


CLASSIC DRIVER

1938 Austin 12/4

- Lot sold
USD 29 081 - 33 928
GBP 24 000 - 28 000 (listed)
Year of manufacture 1938
- **Country VAT** GB
- **Mileage** 20 259 mi / 32 604 km
- **Gearbox** Manual
- **Chassis number** 81512
- **Number of seats** 2
- **Number of doors** 3
- **Drivetrain** 2wd
- **Lot number** 113
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- **Drive** RHD
- **Condition** Used
- **Location** 
- **Fuel type** Petrol
- **Exterior colour** Other
- **Car type** Other
- **Engine number** 77858L
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Description

- Bodied by Ricketts and 1 of 4 just known survivors
- Unusual six-light configuration complete with quarter landalette hood
- Taxi meter, correct 1938 decal, well-appointed interior, recent work has included new cylinder head gasket and five fresh tyres

Prompted to enter the London taxicab market in 1929 by a generous order from dealers Mann and Overton, Austin soon upset the status quo. Based on the redoubtable 12/4 chassis, the Longbridge manufacturer's 'High Lot' model was cheaper, easier to maintain and more reliable than its Morris Commercial and Beardmore opposition. Updated in 1934 as the 'Low Loader' or 'LL', the Austin boasted ample luggage space next to the driver and four seats to the rear compartment (though, two of these were of the 'fold down' variety). Among the more expensive coachwork options, J & H Ricketts' Landaulette design featured a retractable rear roof that allowed passengers to make the most of any clement weather and could be had in four- or airier six-light guises. Famously durable, the 12/4's 1861cc sidevalve four-cylinder engine was allied to an equally stoical four-speed manual gearbox both of which promised years of faithful service.

One of just four Ricketts-bodied examples known to have survived, 'ELW 601' remained in service until 1955 by which time it belonged to Alan McIntosh of Upper Norwood. Subsequently passing through the hands of F. Bloomfield Ltd, H.W. Baker-Duly, Jean Foster and Alan Nightingale, the Austin was rescued from a council lock-up garage in Gravesend during the late 1980s by taxi collector Anthony Blackman. Treated to an extensive restoration that saw much of its ash framing renewed by subsequent keeper James Wood, the 12/4 returned to the road in 2003. Still presentable some thirteen years later, this decidedly rare 'Low Loader' has benefited from a new head gasket, eight new valves and five fresh tyres during the vendor's custodianship. Sporting a roof rack, taxi meter and ingenious one directional wind-up / wind-down windows, period photos on file show 'ELW 601' in London traffic before WW2 and participating in the 1964 London to Brighton Historic Commercial Run.

H&H Classics

The Motor House
Lyncastle Road
Warrington
Cheshire
WA4 4SN
United Kingdom

Phone +44-1925210035

Fax +44-1925269631

Mobile phone +44-1925269631

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