


CLASSIC DRIVER



1935 Bentley 3 1/2 Litre - Foursome Drophead Coupé

Foursome Drophead Coupé

Price	Price on Request	Drive	RHD
Year of manufacture	1935	Interior colour	Grey
Gearbox	Manual	Condition	Restored
Chassis number	B-168-EF	Location	
Number of seats	4	Fuel type	Petrol
Drivetrain	2wd	Exterior colour	Blue
Interior type	Leather	Car type	Convertible / Roadster
		Engine number	K-4-BU

Description

Supplied new by Rossleigh Ltd. & formerly the property of William Lake & The Hon. Alan Clark, 1935 Bentley 3½-Litre Foursome Drophead Coupé
Coachwork by Barker & Co.
Chassis No. B-168-EF
Engine No. K-4-BU
Registration No. WG 3939 (UK)

The Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the ensuing global economic downturn created the demand for smaller, more economical sporting and luxury cars. Rolls-Royce had purchased Bentley Motors in 1931, but it was not until August 1933 that a new Bentley motorcar was introduced, namely the 3½-Litre model. Billed as "The Silent Sports Car" the 3½-Litre Bentley was essentially a development of the existing Roll-Royce 25/30HP model and catered for this demand admirably. Rolls-Royce had in

fact been working on the concept for some time with a prototype car code named "Peregrine" but there was no better way for them to introduce a new breed of refined sports car to the market than by using the Bentley name, a name, of course, synonymous with sporting success.

The engine of the Bentley 3½-Litre employed the same basic bottom end (sump, crankcase and monoblock six-cylinder) as the Rolls-Royce 25/30HP, but featured a re-designed cylinder head with an increased compression ratio of 6.5:1 and twin SU carburettors giving a claimed output of circa 115bhp. The engine was mounted on a shorter and lower 10ft 6in wheelbase chassis and fed power to the rear wheels through a four-speed gearbox with synchromesh on third and top. Set low and with a pretty Bentley radiator styled on the earlier models, most would argue that the "Derby" built Bentleys were, in general, much more attractive than their Rolls-Royce counterparts. Despite the refinement and less sporting credentials of the new breed of Bentleys, motor racing drivers were also impressed. Eddie Hall, having used a 3½-Litre car for the practice run of the 1934 Mille Miglia, managed to gain works support to compete in the Ulster TT where he finished a highly creditable second place and achieved the fastest lap of the race on the Ards circuit. Much like the vintage Bentleys and Rolls-Royce the 3-½ Litre Bentley was offered exclusively as a coachbuilt car with the very best coachbuilders of the time employed to cloth the cars in various types of body from saloons, to drophead coupés and tourers.

This superb Bentley 3½-Litre foursome drophead coupé is supplied with an extensive history file giving details of the ownership history from new and a comprehensive list of the service and restoration works carried out dating back to the 1950s. Copy factory records, on file, indicate that this particular car, chassis no. B-168-EF was fitted with engine K-4-BU and sent to Barker & Co to be clothed with "foursome" coupé coachwork. Famous for producing the Roi-des-Belges coachwork for the original Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost (AX 201) Barker & Co. were, as their adverts stated, the chosen coachbuilder of "H.M. the King." Thought to be one of three examples clothed in this Barker & Co. design, the coachwork is elegant, versatile and lightweight in its construction and far more delicate than most of the drophead coupé designs found on the "Derby" Bentleys. The chassis cards show that delivered on the 1st July 1935 to Lillie Hall (The Rolls-Royce showroom in Fulham) but the customer is noted as Rossleigh Ltd. of Edinburgh for their stock. The Rolls-Royce Enthusiast Club records show the first private owner of 'B-168-EF' as a Mr. R.C. Whitfield of Cheshire, with the car first registered WG 3939 on 1st September 1935.

Subsequent owners of the Bentley are listed on the R.R.E.C. records and log-books and read as follows:

C. Whitfield, Wallasey Cheshire
C.W.R. Procter, Leeds, Yorkshire
D.H. Sharp, Belruddery, Dundee
A. Norris, London
J.K. Yerbury, Sittingbourne, Kent
William "Bill" Lake, East Grinstead, E. Sussex (A collector of significant W.O. Bentley Team cars, Grand Prix Sunbeam, C-Type Jaguar and other racing models)
N. D. Higbee, Bognor Regis, W. Sussex
D. A. Higbee, London
The Hon. Alan Clark, Saltwood, Kent (Not listed on log-books)
G Starbuck (Not listed on log-books)
L. Scull, Redhill, Nottinghamshire

During Mr. Scull's ownership 'WG 3939' was treated to a major restoration by both Ristes Motor Company and Wilkinson & Son between July 1977 and June 1982. A full report of his acquisition and restoration of the car is written up in the R.R.E.C bulletin, (No. 135 November December 1982) a copy of which is on file. It is in this report that Mr. Scull notes that the body and chassis were separated at one stage, presumably with the idea of making a special from the chassis. He states that "There is a letter from Norma Higbee stating that she recollected selling the car to a Mr. Clark. The latter was, in fact, the Hon. Allan Clark, MP, who told me he had sold the car in two parts in the late 1960s, the body to Frank Dale and the chassis to an antique dealer in Harrogate." By the time Mr. Skull

purchased the car the body and chassis had been re-united and thus he was able to have the thorough restoration concluded. In 1983 the car passed to Mr. D.S. Cottell East Grinstead, Sussex, a significant figure within the Bentley Drivers' Club, who retained ownership until 2001 when it was purchased by James Tucker, the Derby Bentley Registrar for the R.R.E.C. A full list of works carried out by these owners is also contained within the history file.

The current owner purchased 'WG 3939' from Mr. Tucker in 2015. The full list of works carried out is too lengthy to list here but in more recent years it is worth noting that the engine has been fully rebuilt with a new cylinder head by Ben Smith engineering in Devon and recent servicing works carried out by Jonathan Wood of Essex are listed on numerous invoices in the file. 'WG 3939' also benefits from the fitment of a high back axle ratio, significantly improving the cruising performance and thus ease of use. It is also worth noting that your author has recently participated in a rally with the vendor in 'WG 3939' where the car performed faultlessly and effortlessly. To best describe the benefits of the car one can refer to Mr. Skull's thoughts on it where he writes "I must say that, of all the models I have driven, the Bentley is perhaps the most practical to drive under present day conditions. It is comparatively small and will accelerate responsively when called upon, and is effortless at the legal limit." Offered for sale in fine condition, this rare, well-documented and elegant Derby Bentley is a splendid example of "The Silent Sports Car" - viewing is highly recommended at our showroom.



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