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The Ex - Lord Cross, Mugello World Sportscar Championship, First UK & RHD 'COB' Cobra, Two Family Owners From New

1963 AC Cobra 289

Chassis Number: COB 6004

Registration Number: 4141 PE

- The first UK market, right hand drive 'COB' chassis number designation AC Cobra 289 produced, delivered in November 1963 to Investigations & Management Ltd in London.
- Sold just three months later to Lord Cross, who campaigned COB 6004 from 1964, at events including the Mugello round of the World Sportscar Championship, throughout the rest of his life.
- Retained by the Cross family until 2006, when sold back to the family of the original owner.
- Remaining exquisitely original and complete, featuring original interior and hard top. Accompanied by complete history file with original 'buff' log book, AC Cars purchase order, period correspondence, original race programmes, period race pictures and more.

Regarded as one of the all-time great sports cars, the muscular, yet refined AC Cobra combined European chassis engineering and American V8 power in an what was to be become a legendary alliance between AC Cars and the Ford Motor Company, brought about Le Mans-winning racing driver Carroll Shelby,. The former's Ace provided the simple twin-tube chassis frame - strengthened and supplied with four-wheel disc brakes for the Cobra - into which was persuaded one of Ford's lightweight, small-block V8s.

The 260ci (4.2-litre) prototype first ran in January 1962, with production commencing later that year. Exclusively for the USA initially, Cobras - minus engines - were sent from England to be finished off by Shelby in California, and it was not until late in 1963 that AC Cars in Thames Ditton got to building the first fully finished European-specification 289ci cars.

The Cobra was an instant success from the moment it hit the track, giving the might of Ferrari a run for its money. The Cobra went on to firmly secure its place in motor racing and sports car history and remains the weapon of choice for Historic GT racing to this day, with Cobras dominating events like the Goodwood Revival's prestigious TT.

COB 6004, this car, is the very first right hand drive, UK market, AC Cobra 289 to be supplied and was sold new to Major Michael Woodbine Parish MC of Investigations and Management Ltd of London. Ordered in the striking livery of Vineyard Green with Beige leather trim, Black hard top and tonneau, COB 6004 was fitted with engine number 816 ahead of its despatch to Major Parish on the 13th November 1963, as detailed on the original AC Cars Limited, Thames Ditton advice note from that date which still remains within the history file today.

The original 'Buff' log book, also remaining within the history file, shows that COB 6004 was registered on the following day, the 14th November 1963, with Surrey County Council in Kingston-Upon-Thames with registration number 4141 PE.

An invoice dated 15th November 1963 details the equipment supplied with COB 6004 and the corresponding prices. Major Parish specified for a radio, Marchal headlamps, luggage rack, headlamp flasher, 5 pts. anti-freeze, 8 gallons petrol, registration 12 months and number plates, with the most expensive addition being the radio at £45! With all of this, the Cobra totalled a purchase price of £2543 8s 11d. By comparison, in 1963 a new Hillman Imp would have set you back around £500.

After just a few months of ownership, and seemingly very few miles of use, Major Parish agreed to sell COB 6004 to The Rt. Hon. Lord Cross of Broughton-in-Furness, North Lancashire on the 12th February 1964. In a letter dated 26th February 1964, A.G. Hall on behalf of Major Parish's Investigations and Management Ltd. follows up on their recent conversation from the day before, and explains that the agreed selling price of £2,443 was just over one hundred pounds less than the purchase price as new. Hall goes on to explain that it has been noted that three months of the registration has been used, and that there is most likely not 8 gallons of petrol in the car, so encloses a cheque to the order of £5 14s 4d to make up for the shortcoming. To this letter, the AC Cars Limited detailed invoice was attached.

It was not until the 20th February 1964 that the next AC Cobra 289s were produced and despatched, with the majority of production being despatched from around September 1964.

Lord Cross did not take long to begin to explore the capabilities of COB 6004 further. Having previously raced in England with a selection of smaller cars, COB 6004 was to take him not only around England, but to Europe and even the United States of America, and is classified as one of only six 'Original Independently Prepared Competition' AC Cobras.

