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# 1938 DKW 250SS

Stafford, 18 October

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Lot sold	<b>USD 54 696 - 68 370</b> GBP 40 000 - 50 000 (listed)	Condition	Used
Year of manufacture	1938	Location	
Engine number	429 378 (see text)	Motorcycle type	Street
		Colour	Other

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## Description

1938 DKW 250SS Supercharged Racing Motorcycle

Frame no. 260420

Engine no. 429 378 (see text)

One of an estimated 110 made

Previously owned and raced by Roger Slee

On museum display for the last 40-or-so years

DKW was founded in Zschopau in 1919 by Danish engineer Jorgen Rasmussen and built its first motorcycle power unit, a single-cylinder, clip-on engine for bicycle attachment, in 1921. The initials stand for 'Das Kleine Wunder' - 'The Little Wonder'. Designed by Hugo Ruppe, this 122cc motor was a two-stroke, and DKW would remain faithful to this engine type from then on, becoming world leaders in two-stroke design in the 1930s thanks to the prescient adoption of the Schnuerle loop-scavenge system. The latter used flat-topped pistons rather than the then-conventional deflector-crown type, relying on carefully angled transfer ports to direct the incoming charge around the cylinder.

Back in 1925 DKW had embarked on a racing programme with 175cc and 250cc machines featuring the Bichrone system of supercharging using a 'slave' pumping cylinder, significant success being achieved only after the Hermann Weber-designed split-single cylinder configuration, which enabled better control of port timing, had been adopted. Ear-splittingly noisy, the supercharged split-single 'Deeks' eventually overcame reliability problems to become the dominant force in 250cc racing in the late 1930s, works rider Ewald Kluge making history in 1938 when he became the first German to win

an Isle of Man TT race.

From 1935 there were customer versions available - the 250SS and later 350SS - based on the works racers. When the latter switched to an upright pumping cylinder for 1938, the production racers kept the original arrangement but nevertheless were updated with the works bikes' Benelli-style rear suspension, as seen on the example offered here. Although reputedly sold at a loss, the DKW production racers were very expensive, costing the equivalent of £125 when a Norton International could be bought for £95 10s. Not surprisingly, they were sold in limited numbers, estimated at 110 250SS and 25 350SS models between 1935 and 1939 based on engine number records.

It appears that only two found their way to the UK during the 1930s, being linked with speedway ace Frank Varey and road-racer Noel 'Mavro' Mavrogordato, both of whom were noted devotees of the Scott marque. Two blown Deeks were entered in the 1946 Manx Grand Prix, one by Mavrogordato and the other by A J Wilkinson, though the latter did not show up and Mavro was forced to retire from the race when the gearbox seized. Other blown DKWs were raced in the UK by Bonnie Good (who later sold his to collector Bill Body) and future scrambles star Les Archer junior, whose bike was badged as an EMC by its owner Dr Joe Ehrlich. Archer won the 1947 Hutchinson 100 on Ehrlich's bike before the FIM's ban on supercharging rendered it and all its fellows obsolete.

Little is known of the history of this example, which was purchased by the vendor's father in 1976 and is believed to have once belonged to Ehrlich. Ehrlich is believed to have owned two such DKWs. This machine's immediately preceding owner was Roger Slee, who restored it and was pictured in Motorcycle Sport riding the Deek at the 'Vintage Race of the Year' meeting at Mallory Park in 1975 (see history file). The bike, though not with its rider, had been pictured at the same meeting in 1974. The Ariel girder forks were already fitted at that time.

Roger Slee's type-written notes concerning the machine's dimensions and specifications are on file, there being a reference therein to 'Erlich' (sic) which would seem to indicate that this machine did indeed once belong to him. Its headstock VIN plate records the frame number as '260 420' and the engine number as '429 363'; however, the machine is currently fitted with engine number '429 378'. '429 363' is currently in another DKW 250SS in the UK, pointing to the conclusion that both these DKWs once belonged to Ehrlich and that the engines were swapped before they were sold on.

The vendor recalls that, when a youngster, he heard the 'very noisy' DKW being run once on the driveway at home. It is currently a non-runner, there being no spark from the flywheel magneto, and has spent the last 40-or-so years on static display in a private museum. One of only 110 made, of which only a small proportion is estimated to survive, this rare DKW 250SS represents a wonderful opportunity to acquire one of the most exotic production racing motorcycles of all time, ripe for sympathetic restoration.

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