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## 1956 AC Bristol

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Lot sold	<b>USD 176 631 - 217 392</b> GBP 130 000 - 160 000 (listed)	Drive	LHD
Year of manufacture	1956	Condition	Used
Chassis number	BEX222	Location	
Number of seats	2	Fuel type	Petrol
Drivetrain	2wd	Exterior colour	Other
Lot number	378	Engine number	100D2 1038

### Description

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1956 AC Ace-Bristol Roadster

Registration no. PFF 887

Chassis no. BEX222

Engine no. 100D2 1038

'Of them all, the Ace was the truest sports car: it could be used for daily commuting or for high-speed long-distance touring, but it could also be driven to a race meeting, campaigned with distinction, and driven home again - even if that race was the Le Mans 24 Hours.' - AC Heritage, Simon Taylor & Peter Burn.

The success of Cliff Davis's Tojeiro sports racer prompted AC Cars to put the design into production in 1954 as the Ace. The Davis car's pretty Ferrari 166-inspired barchetta bodywork was retained, as was John Tojeiro's twin-tube ladder frame chassis and Cooper-influenced all-independent suspension, but the power unit was AC's own venerable, 2.0-litre, long-stroke six. This overhead-camshaft engine originated in 1919 and with a modest 80bhp (later 100bhp) on tap, endowed the Ace with respectable, if not outstanding, performance.

In 1955 AC added a hardtop version - the fastback-styled Aceca - and both models became available from '56 with the more-powerful (up to 130bhp) Bristol six-cylinder engine. The 1,971cc Bristol six was based on that of the pre-war BMW 328, which featured an ingenious cylinder head, designed by

Rudolf Schleicher, incorporating hemispherical combustion chambers and inclined valves without recourse to overhead, or twin, camshafts. Instead, the earlier BMW Type 319 engine's single block-mounted camshaft and pushrod valve actuation were retained, thus avoiding an expensive redesign. Two rocker shafts were employed, one situated above each bank of valves, giving the engine an external appearance almost indistinguishable from that of a twin-overhead-cam design. Downdraft inlet ports contributed to the motor's deep breathing, and its tune-ability made it a popular choice for British racing car constructors, most notably Cooper, during the 1950s. Externally, Bristol's clone of the BMW motor differed little from the German original, the most obvious difference being the adoption of SU, rather than Solex, carburettors part way through production. The most significant changes made by the Bristol designers were metallurgical; their utilisation of the highest quality materials contributing to greatly increased engine life.

The combination of a fine-handling chassis and a decent power-to-weight ratio - in Bristol-engined form the car could touch 120mph - helped the Ace to numerous successes in production sports car racing, arguably its finest achievement being a first-in-class and seventh overall finish at Le Mans in 1959. Indeed, its basic soundness and versatility were reflected in the fact that relatively few major changes were found necessary when the Ace was endowed with Ford V8 power to create the legendary Cobra.

Originally a left-hand drive model exported to AC Imports of Arlington, Virginia, USA, this Bristol-engined Ace (now right-hand drive) was first owned by one R B Hayward. It was originally finished in Svecia Red with black leather interior, as confirmed by AC Cars' letter on file.

The Ace was essentially complete and in original condition, albeit with an incorrect Bristol engine, when it was imported into the UK in October 1988 by David Holroyd of Aughton, Lancashire (copy C&E Form 386 on file). 'BEX222' subsequently passed to David Howard Cars of Romsey Heath, Hampshire, from whom it was purchased in May 1992 by Keith Roach of historic-car coachbuilders Roach Manufacturing & Engineering. The accompanying bill of sale states that the Ace was 'sold for restoration'. In an emailed communication (printout on file) Mr Roach states that there were no signs of any prior body modifications and that he converted the AC to right-hand drive during restoration. The car's unmolested condition is confirmed in an email from marque specialist Rinsey Mills, who inspected 'BEX222' at Keith Roach's workshop prior to the rebuild's commencement. He states: 'there was no question this car was BEX222'.

The original engine fitted by AC Cars was '100D531', and although there was a six-cylinder Bristol engine with the car, it was not of the correct type for an AC. As a result, Keith Roach sourced a more powerful D2 engine that had originally been fitted to a 1959 AC. Keith decided to finish the car in silver with red interior, a combination used by AC in period.

The immediately preceding owner acquired the Ace on 9th July 2010 and decided to undertake a complete engine rebuild while at the same time increasing the maximum power output. The brief was to end up with a 150bhp road/track car (easily up-rated further to racing specification) that would still be capable of long-distance Continental touring if required. Works undertaken included overhauling and porting the cylinder head and fitting new Cosworth pistons/rings, 'high-torque' crankshaft and damper, long connecting rods and a lightweight flywheel. In addition, the oil pump and starter motor were renewed, the overdrive gearbox rebuilt with a close-ratio cluster, and an aluminium radiator and Kenlowe electric fan installed. All the minor items associated with such a rebuild: valves, guides, studs, nuts, bolts, chains, bearings, seals, gaskets, etc were replaced with new top quality items. Other noteworthy features include a gel battery and five new 72-spoke 15" wire wheels. Only some 1,000 miles had been covered since the rebuild's 2012 completion when the then owner offered the Ace for sale at Bonhams' Goodwood Festival of Speed auction in July 2013 (Lot 326). The current vendor purchased the car at that sale.

Described as in generally very good condition, the Ace is offered with the aforementioned documentation, sundry restoration invoices and a UK V5C registration document. It should be noted that there is another AC Ace in Denmark with same chassis number.

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