
1939 Bentley 4 1/4 Litre

Lot sold	USD 199 140 - 265 521 GBP 150 000 - 200 000 (listed)	Condition	Used
Year of manufacture	1939	Location	
Chassis number	B-133-MX	Exterior colour	Other
Lot number	216		

Description

1939 Bentley 4¼-Litre Vanden Plas-style Tourer
Registration no. VSU 634
Chassis no. B-133-MX

Introduced in 1936, the 4¼-Litre Bentley chassis, developed from the preceding 3½-Litre, was the finest that the wealthy sporting motorist could aspire to. Although Rolls-Royce's acquisition of Bentley Motors in 1931 had robbed the latter of its independence, it did at least ensure the survival of the Bentley name. Launched in 1933, the first of what would become known as the 'Derby' Bentleys 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 20/25, the 3½-Litre Bentley was slightly shorter in the wheelbase at 10' 6" and employed a tuned (115bhp), twin-SU-carburettor version of the former's 3,669cc overhead-valve six-cylinder engine. Add to this already remarkable package a part-synchromesh four-speed gearbox and servo assisted brakes, and the result was a vehicle offering the driver effortless high performance in almost absolute silence. 'The Silent Sports Car', as it was quickly 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 end of the 1930s the 'Derby' Bentley had undergone a number of significant developments, not the least of which was an increase in bore size in 1936 that upped the capacity to 4,257cc, a move that coincided with the adoption of superior Hall's Metal bearings. This new engine was shared with the equivalent Rolls-Royce - the 25/30hp - and as had been the case with the preceding 3½-Litre

model, enjoyed a superior specification in Bentley form, boasting twin SU carburettors, raised compression ratio, and a more 'sporting' camshaft. Thus the new 4¼-Litre model offered more power than before while retaining the well-proven chassis with its faultless gear-change, and servo-assisted braking. Land speed record holder Sir Malcolm Campbell appreciated its formidable performance, praising the 'absolute perfection' of the Bentley's engine, handling, and braking.

It was the construction of modern highways in Continental Europe, enabling cars to travel at sustained high speeds, that had prompted the introduction of the Hall's Metal bearings and would lead eventually to the adoption of an overdrive gearbox and improved lubrication system on Bentley's peerless Grande Routière, improvements which coincided with the introduction of the 'M' series cars in 1939. Refinement, reliability, and effortless long-distance cruising (3,000 revs equates to 78mph) were hallmarks of the coveted overdrive-equipped 'M' series. Only some 200-or-so were produced during 1939 and all are most highly regarded today.

With its 4¼-litre engine and overdrive gearbox, 'B-133-MX' represents the Derby Bentley in its ultimate and most desirable incarnation. This car was originally bodied by Park Ward as a four-door sportsman's saloon and delivered new to John Mowlem & Co Ltd carrying the registration 'FYV 639'. A (copy) advertisement on file dating from 1954 shows the car with its original body and states that it had benefited from an extensive engine overhaul by Bentley Motors in 1949. A radio and heater were listed as 'extras', and the asking price for the one-owner car was £1,150.

Believed re-bodied in the 1970s (possibly by D Brockman of Reading), 'B-133-MX' spent some time in the USA as part of the James C Leake Collection, during whose custodianship the car was restored, before returning to the UK circa 1989. The current vendors purchased the Bentley at a UK auction in September '89. Driven regularly from then until 2018, attending many Bentley Drivers' Club events, the car has spent the last couple of years dry garaged due to the owner's ill health. It has been started and moved but has not been driven on the road. Careful re-commissioning is advised before further use. Always well maintained while in his enthusiast ownership, there are details of servicing and other replacement items in the intensive history file. Offered with a V5C document, this delightful Derby Bentley affords the prospect of Vintage-style fresh-air motoring combined with the mechanical refinements of the late-1930s.

Bonhams 1793

Title Mr

First name Jamie

Last name Knight

101 New Bond Street

London

W1S 1SR

United Kingdom

Phone +44-2074477447

Fax +44-2074477401

<https://www.bonhams.com>