


CLASSIC DRIVER



1968 Bentley T I

Lot sold	USD 226 784 - 266 804 GBP 170 000 - 200 000 (listed)	Lenkung	Links
Baujahr	1968	Zustand	Gebraucht
Chassisnummer	CBH 4033	Standort	
Zahl der Sitze	2	Kraftstoff	Benzin
Antrieb	Zweirad	Außenfarbe	Sonstige
Losnummer	14	Motornummer	4033

Beschreibung

Unique prototype originally owned by Lord Hanson; 21,294 miles from new

1968 Bentley T-Series 'Coupé Speciale'

Coachwork by Pininfarina

Registration no. BGC 225G

Chassis no. CBH 4033

Engine no. 4033

In the between-the-wars decades, bespoke coachwork was the norm on high quality chassis, but after WW2 the motor industry's wholesale switchover to unitary construction of the chassis/body severely restricted the freedom of the few surviving coachbuilders to create unique bodies for wealthy clients. Rather, coachbuilders increasingly produced 'concept cars' for manufacturers but only rarely for individuals, some of which might eventually make it into production if favourably received.

In this context, this Pininfarina-styled T-Series Bentley is unquestionably one of the more interesting cars of its era. Known as the 'Coupé Speciale', it was the work of Paolo Martin, a gifted stylist who had started his career with Michelotti in 1960. He moved to Bertone in 1967 and the following year was appointed chief of Pininfarina's styling department where he would be responsible for innovative designs such as the Ferrari Dino Competizione and 512S Modulo, Alfa Romeo P33 and Lancia Beta Monte Carlo. There were, of course, precedents for such a car in the 'Cresta' fastback coupés styled by Pinin Farina (as it then was) in the late 1940s, approximately one dozen of which were built on the Mark VI chassis, three by Farina and nine by Facel-Métallon in France, and the unique Farina bodied Bentley R-type Continental in 1954.

The Coupé Speciale was commissioned by the wealthy British entrepreneur and motor car aficionado James E Hanson, later Lord Hanson, who first approached Sergio Pininfarina with his proposal in

1965. Interviewed by *Thoroughbred & Classic Cars* magazine (March 2000 edition) Lord Hanson recalled: 'I had met him before when I bought a Ferrari Superfast. He got quite excited about the idea and agreed to do it at cost price because he felt he would be able to persuade Rolls-Royce to use his prototype as the new Bentley Continental.'

Sergio Pininfarina's instincts would be proved correct, but not in the way that he expected, for the Coupé Speciale would turn out to be the progenitor, not of a new Bentley Continental, but of the Rolls-Royce Camargue, its resemblance to which is unmistakable. Hanson had given Pininfarina free reign, telling *Classic Cars*: 'I just said to them, do it as if you are doing a Ferrari it's your car so put your signature on it.' He viewed the wooden mock-up in Turin, suggested a few alterations, specified a black leather interior and settled on the exterior colour: a deep green that looks black in most lights. There are indeed traces of Pininfarina's work for Maranello in the Bentley: its tapering roofline (reminiscent of the contemporary 365GT), circular rear lights, slender seats and delicate interior fittings all being typically Ferrari. Pininfarina also lowered the radiator, taking care not to depart too far from the original style and risk upsetting Rolls-Royce.

'To have stepped up into this cabin and gone motoring in the late Sixties and Seventies must have been a wonderful experience,' observed *Classic Cars*' Martin Buckley. 'Here was a generously dimensioned four-seater gran turismo cast in the role of a Continental for the Seventies elegant, dignified and swift...'

The Coupé Speciale was exhibited on Pininfarina's stand at the 1968 Paris and London Motor Shows before Lord Hanson took delivery, via H R Owen, in May 1969 (see copy chassis cards on file). Despite his favourable deal with Pininfarina, he still paid £14,000 for the Bentley, roughly double the cost of a two-door T-Series by Mulliner Park Ward. Lord Hanson would own his unique Bentley for only a little over 10 years, telling *Classic Cars* that one of his biggest headaches was keeping the curious away from it! With his business ventures occupying more and more of his time, he found fewer opportunities to enjoy the car: "... really it was an open-road car, something you would take on the continent in the old-fashioned Rolls-Royce Continental style. Had I lived in California where you drive and drive and drive it would have been wonderful but I was only using it in London and I only took it on my holidays once the South of France, something like that. The longest I'd drive in this country would be from London to Huddersfield where my home and family businesses were."

