


CLASSIC DRIVER



1951 Bentley R Type

Lot sold	USD 1 060 991 - 1 343 921 GBP 750 000 - 950 000 (listed)	Lenkung	Links
Baujahr	1951	Zustand	Gebraucht
Chassisnummer	BC11A	Standort	
Zahl der Sitze	2	Kraftstoff	Benzin
Antrieb	Zweirad	Außenfarbe	Sonstige
Losnummer	328		

Beschreibung

The ex-Loel Guinness
1951 Bentley R-Type Continental Sports Saloon
Coachwork by H.J. Mulliner
Registration no. NME 61E
Chassis no. BC11A

'The vocabulary of motoring being a lame and limited thing, it is difficult to put into words the gulf that separates a Continental from the average car in all the qualities that have a bearing on safety at speed. In acceleration, in braking, in cornering power, in roadholding, in responsiveness to the controls, this Bentley is the equal of modern racing cars, and superior to some.' Raymond Mays, The Autocar, 2nd October 1953.

Described by The Autocar as, 'A new stage in the evolution of the post-war Bentley,' the magnificent Continental sports saloon has been synonymous with effortless high speed cruising in the grand manner since its introduction in 1952 on the R-Type chassis. Of all-welded construction, the latter enabled the incorporation of a much-needed improvement to Rolls-Royce's standard bodywork in the shape of an enlarged boot together with associated changes to rear wings and suspension. The standard R-Type was a lively performer, achieving 106mph in silence and reaching 50mph from standstill in 10 seconds despite a kerb weight approaching two tons.

The Continental raised this already superlative combination of high performance and exceptional

refinement to hitherto unattained levels. Unlike the ordinary 'standard steel' R-Type, the Continental was bodied in the traditional manner and first appeared with what many enthusiasts consider to be the model's definitive style of coachwork - the lightweight, aluminium, wind tunnel-developed fastback of H J Mulliner. In developing the Continental, Bentley Motors made every effort to keep its weight to the minimum, knowing that this was the most effective way to achieve the maximum possible performance.

Rolls-Royce's six-cylinder, inlet-over-exhaust engine had been enlarged from 4,257cc to 4,556cc in 1951, and as installed in the Continental benefited from an increase in compression ratio - the maximum power output, of course, remained unquoted but has been estimated at around 153bhp. As the Continental matured, there was inevitably an increase in weight, which was offset by the introduction of a 4,887cc engine on the 'D' and 'E' series cars, commencing in May 1954. The Continental's performance figures would have been considered excellent for an out-and-out sports car but for a full four/five seater saloon they were exceptional: a top speed of 120mph, 100mph achievable in third gear, 50mph reached in a little over 9 seconds and effortless cruising at the 'ton'.

Built for export only at first, the Continental was, once delivery charges and local taxes had been paid, almost certainly the most expensive car in the world as well as the fastest capable of carrying four adults and their luggage. 'The Bentley is a modern magic carpet which annihilates great distances and delivers the occupants well-nigh as fresh as when they started,' concluded Autocar.

The eleventh example completed, right-hand drive chassis number 'BC11A' was ordered for use in France by Mrs Loel Guinness and delivered via Franco-Britannic Automobiles. Born Gloria Rubio y Alatorre in Mexico, Mrs Guinness was the third wife of Thomas Loel Guinness, an MP and member of the eponymous brewing dynasty, though his branch of the family had made its fortune in banking and real estate. Known as 'Glorious Gloria', she was a well-known socialite and fashion icon. Dressed by the great European fashion houses, Gloria was photographed for Vogue, featured on the International Best Dressed List, and acted as a contributing editor to Harper's Bazaar. Loel Guinness was her fourth husband. Gloria Guinness died in Switzerland in November 1980, and many of her fabulous clothes now form part of the Victoria & Albert Museum's collection.

In January 1955, the Continental passed (via Franco-Britannic) to its second owner in France, ONE Lemaigre Dubreuil. Franco-Britannic also handled the sale of the Bentley to its third owner, one M Rambuteau, who acquired it in June 1964. In September 1967, 'BC11A' returned to the UK when Jack Barclay sold the car to its fourth owner, Guy May. The car subsequently passed through the hands of three more UK-based owners Richard Seys, J Evan-Cooke, and J Gurney respectively before passing into the ownership of the current vendor's family in November 1978 (purchase receipt on file).

These Series-A cars are considered the most desirable because they exemplify the Continental concept in its purest, and lightest, form. 'BC11A' was ordered with lightweight seats, a Jaeger trip chronograph, and a plain radiator (no cap or mascot), and was originally finished in Tudor Grey with maroon trim.

'BC11A' has the manual gearbox and right-hand gear lever; the latter is considered to be far superior to both the steering column and central gear changes, which have the disadvantage of additional linkages resulting in less precise shifting. A published road test of the right-hand gear change on an R-Type Continental noted that the expression, 'like a hot knife through butter!' was especially apt.

In 2002, 'BC11A' attended the R-Type Continental's 50th Anniversary Celebration at Silverstone, and the following year was treated to a professional restoration of the bodywork and interior. Carried out between November 2003 and July 2004, these works included repairs to panels, a bare-metal re-spray, partial re-trim (new carpets, headlining, etc), refurbishment of woodwork, re-plating of brightwork and much more besides. Details of the works carried out are on file together with photographs of the Bentley in bare metal prior to the re-spray.

The car is offered with its original handbook, workshop manual, first UK logbook (issued 1967), various articles, assorted correspondence, and other historical documentation. Presented in running order, 'BC11A' represents a rare opportunity to acquire a fine example of the most famous post-war Bentley, possessing impeccable provenance.

Bonhams 1793

Bonhams

Titel Herr

Vorname Jamie

Nachname Knight

101 New Bond Street

London

W1S 1SR

Vereinigtes Königreich

Telefonnummer +44-02074477447

Fax +44-2074477401

<http://www.bonhams.com/auctions/24876/>

<https://www.classicdriver.com/de/car/bentley/r-type/1951/541215>

© Classic Driver. All rights reserved.