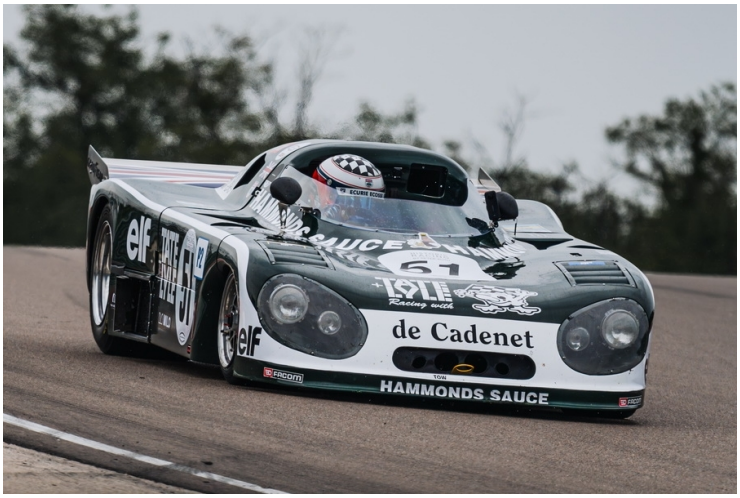
Our passion is classic competition cars

1977 - de Cadenet LM3



Make:	de Cadenet
Model:	LM3
Year:	1977
Location:	U.K.
Type:	Open Sportsracer
Chassis Number:	LM3
Drive:	RHD
Road Registered:	Yes
Competition Ready:	Yes
FIA HTP:	Yes
Interior Color:	Alu
Exterior Color:	British Racing Green & White
Price:	P.O.A.

Key Features

- Unique, one-off constructor-built chassis with Len Bailey designed bodywork
- 5th Overall at the 1977 24 Hours of Le Mans
- Well documented with over 40 years single-family ownership
- Restored to original 1977 specification; race-ready with current HTP and good spares
- Eligible for all prime historic race events including Le Mans Classic, CER2, etc.

Description

A Central Chapter in the de Cadenet Le Mans Story — Fifth Overall in 1977

Few privateer programmes are as closely associated with the spirit of the 24 Hours of Le Mans as that of driver-constructor Alain de Cadenet. From the early 1970s onward, his ambition was singular: to challenge the established factory teams on endurance racing's greatest stage: Le Mans 24 hours. The de Cadenet LM3, introduced for the 1977 season, represents the culmination of this determined and technically sophisticated effort, and today stands as one of the most significant survivors of the independent prototype era.

Entered on four occasions at the 24 Hours of Le Mans, the LM3 achieved its defining result in 1977, finishing 5th overall, a remarkable performance for a privately developed and operated machine competing against major manufacturer programmes. The car was driven by its creator himself, reinforcing its status as a genuine constructor-driver prototype and a central component of the De Cadenet legend.

The origins of the LM3 can be traced to the early 1970s, when Alain de Cadenet approached a young designer named Gordon Murray, then working at Brabham under Bernie Ecclestone. De Cadenet sought to develop a competitive endurance prototype using available components and inspired by contemporary sports-car designs such as the Ferrari 312PB.

This collaboration produced the Duckhams Special, entered at Le Mans in 1972 with the support of Duckhams Oil Motor Racing. Continuous development followed: in 1973 and 1974 the concept evolved into the de Cadenet LM; in 1975 performance continued to improve, with Chris Craft setting the fastest lap of the race; and in 1976 a revised design by Len Bailey delivered a breakthrough result of 3rd overall at Le Mans. By 1977, the De Cadenet team had accumulated five years of engineering knowledge and race experience. The LM3 would embody the most advanced expression of that development.

Introduced in 1977, the LM3 represented a comprehensive refinement of the previous chassis, with particular emphasis placed on aerodynamic efficiency and high-speed stability. The chassis consisted of a lightweight aluminum monocoque structure clothed in fiberglass composite bodywork. Wind-tunnel testing at MIRA, supported by Motor magazine, delivered measurable improvements in performance. Period reports recorded a maximum development speed of approximately 228 mph (366 km/h), while the car achieved approximately 330 km/h on the Mulsanne Straight at Le Mans. The bodywork, designed by Len Bailey, demonstrated the effectiveness of systematic aerodynamic development—an impressive achievement for a privateer operation.

The LM3 made its competitive debut at Le Mans in 1977 under the designation De Cadenet T380 LM. In a field that included factory-backed entries from major manufacturers, the car delivered a disciplined and reliable performance, ultimately securing

5th place overall. This result established the LM3 as one of the most successful privately constructed prototypes of its era.

For the 1978 running of Le Mans, the LM3 was sold to Peter Lovett and entered under the John Cooper banner. Although the car demonstrated competitive pace during qualifying, it ultimately did not start the race and was listed as first reserve. In 1979, the car returned with further mechanical and aerodynamic refinements, but a sequence of issues—including starter, gearbox, and alternator failures—led to retirement during the night.

