

1958 Aston Martin DB 2/4 Mk 111 (RHD)

For Sale

Vehicle Details :-

- Vehicle chassis/car number 1444
- Engine number 1058
- Body colour Maroon
- Interior colour Mid grey

Key Highlights :-

- One owner for the past 40 years with known history since 1977
- Restored 12 years ago, with recently refreshed cylinder head and paintwork, plus a new stainless-steel exhaust system
- All matching numbers, with original chassis, engine, gearbox, rear axle, suspension and all-aluminium body
- Original generator, starter, distributor, wiper motor, instruments etc.
- Road registered and licensed
- All-leather interior
- Silicone brake fluid throughout
- A number of desirable performance upgrades, with removed original parts available
- New wiring harness and front windscreen fitted
- Completely rust and accident-free
- Original and complete engine bay tool kit, jack etc
- Original owners handbook
- Genuine Aston Martin service and spare parts books
- Comprehensive known history, with receipts and details of repairs etc
- Approximately 2 150 miles covered since restoration, (+/- 250 miles since refresh)

Rebuild Specification :-

- Motor upgraded to 3 litre (from 2.9 litre) with forged high compression pistons, forged connecting rods, new cylinder sleeves - kit supplied by Tim Stamper (UK)
- New main and big-end bearings, oil seals, timing chains, clutch etc.
- New Weber DCOE 40 carburettors (3) with matching inlet manifold
- Fast road camshafts
- Tubular stainless-steel exhaust headers and custom dual exhaust system
- Original David Brown 4-speed gearbox
- All-aluminium high-performance radiator plus electric cooling fan
- Higher rate front coil springs fitted to sharpen steering and handling
- Carbotech brand carbon-ceramic front brake pads
- Original tri-bar headlights in good condition, new tail-light lenses
- Set of 5 polished stainless-steel 16" x 72-spoke road wheels
- Avon 16" tyres (5)

History :-

Late 1960's to early 1970's. The car spent a number of years in Vanderbijlpark (70 km south of Johannesburg) in what was then the Transvaal Province. Several local car enthusiasts recall noticing it parked outside the local Post Office from time to time. It was reputedly being used on dirt roads at one stage to carry lucerne bales to horses on a small holding outside the town*. Mr. Leon Hoffman from the nearby town of Vereeniging bought the car in 1977. It was complete and running but generally scruffy, painted gold with red and black vinyl-covered seats. (See picture) It had been fitted with an Alfa Romeo 5-speed gearbox, but fortunately, Mr. Hoffman negotiated to get the original gearbox re-fitted prior to the sale. He then partially stripped the car with the intention of rebuilding it. This progressed slowly until 1983 when Mr. Hoffman was persuaded to sell the Aston Martin, in stripped-down condition to the current owner.

Continuing with this tradition of slow progress on the rebuild, the car was moved around for a number of years in this state of undress. The dashboard and instruments, foot throttle assembly, steering wheel and a number of other small parts were attended to, with a view to keeping these items as original as possible. Also attended to was the bulk of the repairs to the bodywork – dent removal etc. The car spent a number of years in storage in a Karoo farm shed close to Graaff Reinet, the location being ideal for its extremely dry and safely remote situation. Whilst here it almost gave another Aston enthusiast, Stewart Cunningham, a heart attack when he accidentally discovered a complete but stripped-down Mk111 in what he believed was the ultimate barn find. He even offered to rapidly remove the car to restore the farmer's tractor parking inside the shed. This became something of a light-hearted joke whenever he was subsequently encountered!

By 2006 it had become obvious that if more rapid progress wasn't made, there was a risk that the car may never get to be driven and enjoyed again. So, in 2008, the car's nut-and-bolt restoration was entrusted to a small firm in Graaff Reinet. This included a bare-metal respray of the all-aluminium body. Despite getting the car together and running again, which was undeniably a major step forward, the work done in certain areas was either incomplete or not fully up to the high standard that the vehicle deserved.

In 2009 the car was relocated to the small town of Knysna in the Western Cape where a steady program was mounted by the owner to carefully bring it up to an appropriate standard. The entire vehicle was assessed, with the owner now personally attending to any identified issues. The engine required some cylinder head attention which was undertaken by a specialist company that reworked the valve guides and valve clearances. The paintwork showed some imperfections and minor blemishes which were attended to by a local painting specialist who brought the car up to its current high standard. A new custom dual exhaust was commissioned with the rear silencer boxes being tucked up either side of the underslung spare wheel cradle.

