

ECURIE BERTELLI

PRE-WAR ASTON MARTIN SPECIALISTS

1925 Aston Martin Side-Valve 1½-Litre

Supercharged Racing Two-Seater

Car No. 1954 · Recognised by the AMOC & AMHT



A supercharged 1½-litre side-valve of 1925 — one of the very first Aston Martins — recognised by both the AMOC and the AMHT. Rebuilt over two decades by Andy Bell of Ecurie Bertelli around a core of genuine components, including the crankcase and gearbox of the last Works Brooklands racer, and newly bodied as an accurate replica of the 1922 Strasbourg team cars. Completed in 2025, it looks, sounds and drives exactly as a hundred-year-old Aston should.

THE CAR

Every marque has a beginning, and few are as thinly populated as Aston Martin's. Only a handful of Bamford & Martin cars survive in any form from the marque's first years. This is one of them: car number 1954, a 1½-litre side-valve of 1925, recognised by both the Aston Martin Owners' Club and the Aston Martin Heritage Trust. Rebuilt with great patience — and unusual honesty — around its surviving original components, and newly clothed in the unmistakable boat-tail of the 1922 Strasbourg team cars, it is that rare thing: an Aston from the very first chapter of the story that can be driven, hard and happily, today.

ONE OF THE FIRST ASTON MARTINS

Car number 1954 was built by Bamford & Martin Ltd in 1925 as a standard 1½-litre side-valve — in the earliest Aston Martin idiom, when chassis and engine shared a single number and each car was almost entirely made by hand. Its original body style is not recorded. The car appears, listed simply as 'in stock', in the celebrated 1926 letter from G. L. Francis & Co to Lionel Martin, written when Martin asked his agents for a list of surviving owners; before that it had belonged to F. Cook, who sold it to Francis. It surfaces again in the Aston Martin Works records of 1931–33 — noted there, endearingly, as '1954 Old A.M.' — receiving attention to its front and rear axles and repairs following an accident.

DECLINE AND RESCUE

By the 1950s the car had passed to Brian Hart and fallen into poor condition, its chassis by then badly rusted. In the 1980s it was acquired by Stan Milton-White, who also owned chassis 1925 — the last of the Works Brooklands racers — and who took 1954 essentially as a source of spares for that car's restoration, carried out at Morntane Engineering and Ecurie Bertelli by Andy Bell. A few of 1954's better parts were used in 1925; the rest was carefully set aside. In 2005 the remains — a collection of original components, together with new chassis side-rails fabricated in 2004 and married to the original cross-members — passed to Andy Bell, and the long work of bringing 1954 back began.



The 1½-litre side-valve engine in the chassis, built on the original crankcase of the last Works Brooklands racer.

A REBUILD WITH A PEDIGREE OF PARTS

What makes this car unusual is not merely that it was rebuilt, but what it was rebuilt from. Among the parts that came with it was a narrow racing radiator, discovered by Milton-White and still bearing traces of its original black paint — believed to be the sole surviving component of chassis 1950, the 'Swiss Car', a 16-valve twin-cam 'Super Sports' and itself a Works replica of the Strasbourg racers. During the rebuild it was further established that the engine crankcase and the close-ratio gearbox were those of chassis 1925, the last Works Brooklands racer. To these were added a great many further original parts gathered over twenty years, and a considered programme of new manufacture where nothing sound survived: four brake drums and eight shoes, a differential centre casing, crown wheel and pinion, steering-box worm and sector, front and rear hubs, and five beaded-edge wheels and tyres. The rear axle and gearbox were rebuilt entirely, with new bearings and seals throughout.