Following a change in ownership to Nick Faure, the LM3 again appeared at Le Mans in 1980. Although positioned as the first reserve after qualifying, it was not called to the starting grid. In 1981, the car returned once more to the Le Mans grid under Dorset Racing, but a broken gearbox casing forced retirement, marking its final period appearance at the event.

In October 1983, the car was acquired by Hugh McCaig as part of an initiative to revive the historic Ecurie Ecosse name in modern endurance racing. To comply with contemporary regulations, the chassis was extensively modified and reborn as the Ecosse C284, competing at the 1984 edition of the 24 Hours of Le Mans. Although the car retired after six hours, this programme formed an important chapter in the vehicle’s continuous competition history.

Following this period, the McCaig family retained the car and undertook a comprehensive restoration programme. The decision was made to return the chassis to its original 1977 configuration—the specification in which it achieved its landmark Le Mans result. Remaining within the same family stewardship for more than four decades, the LM3 benefited from unusually long and stable custodianship for a competition prototype of this type.

More recently, the restored LM3 returned to competition at the 2023 Le Mans Classic, demonstrating both reliability and competitiveness in modern historic racing conditions. Powered by a Ford Cosworth DFV engine prepared by G. Richardson, the car remains a highly credible entrant for top-tier historic events, including Le Mans Classic and Classic Endurance Racing 2.

The 1977 de Cadenet LM3 is not merely a surviving race car; it is a direct expression of the independent engineering ambition that defined endurance racing in the 1970s. With four Le Mans entries, a documented 5th overall finish in 1977, continuous competition history, long-term family ownership, and proven historic-racing capability, it stands among the most important and compelling privateer prototypes of its generation.

Current Condition, Equipment and Documentation
The car is presented in fully race-ready condition and prepared to current historic competition standards. The Ford Cosworth DFV engine has just undergone a full rebuild by Geoff Richardson and is at zero miles since completion. The gearbox has likewise been freshly rebuilt and is also at zero miles. Crack test has been done this year so valid for another 2 years.

In addition to its mechanical readiness, the car is supplied with a comprehensive and highly valuable spares package, including two and a half sets of wheels, an engine pre-heater, various gear ratios, and a full set of spare and original bodywork.

The car is located in England and is accompanied by an extensive history file and current FIA Historic Technical Passport (valid until 2033), ensuring eligibility for all leading historic competitions. It is also supplied with a period UK V5 registration document.

Technical Specification	
Constructor	De Cadenet
Model	LM3
Year	1977
Category	Group 6
Production	One-off
Chassis	Aluminium monocoque
Body	Fibreglass
Engine	Cosworth DFV V8
Displacement	2,993 cc
Power	~480 bhp
Gearbox	Hewland DG300, 5-spd
Drive	RWD
Suspension	Independent. double wishbones
Brakes	Ventilated discs
Steering	Rack & pinion
Weight	~700 kg
Top Speed	~330 km/h

History

Ownership History

1977 – 1978 Alain de Cadenet *(constructor / entrant)*

- Car built and campaigned by De Cadenet
- Achieved 5th overall at the 1977 24 Hours of Le Mans.

1978 – 1980 Peter Lovett *(entrant: John Cooper)*

- The LM3 was sold to Peter Lovett ahead of the 1978 Le Mans event.
- Entered under the John Cooper banner.
- DNS at Le Mans 1978
- Entered as Lola T281 SG with DNF at Le Mans 1979

1980 – 1983 Nick Faure *(entrant: Dorset Racing)*

- Purchased from Cooper approximately three months before the 1980 Le Mans race.
- Entered at Le Mans in 1980 (DNS) and again in 1981 (DNF)

October 1983 – McCaig family

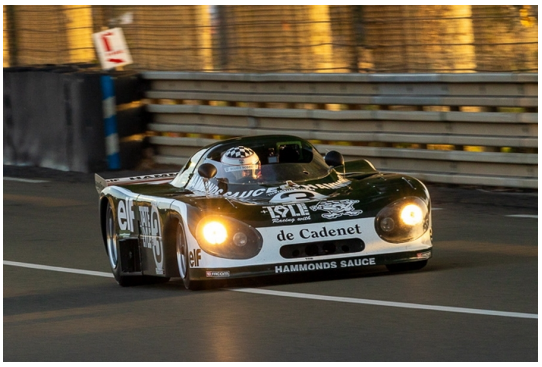
- Car converted into Ecosse C284 to comply with Group C2 regulations.
- Entered Le Mans 1984 (DNF – accident)
- Car retained by the family
- Full restoration undertaken to return the car to its 1977 Le Mans configuration
- Participated successfully at Le Mans Classic 2023
- Continuous family ownership from 1983 to present (over 40 years)