* This could possibly account for the repairs needed to the rear roof/upper tailgate hinge areas which were extensively cracked, probably due to running on rough roads with the hatch open and shaking from side to side?

Observations and Recent History:-

Whilst not adding significant annual mileage, the car has been in regular use, including a couple of longer-distance runs. The car is frequently used for local classic car shows, breakfast runs and the like. In May 2014 it was favoured with the “Best of Show” award at the Garden Route Motor Club annual classic car event. This car show is widely regarded as one of the finest in South Africa and it regularly attracts some of the very best vehicles (by invitation), making this a particularly meaningful achievement. It has also been featured in one of the premier SA classic car magazines.

During the initial rebuild, renowned Feltham Aston expert Tim Stamper was consulted about the desirability of fitting a 5-speed gearbox, however, he very firmly disagreed with this. In his words, the David Brown 4-speed gearbox was one of the car's very best features and should be retained at all costs. He was correct – it is unique and an absolute delight to use and is integral to the car's core character and heritage. He also guided the rebuild specifications for the owner, the brief being to achieve a lively, but completely comfortable and easy-driving sports car – in other words, a driver's car.

At some early stage in its life, the car had 3 x Weber side-draught carburettors fitted. This was evidenced by the modified firewall in the area above the passenger footwell. It was decided that this feature should be retained and would be an advantage when upgrading the car to a “fast road” state of tune. A set of new carburettors were duly added, along with the other engine upgrades. Note that the original and unrestored SU carburettors, inlet manifold, painted wire wheels, cooling fan etc. are available with the car should the new owner wish to make use of these items again.

These saloons were the very last of the Feltham-produced Aston Martins and were equipped with the final iteration of the W.O. Bentley-designed Lagonda twin overhead camshaft engine. It was also the very first of Aston's production cars to sport the iconic front radiator grille shape which has been employed continuously ever since, carrying through to their current models. In Ian Fleming's famous “Goldfinger” book, MI6 issued special agent 007 with an Aston Martin DB 2/4 Mk 111, thereby making this the true James Bond car. Evidently, a neighbour owning one must have made an impression on Mr. Fleming. Hollywood, in its inimitable way, simply got it wrong by featuring the later DB5 when making the film version.

This particular Aston Martin is a delight to drive, having been continuously maintained, fettled and regularly used by its long-term owner. The upgrades make it responsive and completely capable of being safely driven in modern traffic, with its brakes and suspension being up to the challenge. Having lived the bulk of its life in a dry climate, including extensive time spent in safe, dry storage, it has importantly retained its integrity due to the virtually total absence of any corrosion or accident damage, and the careful retention of its original components.

Whilst it was impossible to know the total vehicle mileage covered since new, on stripping the car down and by judging the overall condition of a number of mechanical and trim wear components, it would be fair to assume a moderate prior mileage – almost certainly under 50

000 miles. The odometer from memory was reading approximately 45 000 miles, however this detail was lost when the unit was cleaned and serviced during the rebuild process.

The motor runs particularly well, with excellent hot and cold oil pressure, and offers enthusiastic acceleration when asked. Brakes are excellent and capable of repeated fast stops with little or no fade. The gearbox is a delight to use with crisp changes, a smooth rifle-bolt action and good synchromesh on the upper gears. The non-synchromesh 1st gear, with its characteristic whine on pull-away is utterly in keeping with its 1950's character. The mildly upgraded front suspension springs remain supple and the car is remarkably capable over modern speed humps and any rogue pot-holes.

Ideally suited as a long-distance tourer, the car properly comes into its own in the 60 to 80 m.p.h speed range on smooth, winding roads. The steering feel and weight improves proportionally with speed, the car seems to settle down, shrinking around the driver, with the engine revs falling right in the middle of the torque curve. This yields an eager and rapid response to any throttle input. The car also sounds fantastic when performing like this, due to its deep-throated exhaust note.

This car is in top condition and with its known long-term ownership and unique history will make a desirable addition to any serious enthusiast's collection.