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# 1929 Coventry Eagle Flying 8

Stafford , 23 April

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Lot sold	<b>USD 193 587 - 221 242</b> GBP 140 000 - 160 000 (listed)	Condition	Used
Year of manufacture	1929	Location	
Engine number	KTOR/C/90460	Motorcycle type	Street
		Colour	Other

## Description

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1929 Coventry-Eagle 980cc Flying-8 OHV

Registration no. WK 9146

Frame no. 41507

Engine no. KTOR/C/90460

Rare Vintage-era superbike

Restored in 2007

Present ownership since 2008

'There is an undeniable fascination in owning a machine capable of seemingly illimitable speed. For ordinary running the engine is merely idling, 50mph seems like 30mph on most machines, 60mph is a comfortable touring speed, while when one of those very rare stretches of really safe road is encountered the speedometer needle will, when the throttle is opened wide, pass the 80mph before remaining steady.' Motor Cycling testing a Coventry Eagle Flying Eight, with sidecar attached, in 1925 (4th November edition).

Established in Victorian times as a bicycle manufacturer, Coventry Eagle built a diverse range of motorcycles using proprietary (mainly JAP) engines from 1901 onwards, though machines only began to be produced in significant numbers after WWI. Six Coventry Eagles were offered for 1923, all JAP-powered except for a Blackburne-engined 350, ranging from the formidable Flying Eight to the diminutive S14 Ultra-Lightweight.

Most famous of these was the Flying Eight, which took its name from the engine's RAC rating of 8

horsepower. With its mighty JAP v-twin motor and muscular good looks, the Flying Eight was a worthy rival for the Brough Superior and a formidable Brooklands racing machine in the hands of privateers such as Bert Le Vack. Introduced in 1923, the Flying Eight was not Coventry Eagle's first v-twin but it was the first to establish a sporting reputation thanks to its special 976cc sidevalve engine that guaranteed a top speed of 80mph, an exceptional performance at the time. Motor Cycle's tester found that the Flying Eight was tractable, comfortable and handled well in town, while 'on the open road, as one would expect, it is possible to annihilate space on the merest whiff of gas...'

For 1926 the original sidevalve-engined Flying Eight was joined by a new overhead-valve version powered by the same 980cc JAP KTOR engine used by rivals Brough Superior in their SS100. It is said that the Brough and Coventry Eagle v-twins' resemblance was no coincidence, the Coventry firm's Percy Mayo and George Brough having become acquainted while on active service during WWI. A new frame incorporating substantial engine plates was used for the OHV Flying Eight, which featured both mechanical and hand-pumped lubrication, a Jardine three-speed gearbox, large (8" diameter) brakes, and Royal Enfield wheels: the rear boasting its maker's famous cush drive.

Motor Cycling concluded its test of the OHV Flying Eight thus: 'We have no hesitation in recommending the latest Coventry Eagle as a high-quality machine, capable of the most satisfactory road performance both as regards speed and flexibility.' And that, lest we forget, was with a sidecar attached.

Sadly, the onset of the Depression would forced Coventry-Eagle to change tack, the firm concentrating on bread-and-butter lightweights until it ceased motorcycle production in 1939. The last overhead-valve Flying Eight left the factory in 1930 and the final sidevalve model the following year. Compared with the rival Brough Superior, Flying Eight survivors are relatively few.

In the present ownership for the last eight years, this overhead valve Flying Eight represents a rare opportunity to acquire a fine example of one of the Vintage era's most famous superbikes. The machine is offered with an old-style continuation logbook (issued 1955) showing that it was attached to a sidecar at that time. There are four owners listed, the last of whom, one Edwin East, acquired the machine in March 1978 and also appears as owner on the old-style V5. (The late E A Stafford East was a Buckinghamshire-based motor dealer, collector and connoisseur of fine motorcars and motorcycles, with a penchant for the Bugatti, Brough Superior, GN, and Frazer Nash marques).

In April 1996, 'WK 9146' was offered for sale at Brooks' Stafford auction (Lot 495) on behalf of Mr Stafford East, being described as 'recently emerged from a long period in storage and... in superbly original condition.' Restored in 2007, it was purchased from collector Daniel Ward by the current vendor in September 2008 (purchase receipt on file). Since then the Flying Eight has covered some 1,000 road miles, successfully completing the Banbury Run and taking part in the 'Festival of 1,000 Bikes', as well as being ridden by James Robinson for a feature in this month's The Classic MotorCycle magazine. The vendor has fitted lower-compression pistons and tells us that the machine is an easy starter that rides beautifully. Accompanying documentation consist of that mentioned above, plus a V5C registration document.

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