ENGINE

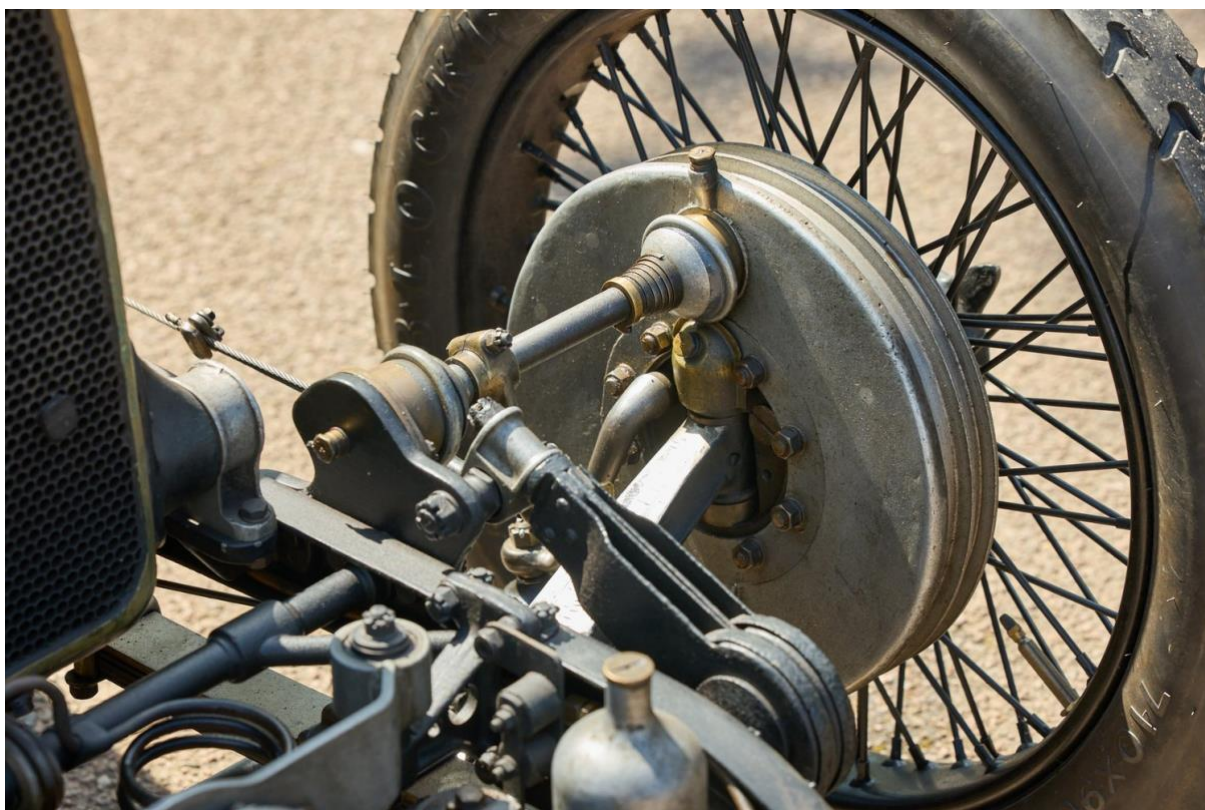
The engine was built and tested by Ian Webber of T. I. K. Engineering in Fareham — an acknowledged master of these early Aston units, who had already rebuilt three side-valve and two 16-valve racing engines for Morntane Engineering and Ecurie Bertelli. On the original 1925 crankcase he fitted a new cylinder block, a new billet crankshaft, new Carrillo-type connecting rods, new high-compression domed pistons, and a full set of new timing gears, camshaft and valve gear. A few sympathetic modern touches — camshaft thrust washers, main-bearing oil-feed pipes — were incorporated purely for reliability. Installed in the chassis, the engine was coupled to a Centric supercharger, rebuilt by Derrick Chinn: the result is an early Aston with genuinely lively performance, matched to the excellent handling and braking for which these light, well-balanced cars have always been admired.



The cockpit, with supercharger boost gauge, Watford rev-counter and correct minor instruments.

COACHWORK

The body is a new ash frame patterned faithfully on the 1922 Strasbourg team cars, made by Nick Jarvis — a coachbuilder who had built at least two such bodies before and knew Bamford & Martin cars intimately — and panelled in aircraft-specification 14-gauge aluminium by Andy Bell. Left in bare, hand-finished alloy over a deep red interior, it has the purposeful, unadorned look of a works racer, and every rivet and radius is correct.



Front axle, steering and brake detail — new drums with racer-type adjustment on beaded-edge wheels.

