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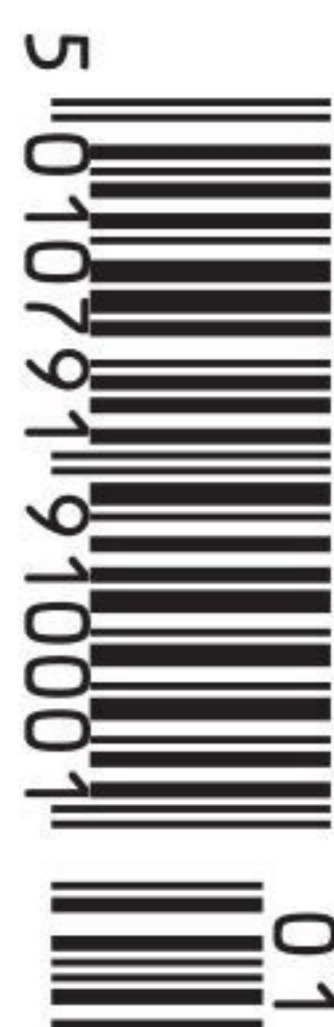
← FROM THE EDITORS OF MOTOR SPORT MAGAZINE →

BENTLEY

COLLECTORS' EDITION – FROM RACE TO ROAD



£9.99

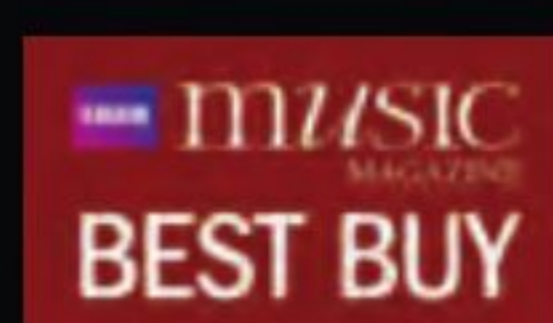


TOM KRISTENSEN TESTS A BLOWER • THE BENTLEY BOYS
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 **Christopher
Ward**

christopherward.co.uk



MOTORSPORT

WELCOME TO BENTLEY COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD

One hundred years ago it was merely one man's surname; yet the word Bentley quickly came to define the sporting car, combining performance and comfort with sophisticated engineering. Today that rich tradition continues into a new era and for almost the whole of Bentley's century, *Motor Sport* has been testing, analysing and reporting on the marque, its racing and its magnificent vehicles – we even road-tested the groundbreaking 3-litre in our very first issue in 1924.

Success on the track came immediately for Bentley, and during the 1920s the firm's racers effectively dominated that most famous of races, Le Mans. But the marque achieved something else: a unique aura of fame grew up around the characters who raced behind that winged 'B' – the legendary Bentley Boys, as often seen in the society papers as the racing magazines. In subsequent years that glamour continues to gild the story.

Collating nine decades of authoritative *Motor Sport* articles on the marque, this Collectors Edition is packed with quality photography and incisive comment on the machines, the history and the remarkable characters who created and raced these cars. Read about the penniless baronet and the millionaire playboy who dominated racetracks pre-war, the triumphant racing return in the 2000s, and the superb range on offer today, with our informed opinion on every model we've driven across a century of greatness. *Motor Sport* has been with Bentley all the way.

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To read more about Bentley's illustrious history and the drivers who have helped to forge a legend, visit:

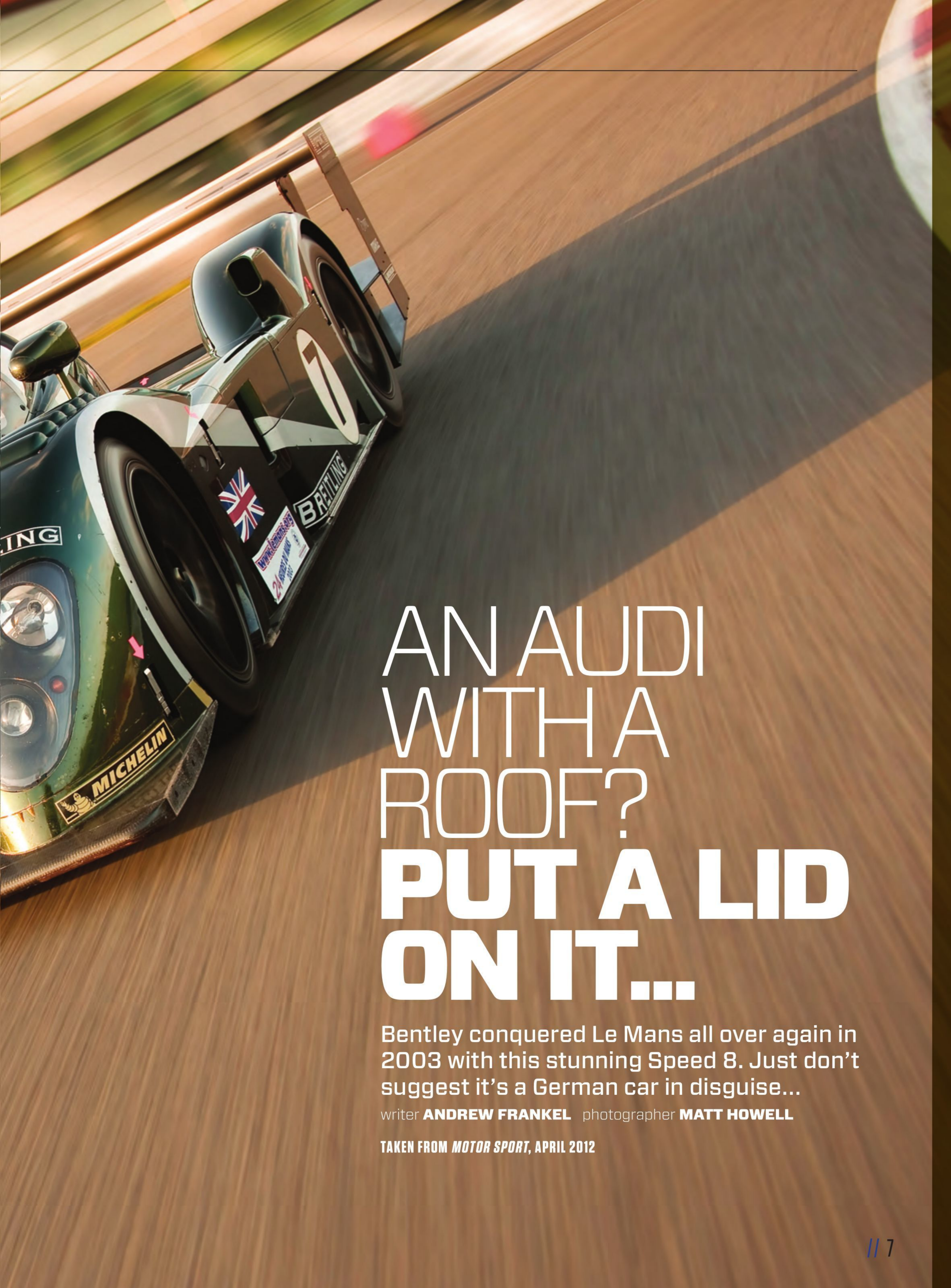
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BENTLEY

COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD





AN AUDI WITH A ROOF? **PUT A LID ON IT...**

Bentley conquered Le Mans all over again in 2003 with this stunning Speed 8. Just don't suggest it's a German car in disguise...

writer **ANDREW FRANKEL** photographer **MATT HOWELL**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, APRIL 2012



LCD readouts abound in the cabin but visibility is restricted to a letterbox view ahead plus two tiny mirrors



Frankel pauses with the Speed 8 before trying to thread himself into the cockpit's tight confines

Unalloyed triumphs are rare events. With almost every victory comes a tinge of regret, a sense not just of a job well done, but ways in which it could have been done even better. Bentley's successful three-year campaign to win the Le Mans 24 Hours at the start of this century is the perfect case in point.

The history books show that at its first attempt, in 2001, Team Bentley placed third, a podium position behind two realistically unstoppable works Audi R8s. In 2002 with just one car entered, it came fourth and once more first car home behind the factory R8s. In 2003 with only private R8s to contend with, two Bentleys entered, placing first and second. In all three attempts, amounting to well over 100 hours of racing, one car retired due to freak weather conditions, but none was ever pushed back into the pit garage for repairs. Indeed the winning Speed 8 in 2003 spent a grand total of 17 unscheduled seconds in the pits, an unparalleled achievement in the history of the race. Who could want for more?

The source of dissatisfaction is two-fold, neither being the obvious fact that Bentley didn't win every Le Mans it entered. I was in their pits for the duration of all three races and not once was there any sense that the team was punching below its weight. Indeed most of the time they exceeded every expectation. I know, for instance, that the never-communicated internal goal for 2001 was for one car to get home in the top 10. A podium was undreamt of. No, what still rankles in certain Bentley circles to this day is, first, that the team did not defend the victory in 2004 and, second, that

the perception still exists that the EXP Speed 8 (or Speed 8 as the 2003 car was known) was actually an Audi R8 with a roof.

On the first point I can remember at the time quizzing Bentley's Franz-Josef Paefgen, then chairman of Bentley and in charge of all VW's motor sports projects, about his decision not to go back to Le Mans in 2004 when it appeared clear the Speed 8s would have to do little more than turn up to be assured of a second triumph.

I remember pontificating about how no one remembers a single Le Mans win – citing BMW's 1999 victory as an example – and how as WO Bentley proved in the 1920s, if you are to derive real value from a racing campaign you need to win and win again, leaving an indelible mark on the event as Jaguar, Ford, Ferrari, Porsche and now Audi have done.

His view, expressed with impressive candour, was that I was being naïve: the purpose of the project was to help transform the image of the company ahead of the late 2003 launch of the all-new Continental GT road car, the machine that would entirely transform Bentley's business. That job had been done and millions spent not just on racing but also designing the road car and rebuilding the factory: now it was time to sell some cars and gain a return on that investment. ►

As for suggestions that the Speed 8 was an R8 coupé, genuine bafflement exists even today. “I guess we just didn’t do that great a job communicating it at the time,” says Bentley’s engineering guru Brian Gush who was instrumental in the entire project from its earliest days and, with Paefgen’s predecessor Tony Gott, probably campaigned harder and for longer than anyone to get Bentley to La Sarthe. Brian’s killer fact, which I don’t remember from any press release, is that there was more British content in the Audi than there was German content in the Bentley. “But people saw that we used an Audi engine, knew we both belonged to the same group and came to some inevitable and entirely wrong conclusions.”

A man with an even greater right to be cheesed off with this perception is Peter Elleray, the man who designed both the 2001-02 EXP Speed 8 and the all-conquering 2003 Speed 8.

“It’s just sheer bloody ignorance,” he says, still railing against the notion well over a decade later. “It’s true the R8C was designed at RTN,” he says, referring to the Audi coupé that proved completely inadequate at Le Mans in 1999 and Racing Technology Norfolk, the factory where the racing Bentleys were created. “So yes, we had that knowledge. But engine aside, there was not a single thing on the Bentley that had anything to do with the R8C or, indeed, any other Audi.”

So how did it all start? Though rumours had been flying for a while, the first the public knew that Bentley’s lifetime of waiting to return to Le Mans was shortly to end came in a release dated November 4, 2000.

Two cars would contest the race the following summer. Unlike any others in the race, they would be closed prototypes and while they’d be tested and raced by the late Richard Lloyd’s Apex Motorsports, the contract to build and develop the

*“THERE WAS MORE BRITISH CONTENT
IN THE AUDI THAN THERE WAS
GERMAN CONTENT IN THE BENTLEY*



cars went to RTN in facilities that would later house the Caterham Formula 1 team. Outwardly Bentley Motors, RTN and Apex would come together to form Team Bentley, but internally the return to Le Mans was always known as 'Project Barnato' after Bentley's former chairman and still the only man to race at Le Mans just three times, and win every one of them. The steering committee was led by Gush.

The decision to make a closed car was the result of a careful balance of attributes. On the downside it would be more complex because of the screen, wiper and door systems, it would carry more of its weight higher up, the rules mandated it had to have narrower tyres and pitstops would take longer. On the other hand, there was a larger restrictor, a smoother route for the air to take to the rear wing, and while the narrower tyres meant less mechanical grip, they impeded air flow under the car less, so this could be balanced by better aerodynamics. It

would also look nothing like an Audi R8.

There were problems from the outset. Audi couldn't supply any engines until March, so the car spent most of its development powered by a Ford DFR unit which had similar power but a fraction of the torque of the Audi turbo. James Weaver was enlisted to do all the testing but quit the team long before the race. So one car would be driven by sports car stalwarts Andy Wallace, Butch Leitzinger and Eric van de Poele, the other by none other than Martin Brundle, partnered by Stephane Ortelli and a relatively unknown youngster, Guy Smith.

The official Le Mans test went well; too well according to some. Brundle put in a lap that placed the Bentley far closer to the Audi R8s than anyone had expected, Audi included. Yet come qualifying for the actual race some weeks later, he couldn't get within 2sec of the time. Conspiracy theories abounded about the health of Audi's race engines relative to the test weekend units. ►



Despite the extra weight, Bentley chose to go the coupé route because of possible aero and engine restrictor advantages

Even so, Brundle still managed to startle everyone by leading the race at the end of the first hour: it was raining, the car running on Dunlops which had had almost no wet weather development compared to the Michelins on all the other front-runners; but some canny tyre choice by team manager John Wickham and Brundle's talents allowed Bentley, briefly, to head the field.

But euphoria soon turned to despair as the car retired with Smith at the wheel, stuck in sixth gear at Arnage. Water had got into and scrambled the gearbox actuator; worse, the second car was showing symptoms of the same problem. What happened next has become part of Bentley lore. Leitzinger got stuck in gear too, but mercifully only fourth, which allowed him, just, to get to the pits. There the actuator was changed and the water's ingress stopped by the strategic positioning of the top of a bottle of mineral water. Thereafter the car ran near-flawlessly to the flag, and third position. Richard Lloyd, among many others, shed tears of joy.

The 2002 race was one of consolidation. Bentley knew it needed a new car to keep up with the Audi R8, of which three works units were entered. So just one EXP Speed 8 took the start, crewed by the same team that had come third the year before. And once more they were best of the rest behind the works R8s, but this time that meant just fourth.

And so to the 2003 season and Peter Elleray's Speed 8. "I'd had the idea for the car a while back," he says, "but I didn't feel well enough established to stand there in the early days and state 'this is what we need'. But after the 2001/2002 cars, things were rather different. I expect we told Dr Paefgen we were going to do a comprehensive update. In fact we started again from scratch."

It was as bold as its predecessor had been conservative and it would be driven by an almost completely new set of drivers. One car would be allocated to Johnny Herbert, Mark Blundell and David Brabham (Allan McNish had been approached but had chosen not to give up his Renault F1 testing contract), the other to Tom Kristensen and Dindo Capello, on loan from the works Audi team currently on sabbatical from sports car racing. They would be joined by the sole survivor from the EXP Speed 8, Guy Smith, who'd sat out 2002 as Bentley test driver and turned down many top drives as a result. The reward for such loyalty would be as great as it was deserved.

The Speed 8s went to Sebring, the first time a works Bentley had raced in America since a car was entered into the 1922 Indy 500 and came last. In qualifying the cars destroyed the field, but still started from the back because of a technical infringement that almost certainly harmed their performance. The R8s had no such problem and fled, leaving the Bentleys too much work to do on the tight, twisting circuit. A dozen hours later they were, yet again, best of the rest in third and fourth behind the Audis. It was becoming a habit.

The story of Le Mans 2003 is swiftly told. Capello qualified the lead Speed 8 almost three seconds faster than the quickest (privateer) R8, Kristensen started the race and took a lead which the car still held 24 hours later when Smith drove it over the line to win. The second car, after a smattering of small but annoying issues, came second, three laps clear of the closest R8. ►

Flagfall at 4pm as Bentley finishes Le Mans first and second, the marque's first victory there since its magnificent 1927-30 run





Torque-laden twin-turbo 4-litre V8 is an unashamedly Audi production and offers staggering performance

Interestingly, while there was much satisfaction in the team at the victory, the scenes of wild jubilation that broke out in 2001 were nowhere to be seen: celebrations were almost muted by comparison. And it is easy to see why: that year and for the first time, Bentley had the best car, the best team – with assistance from Audi's respected Joest squad – the best drivers and little comparable competition: anything less than victory would have been defeat. In 2001 in particular, equipped with a good but not great car, the new team punched monstrously above its weight to achieve a result of

which few would have dared to dream.

And as for that much discussed return to Le Mans in 2004, while Gush would have loved to go back and at the time put forward a formal proposal to do just that, Elleray puts a different spin on the subject: "Do you know what I'd have hated? Going back in 2004 but without the likes of Tom and Dindo who were still on Audi contracts, without the best pit crew because the Joest boys had gone with them, with customer engines and a non-works tyre contract. Funnily enough I think we might still have won it,



because the Speed 8 was so good, straight out of the box. We set it up but did very little fresh development work on it. What ran for the first time in January 2003 is pretty much what won the race in June. But that was the perfect race. We could never have done any better. If you've got to stop somewhere, where better than right at the top?"

So it is to Bentley's eternal credit that it has kept the Speed 8s working and to my eternal good fortune that late last year, Gush rang and said, "Remind me how tall you are."

I'd never driven a modern sports prototype before. My first-hand knowledge of Le Mans cars logs off with '80s Group C machinery, veritable dinosaurs compared to the Speed 8 now sitting in the pitlane of the extended and transformed Stowe circuit at Silverstone. Gush and Smith are in attendance and much are amused by my flailing attempts to thread my way into the Speed 8's dark interior.

"You need to sit on the side, hold on to the roof, swing your legs over, squeeze your feet under the wheel and then shuffle your backside across," is ▶

