

CLASSIC DRIVER



1934 MG Magnette

Lot sold	USD 111 320 - 139 150 GBP 80 000 - 100 000 (listed)	Drive	LHD
Year of manufacture	1934	Condition	Used
Chassis number	NA 0512	Location	
Number of seats	2	Fuel type	Petrol
Drivetrain	2wd	Exterior colour	Other
Lot number	310	Engine number	771AN

Description

From the estate of the late Graham Galliers
1934 MG Magnette ND/NE Racing Special
Registration no. ABY 253
Chassis no. NA 0512
Engine no. 771AN

'It is not surprising that with the makers' knowledge of racing... it should be capable of giving as high a speed as 80mph. What comes as a revelation is the ease with which on Brooklands that speed is reached and held. The rev needle hovering between the 5,000 and 5,500 marks, the whole mechanism feeling as one, and with no sense of adventure attached to such speeds.' 'The Autocar' on the N-type Magnette.

Small-capacity six-cylinder cars were much in vogue in the early 1930s and MG had duly climbed aboard the bandwagon in 1931 with launch of the Magna 'F'. Maximum output of the Magna's 1,271cc Wolseley Hornet-based overhead-camshaft engine was later raised from a modest 37bhp to a much healthier 47 horsepower. An extensively revised and improved version of this 'KD' engine, tuned to produce 56bhp, was carried over to the 'NA' Magnette of 1934. The chassis too had come in for revision, being lighter than hitherto, while the body was now supported by rubber-mounted outriggers, an arrangement that gave a more comfortable ride.

'ABY 253' is one of only 24 ND Magnettes built out of a total of 738 N-types (excluding the racing NE).

Records held by the MG Car Club's MMM register show that 'ABY 253' was first owned by W E C Watkinson, who was a recognised MG 'works' driver and had the factory fit an NE-specification racing engine, Watkinson is believed to have raced this car at Brooklands and elsewhere pre War. In the 1960s the Magnette was owned by long-time MG enthusiast Allan Scott. Allan had acquired the car from the Red Dragon Trials Team, who had bought it from Watkinson. In an article published in 'Safety Fast!' (the MMM newsletter) in June 2002, he recalled: 'It was a very handsome car in beautiful condition. It went like a scalded cat and handled like a dream. It only had one defect; the rear cross tube had worn through and a crude bar repair was welded to support the spring tails. In fact, the car was an ND. It had an amazingly high axle ratio. The N chassis was a revelation. The PA would have to go!'

Allan kept the Magnette for a year, selling it when the crown wheel broke and the MoT became due. His article concludes: 'Of all the cars I have owned, this is the one I regret parting with most.' A letter on file reveals that 'ABY 253' was purchased by Nev Churcher from Hampshire, who fixed the broken axle and sold the car two years later. There are also two photographs on file of the MG when owned by Nev Churcher.

The Magnette is pictured in 'Safety Fast' wearing standard bodywork in the 1960s but currently has an NE body fitted. Only seven racing NE Magnettes were built by MG at Abingdon in 1934 (chassis numbers 'NA0516' to 'NA0522'). They were designed to compete in the 1934 RAC Tourist Trophy held on the Ards Circuit in Northern Ireland, which MG succeeded in winning for the third year in a row. They also competed in the 1935 race with Dick Seaman driving the highest placed car.

A typed document on file, believed written in 1999 by previous owner, Mike Dowley, states that the car was sold to him as having Brooklands racing history. The NE body is described as genuine and complete with an original radiator with the larger filler neck and racing cap, which were only fitted to genuine works cars such as the K3, NE, Q and R Types. The car was sold with the following original NE parts: alloy-based racing seats with distinctive shaping to driver's seat; original leather bonnet strap and fittings; headlamps (believed original and extremely rare); bulkhead including the unique alloy beading and original accelerator pedal and cross shaft; and a front apron with distinctive NE cut-outs for headlamp stands identifying it as an original, there are photos on file of some of these parts as bought.

The NE body has been the subject of some research and three of the other NE owners came to see it and check details during their own restorations: Karl Weissman (Germany), Syd Beer (UK) and Pete Thelander (USA). There are numerous photographs on file testifying to research carried out into the surviving NE team cars.

The late Graham Galliers purchased 'ABY 253' as a 'kit of parts' from Mike Dowley for £20,000. There are numerous invoices on file for parts, etc relating to its restoration, which commenced circa 1999. As of February 2003, some £30,000 had been spent with Tom Dark Engineering for building and parts for the racing Magnette engine and close-ratio Armstrong Siddeley pre-selector racing gearbox. The supercharger was fitted at this time, supplied by Derek Chinn.

In August 2013 Graham drove 'ABY 253' successfully at VSCC Prescott in what would turn out to be his last competitive outing. The MG was driven in the funeral procession through Shrewsbury in Graham's honour by Bonhams Motoring Department specialist John Polson prior to the cremation and memorial service.

Accompanying documentation includes a copy of MG's original invoice to W E C Watkinson showing that the car was supplied with the NE specification engine (with the addition of a supercharger), plus others for work done by the factory for Watkinson in the 1930s. There are many letters on file written by Graham confirming the history as detailed above, and the car also comes with an old-style logbook and V5 registration document. Boasting an NE-specification engine and a genuine NE body, 'ABY 253', although a 'special', is about as close to team car specification as it is possible to get, but at a fraction of the cost of one of the originals.

Bonhams

Title Mr

First name Jamie

Last name Knight

101 New Bond Street

London

W1S 1SR

United Kingdom

Phone +44-2074685801

Fax +44-2074477401

<http://www.bonhams.com>

<https://www.classicdriver.com/en/car/mg/magnette/1934/235713>

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