
Connaught A-Type

Lot sold	USD 109 375 - 164 063 GBP 80 000 - 120 000 (listed)	Drive	LHD
Chassis number	AX (formerly A2/AX)	Condition	Used
Number of seats	2	Location	
Drivetrain	2wd	Fuel type	Petrol
Lot number	16	Exterior colour	Other

Description

1952-model Connaught A-Type Formula 2 Racing Single-Seater

Chassis no. AX (formerly A2/AX)

Connaught was a wonderfully British always under-funded (!) motor racing team, and its products such as this handsome A-Type design are preserved today as quintessentially British, front-engined, single-seat racing cars. This particular A-Type has been known essentially as chassis number 'AX', ever since its initial assembly from mainly original Connaught-made components around the turn of the 1950s into the 1960s. It features the A-Type design's standard 7-feet 1-inch wheelbase length and emerged from the private stable of contemporarily-prominent VSCC racer Jack Horton.

He was already the owner of one of the two long-wheelbase Connaught A-Type cars built, chassis serial 'AL10'. The 'AL' cars had a wheelbase 5-inches longer than the normal A-Type standard at 7ft 6ins in length. We understand that Jack Horton wanted a shorter, lighter-weight variant than 'AL10' primarily for use in sprints and hill-climbs. After crashing 'AL10' in the later 1950s, he needed a replacement de Dion tube for its rebuild, and despatched his son John to visit well-known Alta and Connaught specialist Ken Flint in the Wirral, in search of such a component.

Ken Flint had not long acquired an abundance of original ex-works components, bought at the Connaught company's closure Sale, which had taken place over three days, 17th-19th September, 1957. While seeking a replacement de Dion tube, John Horton was shown two standard-specification Connaught A-Type short-wheelbase chassis frames. These had been offered in the closure Sale as

auction Lot numbers 718 and 719. The former assembly was brand-new and unused, still wearing its factory primer coat of red oxide paint, while the other frame had been part-converted to accept a probably 2.4-litre Jaguar XK-series 6-cylinder engine.

John Horton negotiated purchase of the first frame from Ken Flint for a reported £125, and we understand that it was around 1959-60 that the Hortons, father and son, then decided to build-up the fresh chassis frame into a complete A-Type tailored to the demands of short-distance British sprint and hill-climb events. Drawing upon their own considerable collection of Connaught components and spares, they were able to complete the assembly process with only the front suspension wishbones requiring fresh manufacture. Initially they considered re-creating a Connaught sports-racing car upon this chassis frame. The engine for the finally single-seat configuration chosen was then built-up from original spares which had been acquired when they had originally bought 'AL10' from celebrated Guildford dealer/racer John 'Noddy' Coombs.

The freshly-assembled Horton car's engine was equipped with twin-choke Weber carburettors instead of the four individual Amal components specified for most A-Types, while a small-capacity sprint-event fuel tank was mounted in the car's tail instead of using the standard Connaught-design pannier fuel tanks each side of the cockpit. The Hortons produced their own design bodywork for the car and subsequently competed in it with considerable minor-league success. The car featured an Armstrong-Siddeley pre-selector gearbox, and John Horton campaigned it in partnership with his long-wheelbase A-Type 'AL10' until he sold the latter car to Alan Cottam who used it subsequently to become a leading VSCC-event contender. Mr Horton retained this car now offered here until he sold it to Dan Margulies, the high-profile London-based dealer and historic racer.

Dan Margulies then competed in this Connaught from around 1963, ultimately selling it to Alta specialist Hugh Clifford. He then continued the car's competition career in VSCC Historic events before finding a buyer for it in one Dennis Kitchener, who is said to have raced the car only once at Silverstone in 1969, where the engine failed expensively.

The car was subsequently sold to Arthur Carter, the current owner who preserved it in storage amongst his extensive, and continually growing, collection until 1983 when he had the car completely restored into definitive 1950s-era Connaught A-Type road racing trim. FIA papers were provided for the car in 1983-84 and it subsequently appeared quite frequently at Historic racing level, being driven by Brian Turner through 1984-86.

In period the chassis serial 'A2' was skipped by Connaught, chassis 'A3' possibly so-named after the main London-Portsmouth A3 road running past the company's garage-cum-factory base at Send in Surrey being the first production example following financial backer and occasional driver Ken McAlpine's prototype 'A1'.

In 1999 this car's FIA documentation was renewed, and it was race-prepared to appear in the Goodwood Revival Meeting, finishing ninth after starting in last place on the starting grid due to its practice-period having been cut short by magneto failure. Throughout its current ownership this Connaught has been primarily maintained and prepared by leading Lincolnshire-based Historic racing car specialists Hall & Hall. It is now offered here in well-presented condition with the mechanical condition as last raced. We would of course recommend the usual checks and re-commissioning prior to running the car.

Connaught of course claimed tremendous acclaim in October 1955 when the marque became the first British constructor to win a significant Continental Grand Prix with a British driver (Tony Brooks) behind the wheel of one of its products, since Henry Segrave had won the San Sebastian Grand Prix for Sunbeam as long beforehand as 1924!

Under the direction of company founders Rodney Clarke and Michael Oliver both ex-RAF officers Connaught cars had always been ingeniously designed, exquisitely well-engineered, and certainly beautifully made.

The A-Type Connaught was built for 2-litre Formula 2 competition from 1950-53 and was based upon a twin-tube chassis frame with torsion-bar suspension front and rear. Rodney Clarke even had dedicated-design magnesium-alloy wheels cast for it, promising to be both stiffer and lighter than

contemporary wire-spoked racing wheels. Michael Oliver developed the trusty high-camshaft 4-cylinder Lea-Francis 4-cylinder engine which, with dry-sump lubrication and four Amal carburetors, developed some 130bhp from its initially 1,767cc capacity. This unit was mated to the well-understood and reliable Wilson pre-selector gearbox. The Lea-Francis-derived engine was enlarged to 1,960cc, developing some 145bhp, and by the end of 1952 six A-Type Connaughts had been completed, and by the end of 1953 nine of them were in service, accumulating no fewer than 21 race wins in addition to 12 second places and ten third-place finishes.

Here we recommend the closest consideration of this single-seat Historic Grand Prix racing car embodying as it does both the very best of early-1950s 'gentleman racing' with a very considerable record over many years of VSCC success. Above all, these bespoke single-seaters are described as being "great fun" to drive.

The Connaught is offered with FIA MSA Historic Technical Passport; no. GB9486; issued 21st October, 2014; FIA Class F2/1; Period E 1947 to 1960; and valid to 2024.

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