
1932 Brough Superior

Stafford , 23 April

Lot sold	USD 109 392 - 164 088 GBP 80 000 - 120 000 (listed)	Condition	Used
Year of manufacture	1932	Location	
Engine number	M131039	Motorcycle type	Street
		Colour	Other

Description

From the estate of the late Frank Vague, The ex-Hubert Chantrey

1932 Brough Superior 800cc Model BS4 Project

Registration no. GY 989

Frame no. 4004

Engine no. M131039

One of only seven survivors (out of ten made)

Matching numbers

Present ownership for over 50 years

Offered for restoration

George Brough had toyed with idea of a four-cylinder motorcycle on two previous occasions, both of which had resulted in a solitary prototype, before making a more serious attempt in 1931. For this latest venture George chose an off-the-shelf power unit of proven reliability: the 747cc engine of the Austin Seven light car. Retaining the Austin three-speeds-and-reverse gearbox, this was mounted fore-and-aft in the frame and at first it was planned to use chain final drive. However, the required intermediate transmission made the machine unacceptably long, so George came up with idea of retaining shaft drive and using twin rear wheels, one either side of a central crown wheel and pinion. The wheel centres were 7½" apart which, fortunately, meant that as far as the taxation authorities were concerned the machine still qualified as a motorcycle, albeit one much better suited to sidecar duties than solo riding.

Tests of the first prototype revealed that the Austin engine's 13bhp maximum output made for unacceptable poor performance, and so the second machine incorporated an engine bored out for a capacity of 797cc and fitted with an alloy high-compression cylinder head and a more 'sporty' camshaft. Two radiators were provided for the water cooled Austin engine, their bulbous header tanks blending into the front of the fuel tank to maintain the traditional Brough look, though a more conventional arrangement was adopted for the production models. Castle forks were standard equipment, and it is worth noting that Brough's patented easy roll-on centre stand made its first appearance on the new Four, which was announced to an astonished public in November 1931. Following the Four's debut at the Olympia Motor Cycle Show, George Brough's friend Hubert Chantrey rode the show model, as a solo, in the London-Exeter Trial in December '31, an account of which appeared in *Motor Cycling* (13th January 1932 edition). At the end of the article, Chantrey stated that he had ordered one of the Brough Fours.

Highly unusual in retaining its original engine, '4004' was despatched to Hubert Chantrey on 20th March 1932 in solo form, though he did not register the machine, as 'GY 989', until July of that year. Why was there a four-month delay in registration? Possibly because '4004' had been ridden initially on 'borrowed' numberplates, a practice the works frequently indulged in despite its illegality.

It is assumed that '4004' is the Brough ridden by Chantrey in the MCC's Land's End Trial in 1932, run over the Easter weekend. Although he climbed all the most difficult hills and completed the course, he received no award, having finished outside the time limit at the Taunton checkpoint. That summer, Chantrey entered the Four (as a motorcycle combination) in the MCC's London-Edinburgh Trial. In the event, he non-started as a protest against cars being allowed to precede motorcycles. Chantrey was killed in an air crash in 1933; 'GY 989' then disappears from the Brough Superior records, reappearing circa 1947 in the ownership of Les Dunster of Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey. Dunster fitted an Ariel front wheel and telescopic forks, and three years later part-exchanged the Brough against a BSA Golden Flash at the famous dealership Comerfords of Thames Ditton, Surrey. Comerfords used 'GY 989' to haul their box-sidecar 'float', and some time later sold it to Mr E J Sheridan of Forest Gate, London E7.

In 1958, while still owned by Sheridan, 'GY 989' was featured in an article in *Motor Cycling* by John Griffith, at which time it was still attached to a sidecar and fitted with the Ariel front end; it also had a Solex carburettor. The Brough was last taxed by Sheridan on 24th March 1958.

Circa 1959, 'GY 989' passed to Brough Club member J Cornwell, an RAF sergeant of Minster, Kent, who fitted it with the correct Castle forks and corresponding front wheel, and also replaced the original radiators. Photographic evidence shows that at this time the Four was fitted with a Brough Superior AGS petrol tube sidecar chassis, with Cruiser body, taken from another Brough. 'GY 898' was advertised for sale on 21st August 1961, and is believed to have been purchased by Frank Vague in 1963. It is possible Frank bought it from Matthias, a scrap dealer at Lopscombe Corner on the A30 between Salisbury and Stockbridge, which is not far from his St Mary Bourne home. The Brough Club has a reliable report of a BS Four seen at the scrapyard in the early 1960s, and it seems most unlikely that there were two in the same locality. It is worth noting that of the seven surviving Brough Superior Fours (out of ten made) only three, 'GY 989' being one of them, retain their original engines.

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