


CLASSIC DRIVER



1928 Bentley 4 1/2 Litre - Le Mans Replica

Le Mans Replica

Price	Price on Request	Drive	RHD
Year of manufacture	1928	Interior colour	Green
Number of seats	2	Condition	Used
Drivetrain	2wd	Location	
		Fuel type	Petrol
		Exterior colour	Green
		Car type	Convertible / Roadster

Description

If there is one car that embodies the spirit of British motoring achievement from the 'Roaring Twenties' then that is the Bentley 4½ Litre. Establishing its reputation at the arduous Le Mans 24 hour endurance race, it has become a motoring icon and recognised the world over. A good 4½ is a great all-rounder and will serve faithfully as Tourer, Sports car, Racing car and Rally car. It will also always draw a crowd in the pub car park. 658 were built on during the six years between 1927 and 1931 and at that time the price of a new car with open coachwork was about £ 1,300 which is remarkable when you consider that the average house price at that time was about £ 200. With four valves per cylinder and an overhead cam shaft it was one of the fastest and finest cars on the road. This car was built in 1928 and the original Bentley archives record that it was not a private order but built for stock. In these instances the company would choose the most saleable body and not surprisingly chose to copy the 1928 Motorshow car which was a Sports Tourer by Vanden Plas that featured the long bonnet as used on the racing cars of the day. This is confirmed by the Vanden Plas build sheet that states "As Show Job" and "Bonnet 6 inches longer than standard".

The first owner was a Mr. Russell Smith of Burnham, Buckinghamshire but by 1937 the car was in the hands of motoring enthusiast Dick Wilcox who that year entered the car in the 12 Hours Sports Car Race at Donington. Driving with his friend, David Steele they finished 23rd overall but second in class behind Prince Bira in a Delahaye.

There is a wealth of period photographs and written accounts of the race and David Steele even appeared in newspaper articles in 2002 when aged 85. At the time he commented that the car was requisitioned by the authorities during the war although it appeared in the 1940 feature film "Over the Moon", starring Rex Harrison and Merle Oberon. Perhaps this was considered 'war work' but in any case it appeared in private hands again in 1946 when it was re-registered FER 134.

The car had three further owners before 1956 when it passed into the long term custodianship of Robin Shrimpton who kept the car for over 50 years, only selling in 2007. Shrimpton kept a log from the date he acquired the car detailing his activities and amazingly this is still with the car. He had Hoffmann and Mountfort shorten the chassis to 9 foot 9½ inches in 1963 emulating the Tim Birkin race specification. The log records improvements and repairs along with trips undertaken and changes of government. In 1985 he commissioned Excel Engineering to fit a Birkin style Le Mans body which appropriately retained the long bonnet, and this is still fitted today. In 2007 the car benefitted from an NDR engine rebuild with Phoenix crank and rods and these are complimented by a John Ambler replacement block that is dated 1996. The numbered crankcase and gearbox are original and correct. In addition the car has a modern overdrive and a fuel system that can be operated by electric pump or autovac, a combination that makes for an ideal rally car.

The current owner has had the car for just over 10 years and he re-instated the original registration number and is reluctantly selling as a recent house move leaves him short of garaging.

To sum up this is a very attractive short chassis Birkin spec Le Mans style Bentley, with Vanden Plas heritage, long bonnet, Pre-War Race history, matching number chassis, engine, gearbox, steering box, front axle and registration. It has a rebuilt engine with overdrive and servo brakes and comes with a weighty history file and fully known provenance.

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