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1953 ASTON MARTIN DB2/4 PROTOTYPE AUBURN 2008

**LOT NUMBER:**

64

ESTIMATE:

AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

CHASSIS NO:

LML/515; MOTOR #VB6J/286/L

3 liter, DOHV six-cylinder engine, four-speed manual gearbox, two -SU HV6 carburetors, front and rear coil spring suspension. Wheelbase: 99"



The Ex-Aston Martin Experimental Department, David Brown, Peter Collins, King Hussein of Jordan, Factory DB2/4 Prototype

The history of commercial travail which had frequently beset Aston Martin reached an end when the company was acquired by David Brown in February 1947.

The Brown Company, a leader in manufacturing gearboxes and gear systems, had been established by the first David Brown in 1860 as a patternmaker specializing in patterns for cast gears. In 1898, it began to manufacture cut gears. The senior David Brown died in 1903 and was succeeded by his sons, Frank and Percy, who specialized in making worm gears and worm gear drives. The business expanded rapidly during World War I, and at the end of the war, David Brown was the largest manufacturer of worm gears in the world.

Expansion continued between the wars, and the first expansion outside gear manufacturing and gearboxes was made when it began to manufacture David Brown/Ferguson tractors in 1936. During World War II, it built tank transmissions, ship propulsion system reduction gears, and aircraft gears.

The second David Brown had become Managing Director in 1931 and had led the company through the Depression and the war. A man of talent, engineering intuition, and design insight, it was David Brown who perceived the opportunity that lay in Aston Martin after the war. Another acquisition followed a year later when David Brown bought Lagonda, in the process acquiring the dual overhead camshaft inline six-cylinder 2.6 liter engine just designed for Lagonda by W.O. Bentley and William Watson.

Aston had been at work during the war on a new postwar model with a 2-liter four-cylinder engine which it famously installed in a prototype four-door sedan known as the "Atom," with parallel trailing arm, coil spring independent front suspension, for development during the war years. An envelope bodied drophead coupe called the Two Litre Sports but later known as the DB1 was introduced following the acquisition by Brown of which a very limited number (just 13 plus a single fastback saloon) were built.

Both David Brown and the managers of Aston Martin and Lagonda realized that the 90hp Atom engine was marginal in the postwar market. A team of three Astons were entered at Le Mans in 1949, all bodied in a handsome fastback style designed by Frank Feeley. Two of them had the Atom four-cylinder. One was powered by the Bentley-designed Lagonda six. A water pump failed on the six in the

first hour but shortly thereafter it finished third at the Spa 24-hours, showing the promise of the chassis, engine, streamlined coachwork, and, of course, its David Brown gearbox. Aston Martin settled on the inline six for the production series, now called DB2.

Light weight (under 2,500 pounds) and the predictable handling characteristics of the zero camber change trailing arm independent front suspension were complemented by the engine's 105hp and the streamlined Frank Feeley-designed coachwork. The DB2 entered production in 1950 and continued through 1953 with a total of 411 built, the vast majority (309) being two-door, two-seat Saloons.

As Aston Martin developed experience with the DB2, its marketers realized that added luggage capacity and accommodations for occasional passengers were desirable attributes that would complement the tractability of the long stroke engine and enhance the Aston Martin saloon's appeal. Accordingly, development began on a second generation DB2 which came to be known as the DB2/4, signifying its occasional four-seat interior.

Introduced at the London Motor Show in 1953, the DB2/4 added two small bucket seats behind the driver and passenger. The fuel tank was reduced from 19 to 17 Imperial gallons in size and the roofline raised over the rear seats. The spare wheel and tire were relocated to a tray below the fuel tank and, most visibly, the rear window was placed in a large side-hinged panel which was arguably the first "hatchback" and certainly the first one on a luxury gran turismo. Both saloon and drophead coupe configurations were offered from inception.

One of the dropheads, chassis LML/515, the car offered here, was built for David Brown's personal use and was registered in his name even though it was used by the Aston Martin Experimental Department from 1953 through 1955 in development of the next generation DB2/4, the Mark II.

Among Brown's special touches were a notchback hardtop that contrasted distinctly with the fastback design of the hatchback DB2/4 saloon and foreshadowed the notchback fixed head coupe body that would be fitted to 34 of the 199 DB2/4s built. His DB2 also had quarter windows, wind wings, and a revised bonnet design with fixed panels behind the wheels that was tried here for the first time and eventually adopted in production. The coachwork was by Mulliner rather than Tickford which was acquired by David Brown in 1955.

In 1955, David Brown and the Experimental Department relinquished LML/515, turning it over to Aston Martin factory team racing driver Peter Collins on July 13. It was re-registered from its factory VMF 123 number into Collins' name on registration 9 FMP. Its history with Collins is recounted in Chris Nixon's famous book "Mon Ami Mate" about Collins and his pal Mike Hawthorn. In that period it also was featured in Aston Martin advertising.

The Aston Martin factory chassis and service records disclose that it was serviced in 1956 with racing camshafts and "modified restrictors" which in factory-speak indicates low restriction mufflers. In June of 1958 it was fitted with the replacement engine which it still has. At that same time, the factory re-installed the factory big-valve "L" type cylinder head which the original engine had; an example of the advantages which Peter Collins had in being one of the premier British drivers of the day.

LML/515 was subsequently rebodied by Mulliner in fixed head coup configuration retaining the look of the David Brown/Peter Collins drophead coup with its very special hardtop. In addition to its rare and desirable fixed head coup coachwork and ownership history with two of the essential figures in the history of Aston Martin, David Brown and Peter Collins, it is an important Aston Martin experiment department development vehicle

Following Peter Collins it had several owners eventually coming into the ownership of King Hussein of Jordan. Later it became part of the breathtaking Aston Martin collection of J.S. Draper.

It has been restored twice, first by Bristol Cars and later by Aston Martin in 1994-95 at a cost of 90,000. It is one of the most important and significant of all postwar Aston Martins, a car that not only has an important place in the evolution of Aston Martin's production models but also figures in the history of some of the most significant figures in postwar British sports car history, Sir David Brown and Peter Collins. King Hussein of Jordan, an enthusiastic driver and supporter of sports car competition, adds important value to the history of LML/515. It has been carefully maintained and has seen only limited and very careful use since its most recent restoration by Aston Martin. An impressive package of documentation from the Aston Martin factory and copies of the British registration document in King Hussein's name accompany it.

A righthand drive car, its four round dial dashboard and switch panel cluster is characteristic of the early DB2 and DB2/4 Aston Martins. Finished in black with magnolia leather interior, silver wire wheels and blackwall tires, this is a distinctive factory development Aston Martin with important design features and an ownership history which is unsurpassed.

An irreplaceable Aston Martin, LML/515 combines unique coachwork, history, performance, and design in a wonderful combination that is beautifully restored and carefully preserved. There are few automobiles that come close to its combination of attributes, history, style, and presentation.

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