

CLASSIC DRIVER



1926 OM Superba

Lot sold	USD 157 381 - 196 727 GBP 120 000 - 150 000 (listed)	Drive	LHD
Year of manufacture	1926	Condition	Used
Chassis number	25892	Location	
Number of seats	2	Fuel type	Petrol
Drivetrain	2wd	Exterior colour	Other
Lot number	128	Engine number	665 0080

Description

1926 OM 2.0-Litre Type 665 S3 Superba Sports
Coachwork by Short Brothers, Rochester
Registration no. YR 88
Chassis no. 25892
Engine no. 665 0080

From 1933, when they became part of FIAT, OM produced commercial vehicles, but in the 1920s and early 1930s OM sports cars competed with outstanding success against the more illustrious Bugatti and Alfa Romeo marques in the major continental long distance events. The OM (Officine Meccaniche - Mechanical Workshops) company came into being in 1899 as a result of the merger of Miani, Silvestri & Co with Grondona, Comi & Co, both firms being active in the production of railway locomotives and rolling stock.

OM's involvement with car manufacturing began in 1917 when it bought the Roberto Züst factory in Brescia and the first OM car, closely resembling a Züst, appeared in 1918. Designed by the Austrian-born engineer Lucien Barratouch and introduced in 1920, the first model of wholly OM design - the

Type 465 - was powered by a four-cylinder 1,325cc sidevalve engine. This was followed by two more four-cylinder models, the Types 467 and 469 (OM type nomenclature being the number of cylinders followed by the bore dimension in millimetres).

The firm's most noteworthy competition successes came in the 1927 Mille Miglia, when Ferdinando Minoia and Giuseppe Morandi headed an OM '1, 2, 3', and the 1928 race when an OM finished in 2nd place overall. That car also won the 2-litre class, in which category OMs filled the next seven places! These were six-cylinder Type 665 cars but the earlier four-cylinder models won their share of honours too, with many 1,500cc class wins in the early 1920s. OM also took the team prize in the 1928 Coppa delle Alpi. The make was imported into Britain by the concessionaires, L C Rawlence & Co of Sackville Street, London W1, whose development engineer and driver, R E Oats, raced OMs to numerous victories at Brooklands.

In the mid-1920s OM obtained a licence to build the Swiss firm Saurer's diesel engines, a move that facilitated its diversification into commercial vehicle manufacture. The car side of the business had already been sold off when FIAT acquired OM, which continued as a truck and bus manufacturer until the mid-1970s when FIAT's commercial vehicles division was reconstituted as IVECO.

This OM 665 S3 carries two-seat open sports coachwork by Short Brothers of Rochester, Kent, better known as manufacturers of seaplanes. Diversifying into coachbuilding after WWI, Short had the contract to provide bodies for the Salmson 10 and was also engaged in building bus bodies, which it would eventually concentrate on. Built in 1925 and first registered in 1926, 'YR 88' has no surviving historical documentation prior to 1941, when the earliest of the accompanying old-style logbooks was issued. Records show that in 1950 the engine and gearbox were replaced with units dating from 1928 or later. From 1978 the car was owned by John Anthony Knight, who in 1988 sold it to Maxwell Booth. The current vendor bought the car from Mr Booth in 2009.

It is understood that Mr Knight, an engineer, was a keen OM enthusiast. He carried out a comprehensive restoration of 'YR 88' (and another OM) during his ownership, including an engine rebuild, new radiator core and overhauled chassis, brakes, axles, springs, steering, wheels, electrics, instruments, fuel tank, windscreen, etc. In addition, the body and wings were repaired and the car re-sprayed (bills and photographs on file).

The next owner, Mr Booth, was another OM aficionado, collecting much of the general marque history, photographs and drawings that come with the car. According to Mr Booth's own restorer, Larry Rose, Mr Booth continued to improve the OM during his ownership, having new seats made, the interior re-trimmed throughout, the wheels rebuilt and a new cylinder block installed (in 1990). Described by the private vendor as in generally good condition, running well, this rare Italian thoroughbred is offered with the aforementioned logbooks, OM UK Register, current MoT, V5 registration document, sundry restoration invoices, parts diagrams, engineering drawings, copy instruction manuals and a most substantial quantity of marque-related literature and photographs.

Bonhams 1793

Bonhams

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