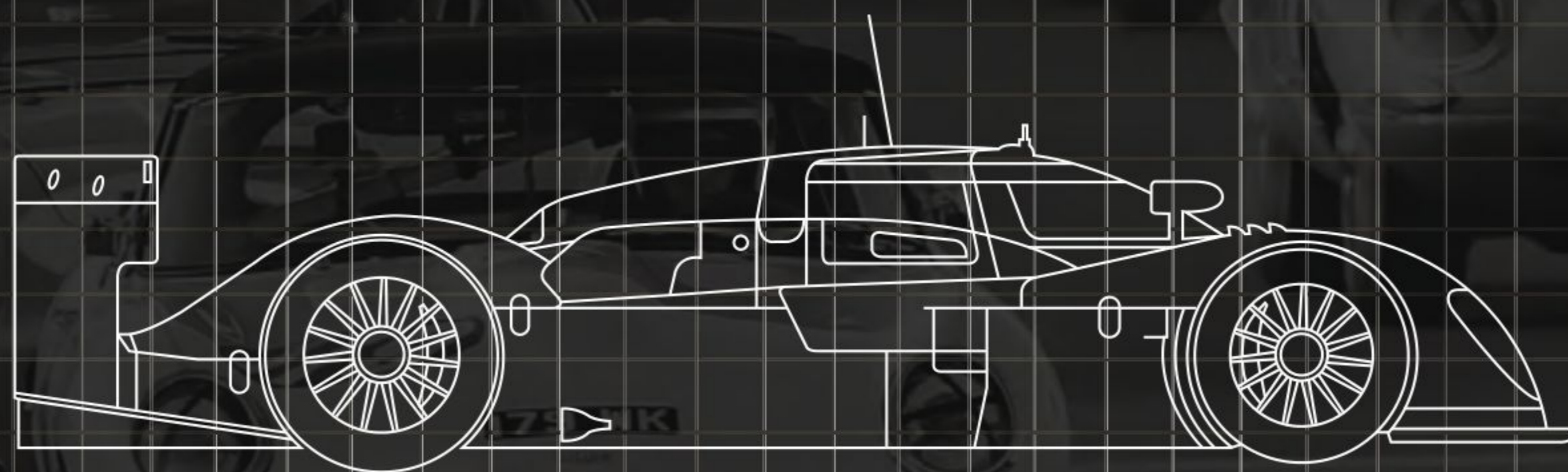
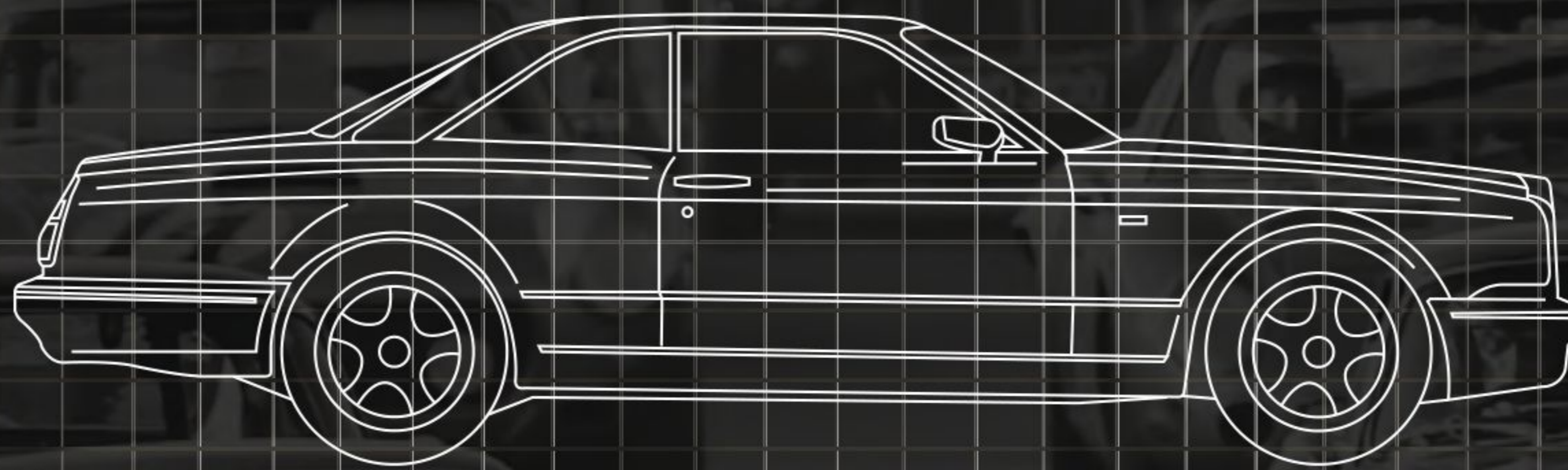
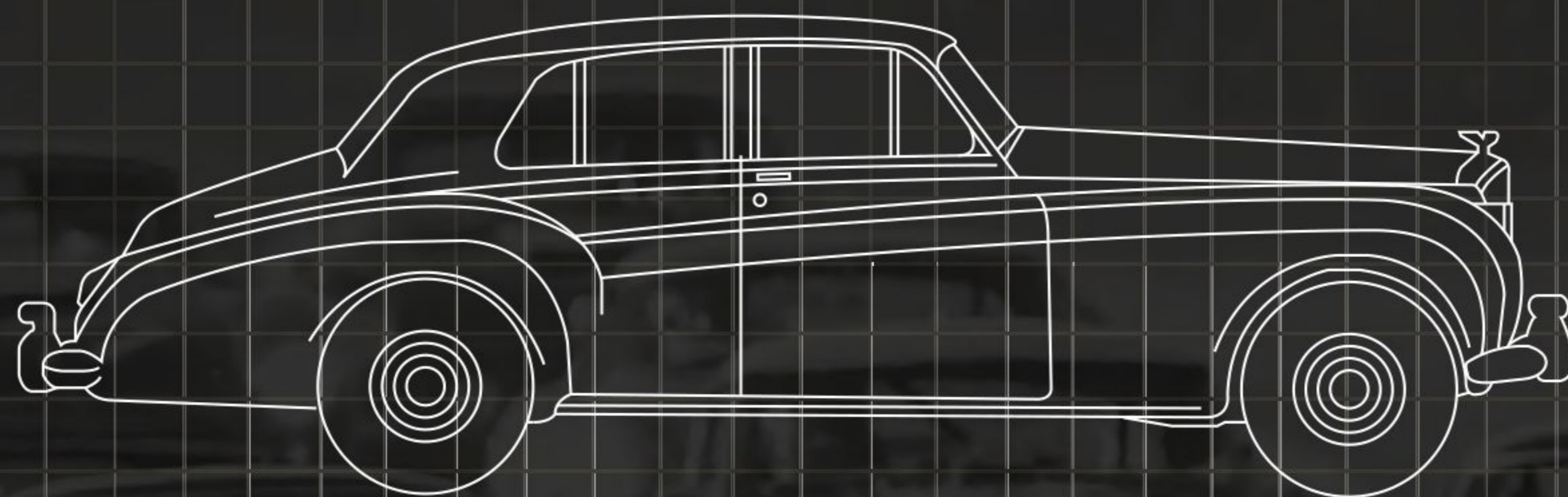
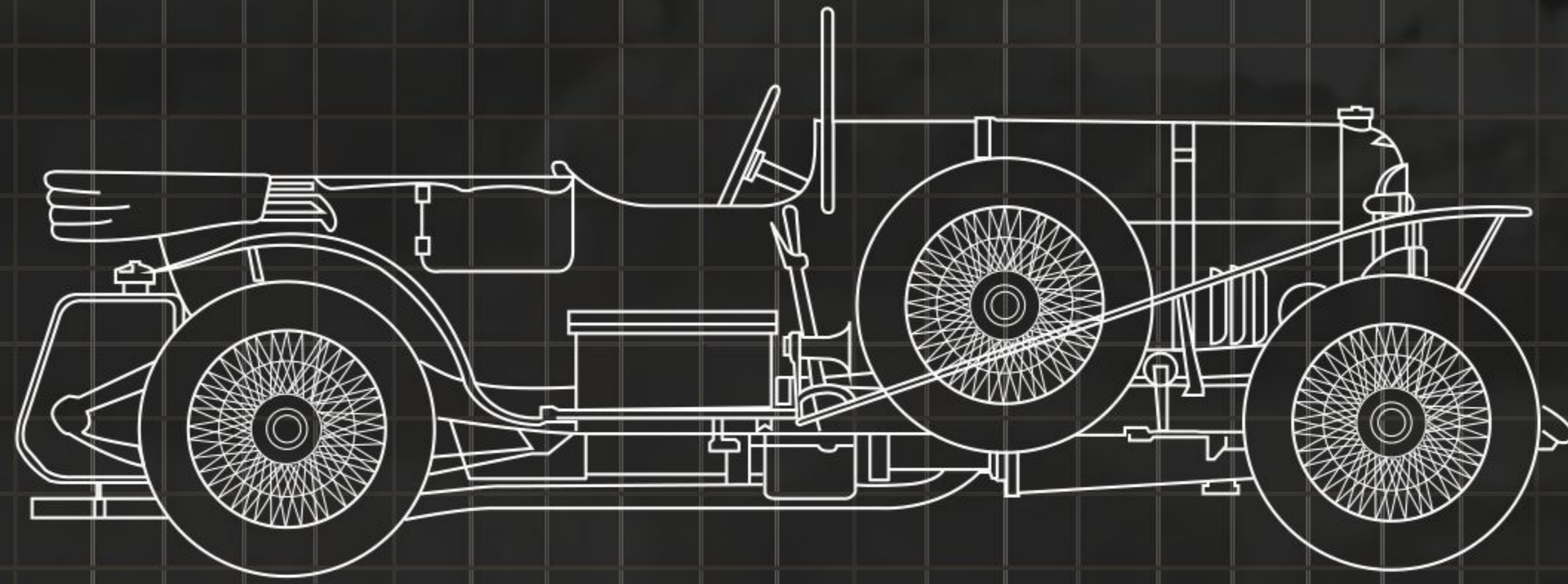


Conquering Le Mans was the Speed 8's immediate task, but the real objective was to boost the marque prior to launching the Continental GT. Job done, in style



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the advice of Ash Mason, the man responsible for running the Speed 8 today. Happily while getting in is murderous, once in place the car fits well. I'm almost comfortable.

Which is not to say it's even close to relaxed in here. Visibility is terrible – if I look straight ahead all I can see is the opaque strip at the top of the screen. Below that is a small letterbox of glass and to either side there are a couple of portholes cut in late in the car's development to allow just a trace of peripheral vision. You can see very little behind you even with the external mirrors but then I guess in a car like this anything that was behind you was likely to be staying there.

Guy leans in, keen to calm my nerves. "You're lucky you're not driving the older car," he says. "That was a pig in the cold. Jumped about all over the track. This one's very easy." To which Gush adds, "but just remember you'll have no brakes, no grip, no traction control or ABS and if the back goes, it stays gone."

He's right. The track is damp, the air temperature a degree or two above freezing. I'm grateful for a set of new intermediate tyres but in this weather I doubt I'll get meaningful heat into either them or the carbon-ceramic discs with pads so hard they'll do 24 hours without needing to be changed.

Still, Guy is adamant the car is easier and more

pleasant to drive than an R8 and he should know: he drove one to second place the year after he won in the Bentley. The key difference is that while the Audi had a 3.6-litre engine, the Speed 8 unit displaces four litres. A small restrictor means there's no more power, but it is much more driveable. Apparently.

I'm not sure why, but I expected a twin-turbo V8 in the back of a Bentley to be a smooth and silken affair. It's not: it fires up and idles angrily with all the charm of a prodded dragon. Compared to, say, a Jaguar XJR-9LM or a late Porsche 962, its 600bhp is comparatively little, but compared to most other 900kg cars, it's palpably absurd. And it has torque you would not believe. There are LCD readouts all over the place but I'm told to focus on oil and water temperature: the Speed 8's cooling system was designed to work with hurricane force air over its radiators, not for crawling around at 40mph behind a camera car. Even in these temperatures it'll do that for a lap maximum before it threatens to overheat.

And when it does there's only one thing that's going to cool it down and that's being driven fast.

Buried deep inside its cockpit and hardly able to see out, engine shouting and snarling, I find the throttle pedal is as intimidating a thing as I've stood on in a while. The performance is instant and brutal. There's no pause, no lag waiting for the boost to arrive as you do in a Group C Porsche – the Bentley just launches itself at the far end of ►



the track. Your very next thought is that those cold inters have started to spin up and the one after that is that this is very senior indeed.

Go up a gear and hope it calms down a bit. Hope in vain. This time the tyres grip properly and you feel like an innocent bystander granted brief access to someone else's vision of pure madness. There's a corner coming and I've already forgotten Brian's warning about the brakes. The pedal is as hard as the bulkhead and about as effective at slowing the car. Right now, you could be comprehensively outbraked by a child's bicycle. But there's nothing else to do except pray and when the brakes do arrive they're so strong you have to bleed off the pedal almost at once to stop the fronts locking. And they raced this for 24 hours?

Happily I've driven enough to know that almost without exception, when confronted with an apparently impossible device like this the trick is not to slow down, but speed up. Moving the car nearer the parameters in which it was designed to work, all the way from engine revs to tyre temperature, is almost bound to make it easier to drive.

And so it proves. That stupendous slug of torque becomes a friend, not an enemy. You don't need to focus on what revs you're pulling or which gear you're in because from 3000rpm onwards, the Bentley just goes. Given a full throttle upchange the paddleshift gearbox suddenly becomes miraculously smooth. Heat in the tyres means they're less inclined to spin and lock and if the back does start to move, as it very easily will with too much power too early, the car will return faithfully to your chosen line, so long as you correct and lift the instant you feel it. The next day, with me stuffed into the 'passenger seat' of a 2001 EXP Speed 8, Guy would prove it could actually be drifted.

Of course the dream would be to let it loose at Le Mans – nailing the throttle at the exit of Mulsanne, hitting some really silly numbers as you rocket down to Indianapolis and feeling the downforce sucking the life out of your neck muscles through the Porsche curves.

But even on the Stowe circuit I thought I could glimpse why the drivers loved this car so much. In its day it was the quickest sports car the world had yet devised. But it was so much more than that: when it really mattered, it was faultlessly reliable, staggeringly strong (Johnny Herbert walked away from a testing accident he described as “the second-biggest of my career”) and knee-weakeningly beautiful.

Does it matter that, engine aside, it was also British from end to end? It probably shouldn't but it does. This was a Bentley after all, and though it was designed and built by others (just like Jaguar's Group C cars) the programme was devised and developed by Bentley in Crewe. It brought inspiration to a workforce, and pride to a nation that had waited over a dozen years for a British car to win Le Mans again. ■

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INNOCENT BYSTANDER
GRANTED ACCESS
TO SOMEONE ELSE'S
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BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT

Bentley's cross-country express
reaches greater heights

writer **ANDREW FRANKEL**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, JULY 2018



Here's confidence for you: assemble a bunch of journalists at the bottom of the 8200ft Grossglockner Pass, distribute among them a small fleet of your new and rather weighty Grand Touring cars and tell them to see you at the top. The new Bentley Continental GT is not just vast in stature, it is not short of heft either: although lighter than the car it replaces, this is still 2244kg of prime British Bentley I'm about to fire up one the highest road in Austria. So you settle down in one of its enormous chairs, fire up its 626bhp 6-litre W12 motor, pull the shifter back into manual mode, pull the pin and let it go.

You notice the thrust first – it'll do 0-62mph in 3.7sec despite all the inertia it must first overcome – and then the howl of the engine and how much easier on the ear it is than the identically configured but barely related motor in the previous Continental GT.

Next you feel the gearchanges, and this is new: while the old car had its shifts slurred and slushed by a conventional automatic box, its successor sports a beefed-up Porsche eight-speed double-clutch transmission. If Sport mode is selected, not only do you get the usual thundering exhausts, stiffened suspension and sharpened throttle, you can also feel each shift being banged through, a ►



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Interior displays the air of hand-built quality that customers expect, though the marriage of tradition and technology isn't perfect

new and tactile approach I rather appreciated. Bentley delayed the launch of this car by several months to perfect the gearbox calibration, and while awkward and embarrassing in the short term, a terrific powertrain is the result and over time that will count for rather more.

So it's good in a straight line. What Bentley was not? For too many in the recent and not so recent past it's the corners where Bentleys have struggled, especially slow turns with treacherous cambers and tricky gradients to negotiate, just like those that punctuate the Grossglockner from base to summit. I remember well the frustration felt driving the very last of the old Conti GTs, the 700bhp Supersports, because its strengths when the road ran true served only to throw into stark relief its manifest weaknesses when it did not. Clearly this new Continental GT would be better, sharing as it does many of its sub-structures with the new Porsche Panamera. But would it be actually good? Could this enormous Bentley possibly rise to the immense challenge ahead and prove itself to be genuinely fun to drive?

It seemed unlikely. That mass, a 2.85m wheelbase and air springs are all ingredients you'd leave firmly in their packaging were you attempting to configure a truly rewarding driver's machine, and to expect such a device to

fulfil its touring brief as well as tackle this preposterously long and difficult climb appeared to be asking too much.

Yet despite it all, the Bentley was indeed good. Not brilliant, mind, but impressive given what it as being asked to do. It never felt light, nor in the least bit chuckable and despite Bentley's assurances it never felt inclined even to shake its hips let alone drift, but it was poised, precise and pleasurable to drive in a way the old one never was. In that moment it proved that, at least to drive, it was the best new Bentley since VW took the reins 20 years ago.

Although I have long admired the quality of every Bentley I've driven in the interim, there has always been a certain youthfulness missing from their characters, and the new Conti goes a certain distance to addressing that deficit. No one is going to find it as entertaining as an Aston Martin DB11 on this sort of road or any other, but it has more than halved the span of what was until recently a yawning dynamic chasm between them.

And then there is all the other stuff that the old Continental GT always did well, at least in its latter years. But the new one is exceptional. It is a delight to guide down a fast open road of the kind Grand Tourers are made for; that there is effectively unlimited torque underfoot will surprise no one, but the fact that its steering is better weighted and has more feel than that of the closely related Panamera simply amazed me.

Yet its greatest assets are its ride and refinement. The suspension is so good that even in Sport mode the car is always comfortable. In Comfort it is sublime. As for the noise levels in the cabin, all I can tell you is that at speeds I have no intention ▶

"IN THAT MOMENT IT PROVED IT WAS THE BEST NEW BENTLEY SINCE VW TOOK OVER THE REINS"

BENTLEY

COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD



of owning up to here, me and my massively experienced driving partner were laughing at how uncannily quiet it remained.

A shame, then, that it is let down by, of all things, its cabin. The job of creating a harmonious marriage between traditional upholstery and state of the art telematics is rarely an easy one and in the Continental GT it doesn't quite work. TFT instruments look great in a Panamera (and, indeed, an Audi A4 or even VW Golf) but they don't in a Bentley. I don't want to look at a thin film transistor screen in a Bentley however clever it might be; I want to look at big, chunky, beautiful analogue clocks. Also the centre console is far too cluttered and I bet that even after months of acclimatisation owners will still be struggling to find the option they want at the first stab of the finger. The car I drove also had some awful 'diamond knurling' around the air vents, representing almost £1500 I would most definitely leave in the bank.

And a word about the car's party piece, its famous rotating dash which can flip the central navigation display to reveal three dials giving outside temperature, your compass heading and a chronometer. And for the novelty value you might

think £470 a reasonable price to pay for the option. Unfortunately it doesn't cost £470 but £4700 or, put another way, a perfectly serviceable second-hand family hatchback. Given that you get the navigation screen anyway which already tells you the direction in which you're heading, and that the temperature is displayed elsewhere, what you're actually doing is paying almost five grand for a stopwatch.

But we won't let this cloud the essential fact that the new Continental GT is not just a fine new car, but an outstanding new Bentley. Existing owners will scarcely believe the progress that has been made, but I expect it will create some converts to the cause as well. It feels as beautifully built as ever but within an envelope of overall ability that has been ballooned compared to what went before. It doesn't break any new ground, but following quite easily the most successful car in Bentley's near 100 years, it was never going to. What it does is take the essentially sound concept of the original Continental GT and reimagine it on a level where it may still be neither the best-looking nor the most exciting Grand Tourer on sale, but for all-round, every day ability, it is almost certainly the best. ■

FACT FILE

PRICE £156,700

ENGINE 6.0 litres, 12 cylinders, turbocharged

POWER

626bhp@5000rpm

TORQUE

663lb ft@1350rpm

WEIGHT 2244kg

POWER TO WEIGHT

279bhp per tonne

TRANSMISSION

eight-speed double-clutch, four-wheel drive

0-60MPH 3.7sec

TOP SPEED 207mph

ECONOMY 23.2mpg

CO₂ 278g/km

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AUGUST 2019

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FROM THE ARCHIVES

WOOLF BARNATO

**Playboy or professional?
Investigating the track record
of Woolf Barnato, high priest
of the famous Bentley Boys**

writer **DOUG NYE**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, JULY 2018

In the run-up to this year's Le Mans 24-Hour race the thought occurs that it marks the 90th anniversary of Woolf 'Babe' Barnato winning the first of his three consecutive Grands Prix d'Endurance there, in 1928. 'Babe' Barnato was ostensibly the massively-built, Champagne-quaffing, playboy leader of the so-called 'Bentley Boys' – that glittering social set of car-crazy backers, customers and amateur or semi-professional drivers for the Bentley Motor Company of Cricklewood, north London.

But I am not alone in having always wondered just how good a driver Barnato really was. He cannot evidently have been any slouch behind the wheel of one of the great works team cars that he bankrolled. Winning the Le Mans 24-Hour race once might be the mark of a multi-zillionaire merely flexing financial muscle, and simultaneously striking lucky. That has happened before – and within living memory. But 'Babe' Barnato didn't just win Le Mans once, that first time in 1928; he won it again in 1929 and then – glory be – returned to do it a third time in 1930. You see the pattern emerging here? Such a record reflects not mere money. Neither does it reflect mere luck. Within the motor racing world, 'Babe' Barnato actually had a trump card up his sleeve – for I have it on first-hand authority that he really was a very fine racing driver indeed. Bentley cars had first won Le Mans in 1924, with John Duff and Frank Clement co-driving the former's new 3-litre. The team was out of luck in 1925 – both cars retired – and in 1926 all three 3-litres failed – but in 1927 what had become 'the great race' was of course the stage on which 'The White House Crash' played out. 'Sammy' Davis, artist and sports

editor of *The Autocar* was involved in that multiple accident in the 3-litre 'Old No 7' which he was co-driving with Dr JD Benjafield. He managed to extricate the badly damaged car from the multi-car melée, while team-mate Leslie Callingham had the macabre experience of seeing Davis and the third team member Duller searching the wreckage for his body.

Davis and Benjafield then set out upon an 18½-hour chase of the leading French Aries co-driven by Chassagne and Laly, battling against queasy-feeling steering caused – as a post-race strip-down revealed – by a cracked ball-joint. When the Aries blew its engine 'Old No 7' finally took the lead with under an hour to run – and Bentley Motors had won its second Le Mans 24-Hour race. It was never again to fail at the Sarthe.

But if anything, the 1928 24-Hour race was even harder fought than the '27 edition. The Bentley works team then comprised a pair of new 4½-litre cars with 'Bobtail' bodywork, plus the year-old 4½ 'Old Mother Gun' in which Duff and Clement had won the 24-hour Grand Prix de Paris at Montlhéry in August 1927, only to retreat home with neither trophy nor prize money since the promoters went bankrupt during the event...

At Le Mans 1928 'Old Mother Gun' was shared by 'Babe' Barnato and his great Australian friend and like-minded all-round sportsman – and serial carouser – Bernard Rubin. Main opposition was the Brisson/Bloch 4.9-litre Stutz which led in the opening stages. 'Tim' Birkin in one of the new 4½s set a new lap record, but Barnato soon broke it, followed by Brisson in the Stutz, and then Frank Clement's Bentley 4½.

Birkin had a rear tyre puncture and wrap itself round the wheel, jamming it solid. He spent 1½ hours struggling to free it, only for the damaged rim to collapse at Arnage Corner as he struggled towards the pits. Bentley works team cars did not carry jacks as standard, the belief being that the cars could easily complete a Le Mans lap on a flat tyre, but the ►

*"BABE BARNATO HAD A TRUMP
CARD UP HIS SLEEVE – HE WAS
A VERY FINE RACING DRIVER"*



Woolf Barnato, behind the biggest garlands, with co-driver Glen Kidston after winning the 1930 Le Mans race in their Bentley Speed Six

always impetuous Birkin admitted he was tearing back at 60mph when the wheel collapse occurred. He then ran back to the pits to report the situation, whereupon co-driver Jean Chassagne hefted a jack under each arm, declared "Maintenant, c'est a moi" – "Now it's down to me" – and jogged three miles back to the stricken car to retrieve it. Total time lost – three hours.

The 4½-litres were all racking their chassis over a diagonal ridge across the road near White House. This fatigued the chassis frames, and Clement's was the first to crack, the effect pulling off a water hose which emptied the radiator and cooked the engine. Both sister cars' frames would fail similarly. The leading Bentley was Barnato/Rubin's – No 4 – and with only minutes to run 'Babe' toured past the pits at 65-70mph, signalling thumb down – chassis broken, radiator leaking. The big Stutz was closing, though itself handicapped by lacking top gear. But Barnato nursed his car home, to that famous third win for Bentley Motors, first win upon his personal Le Mans debut. As a wry postscript to this punishing 24-Hours, the long-delayed Birkin/Chassagne team car left the lap record at 79.73mph last time round to hit their required minimum-distance to qualify as a finisher, then on the way home from Le Mans to Dieppe... its chassis finally cracked.

In 1929 five Bentleys contested Le Mans, and four finished first, second, third and fourth. Three of the Bentleys were works team entries, the Speed Six

6½-litre 'Old No 1' for Barnato/Birkin, and two 4½s, including 'Old Mother Gun'. Entries for Birkin's two new supercharged cars were withdrawn at the last moment, and two additional 4½s substituted.