THE CAR TODAY

The rebuild was completed in 2025 and the finished car tested at Mondello Park. It is, in the fullest sense, a hundred-year-old Aston Martin that behaves like a new one: quick, taut and utterly usable, yet honest in every detail about what it is and how it came to be. As one of the first Aston Martins of all — and one of very few from that era in genuinely driveable order — it is eligible for the most rewarding VSCC and pre-war events, and equally at home on the open road. Presented with a full history file documenting its origins, its long recovery and every stage of the rebuild, car number 1954 is a chance to own the very beginning of Aston Martin — well worth a look and a drive, and unlikely to be available for long.

SPECIFICATION & KEY FACTS

Model	Aston Martin 1½-litre side-valve (Bamford & Martin) — Strasbourg-specification supercharged racing two-seater
Car / chassis number	1954 — taken from the engine number, in the earliest Aston Martin manner
Recognition	Recorded and accepted by the AMOC and the Aston Martin Heritage Trust
Built	1925, by Bamford & Martin Ltd
Coachwork	New ash frame to 1922 'Strasbourg' pattern by Nick Jarvis; aluminium panelling by Ecurie Bertelli
Finish	Bare aircraft-specification 14-gauge aluminium with red leather
Engine	1½-litre side-valve four-cylinder on the original crankcase of chassis 1925 (the last Works Brooklands racer); rebuilt by T. I. K. Engineering with new block, billet crankshaft, rods and pistons
Induction	Centric supercharger, rebuilt by Derrick Chinn
Gearbox	Close-ratio unit from chassis 1925, fully rebuilt
Notable original content	Radiator from chassis 1950 (the Swiss 'Super Sports'); crankcase and gearbox from chassis 1925
Registration	Currently unregistered; age-related mark available
Provenance	Documented from 1925: F. Cook; G. L. Francis & Co; Aston Martin Works service 1931–33; Brian Hart; Stan Milton-White; Ecurie Bertelli
Condition	Newly completed in 2025 and tested at Mondello Park; correct and honest throughout
Ideally suited to	VSCC and pre-war competition, sprints, and open-road touring
Guide price	£175,000

Included with the car

A full history file tracing the car from 1925 to the present: the 1926 G. L. Francis owner list, period chassis registers, the Aston Martin Works service card, the engine and coachwork invoices, and a detailed record of the twenty-year rebuild. Further details available on request.

OWNERSHIP & HISTORY

A selected record drawn from the 1926 G. L. Francis owner list, period chassis registers, the Aston Martin Works service card, the Ecurie Bertelli register and the car's history file. A fuller history is available on request.

1925	Built by Bamford & Martin Ltd as a 1½-litre side-valve
1925	Car number 1954, taken from the engine number
1926	Owned by F. Cook; sold to G. L. Francis & Co
1926	Listed 'in stock' in the G. L. Francis owner list to Lionel Martin
1931–33	Aston Martin Works service ('1954 Old A.M. '); accident repairs, front & rear axles
1950s	Owned by Brian Hart; chassis by now badly rusted
1980s	Acquired by Stan Milton-White, largely as spares for chassis 1925
2004	New chassis side-rails fabricated by Benfield
2005	Passed to Andy Bell (Ecurie Bertelli); complete rebuild begun
2005	Radiator identified as ex chassis 1950, the Swiss 'Super Sports'
2010	Strasbourg-pattern ash body built by Nick Jarvis
2021	Engine built & tested by T. I. K. Engineering; Centric supercharger fitted
2025	Rebuild completed; car tested at Mondello Park

ENQUIRIES

Ecurie Bertelli Limited

53 Stilebrook Road, Yardley Road Industrial Estate
Olney, Buckinghamshire, MK46 5EA, United Kingdom

Telephone +44 (0) 1234 240024

Email info@ecuriebertelli.com

Web ecuriebertelli.com

Ecurie Bertelli has looked after more than three-quarters of all surviving pre-war Aston Martins. With decades of knowledge and experience, we are uniquely placed to assist both buyers and sellers, and to support you long after you leave the showroom — from event entry and preparation to tailored maintenance and expert advice.



Front detail — beaded-edge tyres, period lamp and the deep-red bulkhead.