



National Motorcycle Museum (207)

Wed, 20th Jul 2022

Estimate: £18000 - £22000 + Fees

1923 Lea Francis 600cc Sports 1 of 2 known examples

Registration No: NW 4984

Frame No: 3064

Engine No: 42533

CC: 600

MOT: Exempt

- Fully restored to show winning standard
- Last on the road in 1928 and stored until 17 years ago
- Restored using all the original parts
- Ideal Banbury machine or entrant for other VMCC events
- Records show approximately 1,500 machines were made from 1913-1924
- With around 34 machines left and with just two 600 sports models
- Old RF60 logbook on files and some restoration photos
- Light recommissioning will be required before use due to storage

The Coventry based firm of Lea Francis had been established in 1895 by Richard Lea and Graham Francis in order to manufacture bicycles quickly gaining a reputation for quality, however, a foray into car manufacture during 1903 when a vehicle using a three-cylinder engine was offered, did not meet with the success that had greeted their bicycles. This may explain the firm's comparatively late entry into the world of motorcycle production in comparison to many of its rival cycle manufacturers.

Development work commenced during 1911 culminating in the release during 1912 of a 3 1/4hp model with a JAP vee twin. As had been the case with their cycles, Lea Francis motorcycles quickly earned a reputation for quality. Then as now, celebrity owners could greatly enhance product standing and Lea Francis was to benefit from George Bernard Shaw's purchase of one of their motorcycles, a 592cc inlet over exhaust M.A.G vee twin-powered example. Between 1912 and 1924 approximately 1500 Lea Francis motorcycles are believed to have been built using proprietary engines supplied by the Swiss M.A.G (Motosacoche) concern and J.A.P housed in their own frames. Motorcycle production ceased during 1924 enabling Lea Francis to concentrate their efforts on the production of their newly introduced Meadows-powered light car that, unlike its predecessor, was proving to be a success.

The motorcycle offered was first registered on the 10th October 1923 to Mr. Thomas Whitwell Dresser, it subsequently passed to the late William Henry Fenby, the founder of the North East section of the Vintage Motorcycle Club and instigator of the Nostell Priory Collection where it spent most of its life until now. It was purchased by the last owner at the Nostell Priory Collection. Powered by a M.A.C inlet over exhaust vee twin with a three-speed gearbox, it was last used on the road in 1928.