Facing three Stutzes, two Chryslers and a Du Pont, the Speed Six in Birkin's hands led from the start. Earl Howe would retire the 4½ he shared with Bernard Rubin due to magneto failure, but the surviving Bentley quartet simply rumbled round the Sarthe to their imperious, utterly dominant victory. WO Bentley always had a conservative approach to race strategy and he slowed his cars' pace so much that Jack Dunfee famously parked the 4½ in which he and Glen Kidston would eventually finish second, at the Hippodrome on the Mulsanne Straight to enjoy a refreshing drink. At 4pm that Sunday the Barnato/Birkin Speed Six No1 boomed across the finish line to win, its three sisters following in line astern. Score two for 'Babe'...

In 1930 – the hat-trick attempt for Barnato – he chose to co-drive the 1929-winning Speed Six 'Old No 1' – registered MT3464 - with Glen Kidston. The Bentley entry comprised three Speed Sixes backed by three of the new supercharged 4½-litre 'Blowers' which overheated on the poor-quality French fuel provided. It was decided to run them on pure Benzol which required raising the compression as a last-minute fix. Conversion time simply ran out for one of the cars – for Jack Dunfee/Beris Harcourt-Wood - which became



1929: the Bentley team celebrates its 1-2-3-4 success. Barnato sits in the winning No1 with co-driver Tim Birkin



Frenzied action to refuel the Barnato/Rubin 4½ 'Old Mother Gun' on its way to victory in the 1928 Le Mans race

“WALLY HASSAN ASSURED ME THAT BARNATO WAS THE GREATEST TALENT HE’D KNOWN”

a non-starter. So the two remaining ‘Blowers’ set out to lure the main rival Mercedes of Caracciola/Werner to destruction. Birkin lapped at 89.69mph in the process. But ‘Babe’ Barnato also did his share in the Speed Six, taking the lead on lap 36 and forcing Caracciola into engaging his car’s supercharger excessively. Barnato pressed the German car relentlessly, and it broke. Caracciola told WO that the Mercedes race strategy had been based upon the 1929 Speed Six performance, so Bentley’s conservative pace that year – contrasted by the real speed in this 1930 edition - really had laid the foundation for another triumph.

With the Mercedes removed, WO slowed his entire fleet to cruising pace. A rival Stutz caught fire, another broke its back axle. Birkin’s hard-pressed ‘Blower’ broke a valve late on Sunday morning, and Benjafield’s 10-hour solo stint in the sister car ended when a piston collapsed. His co-driver Giulio Ramponi had fallen ill with a fever and drove just one lap during the night – and that under protest. Clive Dunfee had crashed the

Speed Six he was sharing with ‘Sammy’ Davis, which left Barnato and Kidston leading from Frank Clement and Dick Watney in the only other Speed Six. And they toured home first and second for the fifth and – until 2003 – the last Bentley victory at Le Mans... and ‘Babe’ Barnato’s third in just three drives in the world’s most prestigious endurance motor race.

Back in the 1970s, I talked to Walter Hassan, the former Bentley works team technician who had served as Barnato’s riding mechanic, and who post-war was chief engineer of Coventry Climax. There he worked with Team Lotus, providing the V8 engines with which Jim Clark won his two World Championship titles. And I was surprised when Wally assured me, level-eyed, that ‘Babe’ Barnato had in fact been the greatest driver talent he had known and – very significantly – the most like Jim Clark. “Despite being the company’s financial backer he absolutely obeyed every pit signal he was given. He combined tremendous pace with terrific mechanical sympathy – and he could just make the car do whatever he wanted...”. And for that capability, Wally Hassan plainly considered that ‘Babe’ Barnato – ‘The Captain’, the massive man who had inherited vast wealth from South African diamond mining, who had shone at boxing and who kept wicket for Surrey County Cricket Club – had never received adequate credit. Well, 90 years ago – and in the 50th anniversary year of Jimmy Clark’s tragic demise – ‘Babe’s’ winning debut to launch his Le Mans hat-trick – and his true driving talent - is surely worth recalling. ■

THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD

Bathurst's reputation was forged by an annual saloon car showpiece, but since 2011 it has also been home to an evolving GT classic

writer **ANDREW FRANKEL**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, JUNE 2017



BENTLEY

COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD



In a different era, on a different continent at a different time of day, the sight that greeted Guy Smith was eerily reminiscent of that which presented itself to another Bentley boy 90 years ago. In both cases it was half-light – the last rays of the day disappearing for S C H ‘Sammy’ Davis, the first arriving for Smith – and they came across their respective scenes completely unsighted. Both were confronted with a rival’s car broadside across the track and had only the time it took their instincts to decide what to do next. And in the actions both took in that split second, someone else’s life was probably saved.

I won’t dwell further on the details of the 1927 White House accident, because it is one of the most famous events in Le Mans history. But as Smith flung his Bentley Continental GT3 into the notorious Dipper on lap six of this year’s Bathurst 12 Hours, he found Frank Stippler’s Audi R8

parked across the track, driver’s door towards the thundering Bentley. Actually there was a space on the left-hand side, but his trajectory rendered that escape route unavailable. All he could do was fling the car at the gap on the right, which although minutely widened by a Nissan faced with the same problem seconds earlier, still seemed an impossibly narrow space through which to thread 1.2 tonnes. “I was properly scared,” Smith told me afterwards, “not so much for me, but for Frank.” Less than 15 minutes into a 12-hour race, Bentley’s Bathurst, with one car already in last place and the other apparently about to wipe itself out between a rock wall and a hard Audi, seemed destined for disaster.

It takes about three hours to reach Bathurst from Sydney and, frankly, it’s a rubbish drive. On paper or Google Maps the route looks rather attractive as the Great Western Highway winds up and across the Blue Mountains to Katoomba, more than 1000 metres above the Pacific, and then



descends to the plateau below. What you don't see are the traffic, the speed limits, the police presence and the shockingly poor driving standards. After a 24-hour flight from the UK, you will likely arrive in the desperate hope that it proves a worthwhile destination.

The name, however, has promise. Not Bathurst, gifted to Australia's first inland settlement in 1815 by our then secretary of state for war and the colonies, Henry Bathurst, 3rd Earl Bathurst, but the other name by which its race track is known: Mount Panorama. The title implies elevation and horizon views and sounds a hell of a lot better than the name it had before racing began here almost 80 years ago. Bald Hills was never going to cut it as a credible name for Australia's greatest racetrack.

Greatest? Come here and you'd never doubt as much. It really doesn't matter which side of the pit wall you're on, as a driver or spectator, Mount Panorama rivals the best in the world. And, to a

certain extent, that's its problem. It is so tortuous, narrow and, frankly, dangerous in places that racing at the top level here would never be sanctioned. But nor is it needed: watching the latest GT3 machines spending a dozen hours racing, sliding, spinning and crashing their way around Mount Panorama offered about as much excitement as one jet-lagged correspondent could take.

Although open to sprints and car club gatherings throughout the year, the circuit hosts but three major race meetings per season, the Bathurst 12 Hours I had come to see, a smaller six-hour race for less powerful saloons and the Bathurst 1000, populated by Australia's beloved V8 Supercars. The 1000 is by far the most famous tin-top race in Australia and comes with its own cult following, similar in size to that accompanying the Nürburgring 24 Hours.

There were years when the 1000 was almost as terrifying for spectators as drivers, thanks to ►

thousands of Australians who came here for anything other than to watch a motor race. According to Inspector Glenn Cogdell of New South Wales Police, the stories of parked cars being set ablaze on the mountain and people arriving weeks in advance to dig underground depots for their alcohol and drug supplies are all true, but they are long since past.

"Come to the 1000 today and you'd not believe it," he says. "It's a real family event now. We get very little trouble and then only from idiots who bring drugs with them, are too stupid to read the signs we put up telling them we have sniffer dogs or think that if they push them really deep into their pockets the dogs won't find them..."

There are no sniffer dogs at the 12 Hours, no signs and no idiots. It seems the police are here mainly to take turns driving a Bentley Continental GT and McLaren 650S, road cars that have been wrapped in local law enforcement livery. They lap Mount Panorama during breaks between practice sessions. I ask Cogdell what chance there is of him having to do any actual policing this weekend.

"Essentially, none," he says.

The race itself is growing almost exponentially in popularity in Australia and stature abroad. It's been running for six years in its current GT3 format, and those who were present four years ago talk of empty grandstands, absent concession stores and odd pockets of spectators drifting around the perimeter. This year about 45,000 people came to Bathurst over the weekend, only a quarter of those that attend the 1000 but no one expects that disparity to last. The organisers insist its global 'reach', a measure of all the engagement activity from people watching the race on television, the internet and talking about it on social media, is greater than that of the Nürburgring 24 Hours.

And the GT3 manufacturers have not been slow to realise as much. World-class works or works-backed teams came to Bathurst to peddle their wares on this unique stage. Bentley had a brace of M-Sport Continental GT3s, Porsche its latest 911 GT3Rs, Ferrari but a single car (the new 488GTB), Mercedes-AMG brought two of its fearsome GTs and BMW no fewer than three of its brand-new M6 GT3s. There were Nissans, Audis, Lamborghinis and last year's winning McLaren 650S GT3, too.

As for drivers, Bentley had Le Mans winner Smith, ex-works Audi LMP1 racer Olly Jarvis and former McLaren Autosport Young Driver of the year Steven Kane in one car, with Maxime Soulet, Andy Soucek and Vincent Abril in the other.

BMW's had the likes of local legend Mark Skaife and F1 refugee Timo Glock on board, while Nissan Motorsport wheeled out Brits of the calibre of Jann Mardenborough and Alex Buncombe. The one AMG GT in the Pro class contained last year's winner and lap record holder Shane van Gisbergen, but the Pro-Am car has a distinctly pro-looking line up including Bernd Schneider, Pedro Lamy and Mathias Lauda. The 911 drivers included Le Mans winners Earl Bamber and Marc Lieb, while works driver Toni Vilander and Bathurst experts Craig Lowndes and Jamie Whincup handled the scintillatingly quick Ferrari. That tells you all you need to know about how seriously this race is taken by the biggest prestige manufacturers in the world.

Others were present out of no more than a burning desire to race at Bathurst, among them Aston works driver and *Motor Sport* contributor Darren Turner, driving a Vantage GT8 in the invitation class. "To be honest I had incredibly high expectations of this place because of the

twinkle in the eye of people who have raced here before," he said. "And it did not disappoint: an incredible track, totally unforgiving and I cannot wait to come back." Mardenborough was similarly wide-eyed, saying, "I simply can't believe people race here, but I'm very glad they do."

I watched the race from the Bentley pit where Brian Gush, the man who campaigned for and secured Bentley's return to Le Mans at the start of the century, is ultimately in charge of the two cars run by Malcolm Wilson's M-Sport. The strategy? "Anything can happen and at any time, so getting ahead and building a lead is not important in the first 11 hours: sooner or later you'll get a safety car and all your hard work will go up in smoke. What is critical, and for exactly the same reason, is to stay on the lead lap. Anyone who does that for the first 11 hours will have a chance..."

But the cars have to get there first. Qualifying was as straightforward for one Bentley as it was nightmarish for the other. The car crewed by European drivers was on the pace right away, eventually winding up fifth behind the Ferrari, two BMWs and one 911. But the Brits were having a torrid time: their car was brand-new and untested before getting on the boat to Bathurst and fuel pressure problems dogged practice. Poor Olly Jarvis was not only trying to get his head around a fiendishly difficult and technical track he'd not driven before but a car he'd driven only once, briefly, around a wet Anglesey, and all his ►

"I SIMPLY CAN'T BELIEVE THAT PEOPLE RACE HERE, BUT I'M VERY GLAD THEY DO"



It may be based on a hefty road-going production car, but despite that big rollcage the GT3 Bentley weighs in at less than a family hatchback



track time was rapidly evaporating. The fuel issue was solved before qualifying, but none of the boys was happy with its handling and not even Kane, devastatingly quick over a lap, could raise it above 23rd on the grid.

And then there was the heat: even by the standards of an Australian summer Bathurst was hot and this was going to be by some margin the warmest 12-hour race yet held. On Saturday it hit 39 degC in the shade, over 50 deg on the track and goodness know what inside fireproof underwear, triple-layer Nomex and a Continental GT with a twin-turbo V8 in front of you radiating heat back into the cockpit. As Soulet was to find out, even air-conditioning and air pumped direct into the driver's helmet was often not enough to keep body temperature under control during the race.

To try to understand better what the drivers faced, I hitched a lift around the track with Cogdell between qualifying sessions. The tone for the lap is set by a first turn simply called Hell Corner. Nothing if not direct, these Australians. By the standard of what's to come it's actually quite straightforward, but the appropriately entitled Mountain Straight it introduces is the steepest I've come across so if your exit is not perfect, your lap can be over in the first 10 seconds. And then you're on the mountain, which I can equate only to sitting on a rollercoaster going through a tunnel. The run-off areas make the Nordschleife look like Silverstone, the gradient turns Laguna Seca into the Norfolk Broads. The Dipper, where Stippler crashed, is like driving off a cliff. Even the famed Conrod Straight allows little time for



The drop: the Smith/Kane/Jarvis Bentley Continental plunges over a crest on the steeply undulating Mount Panorama circuit



relaxation as it has an enormous crest in the middle and a 170mph kink – proudly billed as Australia’s fastest corner – at its end.

The fans congregate mainly on the mountain where you need no special passes to get within a few feet of the cars. Photographers go closer still, sitting on a low retaining wall above the track with no physical barrier between them and the GT3s flying past on, and frequently over the limit. Here, 10,000 miles away on the other side of the world, is a taste of what racing must have been like at the more spectator-friendly circuits in the UK 50 or 60 years ago. And, contrary to everything I had been told to expect, this was the most civilised crowd you’ll find this side of the Goodwood Revival. I spent hours walking around soaking it all up and didn’t spot a single person



who looked like they might even be on the way to getting drunk. Instead they stood in the sweltering heat, crowded around the loudspeakers so they could hear the commentary, and watched their heroes race. The event started in pitch darkness at 5.45am but I was there with them by dawn, and to see the sun come up over that scene was one of the most profound experiences I’ve had as a spectator at a motor race.

Smith started the race. He always does. He hates starting but is very good at it. The field streaked away, affording the eerie sight of a hundred high-intensity headlights in the distance picking their way around the mountain. An order established itself but only for a few minutes. On lap four the fifth-placed Bentley was in the pits with a puncture. Soulet had hit the wall and two hours ▶

Famous flat-out Conrod Straight leads to a 170mph bend. Below, that is why it's called Mount Panorama



later the true consequences were revealed as a damaged wheel bearing failed, after which a more detailed examination highlighted the need to change the entire rear corner. It only took six laps of a track with a lap time of little more than two minutes, but it's enough: with 10 hours remaining, all chances of a memorable result had already gone.

In the meantime Smith had his encounter with the Audi and escaped with only scrapes down the side of the Bentley. "That's why we have Guy," says Gush with feeling. "Give him a car and you'll always get it back again."

And he's quick, too. Without fuss or risk in one extraordinary double stint, he dragged the Bentley from 23rd on the grid through the field. When he came in to hand over to Jarvis, a car that should probably be lying wrecked at the top of the mountain was in second place.

From there the race ebbed and flowed with different drivers on different strategies. BMW, for all its phenomenal qualifying pace, would be nowhere. The M6s were fast but fragile and its drivers made too many mistakes. But Shane van Gisbergen's AMG, which didn't even make the top 10 in qualifying, muscled its way to the front to the sound of much muttering about sand-bagging from other crews. Mercedes had provided the course cars for this event, taken over the entire top floor of the trackside Rydges Hotel and brought hundreds of valued guests from all over the continent. Van Gisbergen was the man of the moment, the fastest Antipodean in GT3 racing and they'd come to see him deliver for Mercedes.

But he'd have to deal with the Ferrari first. Because the circuit has both long straights and tight turns, set-up is always a compromise: the AMG is a downforce monster and therefore whip-crack fast around the mountain, but also by far the slowest of the front-runners down the straight.

The race ground on. Gush's safety car predictions were coming true: we were averaging more than one per hour as the mountain claimed driver after driver, the dead car car-park already brimming by early afternoon. What was causing the attrition? The circuit, the need to stay on the lead lap and, of course, the heat.

Soulet came on the radio. Towards the end of a hellish double stint in the hottest part of the day, he could not continue. The Bentley came in, M-Sport leapt into action and Soulet half-staggered and was half-carried to a chair to be covered immediately covered in cold towels. He could scarcely communicate but managed to point to his right boot. The shoe came off and more

towels were applied to where nothing other than vicious heat and his own sweat had scalded him. He would in time lose all the skin from the top of his foot. It was a while before he could even lift a bottle to his lips and, when he did, his hand shook it into a blur. I've not seen racing this raw before and found it shocking to see what drivers will put themselves through even when there's nothing to fight for, and rather humbling too.

A scheduled pad and disc change dropped the Bentley down to eighth, but in this steel-brake formula others stopped too. And for a while in the afternoon, though separated by some laps in the race, on the circuit the two Bentleys led the field around the track. No car has endured greater change to become a GT3 racer and, while now lighter than a family hatch, it remains a physically immense presence around the svelte Ferraris and McLarens. I was reminded of the original Blower's finest hour, when Tim Birkin improbably entered one of his stripped-down leviathans into the 1930 French Grand Prix, coming home second only after

the leading Bugatti elected to miss its final fuel stop to cross the line and win on fumes. Then and now the Bentleys look like hornets surrounded by flies.

But by the time Steven Kane took the helm for the final stint, it looked like the worst possible result was on the cards. The car stalled and lost 35 agonising seconds while it

recycled its start procedure. They were going to come fourth. "Give me retiring from the lead over fourth every day of the week," growled

Gush. The Ferrari and AMG were just too far ahead and there was a 911 with superstar Lieb behind the wheel between the Bentley and the final podium place.

Still, if anyone can conjure something from nothing it is Kane, who recorded the car's fastest lap of the race with less than an hour to go. He loves it here, says it should be on the bucket list of every proper racing driver and was showing us why. But the best hope lay in the belief that the Porsche would have to splash and dash before the end. It refuelled with 80 minutes to go and hadn't looked like running that far on a tank all weekend.

Then with 30 minutes to go all hope evaporated as van Gisbergen punted another Porsche into the gravel. It had to be recovered, the 16th safety car period in this 12-hour race had to be declared and now Lieb could make it to the end without a problem. For the first time in almost a dozen hours, heads fell in the Bentley pits. In the queue behind the safety car the Ferrari led on new rubber with van Gisbergen on old tyres directly behind, then ►

*"THAT'S WHY WE
HAVE GUY. GIVE HIM
A CAR AND YOU'LL
ALWAYS GET IT
BACK AGAIN"*

came the Porsche with many lapped cars to be overtaken between it and the Bentley. It was over.

Or maybe not. The race restarted with 19 minutes to go and in an instant Whincup and his freshly shod Ferrari ran away. But nobody had told van Gisbergen his cause was lost. Coming down the Dipper, almost exactly where Stippler's race was run almost a dozen hours earlier, van Gisbergen buried his Merc in the barrier with no outside help. Fluid all over the track showed the rads had gone: it wouldn't make it to end of the lap, let alone the race. Team-mate Maro Engel stalked away in disgust and said some heartfelt stuff to a waiting reporter. Kane rattled off the remaining laps and brought the Bentley home third. Euphoria erupted.

The last time I was at a race with Brian Gush when a Bentley came third was Le Mans in 2001. Of course people remember more readily the 2003 victory, but by then the race was Bentley's to lose. In 2001 the undeclared team target was one car home in the top 10. To many in the team the podium finish of 2001 was and will always remain sweeter than the win in 2003. This was not quite like that: on the one hand it was an incredible result few would have bet upon as Smith bore down on Stippler's Audi, on the other while the car did lead the race a number of times, it never looked like winning. "We simply didn't have the pace of the Ferrari today," was Gush's honest assessment, and nor did anyone else. "All I can really ask of my drivers is go as hard as they can and not make any mistakes and

they all delivered, unlike certain others... Come race day the cars were perfect too, and of that we can be proud."

As a race itself Bathurst is without parallel in my experience. Like Mardenborough I struggle to believe they race GT3 cars there and perhaps on any other continent it would not be allowed. But out here, on the far side of the Blue Mountains in New South Wales, another law applies. It's one that allows racers to race and spectators to spectate free from let or hindrance. Put it this way: if I could see just one more sports car race and wanted the nearest thing to a guarantee of the best view of the best racing on the best track, I'd happily fly straight over Le Mans and the Nürburgring to come here. It might have taken 24 hours of travel and a few more to get home, but the memories of two days in the air are already fading fast while those of a dozen hours at Mount Panorama will likely last forever. ■



Delighted at their unexpected podium, Guy Smith tries to cool off his teammates Ollie Jarvis and Steven Kane





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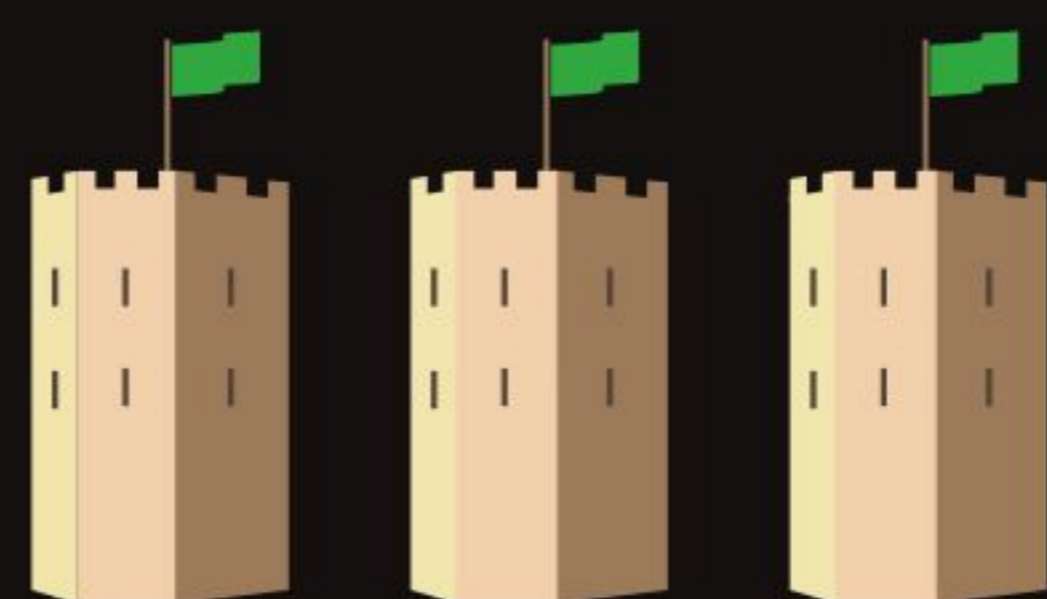
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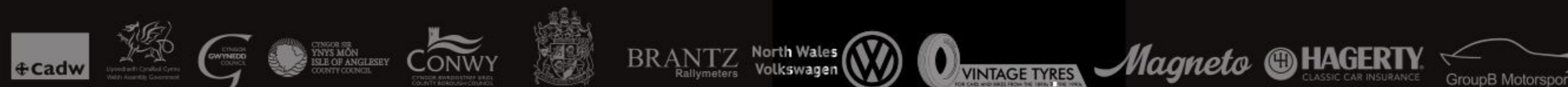
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COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD



YOU, ME AND WB

The spirit of Bill Boddy was surely travelling with our two-man Bentley crew as they sprinted to John O'Groats and back

writer **ANDREW FRANKEL**

At midnight on June 27, 1938, a 4¼-litre Derby Bentley eased away from Parliament Square and turned to the north. At its wheel was a 25-year-old lad who was already the editor of *Motor Sport* and would go on to become the longest-serving contributor to this or, so far as we have been able to ascertain, any other magazine there has been. His name was William Boddy, more usually called Bill but best known simply as WB to the hundreds of thousands who would come to feast on his words over the next 73 years.