COB 6004 made its competition debut at Silverstone in 1964, where Lord Cross raced with the race number 116 in what appears to be almost standard specification. They returned for the Silverstone 6 Hour Relay race on 8th August 1964 carrying the number 4E. COB 6004 had the full width windscreen removed for the relay, and a small wrap-around aero screen fitted in its place, and the tonneau cover in place over the passenger seat. Following this was the first of many trips to the Brighton Speed Trails on 12th September 1964, where with number 111, Lord Cross set a top speed of 127mph with a best time of 26.24 seconds.

An itinerary from Wakefield & Fortune Limited within the history file, details the 1964 British Automobile Racing Club Rally to the USA. Beginning on the 1st October, participants set off from London Airport Central and flew to Kennedy Airport, New York. From New York they travelled to Denver, Colorado, through Monument Valley, the Grand Canyon, on to Las Vegas before reaching Riverside where their visit coincided with a large race meeting.

Following Riverside, the group went along the Pacific Coast Highway to Carmel before going on to Yosemite National Park. Ending in San Francisco, members were required to drive their cars to 'Race Finishing Line' before cocktails at the Fairmont Hotel. The participants then transferred back to New York and headed home to London on the 19th October.

Lord Cross and COB 6004 then appear in Autosport Magazine on the 13th November 1964, with Lord Cross enthusiastically urging the Cobra through a corner, leaning right over the cockpit. With race number 65, COB 6004 is once more fitted with the small single aero screen, and radio antenna visible from behind the drivers seat.

Early in 1965, Lord Cross wrote to the Avon Rubber Company Ltd, requesting that they make a new competition tyre suitable for AC Cobras. Avon's reply apologises for the lack of plan to make one, and mentions the GT tyre in production for Aston Martin. The first outing in 1965 came at Harewood Hill Climb on the 4th April, and then on to Croft Aerodrome on 8th May. Sporting race number 80, COB 6004 was raced with the road full width windscreen and soft top hood raised, with Lord Cross' helmet pushing against the material.

Lord Cross then returned to Brighton for the Speed Trials on the 11th September, where COB 6004 sported number 146. A written reply from Ferodo Limited was received on the 11th October 1965, confirming that Lord Cross would have brake pads made available at a discount of 30% in future, from H.E. Theyer, Manager of the Competitions Department.

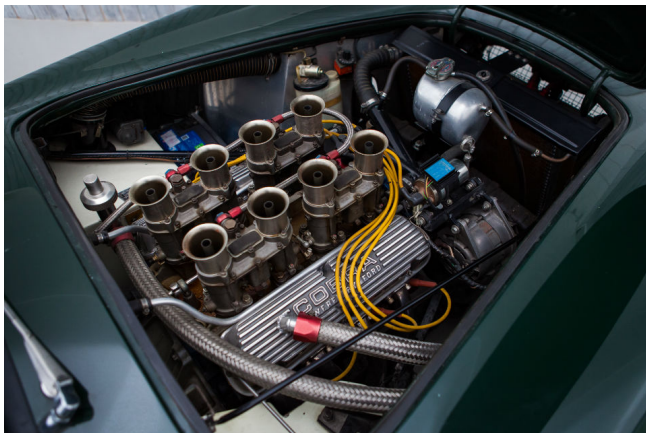
Another tour document is retained within the history file, but this time for the Indianapolis 500 Tour. Organised by Phoenix Travel Limited, amongst the directors listed on the footer are Stirling Moss O.B.E. and K.A. Gregory. Lord Cross was one of fourteen members who attended this tour, although the list is undated.

Into 1966, and the first known outing was at Crystal Palace in July, where COB 6004 was entered with number 66. Just over two weeks later, Lord Cross made the journey to Italy with COB 6004 for the Mugello round of the World Sportscar Championship. Held on the 41.3 mile road circuit around Tuscany, Lord Cross ran with number 199 and finished 1st in class, according to his own records. The original program from this meeting, is one of many which accompany COB 6004 in the history file.

On 1st October, Lord Cross raced COB 6004 at Silverstone with race number 110. He entered both the GT and Sports car races, finishing 6th and 8th respectively. In 1967, COB 6004 was reported in the 1st September edition of Autosport Magazine wearing number 166, complete with a picture of Lord Cross having a bit of a moment! He then returned to Brighton for the 1967 edition of the Speed Trials where COB 6004 wore number 157.

