

---

## 1934 Bentley 3 1/2 Litre

---

Lot sold	<b>USD 230 978 - 312 500</b> GBP 170 000 - 230 000 (listed)	Drive	LHD
Year of manufacture	1934	Condition	Used
Chassis number	B125BL	Location	
Number of seats	2	Fuel type	Petrol
Drivetrain	2wd	Exterior colour	Other
Lot number	244		

### Description

---

Offered from the Bursville Collection  
1934 Bentley 3½-Litre Open Tourer  
Coachwork by Vanden Plas  
Registration no. not UK registered (see text)  
Chassis no. B125BL

"One's impression, when seeing the new 3½ litre Bentley for the first time, is that here we have an absolute thoroughbred. Its low build, its graceful lines, and yet sturdy appearance, all make for a car capable of high speed, combined with the utmost safety and comfort. This impression was intensified when I had an opportunity of handling the car under very adverse road conditions." - Sir Malcolm Campbell, writing in *The Field*.

Although Rolls-Royce's acquisition of Bentley Motors in 1931 robbed the latter of its independence, it did at least ensure the survival of the Bentley name. Launched at Ascot in August 1933, the first of the 'Derby Bentleys', as they would come to be known, continued the marque's sporting associations but in a manner even more refined than before. Even W O Bentley himself acknowledged that the 3½-Litre model was the finest ever to bear his name.

Based on the contemporary Rolls-Royce 20/25hp, the 3½-Litre Bentley was slightly shorter in the wheelbase and employed a tuned (115bhp) twin-SU-carburettor version of the former's overhead-

valve six. Add to this already remarkable package a four-speed synchromesh gearbox and servo assisted brakes, and the result was a vehicle offering the driver effortless sports car performance in almost absolute silence. "...the ability to traverse the rapidly crowding roads of Great Britain in less time, and with less effort, were points strong in its favour" observed Johnnie Green in Bentley, 50 Years of the Marque.

'The Silent Sports Car', as it was swiftly dubbed, had few peers as a tireless long-distance tourer, combining as it did traditional Rolls-Royce refinement with Bentley performance and handling. By the time production ceased in 1937 total of 1,177 3½-Litre models had left the Crewe factory, which went on to produce a further 1,234 of the successor 4¼-Litre model before this highly successful line came to an end in 1939.

As befitted its sporting nature, the Derby Bentley was almost always fitted with owner-driver saloon or drophead coupé coachwork, the standard designs being the work of Park Ward; chassis number 'B125BL', however, was bodied by Vanden Plas as an open tourer. Founded in Belgium in the 19th Century, Vanden Plas was first established in the UK during the Edwardian period when rights to the name were acquired by motor dealer, Warwick Wright. Despite a troubled start and several changes of ownership in quick succession, the British branch eventually prospered, forging its not inconsiderable reputation by a most fortuitous alliance with Bentley, for whom it bodied some 700 or so chassis during the 1920s, including the Le Mans team cars.

'B125BL' was despatched to Vanden Plas on 9th July 1934 and delivered on 8th August '34 via Central Garage Ltd to its first owner, Mrs Kate Hollas. The Bentley's original registration was 'BGF 65', a London mark. Copy chassis cards are on file together with a factory invoice dated 31st March 1939 recording the car's sale to one J W E Banks of Crowland near Peterborough. This invoice notes that the car had been repainted black while the wheels were left red, and that it had a red leather interior. The original exterior colour appears to have been red.

There is then a gap in the recorded history of 'B125BL', which by circa 1960 was in the USA in the possession of Parker Snyder of Ohio, whose wife used it as a 'summer car'. Around 1960, the Bentley was placed in its owners' newly built garage where it remained untouched until purchased earlier this year by the current vendor, a long-standing member of the Rolls-Royce and Bentley community with a large collection of pre-war cars. Presented in 'barn find' condition, 'B125BL' represents an exciting opportunity for the dedicated Bentley enthusiast to return one of these wonderful 'Silent Sports Cars' to the road. Please note that the UK number plate in the photographs will need to be re-applied for.

## Bonhams 1793

**Title** Mr

**First name** Jamie

**Last name** Knight

101 New Bond Street

London

W1S 1SR

United Kingdom

**Phone** +44-2074685801

**Fax** +44-2074477401

<http://www.bonhams.com/motoring>

---

<https://www.classicdriver.com/en/car/bentley/3-12-litre/1934/712221>

© Classic Driver. All rights reserved.