His mission was simple. With two colleagues from the magazine, he would drive north, non-stop, until the road ran out at John O'Groats. The broad reason was that "distance lends enchantment" but more specifically that "we all possessed a desire to see a little of the North of Scotland".

So we thought that to mark the centenary of his birth, we would on the precise 75th anniversary of the event take a brand-new Bentley and also drive it non-stop to the northernmost tip of Great Britain.

Then, aware that what we contemplated was hardly a challenge compared with what WB faced in 1938, we thought that instead of staying there for a few days to do some sightseeing as did our predecessors, we'd turn around with barely a pause and drive all the way back again.

There were other differences, too. While WB had two chums with whom to share the driving (although, impressively, he alone took the helm on the way up), I could only persuade one person that spending what was looking like 24 consecutive hours inside a two-plus-not-much Bentley was a good idea. And then I suspect only because he is my brother, already the owner of a pre-war 4¼ Derby Bentley and as such more than usually sympathetic to such a cause. This explains why such photographs as we took are very much of the happy snap variety and not the professional portraits you are used to seeing between these covers. Then again, as WB and his team saw fit to publish a grand total of two shots of their trip, one of which was merely the Bentley at the side of ►

**TAKEN FROM
MOTOR SPORT,
NOVEMBER 2013**

the road, our approach felt in keeping with the tradition of the run.

The other principal variation on WB's theme was that I did not leave at midnight but just before 7pm. Less romantic it may have been, but faced with a return journey, the idea of delaying departure for several hours after the working day had ended seemed neither safe nor very sensible.

Where two plans laid three-quarters of a century apart did coincide was that we wanted to follow WB's route up as far as practically possible, at least passing the places he mentioned in his story. This meant eschewing the normal M1/M6 route to the border and instead taking the A1 to Scotch Corner before crossing the country on the A66 to Penrith, before heading north again and threading our way through Scotland. As our timings meant the bulk of the outbound journey would take place at night, some of the pictures were taken at the same places, but on the return, daylight leg.

It is fascinating to read about life on the road in 1938. For instance, the fuel station network was sufficiently advanced for them to feel no need to carry spare petrol, even though they knew they'd need to fill at least once at a highly inhospitable hour. But the need to keep an eye on and replenish its other fluids was clearly critical. As we shall see, even a brand-new Bentley could be expected to use quite a lot of oil and half a gallon of water.

Boddy's first complaint will resonate as much today as it did 75 years ago, namely "an unbelievable number of hostile traffic lamps" as he made his way up the Finchley Road towards the A1. They passed Doncaster at 3.14am and Boroughbridge at 4.30am but were in daylight at Catterick Bridge before they stopped at a small filling station.

Protocol then was to wake the owner of said station and persuade him to "condescendingly descend and minister to the Bentley's needs", which included not only 16 gallons of Power Benzole but also and already a quart of oil. WB managed to burn his arm on the exhaust while pouring said oil into the engine, hopefully without dwelling for too long on the fate of Sir Henry Birkin, whose Maserati had inflicted a similar injury five years earlier with eventually fatal consequences.

Farther north they hit heavy rain but cruised the Bentley at an impressive 80mph, despite the inadequacies of the wipers at such speeds. And while they had no motorway network to follow, they did not appear to need one, at least at that time of day. WB remarked that it was not until 90 minutes after the sun had risen "that an approaching car was encountered".

By early morning breakfast was clearly uppermost in their minds, it still being many years before the provision of on-the-hoof cardboard service station sandwiches.

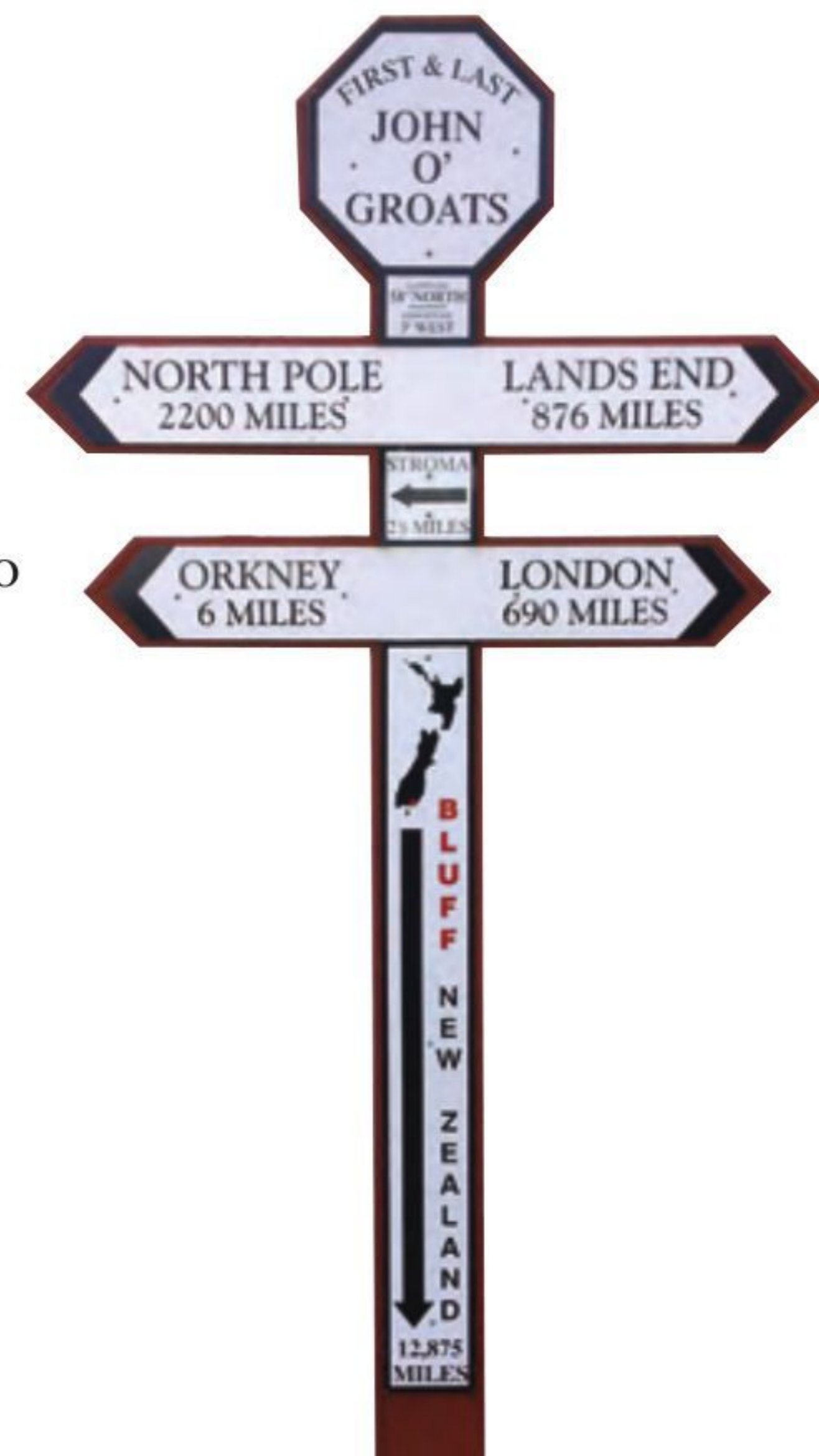


"WB GAINED ATTENTION FOR HIS FAD OF USING TALCUM POWDER BEFORE RESUMING HIS GLOVES"

Promising-looking hotels at Crawford and Abington turned out to be shut until the Amulree Hotel hove into view on the A822 north of Crieff at 8.45am. Some 52 minutes later they were mobile again but not before buying another 14 gallons of fuel, a further quart of oil and WB gaining the unwelcome attention of the locals for his "fad of using talcum powder on his hands before resuming his driving gloves".

To WB's evident pleasure, the Bentley out-dragged an LMS 'Pacific' loco hauling a train up to Drumochter Summit to the north of Blair Atholl and then did it again to another hapless locomotive on the descent to Kingussie.

They got lost in Inverness, had to wait for a swing bridge over the canal, and near Alness filled with fuel again at "an electric pump, the



writer staying in the seat”. To WB this was clearly very impressive. After a final heady blast to speeds of “90 and a bit”, they parked outside the John O’Groats House hotel at 3.14pm, 15hr 14min and 702 miles after departing Westminster.

They seemed in good spirits despite WB’s self-professed susceptibility to aches and pains, though he did admit to his driving having once made his passengers “ill” on the way, without elaborating further on just how dramatic the illness had been. They then retired to the Pentland Hotel in Thurso for a couple of days to recover, see the countryside and prepare for the return. It seems to have been chosen because it was where SCHDavis and many others had once started the Monte Carlo Rally.

I too had cause to curse the traffic lights on the Finchley Road, but not so much as the traffic they were trying (and failing) to control. Sitting in a scarlet Bentley Continental GT, impotently blipping its 500bhp V8 motor, I was feeling tired before the day had begun. Trying to leave London in the early evening was, on reflection, a stupid mistake.

But as soon as city streets turned to the A1, the traffic cleared and by 8.30pm I was peeling off the main road north of Huntingdon to collect Richard, the aforementioned brother, from his home nearby. Helpfully he’d got his Derby out of the garage, presumably in the forlorn hope I might be persuaded to take that instead. Had a bunch of Derby-mounted enthusiasts not themselves re-enacted WB’s run over several days a few weeks earlier, I might have been tempted. In the event I didn’t want to be seen to be copying their idea, but I did want to see how much the mighty theoretical advantage held by a modern Bentley on a (comparatively) modern road network might be mitigated by traffic, road works and fear of the law.

We rejoined the A1(M) before 9.00pm looking forward to a simple run north. Fat chance. North of Mansfield the road was shut and, said the traffic report, backed up for miles.

So we cut cross-country to the M1, and were forced to stay on it longer than planned when we discovered the M18 was also shut. It was nearly 11pm before we finally regained the A1, just in time to leave it for good at Scotch Corner where we refuelled before heading west to Penrith, as did WB all those years ago. The A66 is a good fast road, perfect for a car like the Bentley whose pulverising torque allowed us to pass almost everything as soon as we encountered it. ►

Same starting point, though Frankels chose daylight to head for A1. Left, a windswept AF on arrival. Below, breakfast venue for WB, but not today



Thereafter, save our third motorway closure (the M9), the night passed uneventfully in the company of Messrs Hancock, Parsons, Lyttelton and assorted other stalwarts of the past 60 years of BBC radio light entertainment. As a means of staying awake in the small hours, laughing 'til you cry is a far better stimulant than any amount of caffeine-impregnated soft drink. It also made me appreciate all the more WB's single-handed efforts at the wheel in a car with such limited performance, cornering and braking ability, not to mention what we'd today consider appalling wipers and lights. I hope his companions were raconteurs of the highest calibre.

Daylight met us in Inverness, where we cheated by crossing the Moray Firth via the Kessock Bridge (which opened in 1982), but only to recover some of the miles lost on our diversions. WB would have cut back inland to cross at Beaulieu. But like him we thereafter pressed on as fast as was safely possible, reaching John O'Groats just after 6am. Excluding stops we had done it in 10hr 30min, carving a vast 3hr 22min off the time achieved in 1938.

With motorways and 500bhp at our disposal there was no sense of triumph in the achievement, but it was interesting. I knew we'd beat WB's time but I'd have guessed by fewer than two hours. And, for the avoidance of doubt, this wasn't achieved by cruising at 170mph: a few cobweb-cleaning squirts aside, we drove throughout at speeds that posed no threat to licence, let alone liberty.

We wanted to recreate the picture outside the John O'Groats House hotel, but it's being rebuilt and barriers were placed around it, so we just took a few shots to prove we'd been there and headed to Thurso. No one at the Pentland Hotel had heard of its Monte Carlo history so we snapped some more, made our excuses and left. This time we retraced WB's steps just far enough to photograph the car in daylight outside the now sadly derelict Amulree Hotel, where he and his chums had broken their fast all those years ago. It was strange to think of our Founder Editor, a man known to us all as an elder statesman, as he would have been on this very spot: a young man aged just 25 in the middle of a grand adventure with more than 70 years of life still ahead of him.

We had little time for poignant pauses, nor any need to stick to WB's return route. I just drove

"AS A MEANS OF STAYING AWAKE, LAUGHING TILL YOU CRY IS BETTER THAN ANY CAFFEINE DRINK"



Continental GT cut three hours off the 1938 time, aided by motorways and 500bhp. Left, onboard evidence

south, dropping Richard en route and notionally ending our trip at the M25 before turning west and heading for home in South Wales. WB had felt no need to return to Westminster and neither did I.

For what it's worth, from Westminster to the M25 via John O'Groats took 22 hours 58 minutes, a distance of 1430 miles which means that we averaged almost exactly 62mph throughout. Inexplicably better fuel consumption on the road south bumped the total trip average up to 24.3mpg.

As for the Bentley, it stunned us with its capabilities, to the extent that we struggled to think of another that might do that job better. For a test of a GT requiring total comfort and refinement combined with outrageous performance, infinite poise and a stirring soundtrack, it passed with a starred First. This is actually the cheapest Bentley you can buy, but also the best. It might look like the same Continental GT launched a decade ago, but it has been nothing less than transformed. It is somewhat less elegant, but clearly it's positioned to do the same job today as was the 4¼-litre in 1938. Almost 23 hours in its company showed me that it also does it at least as well, and that I would not have predicted. ■



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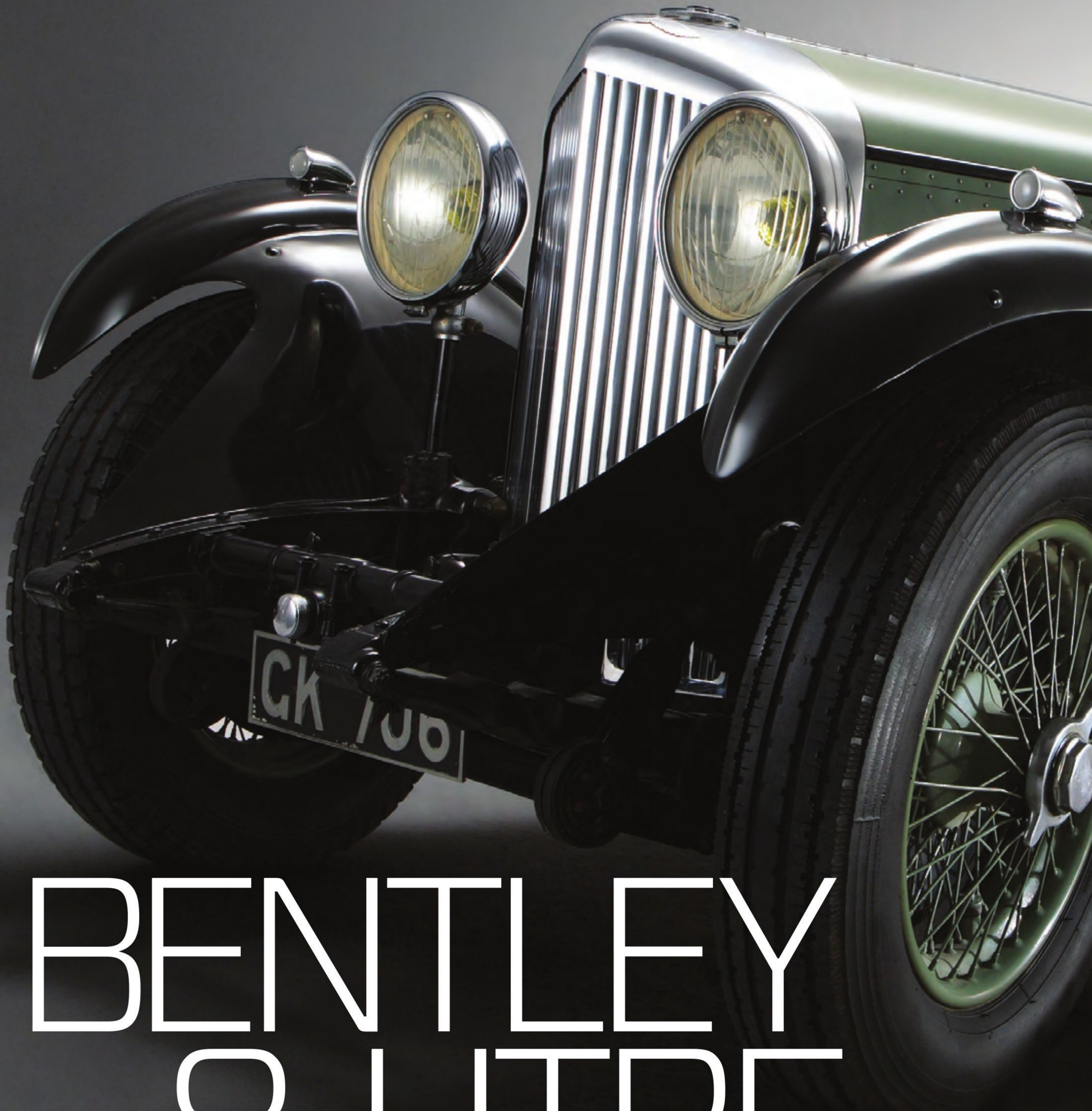
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BENTLEY

COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD



BENTLEY 8-LITRE



Once the personal car of WO Bentley, this Mulliner saloon – a favourite for high-speed trips to France – has returned to its maker. *Motor Sport* is granted an audience before it is restored

writer **GORDON CRUICKSHANK** photographer **MARC WRIGHT**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, AUGUST 2007

Heritage. We've been going on about it in *Motor Sport* for years, and now it seems the rest of the world is catching up. Ferrari used to chop up its old racing cars; now they are carefully slid into the Cliente Corsa programme to please fortunate owners and spectators.

It's more difficult if you are buying in. Consider what are arguably the two greatest British marques: Rolls-Royce, purchased by BMW, a firm with a fine history of its own; or Bentley, almost mythical as regards its vintage years, but sadly devalued in later decades and a challenge for Volkswagen. From somewhere these companies, German both, had to extract or contrive an essence of Britishness which spoke to what we think we feel about both badges.

Rolls-Royce succeeded brilliantly with its new Phantom: immense presence, and proportions which put the onlooker in mind of the great days of coach-building: the Grecian radiator arrives as a fanfare, and you know that a grand passenger compartment will be along in a moment. But frankly it was easier for Rolls-Royce: it was aiming to build the plutocrat of saloons – rapid, but not a sports car.

VW, however, had to cross-connect raw, open motoring, racing success and silent, speedy luxury, though it was the last of those which WO Bentley wanted to offer. We know that because the 8-litre saloon profiled here was WO's own vehicle, his *beau idéal* of the sporting car, a car which he drove for thousands of miles in Britain and across the Continent and on whose logbook he wrote "Any person using this car other than examiner, tester or urgent purveyor... will be immediately discharged". It was very special to him.

Today the new Bentley company is rediscovering its identity by gathering its history to itself. After three decades or more in the same hands, WO's 8-litre now belongs to the firm which makes the magnificent Continental GT, a car which is a long way from the archetypal rough-riding open 4½, but very close in spirit to this one.

I had the chance to inspect it before it went off for restoration, and that is how we have chosen to photograph it: a little tired, slightly down at one corner, traces of rust on the painted green spokes. For this 8-litre is in remarkable, original, condition. These are the very seats on which WO sat, the same doors he pulled shut, the same starter button he thumbed before heading down the A2 for Dover and the Continent.

For 30 years the car has belonged to the Majzub family, who maintained it and changed nothing. Julian Majzub remembers it fondly: "My father loved it. A lot of 8-litres went to people who just wanted a car they could wear top hats in, but this is what WO envisaged as his perfect car. A genuine 100mph saloon; you can easily average 80mph." ►



With a commanding view from this lofty car, the dashboard is packed with instrumentation



That's confirmed by contemporary reports. The second production chassis, this was the first definitive 8-litre and was the car the firm loaned to magazines for road tests – a car that had a huge impact on the car world. “Motoring in its very highest form,” *The Autocar* called it. Now that a Cricklewood Bentley is a hobby vehicle and not a means of transport we are used to these huge limousines being turned into Le Mans lookalikes, or seeing the massive engines transplanted into lighter 3- or 4½-litre chassis to go racing. In 1930 you had to choose between travelling quickly and carrying passengers, if comfort mattered. There were open sports cars which would do 90 or 100mph at the cost of a fresh-air pummelling, and there were comfortable limousines, but even a powerful saloon car could not be expected to whisk four people along at 100mph – until the 8-litre appeared.

