


CLASSIC DRIVER



1909 Mercedes-Benz

Lot sold	USD 506 695 - 720 040 GBP 380 000 - 540 000 (listed)	Lenkung	Links
Baujahr	1909	Zustand	Gebraucht
Chassisnummer	371	Standort	
Zahl der Sitze	2	Kraftstoff	Benzin
Antrieb	Zweirad	Außenfarbe	Sonstige
Losnummer	16	Motornummer	2662

Beschreibung

1909 Mercedes Simplex 35hp Roi-des-Belges Tourer

Chassis no. 371

Engine no. 2662

Perhaps the last place one would expect to find an early Mercedes once advertised as 'The Car of Kings' is at Isis Downs, an isolated sheep station in Queensland, Australia. Nevertheless, that is where this 5.3-litre shaft-drive car resided for many of its early years, serving as the Station Manager's car from 1914 and remaining on the property until the mid-1930s.

The Mercedes was constantly exposed to the harsh conditions of the Australian outback where early cars suffered numerous mechanical failures. The rough terrain would soon expose any weakness in a vehicle, with common problems including broken axles and persistent issues with the perishable Edwardian tyres and wooden artillery wheels. However, those brands whose cars were built with the quality to withstand the rigours of rural life, like Mercedes and Rolls-Royce, became favoured by wealthy landowners.

We have Emil Jellinek to thank for the existence of the 'Mercedes' marque. Jellinek, a wealthy Leipzig-born merchant, was an admirer of Gottlieb Daimler's cars and commissioned the pioneering German manufacturer to construct a new model that had to be both faster and more stable than before, backing his proposal by paying up front for 36 cars. Designed by Daimler's collaborator Wilhelm Maybach, this 5.9-litre, 35hp four-cylinder model marked the watershed between the era of the

'horseless carriage' and that of the modern motor car. Advanced features included a pressed-steel chassis, aluminium cylinder block, 'honeycomb' radiator, atomising carburettor and gate-change gearbox.

Starkly finished in purest white, Maybach's creation debuted at the Nice Speed Week on 25th March 1901. The car was owned by Baron Henri de Rothschild and driven by Wilhelm Werner, but had been entered by Jellinek under the pseudonym 'Mercedes', his 11-year-old elder daughter's name. (At this time Panhard-Levassor owned the distribution rights to Daimler cars in France, hence the need for subterfuge!). Werner drove the car to victory at an average speed of 32mph and two days later achieved a maximum speed of 53.5mph along the Promenade des Anglais, unparalleled performances that emphatically outclassed the opposition. 'We have entered the Mercedes era,' declared Paul Meyan, General Secretary of the Automobile Club de France, an astute observation that was confirmed by the number of manufacturers on both sides of the Atlantic that copied the design. Indeed, so successful was the Mercedes, that Daimler adopted the name for its passenger cars in 1902. An entire range of cars of varying capacities and power outputs followed.

The 1909 35hp Mercedes offered here retains the original's defining features but has shaft final drive (the first Mercedes was chain driven). Shaft drive had been introduced on the 2.6-litre 15/20PS model of 1905 and this advanced feature would soon be adopted across the Mercedes range. This particular car is possibly the oldest surviving shaft-driven 35hp Mercedes.

Copies of the car's commission papers, provided by Daimler-Benz, show that it was commissioned in 1908 by Mercedes-Gesell, Paris and later reserved for Du Cros, the London-based Mercedes distributor for England and the British Colonies. The final payment on the rolling chassis was made in March 1909 but its date of arrival in Australia is not known. The Mercedes arrived at the Isis Downs estate in 1914, having been acquired for the use of the newly arrived Property Manager, Mr Richard Taylor. Isis Downs belonged to Sir Rupert Clarke, 2nd Baronet of Rupertswood, and Robert Whiting, a prominent Melbourne solicitor. It is quite possible that the Mercedes had been used by either of the two men from new, prior to its redeployment on the sheep station. The car was almost certainly imported by Tarrant Motors of Melbourne, Australia's main Mercedes importer at that time, from whom Robert Whiting purchased many of the vehicles intended for Isis Downs.

In late October 1914, not long after its arrival at Isis Downs, the Mercedes was involved in an accident necessitating extensive repairs, which were carried out by Wheeler's Garage in Blackall. Photographs dating from this period show the rear brake drums' backing plates with cooling holes drilled in their circumference, and these too are still in place.

By the close of 1917, the Station Manager, Mr Cameron, had instigated a complete overhaul of the Mercedes, which ended up costing more than a new car. Isis Downs was tough on vehicles and at times the Mercedes was the only one of its cars running. Even the Mercedes was prone to the occasional failure though, and after the front axle had broken, been repaired and broken again, it was decided to have a new one made. James Flood & Co of Melbourne carried out the work.

The Mercedes remained on the property and was recorded in the Isis Downs ledgers in 1922. On 4th March 1922, Cameron wrote to Whiting: 'I believe both the Mercedes and the Daimler to be practically good as new, and far too much money has been spent on the repair and renovation of both. Watts (the station mechanic) has gone beyond himself, and I think possible beyond me, neglecting the maintenance of the working cars for the artistic upkeep of luxurious and idle cars.' Clearly, the aforementioned Watts was something of an automobile connoisseur.

In 1935, the Mercedes was purchased from Blackall Motors by Mr William Shannon, Property Manager of Paradise Downs, another sheep station. The car remained with the Shannon family and in the 1980s was sold by Peter Shannon to Ray White, who restored it with Peter's help. After its completion in 2010, the Mercedes was purchased from Ray White by the current vendor. Assuming either Clarke or Whiting to be the first owner, it has had only five from new. The car's history is recounted in greater detail in the accompanying illustrated report (perusal recommended).

The Mercedes is described by the vendor as in generally good condition and running order, the only fault notified concerning reverse gear, which does not select properly and needs adjustment.

Interestingly, the car was recorded in the Isis Downs records as having reverse gear problems as far back as October 1923! In addition to those already mentioned, other non-standard items fitted during the car's time at Isis Downs include the carburettor, fan blades, steering wheel and radiator. At time of writing a replacement radiator to original specification is being made at the Vintage Car Radiator Company in the UK and should be ready before the sale. A wonderful opportunity to acquire an interesting early Mercedes possessing a fascinating history.

Bonhams 1793

Bonhams

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