


CLASSIC DRIVER



1959 AC Aceca - Bristol (one-off version)

Bristol (one-off version)

Lot sold	USD 243 180 - 364 770 EUR 200 000 - 300 000 (listed)	Drive	RHD
Year of manufacture	1959	Interior colour	Red
Gearbox	Manual	Condition	Original condition
Chassis number	A83 / A86	Location	
Number of seats	2	Fuel type	Petrol
Drivetrain	2wd	Exterior colour	Blue
		Car type	Coupé

Description

Belgian registration papers

- Unique model, formerly owned by Charles Hurlock and Sir Antony Pilkington
- Technically advanced, comfortable and luxurious
- Exceptional condition and clear history

While the AC Cobra remains the most iconic of all AC's cars, the rare coupé version was aimed at true connoisseurs, steeped in automotive culture. There can be no doubt that the car we are offering at auction today is lacking in neither class nor pedigree, with that little something extra which is hard to detect at first glance. Its history and rarity make it exceptional; this car is a unique link in the history of the cars produced at Thames Ditton, a stone's throw from the legendary autodrome at Brooklands.

Built in 1959, this AC Aceca-Bristol is unique and was known as "Mr Charles' car" as it was first used almost exclusively by Charles Hurlock, who was the owner of the marque together with his brother in the early 1950s. According to the records to be found in Rinsey Mills' book, AC in Details, it was then consigned for sale at the start of the 1960s at the garage of the famous tuner Ken Rudd, where

Richard Pilkington (an amateur racing driver, among his many other accomplishments) was working at the time, his jobs including the conversion of Alfa Romeos to right-hand drive, one of Rudd's specialities. Still finished in its original light blue with its original leather interior and red carpets, it is recorded in the factory ledger as the "Ex-Prototype Wide-Track Aceca" with the number A83, although the chassis number is in fact A86. Immediately recognisable thanks to the registration number it has always kept, '3 KPC' was bought by Pilkington, who didn't pay much attention to its history or specification, although he did notice that it was "a bit different from the one my father had (BE 707)".

This model differs from a standard Aceca in almost every respect: its attractive styling is identical, but more generously proportioned. Four inches wider overall, it had small wheel arch extensions, the first sports car from AC to feature these before the Cobra. The windscreen, rear screen and chassis tube closing plate were all modified accordingly. In addition, the slotted vents in the front wings and the bonnet scoop, similar to those on the cars which AC entered at Le Mans, contributed to the car's dynamic look.

The car's technical specification is considerably more advanced. The suspension is much more sophisticated, giving the car superior handling compared with the leaf-sprung models. The suspension makes use of wishbones and Armstrong coil-over-shock struts, with Triumph Herald front uprights. The differential is a GKN unit and the rack-and-pinion steering gives the car a smaller turning circle. It seems surprising that the works did not continue to use this design on its later models, but base financial reasons may have put paid to this idea at the time! Apart from these features, the unique hub carriers were specially cast in aluminium. The 1971cc six-cylinder Bristol engine is original (number 100 D2 973) and still in place in the engine compartment but is distinguished by the fact that it is mounted further forward than on a standard Aceca Bristol, in order to provide more legroom for the occupants inside the car. As a result, the foot-boxes are fabricated from aluminium rather than fibreglass, the pedals are suspended and there is a remote gearchange, similar to that on a Frazer-Nash, to allow the driver to reach the gearlever. There are also a few minor differences concerning the dashboard, some of them changes certainly made by the car's successive owners.

Behind the wheel, the difference in the car's roadholding is remarkable, but it is above all the additional room inside which changes everything. The additional space for the driver's legs and arms provides a much improved driving position for taller drivers. The gearlever falls easily to hand and the gears engage firmly and precisely. Developing just over 125bhp, the engine revs strongly, while the overdrive makes it possible to cover long distances at high speed without working the engine too hard. Perfectly set up, the car is like a high-speed train in a straight line, while the steering does a marvellous job on twisty roads. The car can be placed to the millimetre, thanks to its precise steering and powerful brakes which are resistant to fade even after intensive use on country roads and in city traffic.

Unique and uncommonly stylish, this AC Aceca Bristol also boasts a technically advanced design. It was used as a testbed by Charles Hurlock and then enjoyed by a few discerning collectors, whose meticulous care and exacting standards ensure that it is now in exceptional condition. Refined and unusual (only 169 Aceca Bristols were built), sporty while remaining comfortable, it should be the centrepiece of any collection!

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