Perhaps the BMW M5 had the same sort of impact in our era, proffering 150mph for a quartet of cosseted inhabitants. Or the latest Bentley Flying Spur, which effectively doubles the 8-litre's top speed with unimpaired luxury. For it was the comfort which WO was selling with his vast new machine: a town carriage as much as a grand tourer, it would pull from walking pace in top gear. Just what today's S-class or 750i does, but through sheer earth-moving torque, not via a seven-speed autobox. And it had the huge-striding quality which consumes the miles without apparent effort. *The Autocar* suggested one could breakfast in London and lunch in Catterick – which would be pushing it today. It was such an astonishing combination of qualities that Rolls-Royce, whose Phantom was Bentley's chief target, did not at first take the 100mph claim seriously. When it realised the rumours were true, and that Bentley was in cash trouble, it took decisive action.

Surviving Bentley records tell us that Chassis YH5002 went to H J Mulliner in October 1930, where it received a compact Weymann-pattern body with fabric sunroof. WO was a fan of the Weymann system, which used movable joints covered in fabric to give a body which would flex with the chassis, avoiding the creaks and groans of conventional saloons. He commented on the “silence and almost negligible weight”. That mattered, because the whole car weighs almost 2½ tons.

“THE 8-LITRE HAD A HUGE IMPACT. THE AUTOCAR CALLED IT MOTORING IN ITS VERY HIGHEST FORM”



Patched leather and worn nickel plate testify to years of preservation

Although coachbuilders were competing to add ever more lavish fittings to large cars, there is none of that here. No cigar companions, cocktail cabinets, or fold-down tables, not even a door pocket, although the dainty nickel-plated window catches have a lovely twist to them which makes you want to fiddle. Driver and passenger sit in beautifully shaped bucket seats, rear passengers on a bench with a small armrest, and the mottled brown leather, with patches, has been in there a very, very long time. Since 1930? The service records say it started out with cloth upholstery (leather was what the chauffeur got in the '30s; owners preferred to sit on Bedford cloth), so that is one of the decisions Bentley will have to make about the restoration.

Paint choice is easier: although it looks good in its unusual green and black, it started in black and will revert to black. Julian Majzub explains: “Fred Hoffman [a Bentley engineer] told my father that it had been green once, so he repainted it.”

WO mentions “a great feeling of spaciousness.” Maybe so if you are talking about headroom ►

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and the large windows, but a tall man riding in the rear might find his knees up in the air, despite the little heel recess in the floor; it might take a pair of high heels but not a pair of brogues. This in a car 17ft long. It's inevitable in a vehicle built on a 'proper' chassis, and even though WO used a hypoid rear axle and dropped the frame for greater stability, the 8-litre towers over ordinary cars. It's equally surprising that the luggage space is so small: open up the lid and drop-down panel and there's barely room for one suitcase.

Under the tiny peak over the windscreen is an unusual fitting, an American proprietary vacuum-powered wiper WO rather liked. It's unusual in that the arms don't pivot but slide sideways; as WO put it, "one blade catching the other and carrying it in a companionable sort of manner to the other side of the screen when parked." That alone will be a challenge for James Pearce, the Sussex firm which is carrying out the restoration.

The wiper is virtually the only special feature of this machine, which was the company demonstrator as well as personal transport. Built on the short wheelbase (12 instead of 13ft), it wasn't lightened or tuned: the engine breathes through the same pair of SUs as all the other 8-litres, and the running gear was production-standard, though WO specified two distributors instead of one plus one magneto.

There was no technical advance to the new car: the straight-six engine was much as the 6½-litre – the same non-detachable head with single

overhead camshaft operating four valves per cylinder, with a similar cam drive. Living in a vertical funnel behind the block, this ingenious system borrowed from WO's locomotive origins, using triple eccentrics and three coupling rods to rotate the camshaft. It was an expensive solution, but extremely quiet. There was a new quieter gearbox, still decoupled from the engine, but nothing else novel.

One of the problems with the huge new engine was cooling. Adequate radiators were hard to make at the time, so on 'The Box' (a 6½ with the new 8-litre engine fitted and a quickly cobbled up and rather ugly saloon body) Bentley experimented with evaporative cooling, where the water is kept boiling and the radiator is used to condense steam rather than to cool water. In the end, improved radiator technology side-stepped this difficulty before production began, and Bentley returned to conventional cooling, with thermostatic radiator shutters.

However, three of the nine dials on GK706's busy dash are temperature gauges connected to different points, presumably to monitor the new radiator's performance on the long thrash to the Riviera. Interestingly, the dashboard clock is larger than the speedometer; perhaps time mattered more than mph on WO's longer journeys. After all, he called it: "A fast and delightful car which did a prodigious mileage, including once solo from Dieppe to Cannes in one day without my having to put the lights on." WO enjoyed these trips, and recorded them on film; the black and white shots with this article come from his personal album.

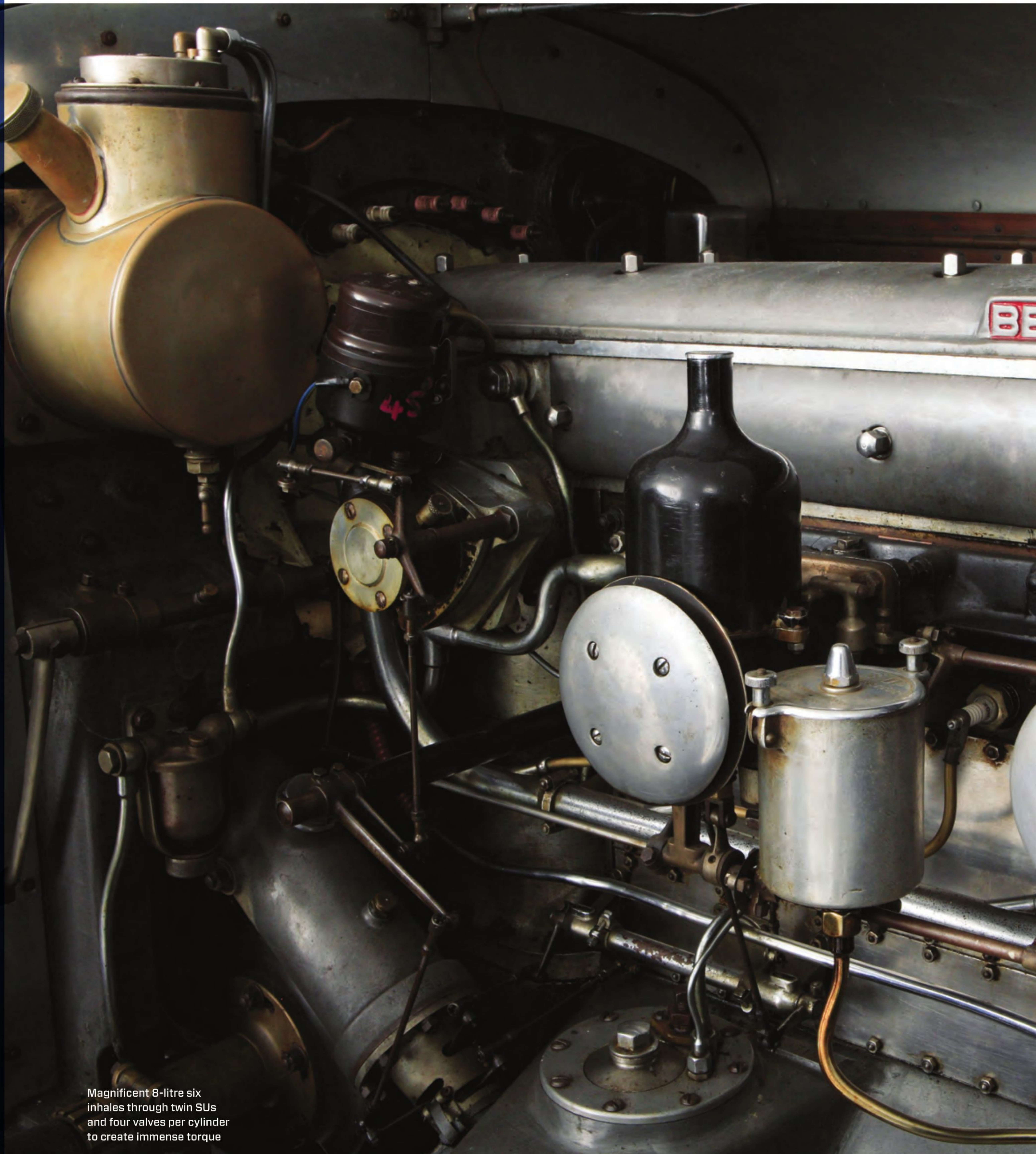
Bentley historian Clare Hay adds a tale about this car, told to her by Margaret Bentley, WO's third wife. She was actually introduced to WO by wife number two, and told Hay that WO drove her home that night in it, and was so excited that he muffed his gear-changes.

But he was not to enjoy GK 706 much longer. In his autobiography he records sadly how he parted with it after Rolls-Royce secretly bought his company in 1931. "The nadir was reached when I was instructed in a letter to sell my 8-litre. I left it with Jack Barclay and walked home, without a car for the first time in goodness knows how long, wondering if I should ever have another." ►

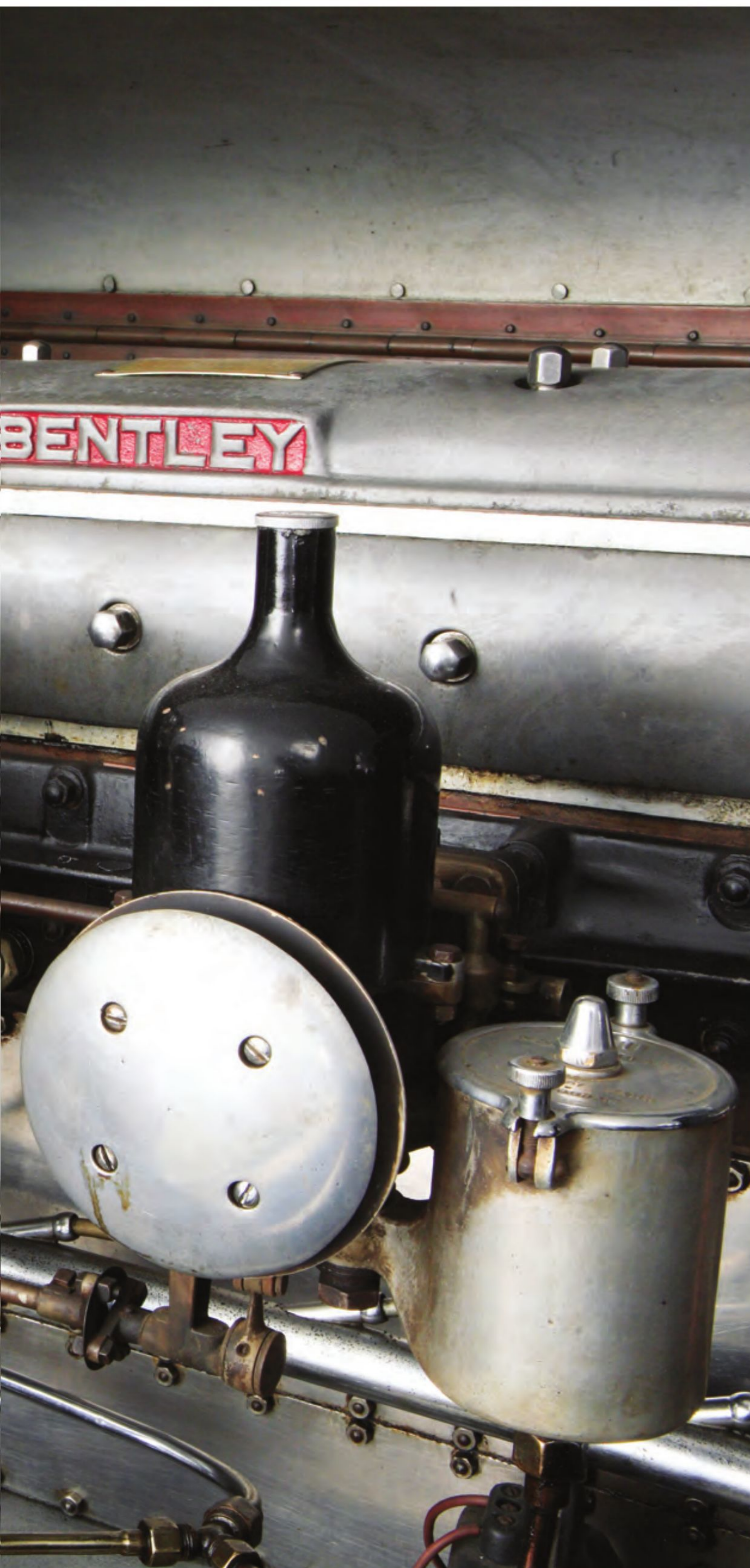
"A FAST AND DELIGHTFUL CAR WHICH WENT FROM DIEPPE TO CANNES IN ONE DAY"

BENTLEY

COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD



Magnificent 8-litre six inhales through twin SUs and four valves per cylinder to create immense torque



Perhaps because of the slump following the Wall St Crash, the car sat at Barclays until 1932 when Kensington Moir, Bentley dealer and racer, bought it for £1200 – £250 less than the chassis price a year before. It was exactly the wrong time to bring out an outrageously fast and expensive car, and only 100 were built; yet WO claimed it was the most profitable Bentley they ever made.

From Kensington Moir GK 706 went through a series of owners, but all stayed in touch with the Bentley service department (which remained open until 1939). The records show that as early as 1932 GK 706 needed one new piston and eight main bearings, new rings only a year on, then new road springs and a series of crankshaft dampers, so it was not having an easy life.

Julian Majzub can't recall when his father bought the car, but he's known it much of his life. Fuad Majzub certainly had it in 1968, because that year he was able to reunite WO with his favourite Bentley when he took the founder to lunch in it on his 80th birthday. "I'm sorry to see it go," Julian says, "but it's for a good cause: my brother is giving the proceeds to a Middle East education charity. And it will be well looked after: Franz-Josef Paefgen [CEO of Bentley Motors] is very keen to maintain its originality."

In a few months GK 706 will look rather smarter than today, ready to parade the Bentley message; but I'm quietly glad I saw it first, a little weathered and worn.

When I went to inspect it the one view that I couldn't enjoy was the driver's outlook, peering along the bonnet over the wide, hard-rimmed wheel. Too much of a jump from my wheelchair. But that didn't matter; it's the one view I know already. Above the desk in my study at home there is a large Roy Nockolds print of the dash of this car, with WO's hand on the wheel and the bonnet spearing down a dusty French road between Napoleon's avenues of trees. With mountains on the left and open fields on the right, the arrow-straight road disappears to a distant, invisible goal, and there is not a vehicle in sight. I gaze at it when I'm stuck for the next line. When I've inched my way home in London's traffic, it's relaxing to look up at this Elysian vision of motoring as it once was, and to imagine that I'm sitting beside WO, in the finest car he ever made. ■

BENTLEY

COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD



*"IT'S RELAXING TO
IMAGINE I'M SITTING
BESIDE WO BENTLEY,
IN THE FINEST CAR
HE EVER MADE"*



FACT FILE

BENTLEY 8-LITRE, CHASSIS YF 5002

CHASSIS Steel side-members with tubular cross-members

FRONT SUSPENSION forged steel axle, semi-elliptic springs, friction dampers

REAR SUSPENSION live axle, semi-elliptic springs, hydraulic dampers

BRAKES drums all round, Dewandre servo

STEERING worm and sector

ENGINE CONFIGURATION six-cylinder inline

VALVEGEAR 24 valves, SOHC, triple eccentric drive

BORE X STROKE 110mm x 140mm

CAPACITY 7982cc

INDUCTION two SU carbs

MAXIMUM POWER 200bhp

GEARBOX four-speed manual, right-hand change

CLUTCH single-plate

DIMENSIONS

WHEELBASE 3656mm

FRONT TRACK 1422mm

REAR TRACK 1422mm

WEIGHT 2439kg

BENTLEY

COLLECTORS EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD

ROAD
TEST

BENTLEY MULSANNNE SPEED

Multiple refinements finally make this a true pleasure to drive

writer **ANDREW FRANKEL**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, AUGUST 2017



It's taken since the start of the decade, but Bentley has finally turned the Mulsanne if not into the car it should have been from the start, then at least the one you might have hoped it would be.

I've always enjoyed the Mulsanne – hard not to when ensconced in a cabin where perceived quality is not applied like make-up, but designed in from the very start. I liked the torque of the V8 and even its benevolent tolerance of being hustled quite quickly. But nor have I been blind to its

shortcomings: it's never ridden quite well enough to be a convincing rival for a Rolls-Royce, never felt quite quick enough to be cast in the role of the modern Speed Six. It felt caught between the imperative of being a luxury car and its conflicting brief to satisfy the desire of the man or woman behind the wheel. You can be driven in a Bentley, we are always told, but a Bentley is for driving.

No doubt this Speed model is the one that most subscribes to this credo. The enormous pushrod V8, so changed from the 1959 original that only ►



the bore centre spacings remain, now puts out 530bhp and, far more significantly, a wall of torque so wide and tall it might make an American president gasp.

New for this year is a rather dubious facelift forward of the A-pillars featuring new lights and a wider grille – how long must we wait before Bentley engineering is no longer let down by Bentley styling? – plus new suspension bushes, revised air spring ratings, active engine mounts and far quieter Dunlop tyres. Inside and at last there's an all-new infotainment system, now at least as good as one you might find in an Audi costing a tenth of the price.

Finally the car now seems complete. Certainly you'll find others, like AMG's S-class Mercedes, that are more dainty, blow harder at higher revs yet still ride beautifully and cost a fraction of this money; but there is nothing in my experience that feels like this. The Speed specification engine provides low-down torque unlike that of any other limousine and, at last, performance fully commensurate with its role in life. But I appreciated even more the improvements to the

car's ride and refinement: once a little disappointing, both are now truly magnificent.

I read elsewhere someone bemoaning that it wasn't a driver's car and I could scarcely disagree more. A driver's car is a car you enjoy driving, and while it may not get you to your apex like a Porsche Cayman or drift like a Jaguar F-type, that doesn't make it worse, just different. And it is unique: there is no question that a Rolls rides even better than this, and is a lot more attractive too, but the Bentley is a delight to drive fast and no longer forces you to accept compromises to its ride and handling as part of the deal.

This is not the best Bentley and the only reason it exists in a class of one right now is because Rolls-Royce is currently between Phantoms. But nothing encapsulates the spirit of Bentley better than this, nor feels more like I'd want a Bentley to feel. In short, I loved it. ■

FACT FILE

PRICE £252,000
ENGINE 6.75 litres, 8 cylinders, turbocharged
POWER 530bhp@4000rpm
TORQUE 811 lb ft@1750rpm
TRANSMISSION eight-speed automatic, rear-wheel drive
WEIGHT 2685kg
POWER TO WEIGHT 197bhp per tonne
0-62MPH 4.9sec
TOP SPEED 190mph
ECONOMY 19.3mpg
CO₂ 342g/km

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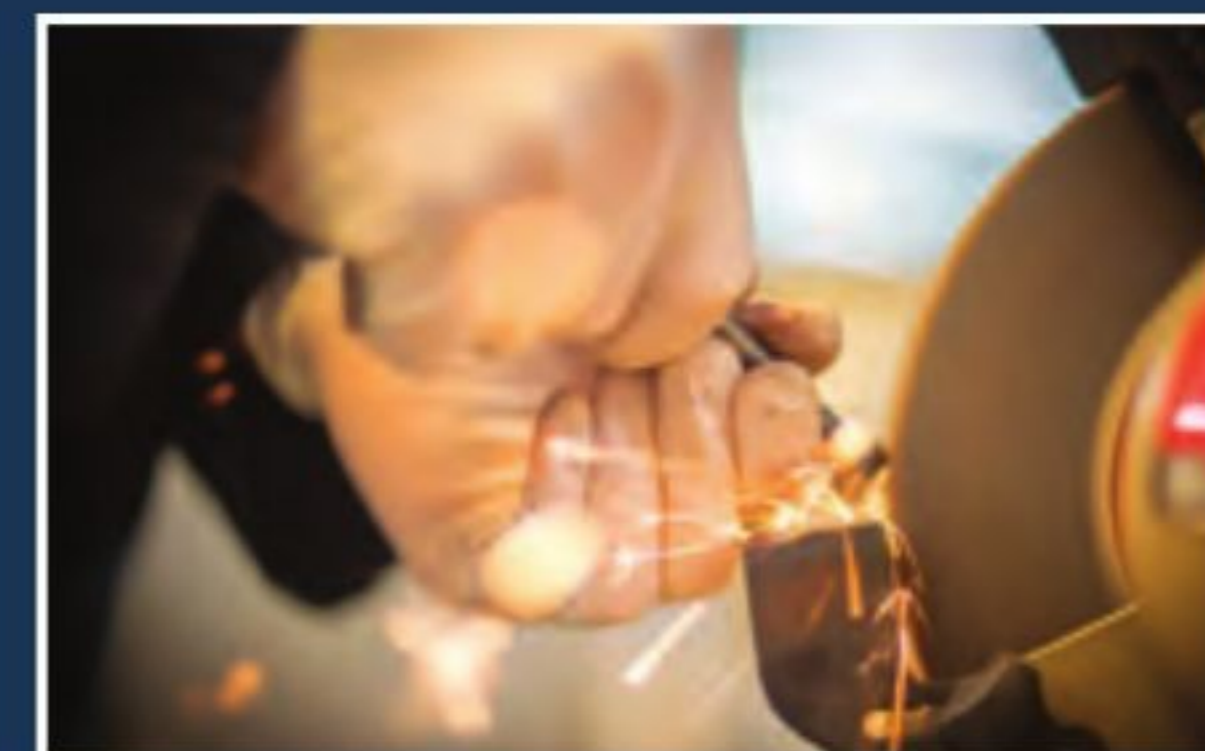
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BENTLEY

COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD

GENTLE GIANT

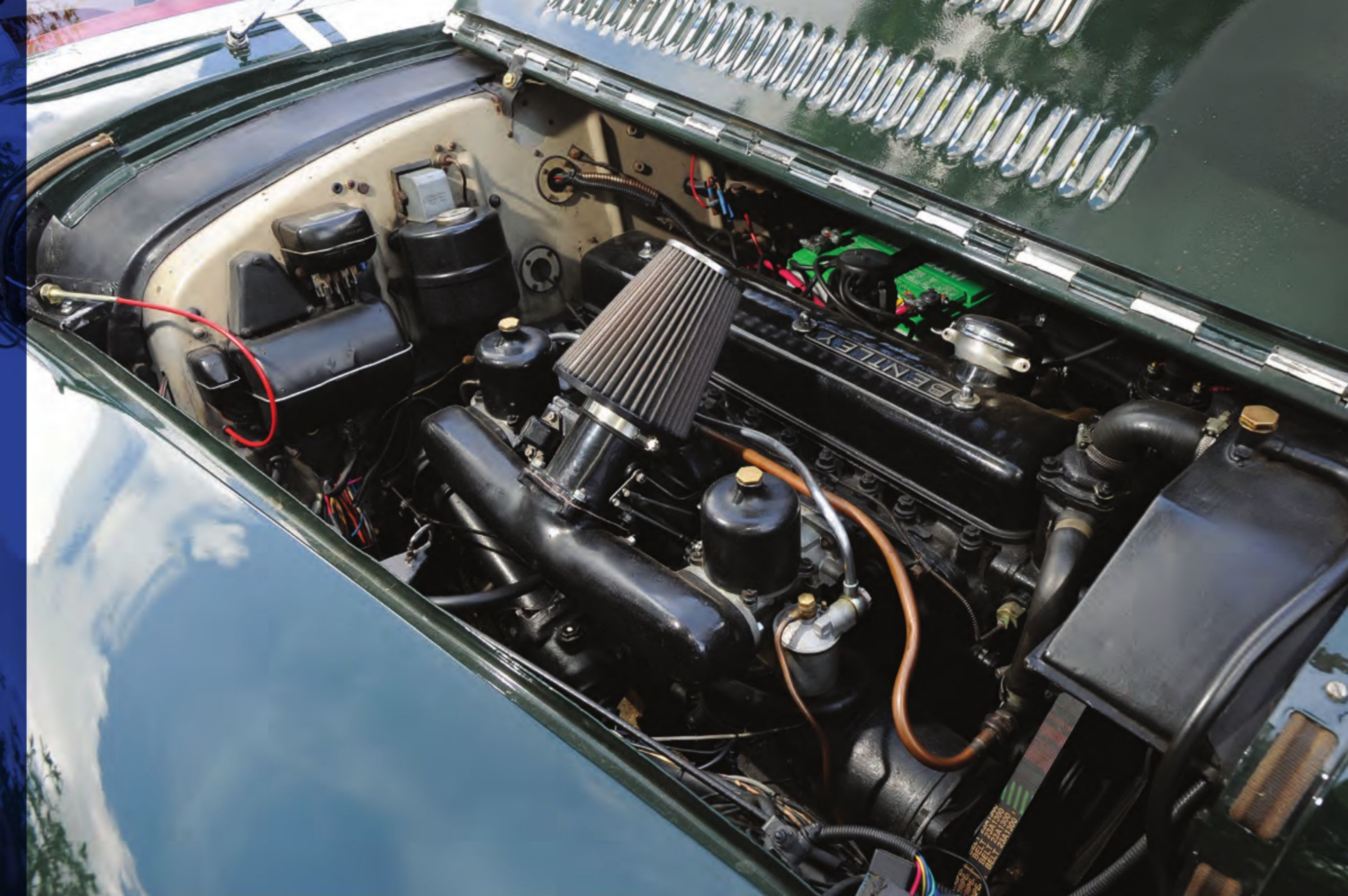
The distinctive Gooda Special Bentley proved to be a crowd favourite when it raced at Goodwood in 2014 – and it's every bit as engaging behind the wheel as it is to behold

writer **RICHARD HESELTINE** photographer **MICHAEL BAILIE**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, DECEMBER 2014









You don't know whether to laugh or cry but make a noise somewhere in-between. It just looks so, well, improbable. It arrives as a Bentley and departs as an Italianate GT, the bluff front end being instantly recognisable, the dramatically arched roofline and cropped Kamm tail rather less so. Then there are the go-quicker stripes and roundels that suggest it's a racing car, except the Gooda Special has only ever ventured trackside twice in competition as far as we are aware. What's more, its circuit forays were some 47 years apart. Delve more deeply into the car's history, however, and it transpires that this most rakish of Crewe ships was also a concours queen. It's nothing if not a contradiction.

But then so much about this remarkable machine is mired in obscurity and conjecture. It rather goes with the territory. As is so often the way with these things, web forums are awash with hypotheses. That the car is a modified R-type Continental (it isn't). Either that, or it's some sort of Bentley prototype (ditto). But by concentrating on what it isn't, you're in danger of missing out on what it is: a highly distinctive one-off that is a riot to drive.

Anyone who witnessed the Gooda Special's appearance at the 72nd Members' Meeting at Goodwood earlier this year will likely never forget it. Driven with gusto by veteran Wil Arif, it towered over its rivals in the Tony Gaze Trophy race. What's more, the car was lapped by many of them as it soared to 27th (and last) place. But – and it's an important but – the Bentley became an instant crowd favourite, its cult legacy assured.

Above: heeling into wind, Goodwood 2014. Right: kicking up the dirt in its youth



The car began life as a standard Bentley R-type saloon, the handsome if conservative 'medium-sized' model that replaced the closely related MkVI from 1952. According to the ever-helpful WO Bentley Memorial Foundation, chassis B 77 ZX left the factory in 1954 and was originally registered RTU 28. Some works documentation says it was used as a trials car by veteran Rolls-Royce/Bentley man Willoughby Lappin. The same paperwork describes it as having engine B 38 Z, a standard 4.8 straight six. Precisely how long Lappin retained the car is unclear and there's a gap in its history until the mid-1960s, by which time Robert (Bob) Gooda and Brian Dumps jointly owned it.

It's at this juncture that the car underwent its metamorphosis into the Gooda Special, although the motive behind its reinvention is lost in the mists of time. Rumour has it that the R-type was rolled, and rather than return the car to its original factory configuration the decision was made to create something more outré. In many ways, the car's creation foretold the cottage industry that would spring up converting MkVI and R-types into 'specials' during the '70s, names such as ►

Syd Lawrence and Derry Mallalieu being to the fore. The difference in this particular instance is that Gooda and Dumps opted for something more contemporary than the pre-war-style roadsters that came to typify the movement.

The fastback body was fashioned by Peel Coachworks of Kingston-upon-Thames, a coachbuilder steeped in motor sport. The firm took its name from the nearby Sir Robert Peel pub, partners Alec Goldie and Fred Faulkner becoming renowned within the British racing car industry for their ability to shape car bodies out of aluminium in double-quick time. More often than not, the ex-Hawker Aircraft men did so armed with little more than customers' doodles. Clients during the 1950s and '60s ranged from McLaren to WSM, the firm subsequently branching out into historic car restoration as racing manufacturers switched over to glassfibre (it is rumoured to have made about 500 repro Bugatti bodies).

The Bentley's new shell was created in 1966 and in a roundabout way it aped the lines of modern-day GT cars, albeit on a much grander scale. That

said, the headlight treatment owed more to the then-current Rolls-Royce Phantom V. Remarkably, the bonnet-line was some 4in lower than before, the Gooda Special also emerging somewhat shorter than a regular R-type – 15ft 4in rather than 16ft 7in – although the wheelbase remained unaltered. It was also lighter: 1549kg, down from 1880kg.

Any performance modifications remain unrecorded. The 4887cc straight-six was still mated to the factory three-speed automatic when the car was entered in the August 1967 Bentley Drivers' Club race meeting at Silverstone. The car was entrusted to Dumps for the five-lap handicap that kicked off the seasonal fixture, although it failed to last the distance. Co-owner Gooda emerged victorious in his S3 Continental, which was described somewhat dismissively by Gregor Grant in his *Autosport* report as a Rolls-Bentley. There is no mention of the Gooda Special in his two-page summary and the same is true of *Motoring News* and *Autocar*. The car was supposedly entered in the 10-lap handicap race that same weekend, but there is no record of it starting. ►

"IT ARRIVES AS A BENTLEY AND DEPARTS AS AN ITALIANATE GT, WITH DRAMATICALLY ARCHED ROOFLINE AND CROPPED KAMM TAIL"



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That would appear to be it for the Gooda Special's track forays in period, although photos exist of it kicking up a storm – and dust – off piste. The car might have competed in a round of the Player's No6 Autocross series in the late '60s, but records are patchy so this is conjecture. The same is true of what happened to the car subsequently. The Gooda Special is believed to have spent time in Belgium during the '70s, when Gooda had moved on to a Derby Bentley-based special. The coupé, however, was unquestionably in the USA by the end of the decade and had undergone a change of hue from silver to white. In 1979, the car made a fleeting appearance in the TV show *Vega\$[sic]*, which starred Robert Ulrich as private eye Dan Tanna. From there we find another gap, although according to Ray Roberts' book *Bentley Specials & Special Bentleys* the Gooda Special was back in Britain by April 1990, when it was offered for sale by Straight Eight Ltd of Goldhawk Road, London. The car subsequently headed Stateside once again where, more recently, Terry O'Reilly owned it. He showed the car at The Quail: A Motorsport Gathering concours in 2008 and drove it on the Copperstate 1000 Rally two years later.

Which brings us to today, when this globe-trotting behemoth is once again terrorising British circuits. The funny thing is, while it may look vast in photos, up close the Bentley appears positively dainty when compared to something like, say, a modern GT car. Up front, the stately body-colour grille has thankfully been denuded of the badge bar it once wore. So far, so normal. It's only when viewed in profile that it appears unlike any other Bentley from the period. The dropaway reverse-

angle door window treatment seems perhaps a mite odd, but the roof-line and air vents offer sufficient racer reference points, as do the louvres punched into the vast acreage of bonnet. The wheels, meanwhile, were made specifically for the car back in the '60s.

Unconventionally attractive to some and conventionally unattractive to others, there's no ignoring the Gooda Special. From certain angles it appears cohesive, from others more a mishmash of discordant elements that have been hammered into shape. Nonetheless, it's hard not to fall for this strangest of Bentleys. It's eminently likable, and even more so once you've clambered aboard, which isn't the easiest of tasks given that it has about a foot of ground clearance. That, and it now has a gearlever sprouting out of the floor to the driver's right. The date of its change from an autobox to a four-speed manual is another mystery. What is clear is that its positioning would likely make lightning driver changes damn near impossible in endurance events. It really isn't the easiest of cars to enter in a hurry.

But it's worth the effort. You cannot help but giggle like a loon even when stationary, because the view ahead is so surreal. How many other racing cars can you think of that have a pull-out desk in the dashboard? The vast steering wheel and burr walnut fascia are pure Bentley, the large aftermarket tacho rather less so. The bucket seats are on the small side, but they are surprisingly supportive. Behind you sits the spare wheel/tyre in an oceanic expanse of space: it more than lives up to the GT ideal as there's loads of room for luggage, spares and heaven knows what else. ►



BENTLEY

COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD



*"IT FIRES IN AN INSTANT AT TROUSER-
FLAPPING VOLUME. YOU DON'T NEED TO BE
TOLD IT'S ON OPEN EXHAUSTS"*



And then the good bit: turn the ignition key, thumb the starter and the Bentley fires in an instant, and at trouser-flapping volume. There aren't even token concessions to decorum here, more a surround-sound fanfare played out at the rate of artillery fire. It's hard not to just sit there flexing the throttle pedal; it's childish but life-affirming. Act the grown-up and it settles to a meaty burble at idle. You don't need to be told that it's on open exhausts.

Depress the light(ish) clutch, ease it into gear, release the parking brake beneath the dash and there's a degree of hesitancy as you amble off the line. Initial acceleration isn't exactly electrifying but, once up and rolling, it comes into its own. Speed builds with freight train-like momentum, gearchanges being surprisingly close-coupled. The actual shift action requires a long throw – you feel as though you're operating machinery, rather than having the hard work done for you as with many modern-day performance cars – but there is little movement across the gate. It has a fierce spring-bias, but it's hard to grandma a gearshift. It's debatable whether you really need to double declutch, but it's fun to hear the engine note rear up as you blip for each shift so it's no great hardship. Given that the standard R-type was capable of 106mph in period, it's fair to assume that the much lighter Gooda Special is good for 120mph or more.


The worm and roller steering is light but has plenty of feel aside from a slight dead spot on the straight ahead, but that could be down to the car's age and a lack of familiarity on the driver's part. You're certainly aware of the less than racy architecture – a beam rear axle on semi-elliptic leaf springs for starters – but it isn't discombobulated by rutted asphalt. It rolls – more than a bit – and you suspect that once it starts flailing, the rear end could likely take out a small cottage, but it's not remotely scary. Nothing of the sort. What this car needs is room, and plenty of it, but it's nowhere near as intimidating as you might imagine when driven with enthusiasm. Some way south of the limit it's pretty faithful. Even the drum brakes work well, although there's about an inch of travel in the middle pedal before they bite. On the debit side, there's precious little ventilation and the cockpit soon becomes very toasty, but this is to be expected.

The Gooda Special is a much better car than preconceptions will have you believe. Even the briefest of sorties tells you that. Quite aside from its out-there appearance, it's great fun to drive. This most barking of Bentleys is an intriguing curio, a very special special that was built to a particular brief; one that arguably works better as a road-going GT car than a competition tool. It offers greatness and derangement in equal measure, and that is why it's compelling still. The Gooda Special might not be to all tastes, but once savoured you crave second helpings. ■

BENTLEY

COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD





DRIVING THE... EX-BIRKIN BLOWER-4 $\frac{1}{2}$ SINGLE-SEATER BENTLEY

Road Impressions of Russ-Turner's
Famous Brooklands Lap Record Car

writer **BILL BODDY**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, OCTOBER 1973

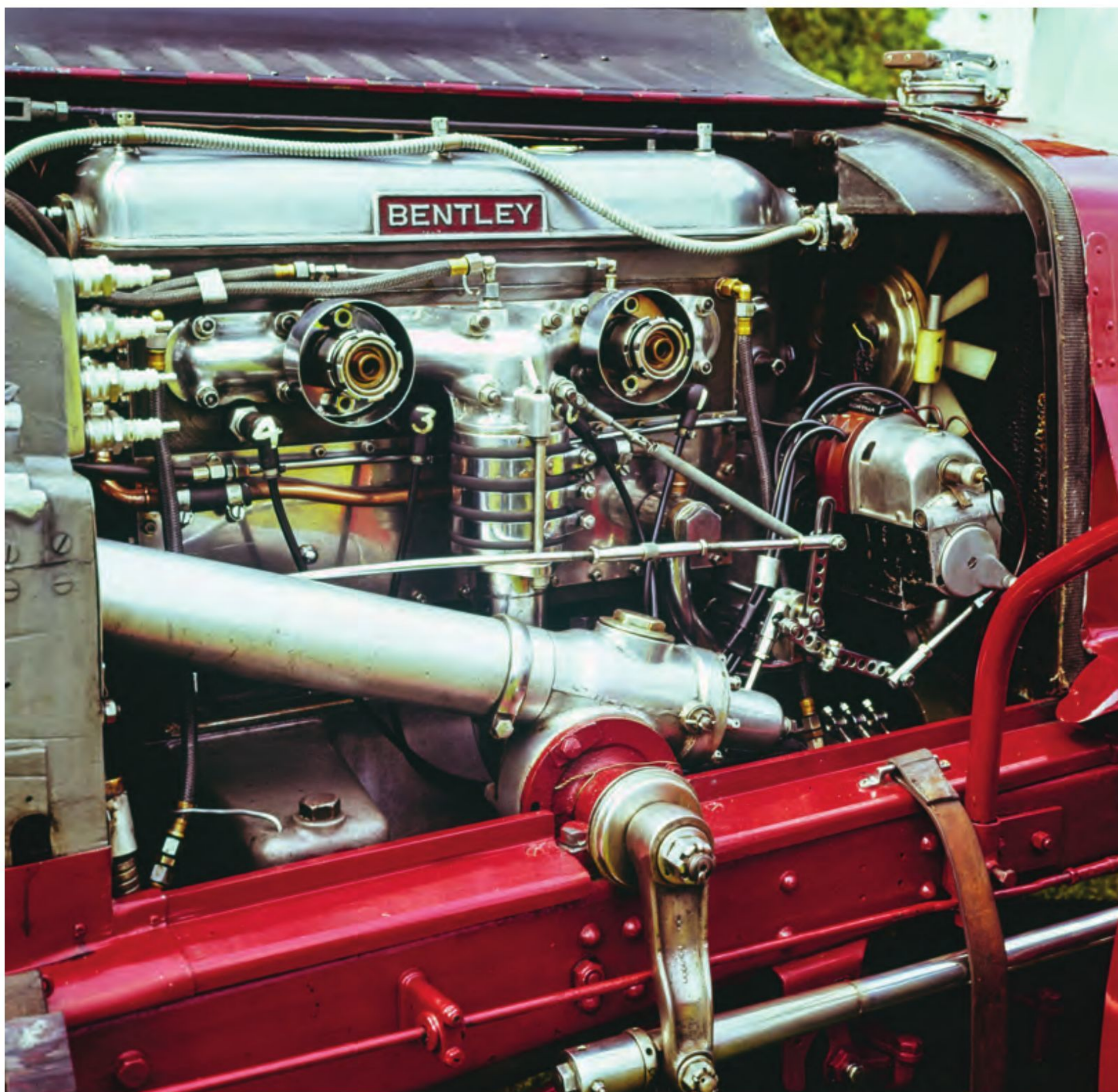
The Blower-4 $\frac{1}{2}$ single-seater Bentley with which the late Sir Henry Birkin twice broke the Brooklands outer-circuit lap record was very much in evidence when I was a regular visitor to the Track. Its appearance raised anticipation to high levels, because it was one of the fastest cars racing, effectively taking the place of the legendary aero-engined monsters of an earlier decade. To see the slight figure of the Baronet taking this long, slim, blue (later red) Bentley round the bankings was indeed exciting, his polka-dot scarf streaming out behind his helmet and the big car snaking viciously over the bumps. From which it can be seen that I was an avid admirer of this combination of man and machine and used to watch it in most of its races.

The last appearance of this very fast and successful Brooklands car was when Birkin beat John Cobb by 0.8sec in a match race in 1932, won at 124.33mph. By then Birkin was estimated to

have done more than 50 laps of Brooklands in it at 135mph or more and had twice broken the lap-record with it. Sir Henry died in 1933 and surprisingly the Bentley was never raced again before the war, and Birkin's patron Dorothy Paget did not sell it. Sir Henry had said it was an extremely difficult car to drive fast so perhaps there were no takers.

In 1939, however, the late Peter Robertson-Roger charmed the car's titled owner into parting with it, and later 'Rusty' Russ-Turner bought it. After using it for a while in modified two-seater form, he refitted the single-seater body. Now the car looks very decently original and is on its original UU 5871 registration. It is raced in VSCC, BDC, and other events and used on the road in its old Brooklands guise.

Russ-Turner has spent a vast amount of time and money on restoring the blower 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ track car and it was a great honour when he invited me to drive it. When we arrived at his Sussex cottage, there on the lawn was the car I had come down to drive and I lost little time in going out in it, paced by Russ-Turner's open Bentley Corniche. The four-spoke steering wheel is very big, so there ►



Twin blow-off valves crown the inlet manifold, above. Right, chronometric tach dominates a busy control panel

were some gymnastics to get both legs beneath it. Seated, the long much-louvred bonnet stretches purposefully ahead and you are confronted by a magnificent array of dials and controls, with a pull-out knob below which frees the reverse stop on the gear-lever should one need to travel backwards. Lower down under this crowded dashboard are a horn-push, Ki-gass tank pressuriser, a hand throttle, and the glass-bowl oil drip-feed for the rear supercharger bearing.

The body, although a single-seater, is off-set, so there is quite a lot of space on one's left. Behind the red bucket seat the bulkhead is in the original blue paint, with a Brooklands admission label and a carefully preserved Scrutineer's ticket mounted on it. Even now I have not exhausted the list, because the cockpit floor presents a battery master switch, a brake-adjuster knob, a long plug spanner, and a Firemaster Fury fire extinguisher. Rusty has made few concessions to road motoring, apart from the obvious items among those mentioned,

and the brakes are still cable operated. Somewhat over-awed, I pressed out the clutch, which has very little movement and feels solid, pressed the starter button, eased in first gear with the outside lever and prepared to go motoring! Being conscious that I was privileged to be driving a one-off, very valuable and quite irreplaceable car, and not wishing to write off both the Bentley and the Corniche in one big shunt, I drove very sedately.

There was no need for this, however, because the brakes work exceptionally well, the equal of today's hydraulic brakes, so that one is never conscious that there is nearly two tons of motor car to control, and it steers easily and rides very comfortably. But do not imagine that it is in any way dull! Depress the central accelerator and dramatic things happen. The acceleration is ►



BENTLEY

COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD



exceptionally good even in top gear, in which I satisfied myself that 3200rpm, nearly 100mph, comes up very easily indeed, the Bentley running straight as an arrow. In Birkin's time the car was capable of 145mph.

The long polished brake lever, outboard of the stubby gear lever, is easy to reach and just about as effective as using the pedal. Only a touch of throttle is needed when double-declutching from top into third and the gear-change is quite easy to accomplish, while the upward change from second into third is one of the most satisfying I have experienced — I found I would snatch my way into second at the approach of a roundabout even though not necessary simply for the sheer pleasure of going back into third!

Looking ahead over the exciting bonnet I was not really aware of the length of tail behind me; but in traffic it is reassuring to know that the rear-view mirror gives a reasonable view behind. The typical tangy note from the Brooklands exhaust system, the other fascinating noises as the

needle of the blower gauge swept upwards, and the great waves of heat which soon engulfed me added to the excitement of this memorable drive. No wonder passers-by look with interest at one's swift passage! Traffic was heavy on the hot August day but the Bentley intended for Brooklands proved entirely manageable. I had been instructed either to open or shut the throttle and not to trail it as part-throttle soots the plugs. So, on these congested roads it was mostly a case of bursts of exhilarating acceleration, accompanied by the roar of the engine and crackle of the exhaust, or slowing under the influence of the brakes with their big, deeply ribbed drums...