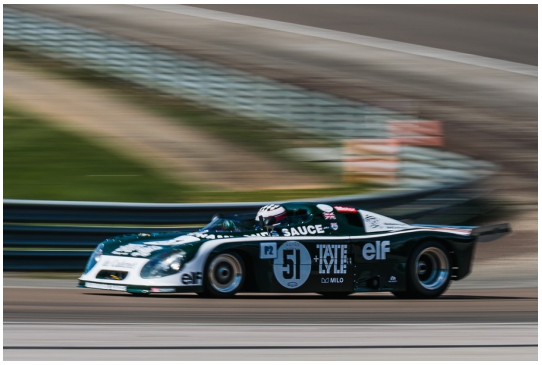
1977 - de Cadenet LM3

Competition History – De Cadenet LM3

Year	Event	Entrant / Owner	Drivers	Configuration	Grid / Status	Result	Notes
1977	24 Hours of Le Mans	Alain de Cadenet	Alain de Cadenet / Chris Craft	De Cadenet T380 LM	Qualified	**5th Overall**	Debut of LM3; best career result
1978	24 Hours of Le Mans	John Cooper (for Peter Lovett)	Cooper / Evans	De Cadenet LM3	1st Reserve	Did Not Start	13th time in Group VI qualifying
1979	24 Hours of Le Mans	John Cooper	—	Lola T281 SG (entry name)	Started	Retired	Starter, gearbox bracket and alternator failures
1980	24 Hours of Le Mans	Nick Faure	—	De Cadenet LM3	1st Reserve	Did Not Start	Replacement decision by ACO
1981	24 Hours of Le Mans	Dorset Racing	Nick Faure / Martin Birrane / Vivian Candy	De Cadenet LM3	Started	Retired	Broken gearbox casing
1984	24 Hours of Le Mans	Ecurie Ecosse	—	Ecosse C284 (converted from LM3)	Started	Retired	Retired after approx. 6 hours
2023	Le Mans Classic — Grid 6	McCaig family	Alasdair McCaig	Restored 1977 specification	Qualified	Finished races competitively	Demonstrated continued competitiveness

Pictures (For size reasons, we have limited the PDF-file to 10 pictures)





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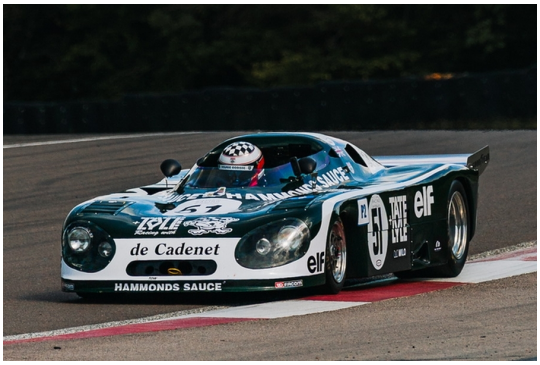

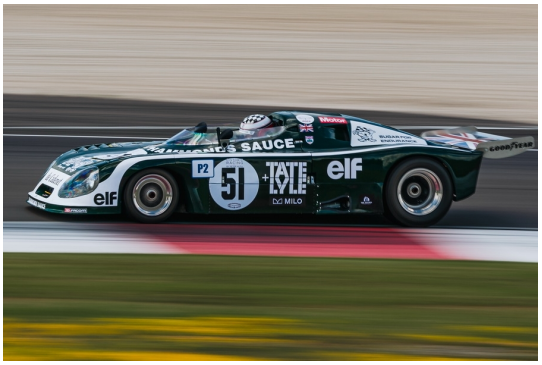

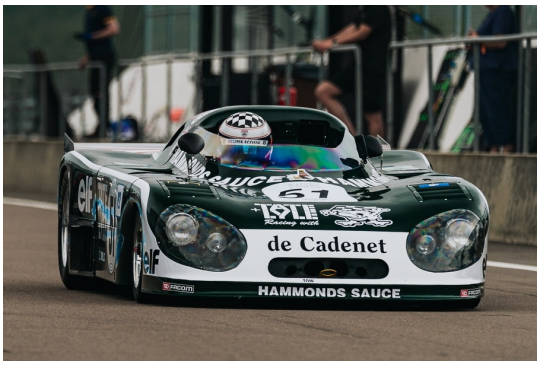

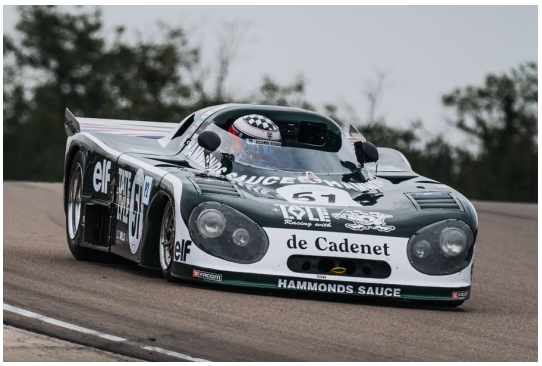

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