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## 1923 Aston Martin 1,5 Litre

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Lot sold	<b>USD 133 432 - 186 805</b> GBP 100 000 - 140 000 (listed)	Drive	LHD
Year of manufacture	1923	Condition	Used
Chassis number	1932	Location	
Number of seats	2	Fuel type	Petrol
Drivetrain	2wd	Exterior colour	Other
Lot number	222		

### Description

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One of the oldest surviving production Aston Martins

1923 Aston-Martin 1½-Litre Two-Seat Sports Tourer

Registration no. NU 2677

Chassis no. 1932

Manufactured by Robert Bamford and Lionel Martin, the first Aston-Martins (the hyphen is correct for the period) rapidly established a reputation for high performance and sporting prowess in the immediate post-WWI years. The company traces its history back to 1914, when Bamford & Martin Ltd built their first Aston-Martin car at their works in Henniker Place, Chelsea, its name deriving from that of founder Lionel Martin and borrowing from the Aston hill climb near Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire (the hyphen was later dropped). Ultimately known as 'Coal Scuttle', that first car would remain Bamford & Martin's sole product for some years, as the coming of war saw the two founders engaged in more important activities. The company was later reorganised under new ownership and changed its name to Aston Martin Motors Ltd (in 1926).

Bamford & Martins first Astons used four-cylinder sidevalve engines, and though the firm experimented with overhead-camshaft types, it was the trusty sidevalves that did most of the winning. Indeed, the firm's single-cam 16-valve motor was barely any more powerful than the sidevalve unit while at the same time being less reliable. Both engines were the work of one S Robb, previously with Coventry-Simplex. In 1922 the sidevalve Aston-Martin enjoyed its finest hour when

one nicknamed 'Rabbit', and latterly known as 'Bunny', set 25 light-car and 10 outright world speed records at Brooklands. Unfortunately, the management's concentration on motor sport, while accruing invaluable publicity, distracted it from the business of manufacturing cars for sale, the result being just 50-or-so sold by 1925 when the company underwent the first of what would be many changes of ownership.

Bamford & Martin's chassis numbering for production cars began at '1916', making the sidevalve-engined chassis number '1932', that offered here, one the oldest surviving production Aston-Martin and one of a handful of early Aston-Martins in roadworthy condition. This car was first registered as 'NU 2677'; was reregistered in 1937 as 'GPA 227'; and reverted to its original registration in 1994.

'1932' was originally fitted with a two-seater body by W W Hall of Redditch in 1924 (a photograph of this body is featured on page 46 of the 1976 book *Aston Martin 1914-1940* by Inman Hunter, a copy of which is included in the history pack). In 1931 the Aston was purchased as a 21st birthday present and in early 1934 suffered an accident, having been driven into an obelisk. It was then purchased by William Lambert of the Hampstead Cylinder Reboring Co of Finchley Road. Lambert was a devotee of the sidevalve cars and also owned 'A3', which is now in the Aston Martin Heritage Museum. The car was repaired and rebuilt by Lambert as detailed in *Brooklands Books' Aston Martin Gold Portfolio* (page 131), a copy of which is in the history file. At this time it was registered 'GPA 227'. The Aston also featured in *The Motor* magazine in 1938 (see copy of article in the history file along with photographs of the car at this time).

In 1944 the car was owned by F O Anthony Phelps and was the subject of an article in *The Autocar* magazine at the time (see history file for a copy). It then passed through the hands of David Elkan and David Francombe before being purchased by Fred E Ellis in 1956. Ellis was a very knowledgeable sidevalve Aston enthusiast who wrote on the subject. Ellis sold the car to Dudley Coram in 1959. Coram wrote the fine marque history *Aston Martin - The Story of a Sports Car* in 1957 with the help of Ellis and Inman Hunter, a copy of which is in the history pack. Coram and Mrs Judith Hogg competed with the car in the 1961 BDC Firlie Hill Climb (Coram, 2nd); the 1964 VSCC Silverstone High Speed Trial (Mrs Hogg, qualified); and the JDC/BDC Silverstone meeting (Mrs Hogg, 3rd).

By 1966 the car was owned by Derrick Edwards (one of the cofounders of Ecurie Bertelli) together with Mrs Judith Hogg, who qualified it in the VSCC's High Speed Trial in '66. Sold to Bernard Kramer in 1967, it continued to be driven in competitions by both Kramer and Mrs Hogg. The AMOC Register records various results for the duo between 1967 and 1970. In 1978 '1932' was owned by Nick Jarvis Snr, who re-bodied the car with a superb GP body. The Aston has remained in the family to date, and in 1994 was reunited with its original registration, 'NU 2677'.

Since 2013, significant work has been carried out on the car including a full engine rebuild in 2015 by Keith Taylor of RK Taylor Engineering. The engine now incorporates the best of modern technology in the form of a Baynton Jones camshaft, Arias pistons, and an Arrow crankshaft and con-rods. The original crankshaft, camshaft, and con-rods are available if required. The car also has a new fuel tank and water pump by Nick Jarvis Jnr; a new radiator by the Vintage Car Radiator Company; and a refurbished dynamo and cut-out. We are advised by the vendor that the Aston now drives very well.

Dazzling details abound in this unique car, conveying the essentially hand-built nature of these earliest Aston-Martins. Extremely rare and magnificently presented, it represents the dawn of one of Britain's greatest sporting marques and would surely take pride of place in any collection of fine Aston Martin motor cars.

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