Incidentally, my drive on the road in this single-seater was really quite appropriate, because Gallop used to drive it thus from Welwyn to Brooklands. With rear-wheel brakes only, he must have concentrated pretty hard...

Towards the end of the run, when a traffic jam brought me to rest, the heat did rise towards 90degC and I duly switched in the fan. Otherwise, no drama. But it was very satisfying and I am indebted to the Bentley's owner for the experience. I have now tried two of the Brooklands lap-record cars, as the Hon Patrick Lindsay allowed me to briefly sample the Napier-Railton at Silverstone... ■

Bill Boddy sits at the wheel, with owner Rusty Russ-Turner alongside

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BENTLEY

COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD



GREEN

Whether on the podium or on the society pages, the Bentley Boys made news.

writer **GORDON CRUICKSHANK**



TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, FEBRUARY 2007

PARTY

Just how did these hearty revellers combine fun with serious racing?

Maybe it's the word 'boys' that makes the phrase ring. We know that they were grown men, but somehow it's the image of schoolboy larks which cements the legend of the Bentley Boys. It's rooted in the time, too: the 1920s, when men with inherited wealth didn't have to work, paid racing drivers were rare and the amateur ideal was still admired.

Who were these grown-up boys? There was no strict qualification: if you were asked to drive for the works you were part-way there, but it was as much an informal social club as a team. We know them now as party-goers; yet they were regular winners. How did these contrasting elements co-exist?

Most of the Boys were Bentley owners already racing their own cars. They loved the off-duty pranks, but they respected team discipline: as WO Bentley said, if they had not, they would lose their place to one of the numerous contenders for it.

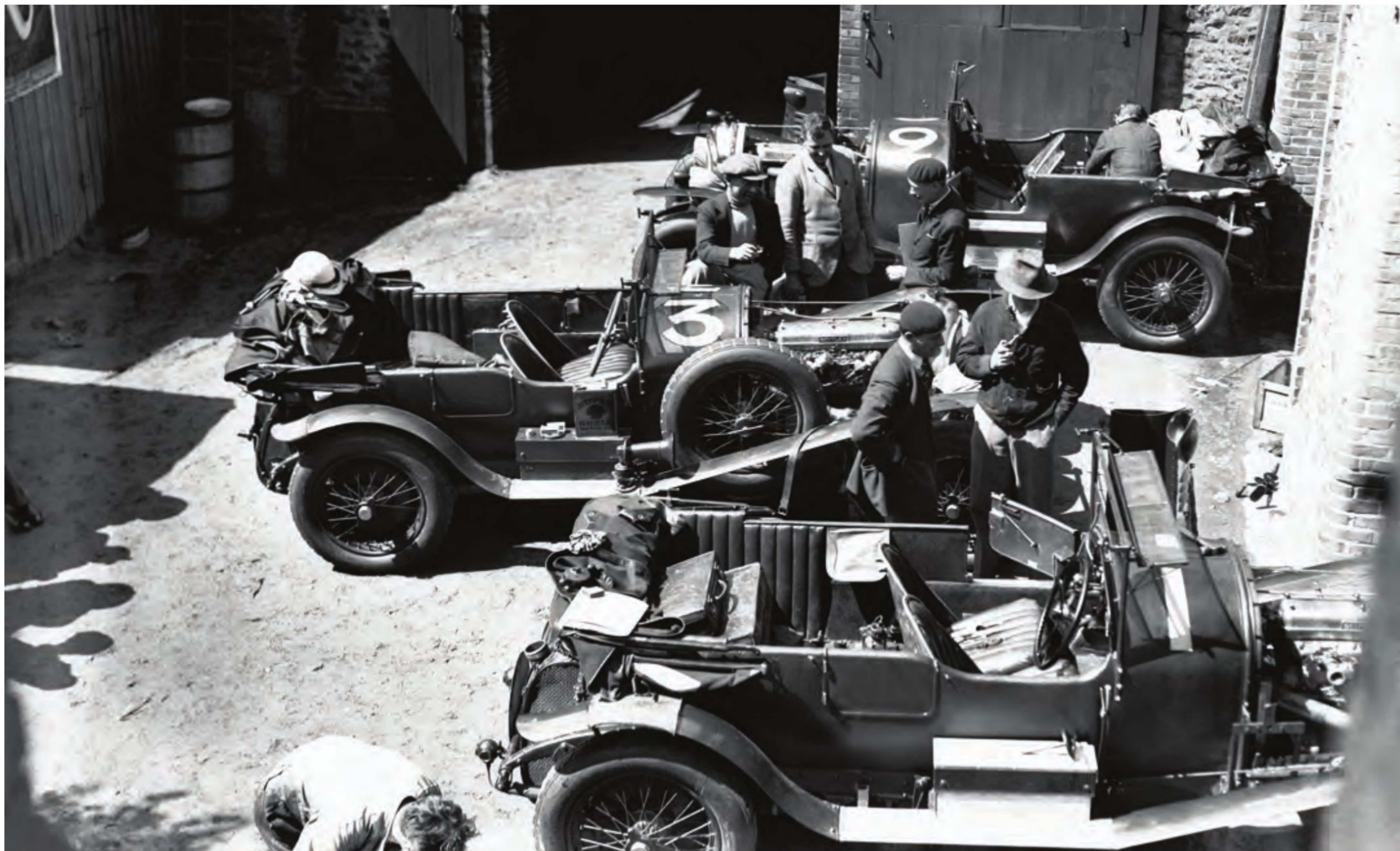
"We were fortunate in having a mile-long waiting list which included the best amateurs of the day," he said. Under WO's attentive eye the team became extremely thorough – pit routines were even filmed to improve efficiency. Despite the larky image, the Bentley team raced to win, and for serious reasons.

"We were in racing not for the glory and heroics but strictly for business," said WO. "No-one ever attempted to dispute that competition success was the



cheapest way of selling cars."

Practical jokes and midnight adventures were the code, so it was ironic that this levity had at its core the reticent, moody man who was WO, a man who reacted to adversity with silence and hated to argue. He was nevertheless revered in the firm; if there was friction it was rarely with the drivers. He appreciated the PR value of the Boys, calling them "this nebulous band of drivers, whose club houses were Mayfair and Brooklands and whose 24-hour AGM took place at Le Mans. The public liked to imagine them living in





“THE PUBLIC LIKED TO IMAGINE THEM IN SMART MAYFAIR FLATS WITH SEVERAL MISTRESSES AND SEVERAL BENTLEYS”

expensive Mayfair flats with several mistresses and several Bentleys. For at least several of them this was not such an inaccurate picture”.

WO was selling a touring car, and knew that endurance events such as the BRDC 500 and the Double-12 were ideal showpieces. The perfect showroom, too, for the toughness of Frank Duff. Looking for excitement after WWI, Duff chose motor racing. Big FIATs and a huge Benz were merely tasters before he bought a 3-litre Bentley and decided to break Double 12-hour records at Brooklands. Tall and slender, Duff hardly looked a tough guy, but he swam and ran assiduously and ate a curious health diet, and if anyone smiled as he mixed his honey and eggs, it didn't cancel their admiration for those

relentless hours of forcing his Bentley around that dusty concrete bowl.

In 1923, when a 24-hour race was mooted at Le Mans, it was Duff who took the idea to WO, saying that if the firm would prepare it and lend a mechanic, he'd buy a new Speed model and enter it. Duff wasn't the first to propose such a plan, but he was a Bentley dealer, he had results behind him, and WO felt they could do business.

To drive with Duff, WO allocated Frank Clement. As a Bentley employee, Clement was the nearest thing to a professional driver, though his racing came on top of his post in the Bentley experimental shop. His thoroughness was behind the details which would make the Bentleys successful: external fillers, quick-action caps and endless pits drill. Though always included in team celebrations, he was not one of the glamour crew with a private income, and was frustrated by the Boys' collective lack of mechanical knowledge. He enjoyed the fun but found it “a nuisance at times”. He was the only Bentley driver to compete in all the Le Mans entries from 1923-30.

That 1923 exercise was a bit makeshift: they just loaded up the car and drove down to Le Mans. WO ►

Top left: WO Bentley in TT entry. Left: team prepares for 1927 race- no3 will win for Benjy/Davis. Above: Duff, WO and Clement with victorious 3-litre in 1924

and AFC Hillstead, the sales manager, followed by train. Duff's car performed well, though a holed petrol tank knocked them back two hours; Duff ran three miles back to the pits for aid. They finished fourth.

Duff went back to Le Mans on the same terms in '24 and this time he and Clement won. Duff's fastidious preparations had brought Bentley glory at very little cost. After the disastrous '25 Le Mans, when both cars ran out of fuel, he set more 24-hour records at Montlhéry. He moved to America in 1926, returning in the 30s to breed horses; he died in 1958, falling from the saddle.

Another customer would soon make his mark. A consultant bacteriologist, cheerful, balding, Dr J D Benjafield hardly looked like a playboy. With a lucrative private practice and a wealthy wife his social life involved weekends on his motor boat and visits to Brooklands. After the Bentley's good showing at Le Mans in '23, he bought a 3-litre and began to fancy himself as a bit of a driver. But it was Bertie Kensington-Moir, who ran the service department at

Cricklewood, who brought him into the fold. Large and cheery, Moir, said Hillstead, "could be very troublesome on occasions," explaining that while sharing a cabin across to Le Mans in 1924, Moir pitched WO out of his bunk and created a shambles in the room. But WO remembered his "vast good humour and warmth".

Moir and Benjy took to each other, and when Benjafield made the mistake of hinting that he'd like more speed, Moir decided to show him something, pelting him round Brooklands in his own short-chassis racer to show the nervous doctor what speed really meant. Later he claimed to have hated it. "I got out of the beastly thing knowing that never before had I been so utterly terrified." But the high-spirited Moir persuaded him to buy it, and soon Benjafield was racing and winning; within a year Moir asked him to join the team for the ill-fated '25 race.

Sadly, 1926 was another flop – Sammy Davis, driving No7 with Benjafield, crashed – but Benjafield bought the repaired car and entered it in the Boillot



Beached - one Speed Six Bentley, after Clive Dunfee went off at Pontlieu in 1930

"I HAD COME THROUGH A BAD SMASH WITH NOTHING WORSE THAN BROKEN RIBS, BROKEN TEETH AND A CRUSHED LIP"

Cup at Boulogne. However, he hit a tree, later commenting: "I had come through a really bad smash with nothing worse than three broken ribs, four broken teeth and a crushed lip – a considerable source of embarrassment to me that evening..."

However, he was cheered up in hospital by another of the Boys. He wasn't terribly rich, but George Duller had a wealth of that other Bentley resource – fun. A cheeky humour and a fund of stories made Duller popular on an evening in town, but he maintained his seat on the unofficial Bentley 'board' because of his

sportsmanship. Compact, fit and competitive, Duller's other existence was as an amateur steeplechase jockey, an unusual parallel for a racing driver; yet he became very successful behind an engine. Perhaps hands that were sensitive to a horse's bit could also gauge just how far to push a car.

That sense of fun showed when visiting the injured Benjy. "He was most sympathetic until he discovered my injuries were so trivial," recalled the doctor. "As soon as he realised this he started his inimitable clowning to make me laugh. The result was not only painful but started my lip bleeding again."

1926 was another dark year at Le Mans, when one 3-litre crashed and one broke a rocker arm; for a while it seemed that Benjy might triumph, until Sammy Davis went off.

WO Bentley did not plan to enter Le Mans in '27; it was Benjafield's pressure which made him relent. The doctor had spent a lot of money on 'Old No7' and was proposing it as a team car – customer dedication once again helping out the company. But the doctor ►



wanted Sammy Davis as co-driver, and when Bentley announced that Davis would partner Clement on the new 4½, Benjafield wasn't prepared to agree. "Strictly speaking, in the interests of the team I should have given way," he wrote; but he held his ground.

This was the year of the notorious White House crash, when the works 3-litre and the new 4½ collided avoiding a spinner and Davis in Benjy's old faithful managed to hit the pile up only lightly. Rough repairs got him going again, and when the leading Aries broke down, Davis and Benjafield were the winners. Benjafield showed his sportsmanship by pulling up 15 minutes before 4pm to let Sammy take the flag.

Hillstead recalled his thoughtfulness at Le Mans when the doctor discovered him hungry but tied to his post by lap-scoring duties; Benjafield soon reappeared with chicken and champagne. And when Bentley mechanic Billy Rockell was injured, Benjy got him into his own hospital, St Georges. He was the ideal mix of

professional and joker: "Wonderful fun at all times," recalled WO. "Except perhaps before a race. Benjy worried – a useful asset in a racing driver."

Though he failed to finish in '28, Benjy, with Baron André d'Erlanger, took third in the dominating 1-2-3-4 result at the Sarthe in '29, a fine end to his Le Mans career. He died in 1969.

The Boys were all friends, but Benjy liked to drive with SCH Davis, Technical Editor of *The Autocar*. Davis was already a seasoned racer when Benjy invited him to share No7 Bentley at Le Mans in 1926, and his sterling recovery after the White House smash made him a bit of a hero even among the Boys. Admired equally for his racing and his journalism, Sammy received two BRDC Gold Stars, in '29 and '30. After a serious crash in 1931 he turned to rallies, continuing to write in *The Autocar* and many books. He died in 1981.

Benjafield's racing successes in 1924 inspired a new,

"BENJY WAS FUN,
BUT HE WORRIED
BEFORE A RACE – A
USEFUL ASSET IN
A RACING DRIVER





Woolf Barnato's Speed Six prepares to pass a Tracta in 1930. Note damage from tyre failure. Top: Tim Birkin tips fuel churns into his tank during a Brooklands race

quicker '100mph' model – and one purchaser wanted to go racing. He was called Woolf Barnato. Loud and self-indulgent, with a whiff of scandal attached, he had inherited millions from his diamond-dealer father. By early 1926 he had been persuaded to buy not only the new 6½-litre car but the firm as well, and suddenly the business, at that point facing liquidation, had proper financial resources.

'Babe,' as the husky six-foot athlete was known, based himself at Ardenrun, the vast house on his 1000-acre estate in Surrey. In 1929, celebrating his second Le Mans victory, he laid on charabancs to bring guests down from London for 'the Grand Prix de Danse', where there were impromptu races on the estate. He did not jump straight into the racing team, though; it was two years after buying the firm that he became one of the Boys.

Though brash, Barnato was anything but rash; he was shrewd, avoided unnecessary risk, and religiously followed WO's racing orders. The entertainment was lavish, yet he had a name for petty parsimony and was a hard businessman. And while he revelled in the glory, he was just as dedicated while pounding round a

sodden Montlhéry circuit chasing 24-hour records, with neither applause nor champagne in prospect.

His most famous exploit, beating the Blue Train in a dash from Cannes to London, has become a defining element in the Barnato story; yet far from being the spur of the moment bet of legend, it was carefully prepared and rather low key. Indeed he undertook it only to prove it was no great feat.

He was, said WO, "the best driver we ever had, and, I consider, the best British driver of his day". If any of his victories showed his racing discipline in high contrast to the playboy image, it was in 1928. By now chairman of Bentley, he nevertheless took his orders from WO and accepted his place with Bernard Rubin in the third team car, the repaired '27 winner. And after the Birkin/Chassagne Bentley was delayed by a puncture and the Clement/Benjafeld chassis cracked, Barnato, sharing with Rubin, showed superb restraint to shadow the leading Stutz until it faltered, meanwhile nursing a car with a cracked frame and dry radiator to a tense win. It was his first Le Mans. With his wins in '29 and '30, he remains the only man to have won a hat-trick there from his debut. ►



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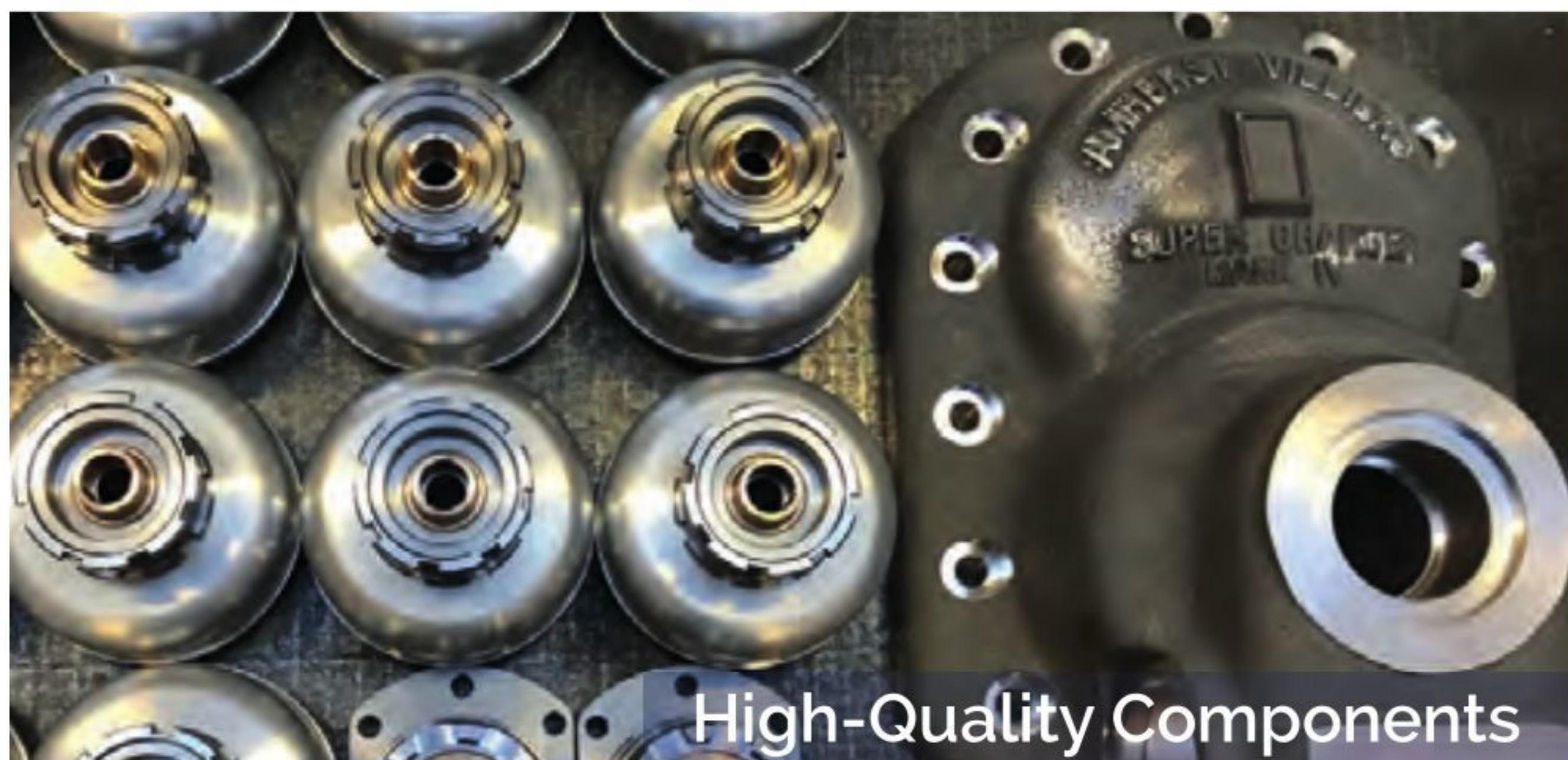
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He chose not to bale Bentley out of its debts before it was sold to Rolls-Royce during the depression of 1931, but his own fortunes survived. He died of cancer in 1948, aged 52.

WO had decided to stop racing after the 1926 debacle, but Barnato wasn't going to miss that source of fun, and quickly put in place a renewed race organisation with a separate race shop. Part of the preparation for 1927 was to run a six-hour race at Brooklands in May, modelled closely on Le Mans. On probation was a new face, Captain Sir Henry Birkin.

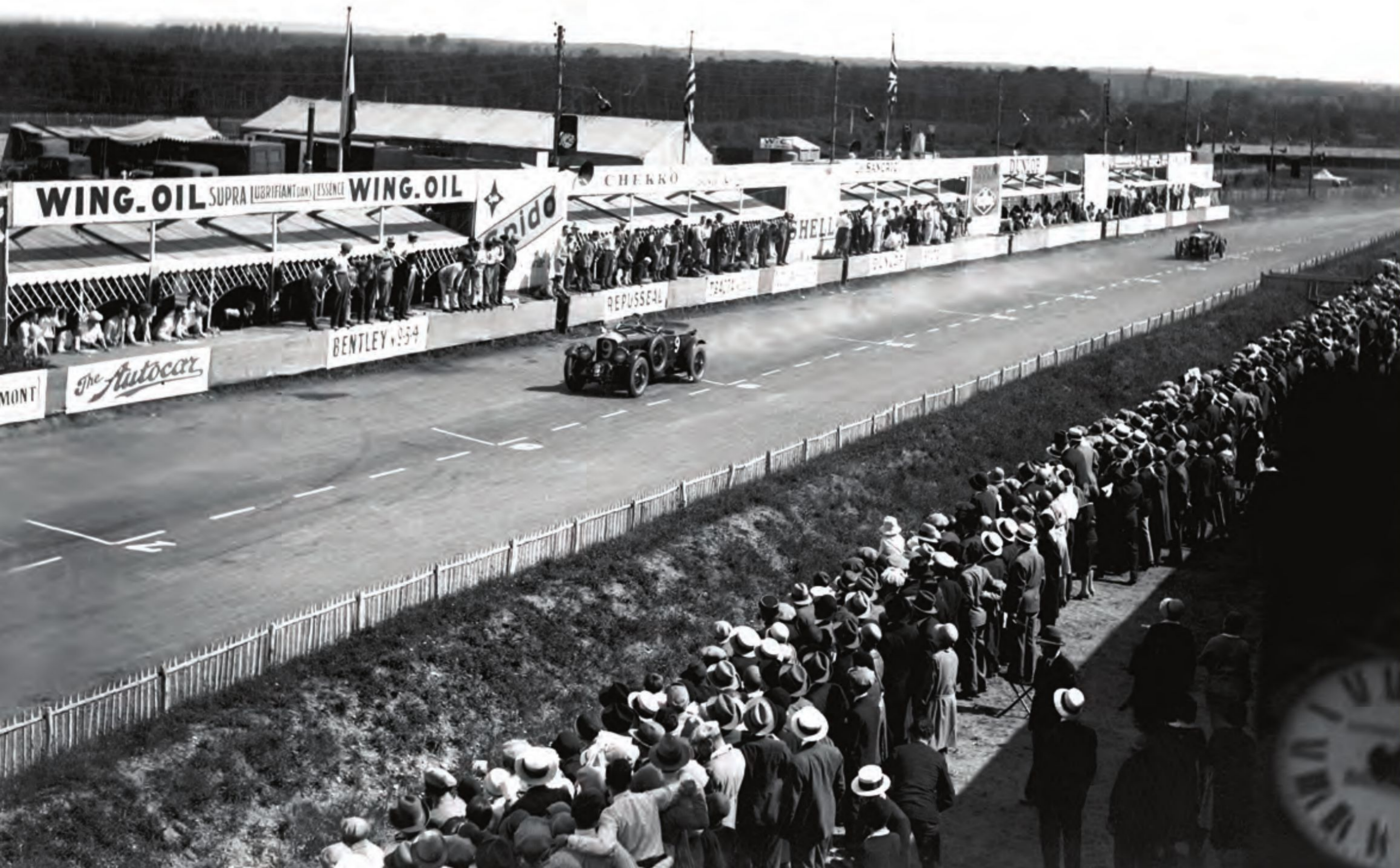
Another war pilot seeking excitement, 'Tim' Birkin, being rich and vivacious, chose Bentleys. Small, slim, shy, with a slight stutter, he shouldn't have been a

hero; but with his dashy dress sense, pencil moustache and a fortune from Nottingham lace, he was an attractive character.