In 1968, the season for COB 6004 kicked off with Thruxton on the 17th March and Lord Cross finished a fine 4th. Then on 27th April, he and COB 6004 raced at Silverstone for the International Sportscar event with number 28. After qualifying 29th, he progressed in the race to finish 19th. On the 21st July, they competed at the AC Owners' Club Annual Sprint, held at Lydden Hill carrying the number 2.

On the 14th September 1968, Lord Cross revisited Brighton once more, for that years edition of the Speed Trials. He posted two timed runs of 25.23 seconds and 24.65 seconds, with a terminal speed of 143mph. A very impressive number for a standing kilometre, and even more so when Duncan Hamilton's best with his Ford GT40 was only 135mph!! 1968 was concluded by an outing at the Silverstone BRDC Gold Leaf meeting on the 19th October, where COB 6004 wore race number 43.



We have a single competition record for 1969, at Thruxton on the 16th March, where it ran with number 1 in the production sports car race. Just two days after Thruxton, Lord Cross went to Weber Carburettors agent, Phegre Engineering near Basingstoke, who tuned and adjusted the four Type 48 I.D.A carburettors, changing the choke tubes, emulsion tubes, main jets, correction jets, and idle jets.

He returned to Thruxton in 1970, competing this time with number 255. Lord Cross travelled to the Chandy Northern Speed Trials at Elvington on the 11th July 1970, where he and COB 6004 won the 3000-5000cc class for a standing start kilometre, with a time of 24.86 seconds.

In 1971, the pairing entered Thruxton once more, this time on the 14th March with race number 100 and finishing 9th in the race. On the 5th June, Lord Cross and COB 6004 competed at Silverstone for the Martini Meeting. Between then and May 1972, it would seem that the engine in COB 6004 let go. An invoice in the file from Ian Richardson (Racing) details the work in stripping out the original engine unit and inspecting for damage, before building up GT40 engine unit. A used 'J' type cylinder block is listed, along with 8 Shelby spot faced rods, 8 forged pistons, 16 lightweight lifters, a Le Mans camshaft and a Cobra alloy gated sump. All of this came at a cost of £445.

Lord Cross attended the ACOC Greenham Common Sprint on the 17th August 1974, where with number 93 he set a best time of 13.26 seconds, enough to win his class and indeed set Fastest Time of Day beating the 427 Cobras in the process. On the 5th October, he returned to Elvington for the Records Weekend. Lord Cross received a letter from the Incorporated Sprint Organisation following the weekend, listing his flying kilometre times as 15 seconds and 14.94 seconds, with 5.90 seconds and 6.14 seconds for the flying quarter mile. The author of the letter congratulated Lord Cross on his top speed in excess of 150mph, with an average of 149mph - "a very fine performance for a 'driven to the course' motor car."

In 1975, Lord Cross was present at the European Formula 2 Championship International race day at Silverstone, where he and COB 6004 competed in the historic race. Up against a selection of cars including a Ferrari 250LM, Jaguar E-Types, Lotus 23Bs, Lister Jaguar and Aston Martin DB4 GT, Lord Cross finished 16th.

In around 1980, COB 6004 had its arches widened further by Cobra specialist Nick Green, and a special wide set of wire wheels made. Over the following years, Lord Cross did a few other events and tours, including a trip to the Isle of Man and participated in the AC 50th Anniversary race at Donington Park in 1999. A FIA Vehicle Identity Form was completed for COB 6004 in 1996 in which Lord Cross cites engine number 816, describes the body as being original to the chassis and lists a couple of period races including Mugello.

He kept COB 6004 until his passing in 2004, at which point ownership went to his two daughters. In 2006, a buyer was sought for COB 6004. It was the son of the original owner, who stepped forward and bought COB 6004 back into the family. COB 6004 has seen minimal use over the 12 year current ownership, and received some work by Nick Green in 2012.

As COB 6004 sits today, it remains in astoundingly original condition. Still fitted with the original beige leather seats and original factory hard top, as far as we are aware COB 6004 has not ever been crashed and could quite possibly still be wearing the majority of its original Vineyard Green paint. Accompanying COB 6004 is the history file with original 'buff' log book, AC Cars purchase order, period correspondence, original race programmes, period race pictures and more, along with six spare wire wheels. It is a seldom found opportunity to acquire a very significant, particularly early, and extensively original example of the iconic AC Cobra.