
1938 Brough Superior

Lot sold	USD 20 233 - 33 722 GBP 15 000 - 25 000 (listed)	Drive	LHD
Year of manufacture	1938	Condition	Used
Chassis number	500/1	Location	
Number of seats	2	Fuel type	Petrol
Drivetrain	2wd	Exterior colour	Other
Lot number	326		

Description

1938 Brough Superior 4½-Litre V12 Sports Saloon

Coachwork by Charlesworth

Registration no. FAU 999

Chassis no. 500/1

It was surely inevitable that a company whose products had earned the well-deserved sobriquet 'The Rolls-Royce of Motorcycles' would eventually turn to the manufacture of motor cars. George Brough's motorcycles were assembled from the finest available proprietary components, and he adopted the same approach to motor manufacturing, using the Hudson Terraplane chassis also favoured by Railton in both 4.2-litre eight-cylinder and 3.5-litre six-cylinder forms. Birmingham-based coachbuilder W C Atcherley had bodied Brough's first Meadows-engined prototype of 1933 and Charlesworth was duly commissioned to provide the bodies for his latest venture.

Threatened with legal action by Railton's aggrieved founder, Noel Macklin, Hudson was soon forced to stop supplying the eight-cylinder chassis to Brough, leaving George with a six-cylinder range only. Despite this setback, George had not given up the idea of producing the ultimate sporting luxury car. For his new venture he chose the smaller (4½-litre) of the two Lincoln Zephyr V12 engines available, although on this occasion the chassis was to be Brough's own, drawn up by George's long-time collaborator, engineer Harold 'Oily' Karlake. Its side members excepted, the chassis was made at the Brough works and assembled using arc welding, believed a 'first' for the British motor industry.

No rivets were used in its construction.

For the V12's body, George turned to Charlesworth, suppliers of coachwork to Alvis, the firm regarded as Brough's principal rival. An early example of 'razor edge' styling (designed by George Brough himself), the long, low body was fronted by a distinctive angular radiator grille and blessed with a particularly generous boot. In an article penned for Veteran and Vintage magazine (copy on file), Harold Karlake states that 'the seating was to be as roomy and comfortable as possible, ample leg room, easy of access, good headroom, and above all excellent visibility all round. All seats within the wheelbase, and ample luggage space'. The chassis was priced at £850 and the four-door saloon at £1,250.

In his definitive book on the marque, 'Brough Superior The Complete Story', Peter Miller states that three V12 chassis were laid down but only one car is known to have been completed pre-war. Photographs exist of this car carrying two different registrations: '297 AU' and 'FAU 999', the former being a Brough 'factory plate' and the latter the one it was sold with. In a letter on file, Harold Karlake confirms that the V12 Brough was a 'one off'.

Of the V12's performance, Karlake observed that 'no vibration whatever could be felt from the power unit, and the only indication that the engine was running was the green jewel on the dash indicating pressure in the oil circuit', while 'the extreme rigidity of the chassis frame and the flexible mounting of the body on the sides of the chassis ensured absence of and body noises of any sort'.

The earliest registration document in the history file is an old-style buff logbook issued in May 1949, listing the owner at that time as one Thomas Hitchon of Grange-over-Sands, Lancashire. He was followed (in 1951) by Thomas Cogswell MBE, who kept the Brough until 1966 when it was sold to John Dyson of the Railton Owners Club (purchase receipt and correspondence on file). Also on file is a letter from George Brough to Mr Cogswell stating that he remembers the latter taking delivery of 'FAU 999' so, presumably, it passed from Hitchon to Cogswell via the Brough works. George also confirms that it is the only car of its kind ever produced. The history file also contains numerous other letters; a quantity of (copy) technical literature; a selection of period photographs; sundry invoices; old V5 registration documents and expired MoTs; and a copy of The Autocar featuring a review of the Brough V12.

The present owner purchased the V12 from John Dyson in August 1976. At that time, the car had been completely dismantled mechanically, and the engine was thought to be irreparable. Fortunately, the owner was able to obtain a new short block engine from France where it had been buried in its crate during the war to prevent it falling into German hands. The Brough's mechanicals were rebuilt over a period and gradually reassembled.

Initially, the car was plagued with overheating problems, but a greatly enlarged radiator, specially made to fit all the available space, solved this problem with no outward change to the car's appearance. The vendor was then able to drive the Brough to Brooklands and back on a fairly warm day with no problems.

The car is offered for sale from long-term storage of some 25 years, and it is expected that it will have been got running by time of sale. Nevertheless, further re-commissioning will almost certainly be required before it returns to the road.

Bonhams 1793

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