 29 329 GBP 17 000 - 22 000 (listed)	Drive	LHD
Year of manufacture	1961	Condition	Used
Chassis number	AN5 48304	Location	
Number of seats	2	Fuel type	Petrol
Drivetrain	2wd	Exterior colour	Other
Lot number	214	Engine number	8G10E30397

Description

1961 Austin-Healey Sprite 'Mk1' Roadster

Registration no. 700 DRM

Chassis no. AN5 48304

Engine no. 8G10E30397

A veritable 'wolf in sheep's clothing', the Mk1 Sprite offered here is fitted with an all-alloy overhead-camshaft 998cc engine producing approximately 100bhp, roughly double the output of the A-Series original. This unique car is the work of Dawson Clarke, a man with considerable experience of working on Rootes rally cars, hence his choice of that manufacturer's B1-type engine. The four-cylinder B1 is a stronger derivative of the overhead-camshaft 875cc Hillman Imp power unit, which had been inspired by the Coventry Climax 'FW' series of competition engines. The Imp carried its engine at the rear but the B1 was intended for fore-and-aft installation in the Talbot/Chrysler Sunbeam and thus ideal for the Sprite. Interviewed for an article about '700 DRM' published in 'MG Enthusiast' magazine (April 2012 edition, copy available) Dawson Clarke explained that his motivation for the project was curiosity about how an Imp-type engine would perform in a front-engined car. 'I had previously owned other Imp-powered sports cars - Davrian, Clan and Ginetta - although a Frog Eye with Imp power seemed just that little bit different! I knew 100bhp was achievable after working on many Imps used today in classic rally events, as for example those driven by Andrew Cowan and Rosemary Smith, Rootes drivers of the 1960s.'

Helping the motor on its way to that 100 horsepower output and 9,000rpm potential is a R17 rally camshaft and twin Weber 40DCOE carburettors, the latter off a 1960s Lotus Elite. Clarke retained the original BMC four-speed gearbox and upgraded the suspension and brakes to cope with the greatly increased performance (see magazine article for full specification). Completing the picture, the 'Coventry Climax' logo was engraved on the Talbot Sunbeam cam cover. A power-to-weight ration of approximately 155bhp/ton means that the Sprite's performance is electrifying (by way of comparison: a Mk2 VW Golf GTi 16V can boast only 147bhp/ton!).

Purchased by the current vendor at auction in April 2013, the car benefits from a new bonnet and a re-spray undertaken earlier this year, and is described as in generally very good/excellent condition, running and driving exceptionally well. Offered with the aforementioned magazine article, sundry restoration invoices, current MoT/tax and V5C document, this delightful 'Q car' affords the prospect of enormous fun this summer.

Bonhams 1793

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