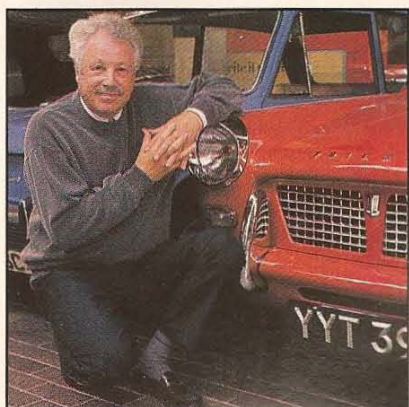


“RACE-BRED LUXURY”

... was how the DB2 was advertised in 1952.

Michael Ware traces some early survivors



I am always interested to hear of readers' own discoveries. Please write to me about them, with as much history as possible, to Michael E. Ware, Discovered, Classic Cars, King's Reach Tower, Stamford Street, London SE1 9LS.

At the Coys Historic Racing weekend at Silverstone on July 24 and 25, there will be a number of special displays. One, organised by Tom Barnard, will feature 45 or more Aston Martin DB2s. He tells me that 409 were made and 171 are at present known world-wide. Tom has been fascinated by these cars for many years, and his family has owned one since 1957. Tom is now Development Director of the new BRDC Board at Silverstone and is no sluggard himself, having been a very successful racer in the Fifties in a Lotus Mk VI, Mk IX and Eleven.

David Brown bought the Aston Martin Company in 1947 and later the same year he bought Lagonda. A new 2-litre Aston Martin driven by Leslie Johnson and Jock Horsfall won the 1948 Belgian 24-hour Race. This car was hastily rebuilt to form the centrepiece of the firm's stand for the Motor Show. Only 15 of these cars were made and in retrospect they were termed the Aston Martin DB1. Three DB1 chassis, but given chassis numbers which corresponded with the DB2, were developed with a very striking aluminium two-seater saloon bodywork for Le Mans in 1949. They were, in fact, the DB2 prototypes. The DB1 and the first 49 DB2s have distinctive three-piece radiator grilles.

Tom Barnard has made a special study of the history of these 49 cars and kindly

loaned me his notes on the ones which have been discovered in recent years – often in the strangest of places. Of those first three cars, 'number one' has been destroyed in a crash, the whereabouts of 'number two' is known but the owner seems unwilling to communicate and 'number three', which was the only one fitted with a Lagonda-inspired engine of 2,580cc, is being brought to Silverstone from the United States especially for the reunion by its owner Derek Durst.

LML/50/6 – This car was shipped on March 20, 1950, to America for display at a show in New York. The show, the British Automobile and Motorcycle Show was purely for British cars and was hailed a great success. The DB2 was in competition with other performance cars such as the Jaguar XK120, the Frazer Nash Le Mans Replica, Jowett Jupiter and Allard. Present owner Chris Salyer, from Oklahoma City, purchased the car in Missouri from Rich Sphar who had owned it for 17 years but had not used it. Prior to that, Rich bought it from "some kid in St Louis who was getting a divorce". The story is that the 'kid' had brought it from Florida around 1969. Chris told Tom Barnard that: "...it had been sitting in a nice dry barn out of the elements. The colour is now white with black vinyl interior. It still has right-hand drive but none of the original gauges or wood dashboard remain." Chris Salyer also owns LML/50/22.

LML/50/11 – This is Tom Barnard's own car. He had been looking for a car for his own use, preferably with a competition history. When he heard that there was a car for sale in Andover, Massachusetts, he jumped on a plane and went to have a look. This was the first DB2 built for direct sale – not a prototype, a team car, nor a show car. Originally road-tested by David Brown, it was sold to racing driver George Schrafft and then to David Hirsch, who drove it in the very first 12-hour race at Vero on March 8, 1952. It started favourite for the first Sebring 12-hour race in 1952, but retired on lap 29. The car was later fitted with an XK Jaguar engine. When Tom first saw the car it was in pieces in an unlocked, draughty wooden building. Prior to that it had been stored on its side in a cellar. A

previous owner from 1973 to 1987 had allowed his children to drive it around the paddock until it literally dropped. When Tom got it back to England he found plenty of very horsey soil lodged in it.

LML/50/12 – Sister car to number 11 but with no known competition history. It has had at least four owners in the United States, but we have little knowledge about any of them. The car was brought back to the United Kingdom in a derelict state some years ago. It is now owned by Douglas Blain and a full restoration is being carried out.

LML/50/18 – This was the first DB2 to go to Belgium. It is believed that the purchaser was King Leopold. In the 1951 Liège-Rome-Liège Rally the car was driven by Laloux and Assoignon, but crashed not far from the finish when the driver fell asleep. The car is reputed to





Above, LML/49/3 at 1949 Spa 24-Hours

Left, LML/49/4 at the 1992 National Classic Motor Show. UMC 272 is thought to be the works development car, which crashed at the 1950 Targa Florio

Right, LML/50/11 on its way to the UK



Left, LML/50/11, engineless and stripped, is removed from a cellar on its side

Right, LML/50/12, which is now being restored in the UK




Above, the DB2 had a 'top-hat' grille instead of DB1's three-piece arrangement. This DB2 belongs to Tom Barnard's sister Left, when LML/50/8 was found it had a Mercedes-Benz engine

Below, LML/50/21 at last year's Silverstone Historic Festival. The car's original owner was Briggs Cunningham



have been entered for the same event the following year. Very little is known of the car's history except that it would appear to have had any number of accidents. In 1991 it was purchased by a Belgian enthusiast who entrusted it to Tom Barnard to rebuild. When found it had been fitted with a Mercedes-Benz engine.

LML/50/21 – Left the factory on November 11, 1950 and was shipped to the United States Aston agent Hoffmans Motor Company Inc. The original purchaser was to be none other than Briggs Cunningham himself. Briggs hardly had the time to run the car in before he competed in the original Sebring 6-hour Race (called the Sam Collier Memorial Grand Prix, in memory of Collier who had been killed a few weeks earlier at Watkins Glen). He finished third in Class D. The car then went on to compete in many races and hillclimbs. Tom Barnard had no clues of this car's whereabouts until he received a letter out of the blue from Tilman Gregor of the German Aston Martin Owners Club in August 1991. The car had found its way to Germany and had been offered for sale in *Auto-Motor und Sport* in the classified column under parts for sale. Tilman viewed the remains and, after a quick check with Captain Ivan Forshaw of the Aston Martin Service Station at Longham in Dorset, he bought it. While it may have been in poor condition, it was remarkably original – and was one of the first cars to be fitted with the uprated Vantage engine. Tilman Gregor brought the car, now fully restored, over to Silverstone for the Historic Festival last year. It was one of the first three-grille cars to be seen there for many years. 

JUNE MYSTERY CAR:

Arnolt MG TD by Bertone

An Armor All valeting kit goes to David Price who correctly identified the mystery car in our June issue as an Arnolt MG TD with Bertone bodywork. Runners-up were Stephen Ellams, M J Falkingham, A H Piper, J E Newman, and D Brostoff.