

CLASSIC DRIVER

1975 Ford Escort

- Lot sold
USD 122 696 - 147 235
GBP 100 000 - 120 000 (listed)
Year of manufacture 1975
- **Chassis number** 1CBA84889
- **Number of seats** 2
- **Drivetrain** 2wd
- **Lot number** 32
- **Drive** LHD
- **Condition** Used
- **Location** 
- **Fuel type** Petrol
- **Exterior colour** Other
- **Engine number** HML2000/1
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Description

The ex-Pentti Airikkala, Roger Clark, Ari Vatanen, Björn Waldegård, David Sutton (Cars) Ltd
1975 Ford Escort RS1800 Rally Car
Registration no. MLD 999P
Chassis no. 1CBA84889
Engine no. HML2000/1

It was the Escort that really put Ford on the rallying map, proving capable of winning World Championship events from 1968, when the Twin Cam model was the works' frontline rally car, right through to 1981 when Ari Vatanen became World Rally Champion driving an Escort RS. In 1970 the Ford Twin Cam engine was replaced by a Cosworth BDA 16-valve unit to create the definitive Escort rally car - the RS1600 - though the engine was, in fact, homologated at 1,601cc to enable future enlargement up to the 2-litre class capacity limit. The first full 2.0-litre engines were homologated in 1972 and in works trim produced 235-240bhp. In this form the Escort RS1600 proved good enough to win the RAC Rally three times on the trot between 1972 and 1974, as well as a host of other World Championship events. There was also a closely related 'spin off' variant: the overhead-valve Kent-engined Mexico, which was intended to cater for those that wanted the RS1600's style but had no need for its stupendous performance.

When the Escort was re-launched as the 'MkII' for 1975, the rally car adopted the new-look bodyshell while retaining virtually the same running gear and was renamed 'RS1800', the latter change reflecting the capacity increase to 1,800cc. Building on the RS1600's success, the RS1800 was further developed and in 2.0-litre form enjoyed an even more successful career than its forebear, remaining competitive well into the 1980s. The RS1800 made its winning debut as a works Group 2 car on the Granite Rally in April 1975, victory

going to Roger Clark, who followed up by winning the Welsh International Rally. In that year's Lombard-RAC Rally, Timo Makinen brought his RS1800 home ahead of the field to score the car's first major international success. It would be the first of five consecutive Lombard-RAC victories for the RS1800 and its Escort RS Group 4 derivative. In 1979 the Escort brought Ford its first World Rally Championship for Makes while works driver Björn Waldegård became the first official World Rally Champion.

After the works team withdrew from international rallying at the end of the 1979 season, the Escort baton was passed to the Rothmans-sponsored team run by David Sutton, which enjoyed strong links with the Boreham factory. In 1981 the Rothmans team made history when its driver Ari Vatanen became the first, and so far only, non-works World Rally Champion.

Bought new by David Sutton Cars Ltd, the RS1800 offered here was used on the 1976 Lombard-RAC Rally, driven by Pentti Airikkala, and then in 1977 was overall winner of the Mintex Rally driven by Ari Vatanen, who also drove it on that year's 1977 Scottish Rally with Gandy Brakes sponsorship. In 1977 and 1978 'MLD 999P' was driven by Roger Clark on the Lindisfarne Rally and by Ari Vatanen in the 1978 Lombard-RAC Rally with Marlboro sponsorship. Retained by David Sutton, this Escort was also used as a Rothmans-sponsored car and has also been driven by Stig Blomqvist and Björn Waldegård, by the latter on the 1979 Scottish Rally. Extensively damaged by Waldegård, the car was re-shelled and in 1981 competed in the Ivory Coast Rally in RS2000 specification, driven by Taylor/Spiller.

In 2004, the car was rebuilt by David Sutton with painstaking attention to detail, even down to sign-written sponsorship logos. That same year 'MLD 999P' won the inaugural Roger Albert Clark historic rally driven by Stig Blomqvist and Anna Goni, its then owner, and finished 2nd with the same driver/navigator the following year. Built originally by David Sutton Cars, this Escort has been maintained and run by David throughout its life. The V5 remained in the name of David Sutton until the car was sold.

Its specification includes a full Group 4 Gartrac bodyshell built with all Gartrac components by David Sutton. The engine has only 50 miles on its bores since a rebuild by Paul Fisher. Built to rally specification, the 1,993cc BDA motor incorporates a Cosworth Nikasil alloy cylinder block, new (un-ground) Doug Kiddie crankshaft and new con-rods, pistons, rings, valves/springs/seats, etc, all components being supplied by Geoff Richardson. A dynamometer sheet is on file together with car's MSA Historic Rally Vehicle Identity Form and UK V5 registration document.

The gearbox has just undergone a complete rebuild; both front and rear centre casings are new, as are all the bearings and baulk rings. This gearbox is fitted with an original ZF direct-top kit and like the engine has seen only 50 miles use since being rebuilt. The rear axle is a genuine fully floating Gartrac item rebuilt at the same time as the engine and gearbox. New parts fitted include the 5:1 crown-wheel-and-pinion, ZF motor sport limited-slip differential and clutch pack, Xtrac half shafts and all hub bearings, etc. Vented rear disc brakes are fitted. The rear suspension boasts new slipper spring bushes and new genuine Ford bushes to the four locating links and the Panhard rod. The five-leaf 'forest' rear springs are described as in perfect condition and have new rear shackles and bushes fitted, while the Bilstein Group 4 forest-specification dampers are newly installed.

New components up front include the Twin Cam anti-roll bar; genuine Ford track control arms; Group 4 steering arms; Gartrac steering rack and track rod ends; front strut casings with new 260/60 Bilstein inserts and 190lb 'gravel' springs; and roller-bearing top mounts. The suspension has seen a mere 50 miles use and the car as a whole is described as in generally excellent condition. Few, if any, surviving RS1800s have been driven by so many top Scandinavians as well as the late Roger Clark.

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