

MARTIN CHISHOLM COLLECTORS CARS LTD

1928 Bentley 4½ Litre VdP Style Le Mans Rep



In a mews off Baker Street, London in 1919 the prototype Bentley 3 Litre engine burst into life for the first time and thus began the legend of Bentley. The first car to bear the name of W.O. Bentley made its public debut at the Olympia Motor Exhibition of the same year and in only mildly modified form this was the model that went on to become a world leader in motor racing history. Beautifully proportioned with its leather-strapped bonnet, a distinctive radiator and British Racing Green livery, the 3 Litre soon chalked up success and in the 1922 Isle of Man Tourist Trophy they finished second, fourth and fifth to take the Team Prize leading to the introduction of the TT Replica or the Speed Model as it became known.

By the middle of the decade the 3 Litre's competitiveness was starting to wane and to retain their competitive edge the company introduced the new 4½ litre model. The original 4½ utilised the effective 3 Litre's chassis, transmission and brakes, with a four cylinder engine of 100x140mm bore/stroke and retaining the 3 Litres front-end vertical camshaft drive.

The first series of 4½ Litres was launched in late 1927, following the success of the prototype car at Le Mans, where it smashed the previous lap record but was subsequently involved in a disastrous multi car pile up on the infamous White House Corner. Eloquent road tests by the motor press of the day established the new 4½ Litre as a very special Bentley with its outright victory at Le Mans in 1928 and subsequent Brooklands competition success; it quickly established itself as the worthy successor to the 3 Litre.

Specifications:

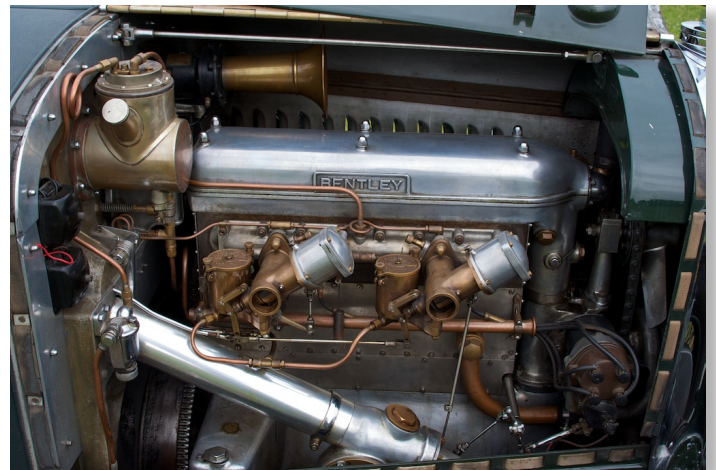
Engine: 4398cc SOHC Inline-4 with Two SU G5 Carburettors, 100 bhp @ 3500rpm.

Suspension: Semi-Elliptical leaf springs with friction shock absorbers.

Brakes: Mechanical. Self-Wrapping at the Front.

Transmission: 4-speed "C-Type" gearbox.

Wheelbase: 10' 10"



During its four years of production, the 4½ received many improvements to the original design most significantly to the gearbox and clutch, the vertical SU carburettors replaced the early 'Slopers' and for many Bentley enthusiasts, the big four-cylinder 4½ Litre with its familiar burbling exhaust, long-legged gait and whine of the straight cut gears symbolised the very best of W.O. Bentley creations. A standard Vanden Plas tourer was capable of a genuine 90mph, but 100mph was possible with Le Mans camshafts and alternative axle ratios.

Unquestionably, the W.O. Bentley fame is based upon the tremendous competition success the company achieved. The most important sports car race then and now, is the 24 hours of Le Mans, held in France every year with one or two exceptions since 1923. Genuine Le Mans team cars are extremely rare and consequently highly valued by collectors but the evocative image of the British Racing Green VDP Le Mans style Bentley has probably inspired the passion for classic cars in more schoolboys than any other motor car of the last 100 years.

Chassis number AB3363 was sold new on the 15th of December 1928 to JFC Inglefield fitted with saloon coachwork by Freestone and Webb. The next recorded owner was in 1951 Mr. J.B. Lowe who in turn sold it to Alan Padgett. Correspondence from a Mr. Padgett in the history file show that it was fitted with a well appointed shooting break body when he acquired it in the mid 1950's. He used the car as daily transport before fitting an open two-seater body for racing with the BDC (Bentley Drivers Club) and VSCC. He sold the car in 1959 to Halfway Garages on the A4 near Reading where it was purchased by The Associated British Picture Corporation for film work.

In 1961 Vintage car enthusiast Gerry Twyman heard about the Bentley being for sale and bought it from the film company. He set about the restoration with a new body in the desirable Le Mans Replica style. The restoration was finished in the early 1970's and the car won its class in the 1974 BDC Concourse at Kensington Gardens and was a regular attendee at BDC meetings for the next thirty years within the Twyman Family until its sale to George Dodds in January 2002. Purchased by Alan Eatwell in 2003, it remained in his ownership until 2007 when it passed into the hands of the previous owner.

This wonderfully presented matching numbers example, with the desirable C Type gearbox and self-wrapping front brakes is accompanied by an extensive history file with numerous bills and invoices spanning nearly 50 years. The car has had a complete engine rebuild by Bentley Specialists McKenzie Guppy and has been used lightly for rallies and tours. In 2007 the car went to marque specialist Neil Davis for some cosmetic work with invoices totalling £20,000. Since then the car has seen light use but has been thoroughly enjoyed by the current owner.

With investors moving to more tangible assets, the values of W.O. Bentleys has seen strong increases in recent years and the rise shows no signs of slowing. This example, therefore, offers a fabulous opportunity for the enthusiast and investor alike.

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