Between 16th June 1978 and 20th November 1979, the Bentley was updated for Lord Hanson to T2/Silver Shadow II specifications by J D Barclay Ltd (Jack Barclay) with the three-speed GM automatic transmission, rubber bumpers and later-type hubcaps. The steering and suspension were revised and updated also, and the car stripped and repainted in its original colour of Brewster Green. Full details of the work are recorded on the 14-page invoice, a copy of which accompanies the car. The cost of this refurbishment totalled £20,451.82, including a full tank of petrol costing £19.54. Some time later, Hanson sold the car through Ivor Gordon of Frank Dale & Stepsons for £225,000. This was reported in the London press as "the most expensive used car ever".

In May 1989 the Bentley passed to a Japanese collector and remained in a private museum in Japan for a number of years, since when it went to the United States and has had a further four owners. The current vendor purchased the Coupé Speciale at Bonhams & Butterfields' Quail Lodge sale in August 2009 (Lot 245). It has been re-imported into the UK, taxed and reregistered with the licence plate 'BGC 225G', with which it was originally issued, prior to Hanson having his personalised plate 'JGH 1' transferred. From day one its use has been modest, with only 15,000 miles on the odometer at the time Hanson sold the car. There is therefore little doubt that the recorded mileage of 21,294 is correct.

In 2011, the exhaust system, centre prop-shaft housing and differential nose quadrant were repaired when the car was fully serviced by Padgett Motor Engineers, the noted Bentley Continental specialists. In late 2013 further repairs and restoration work was undertaken by Padgett's to the rear sub-frame. At the same time all the piping for the brakes and hydraulic systems was renewed; new shock absorbers and springs were fitted to both front and rear (with the much improved Bilstein handling kit); and the differential units and half-shafts realigned and the compliant cushion mounts, trailing arms, brakes and height pipes renewed. The major brake assemblies and height control arms

were fully restored. All hubs, brake assemblies and wheels were refitted and tested. In November 2013 a 12,000-mile service was undertaken, including the fuel and carburettor assemblies. In addition, the gearbox oil cooler was replaced, the alternator overhauled and a new battery installed.

The car is described by the vendor as in generally good original condition and wonderful to drive. It retains its original black leather interior, of which a few panels were replaced in 1978-1979, while the paintwork also dates from the refurbishment and now shows some bubbling. Accompanying paperwork includes a full archive with copies of correspondence between Rolls-Royce and Pininfarina from 1965-1968; original photographs from Pininfarina, including the body on its own in white primer; the full 1978-79 Jack Barclay invoice; and numerous other photographs and documents, including a translation into Japanese of handling instructions and the dashboard layout. Copies of the build sheet and chassis card details from the Rolls-Royce Enthusiasts' Club are included also, as are photographs and correspondence from Frank Dale & Stepsons and copies of the vehicle registration document in the name of Lord James Edward Hanson.

This unique Bentley has been extensively photographed and written about. Publications featuring it include the aforementioned *Thoroughbred & Classic Cars* (March 2000 edition); *Carros* (Holland, June 2000 edition); 'Pininfarina, Architect of Cars' by Michael Frostick; 'Bentley - The Cars from Crewe' by Rodney Steele; 'Rolls-Royce and Bentley - The Crewe Years' by Martin Bennett; 'Rolls-Royce and Bentley - The Best of British in Old Photographs' by Malcom Bobbitt; 'Cars that Time Forgot' by Giles Chapman; 'Rolls-Royce & Bentley - 60 Years at Crewe' by Malcolm Bobbitt; 'Bentley, Fifty Years of the Marque' by Johnnie Green; and 'Bentley Specials & Special Bentleys' by Ray Roberts.

The Coupé Speciale was shown at the Schwietzingen Concours in Germany in the early 2000s, the Bentley Drivers' Club and Rolls-Royce Enthusiasts' Club Concours in 2011 and 2013, and appeared at the Le Mans Classic in 2014 at the invitation of Bentley Motors. It would naturally be welcome at any similarly prestigious events in the future and will always be a talking point. Combining two legends - Bentley and Pininfarina - it would fit perfectly into a collection of either, or indeed alongside, any of the few 1940s and 1950s Bentleys that share this connection. The Coupé Speciale predates Bentley's 1980s re-branding as a sporting marque but nevertheless may be seen as a fascinating 'might have been', had Rolls-Royce taken the decision to revitalise its sister marque sooner.

Bonhams 1793

The logo for Bonhams, featuring the word "Bonhams" in a large, bold, black serif font.

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