

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## 1953 Bentley R Type Continental

- Lot sold  
USD 1 058 767 - 1 155 018  
GBP 880 000 - 960 000 (listed)  
**Year of manufacture** 1953
- **Chassis number** BC8C
- **Number of seats** 2
- **Drivetrain** 2wd
- **Lot number** 10
- **Drive** LHD
- **Condition** Used
- **Location** 
- **Fuel type** Petrol
- **Exterior colour** Other
- **Engine number** BCC8
- 

### Description

1953 Bentley R-Type Continental 4½ -Litre Sports Saloon  
Coachwork by H J Mulliner  
Registration no. 365 HYL  
Chassis no. BC8C  
Engine no. BCC8

'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 example offered here right-hand drive chassis number 'BC8C' - was supplied new via Rickards Ltd of London's Park Lane to Windsmoor Ltd of Upper Grosvenor Street, W1 for the use of company founder Lionel Green. Established in 1933, Windsmoor was, and still is, a quintessentially British manufacturer of high quality ladies' clothing. The brand's slogan 'Look your best in Windsmoor' became iconic, and by the time it purchased this Bentley the company had such a profile that it was mentioned by Sir John Betjeman in his much-loved poem 'Middlesex'. In May 2011 at its Newport Pagnell auction, Bonhams sold an Aston Martin DB2/4 drophead coupé originally owned by Lionel Green, who was obviously a man of impeccable taste when it came to motor cars. The Bentley was delivered on 2nd October 1953 and originally registered 'NYF 7'. Accompanying copy chassis cards show that the Continental was finished in black with beige leather upholstery, while a dash type heater, Model 4200 radio, two fog lamps, steering column dip switch and flashing indicators are some of the many special features listed.

In April 1966 the Continental passed to its second owner, John Lansdell OBE FRSA MSIA, from whom it was purchased in 1992 by a friend, William 'Bill' Medcalf of Enfield, Middlesex. The history file contains Bill Medcalf's account of his time with the Continental, which included several trips abroad. He also states that during his ownership the interior was re-upholstered and re-trimmed; the engine and gearbox rebuilt (in 1993); the brakes and rear suspension overhauled; a cassette player and extra lights added; and a manual choke fitted.

'BC8C' passed to one J A Lang in January 1999 and on 31st August 2002 took part in the Bentley Continental's 50th Anniversary Celebrations at Silverstone. The car's next documented owner is Jean Marc Krief of Paris, who notified the change of ownership in May 2009. During Mr Krief's ownership the Continental was serviced by English Automotive Services Ltd of West Molesey and at the same time was upgraded with an alternator, electronic ignition and modern seals to the inlet valve guides (see invoice on file dated July 2012). Mr Krief also had the interior re-trimmed by R&R Quality Car Trim of Kensal Green, whose invoice for £8,718 is on file together with a current MoT certificate and V5 document. The car also comes with its original service book and owner's manual.

The current vendor purchased the car in June 2014 (purchase invoice available). Presented in beautiful condition, BC8C' represents a rare opportunity to acquire a fine example of the most famous post-war Bentley, possessing impeccable provenance.

Bonhams 1793

**Title** Mr  
**First name** Bonhams Collectors' Car department  
101 New Bond Street  
London  
W1S 1SR  
United Kingdom  
**Phone** +44-2074685801  
**Fax** +44-2074477401  
<http://www.bonhams.com>

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