Perhaps due to what he had seen during WWI, there was a dark streak in the dapper baronet. He did take risks, he was not always an easy companion, and he had little sense of money. He soon spent his entire inheritance but failed to trim his lifestyle; he quarrelled with his partner in his garage business, and while his ghost-written racing memoir *Full Throttle* was a big success, he had signed away the royalties for previous debts. And he was tough on a car: WO called him "ruthless; I know of nobody who could tear up a piece of machinery so completely". Still, he and French veteran Jean Chassagne took their 4½ to fifth in 1928, and the following year Tim partnered Babe in the winning car. However, while racing at the Nürburgring in 1928 he had been overly impressed by the supercharged Mercedes, and set out to build his own blown Bentleys.

On the social plane Tim fitted the Boys image completely, but on the track he was the maverick. In 1928's Le Mans he drove too fast on a damaged tyre, stranding himself in a ditch for three hours. In 1930, though, he made the perfect hare to the hounds, running his own Blower at ferocious speeds and helping rid the team of its most feared rival by overstressing Caracciola's Mercedes. Though no-one else believed the blower would finish, Tim did, and it was a sacrifice for him that it did indeed fail. ►

Top: umbrellas on parade as Speed Six of Barnato/Kidston splashes to 1930 win. Tim Birkin's Blower, below, retired but had broken the Mercedes





Bentley's Le Mans pit in 1927: l to r, Clement, Callingham, d'Erlanger, Duller, Davis, Benjafield. WO Bentley is behind car, second from right

As was turning to Alfa Romeo for a second Le Mans victory in 1931...

To his friend Benjafield's distress, it was Tim's careless attitude that finished him: neglecting dressings for his burnt arm led to Tim's death from blood poisoning in 1933.

A late joiner, but quintessentially one of the Boys, Commander Glen Kidston joined the Le Mans team for 1929. Whereas many of the Boys had left the forces after WWI, he was still serving. A submarine officer, he loved shooting, hunted big game, boxed and raced motorcycles before the cars came along, and he had a record of drama. He was sunk aboard HMS Hogue in 1914, escaped from his sunken submarine, and had to smash his way out of a wrecked aircraft on a flight to Paris. A Riviera regular, he believed in Great Britain's pre-eminent place in the world and wanted to prove her sons worthy of it. Motor racing was one arena for this, and sharing a Le Mans second place with Jack Dunfee in 1929, and winning with Barnato in 1930 helped make his point. He died in 1931 when his aircraft broke up flying over South Africa. Woolf Barnato wrote in his obituary that he was "a resourceful and gallant driver... the most perfect host... a good talker and a better listener... the

"THERE WAS REAL JOY, SAID SAMMY DAVIS, 'IN THE FACT THAT ONE'S RIVALS WERE ONE'S FRIENDS'"

beau ideal of a sportsman."

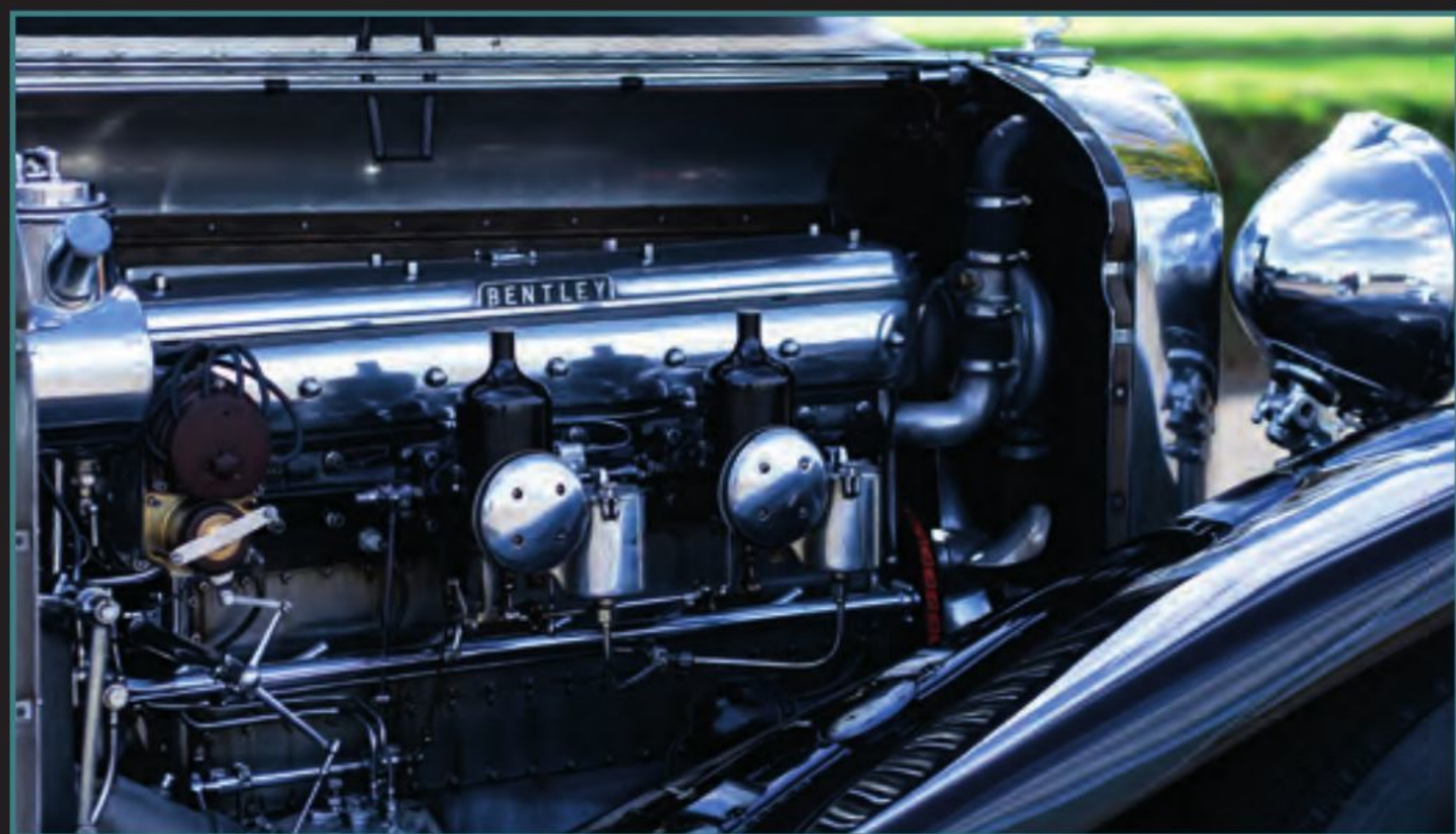
That, perhaps, is what caught the public eye about the Bentley Boys (a phrase which Benjafield, for one, disliked). It was more than success and wealth; sportsmanship was central to their friendly competitiveness. "There was real joy," said Sammy Davis, "in the fact that one's rivals were one's friends."

But with Bentley's sale in 1931, the effects of the Depression and political shadows abroad, the light-hearted mix would not be repeated. "I question if we shall ever see again as cheery a crowd," Tim Birkin wrote in 1932. "We were always seen together; we had the same manner of speech; the same jokes among ourselves." He was partly right; racing drivers continue to have fun, but none since in such a visible, cohesive group as The Bentley Boys. ■

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BENTLEY

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ROAD
TEST

BENTLEY FLYING SPUR V8

With fewer cylinders and less power, the spec sheet says it's a step down. But savour the V8's torque to see why it's a clever marketing move

writer **ANDREW FRANKEL**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, JANUARY 2015







On paper there seems little point in considering this new 4-litre V8 version of the Bentley Flying Spur over its extant 6-litre W12 big brother. It costs about £10,000 less, but in Bentley-land you pay that much to equip your car with fancy ceramic brakes. What you lose is not just two litres and four cylinders but a whole 116bhp, once enough to power an entire hot hatchback. Now with a trifling 500bhp, this is the least-powerful Bentley you can buy, yet at 2425kg it is still massively heavy and indeed a mere 50kg lighter than the apparently far better value 12-cylinder car. It does, just, get under the limit for top-rate excise duty, but you'll still pay £860 in your first year and £485 thereafter for your virtual tax disc.

But the V8 Spur is nothing like the weak link its specification suggests – and this is why. For good or for bad but certainly for sound commercial reasons, the current Flying Spur is a car designed more for those in the back than the front. This is where most Chinese owners will sit and this is where Bentley sells most Spurs, one reason why the largest Bentley dealership in the world is in Beijing rather than Los Angeles or London. It is not a driver's car and so long as Bentley continues to produce other machinery that is rewarding to drive, I have no problem with that.

What profit, then, is there in having the 12-cylinder engine? To many it will simply be a desire to show you have not had to settle for second-best, for what other reason could there be for choosing the V8? Plenty, as it turns out.

Most importantly the V8 is a far nicer engine than the 12, which has its cylinders arranged in such a way that it's more illuminating to call it a



pair of narrow-angle V6s sharing a common crank. That engine is light and notably compact, but it lacks entirely the smooth, rich character of classic V12 configuration. The V8, by contrast, is far more suited to the suave sophistication of the Spur. Its note is far more refined and pleasing on the ear. It does lack the 12's monster low-end torque, but you'll not find the V8 Spur in the least deficient.

What you'll find is a car that will put a further 100 miles between fills, so on any properly long drive it's a far quicker option than the W12.

The rest of the car is as expected. It's amazing that a car using a Volkswagen platform and so much hidden, off-the-peg VW content can feel so unlike any other product of the group. I can't think of any car for remotely similar money that feels anything like this well-built. A Mercedes S-class will be yet quieter and more comfortable, but that reckons without the sense of occasion found in the Spur.

In short this is the least sporting Bentley since Volkswagen took over the business at the end of the last century, yet it is effective, rewarding and delightful to occupy, whichever seat you happen to choose. ■

FACT FILE

PRICE	£142,800
ENGINE	4.0 litres, 8 cylinders, turbocharged
POWER	500bhp@6000rpm
TORQUE	486lb ft@1750rpm
TRANSMISSION	eight-speed automatic, four-wheel drive
0-62MPH	5.2sec
TOP SPEED	183mph
ECONOMY	25.9mpg
CO₂	254g/km

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BENTLEY

COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD



A MASSIVE SUCCESS



It might not look the most obvious choice for a GT racer, but the results to date suggest otherwise

writer **ANDREW FRANKEL**

STORY

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, SEPTEMBER 2016



Author Frankel gets a rundown of the Bentley's controls. Opposite: V8 motor is massively shifted back in engine bay



I was not alone in raising my eyebrows when Bentley first suggested it was going racing with its Continental GT coupé. Everything from its immense weight to its massive frontal area seemed to militate against the idea. Sure, weight could be shed and there would be some aero advantages in its immense size, but enough to bring it to terms with the Ferraris, Lamborghinis and McLarens against which it would compete? Where many rivals were already so light they'd need to shed only 100 or 200kg to be competitive, the Bentley would need to lose an entire tonne. They already had optimal weight distribution from their mid-engined configurations and snake's belly centre of gravity. It had been a mantra from the 1920s that a Bentley should never enter a race it did not have a realistic chance of winning. But a racing Continental GT? It seemed to me that Bentley had become so desperate to race it would compromise its own values and be happy to make up the numbers.

Of course, history has proven me wrong. Last year GT3 Bentleys took the Blancpain Sprint Series championship, missed the Endurance crown by three points, claimed the GT Asia title for teams and lost the lead of the Bathurst 12 Hours with only two laps to go. In probably the most hotly contested category of racing in the world right now, Bentley and its M-Sport partner have fashioned a highly competitive racing car.

There can be no question that, of all GT3 cars, this is the most changed. There's not space to detail everything that's been done but to give you



some idea, consider this. The GT3 is now so light it has to be ballasted up to its homologated weight, which means that more than a tonne of mass has gone from the 2286kg road car. "Actually," says the team's technical manager Will Hunt, "the first 600kg flew out of the car. By the time we'd made all the composite body parts, ditched the four-wheel-drive system and ripped out the interior we'd saved an immense amount."

One startling example is the doors, which weigh 54kg in steel road car form full of electrics and trim, and just 7kg on the racer in bare carbon fibre. Bear in mind too that while the road car has 72 ECUs on board, the racer needs just two. And then think how much smaller and therefore lighter the loom can be. In total 270kg was saved in the powertrain, 256kg in body and chassis, 118kg in exterior trim, 105kg in seats and restraint systems and so on and on and on.

But making the Bentley lighter was just one part of the package. Attention turned to making it handle and exploit the air like a modern racing



001



car too. Which is why when you open the bonnet the engine is not where you expect. In the road car almost all of it sits ahead of the front axle; now it's been shifted 400mm rearward, so it sits entirely behind and right up against the front bulkhead. Obviously full-race suspension is used with four-way adjustable dampers, though the regs preclude carbon-ceramic brakes.

In aero terms it has a fully flat floor, an incredibly long rear diffuser, carbon front splitter and that massive carbon wing. Great attention has been paid to cleaning up airflow particularly in the critical wheel arch area and while the large frontal area is unavoidable, the sheer length of the car means drag can be reduced relative to its competitors.

The interior looks more like that of a converted road car than the space-age cabin of the Mercedes-AMG GT3. Major switches compete for space on a crammed steering wheel with minor functions relegated to a bank of buttons down on the transmission tunnel. The car is comfortable and a decent driving position is easy

"THE TWIN-TURBO 4-LITRE V8 MAKES A FABULOUS NOISE - A REAL DETROIT THUNDER"

to achieve despite a fixed pedal box. Visibility is exceptional for this kind of car.

The Audi-sourced twin-turbo 4-litre V8 makes a fabulous noise: a real Detroit thunder, quieter than Mercedes's normally aspirated engine and over long distances probably all the better for that. Like the AMG motor it is lified at 20,000km but Bentley is keen to point out it was Mercedes that followed its lead in offering a hitherto unprecedented duration for a race engine such as this. "For many customers, that's two seasons of racing," says Bentley Motorsport supremo Brian Gush, the man who talked the VW board into letting Bentley go racing now, just as he did when he wanted to take the brand back to Le Mans at the turn of the century.

Regular driver Steven Kane runs me around Silverstone fast enough to remind me that modern GT drivers don't use the same circuit as those of us brought up on historics. The idea seems to be to get as much of the car on the far side of the kerbs as possible, while still keeping the inside wheels just on the white line that denotes the track limit. He's fast and smooth and it all looks very easy. But then ▶



Standard Bentley shift paddles keep a notional connection with road car, despite complex array of buttons

BENTLEY

COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD



with professional racing drivers it always does.

As ever time is short but the car and tyres are warm. Time to get on with it. The outright acceleration is probably the least surprising aspect: with performance carefully balanced by the regs to ensure no one ever has a significant power to weight disadvantage, the central phase of acceleration – once traction is no longer an issue and before drag really starts to intervene – is similar for all. With its restrictor, the Bentley is putting out about 560bhp which, backed by a thick wad of torque in a 1285kg car, is enough to make it feel properly fast, but not overwhelmingly so.

Through the Becketts complex the car is simply phenomenal: you hear the kerbs but can barely even feel them. Coming out of Club it will take full throttle on the kerbs without even unsettling the car let alone running the risk of breaking it. Where I come from that would be an unforgivable error. I then get it completely wrong, in what I assumed would be the near flat-out right after the new pits straight. It's not, and the car's nose drifts very wide of the apex. Only the fact that Kane in the passenger seat is showing no sign of wanting to brace for impact reassures me that the car will sort it out. And it does, benignly shrugging away my mistake.

In the afternoon I have a brand new set of slicks



and the car to myself. To say it feels transformed is no exaggeration. In my first session it had seemed slightly cumbersome and subconsciously I'd just put that down to it being an enormous Bentley with an inconveniently long wheelbase and that even the best engineers could only go so far toward turning it into a proper racing car. Not so. On proper rubber no excuses need to be made for it.

Having only driven the AMG in terrible weather on an unknown track, this was my first chance to have a proper go in a genuine state of the art, 2016-specification GT3 car, and it is incredible to see how far the game has moved on since I first tested one a decade or so ago. It's the downforce



*"THROUGH BECKETTS
THE CAR IS SIMPLY
PHENOMENAL. YOU
CAN BARELY EVEN
FEEL THE KERBS"*

that really fries your mind. It's not even close to junior-prototype level, but for a device derived from a road car it's other-worldly. At, I guess, around 170mph on the Hangar Straight there is so much aerodynamic grip that there is no force my foot can exert on the brake pedal to tempt the ABS into action. You brake all the way into the apex, using the weight transfer to pitch into the corner before getting back on the power earlier than you'd believe possible.

But the bigger surprise is its behaviour on the limit. I'd been told more than once that GT3 cars are fairly brutal devices these days, set up to allow professional drivers to extract optimal lap times. You brake all the way into a corner, then mash the throttle, relying on first the ABS and then the traction control not to pitch you into the scenery. Yet I find that if you set the electronics not to intervene until their help is essential, you can feel exactly what the back axle is up to, and steer it out of corners on the throttle. No, it will never drift like a 250GTO, but it is entirely viceless and if you choose to drive it that way, immensely good fun. For limited-ability gentleman drivers like me, I'd find the sense that it was on your side intensely appealing. Goodness knows it was a welcome enough trait around a dry Silverstone, let alone round a wet Nürburgring...

More than anything, the Bentley suggests that a GT3 car can be competitive enough to win races and titles, yet still be sufficiently user-friendly for mere mortals to drive. And that way must lie the future of the category.

First shown in 2013 and with two full seasons under its belt, Bentley is now looking at ways of significantly upgrading the Continental GT3 to keep it on the pace, at least until an all-new Continental appears in 2018, probably in time for the 2019 season. But come what may, the cars will never be ubiquitous. Although they are racing cars, Gush still wants them to be Bentleys, which is why they retain beautiful leather door pulls and Mulsanne paddle shifts and will gain flying 'B' inserts in the flanks. For the same reason there will never be more than 30 in circulation around the world, although the Bentley is less expensive than the Ferrari 488, at £368,000 before options.

Were I a wealthy privateer it's probably the car I would choose. I think it would get the best out of me and I'd enjoy driving it more than most. More than that, I'd enjoy knowing I was racing a Bentley: as a young boy to whom the exploits of Messrs Barnato, Birkin, Clement and Duff were as food and drink, the sight of those wings and the sound of that thunder would be enough to entice the shameless old romantic within me. ■

ROAD
TEST

BENTLEY CONTINENTAL SUPERSPORTS

Crewe calls time on GT with 700bhp monster
that is also the world's fastest four-seater

writer **ANDREW FRANKEL**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, APRIL 2017







*"IT'S NOT ONLY THE MOST POWERFUL
BENTLEY IN HISTORY, BUT THE FASTEST
FOUR-SEATER IN THE WORLD"*



When someone comes to write the definitive history of Bentley – who knows, perhaps in time for its centenary in 2019 – he or she will have to consider the models most significant to the brand's survival. There is of course the original, the 3-litre whose twin-spark 16-valve engine was born on a bench in New Street Mews. There was the Speed Six which, like the 3-litre, won Le Mans twice, and the 8-litre, WO's masterpiece, born into a world that didn't want it. After bankruptcy came the Rolls-Bentleys, the superb overdrive Derbys of 1938-39 and the 1952 R-type Continental. Then little more than badge-engineered anonymity until 1982 when the Mulsanne Turbo gave the marque an identity of its own once more.

And then the Continental GT, after the 3-litre the car I would argue was the most significant of all. Before it, Bentley could scarcely sell 1000 cars a year; but thanks to the Continental GT and its derivatives Bentley sales have topped 10,000. It is the Continental GT that brought new levels of engineering integrity to Bentley, that transformed the brand's image around the world. Its success ultimately convinced Volkswagen, which had

bought the brand in 2003, to make the single biggest investment the company had ever seen so an SUV could be designed, engineered and built at Crewe. By the end of the decade Bentley production will probably top 20,000 and I'd be surprised if most were not Bentaygas. And it was the Continental GT that made it all possible.

But now its time is nigh. Fifteen seasons sitting on the architecture of a defunct VW saloon is an extraordinary record, but you don't need long in one to see the evidence of its age in its mass, its 20th century ergonomics, its joke graphics, its uneven weight distribution.

Still, time remains for one last laugh, and this is it: the Continental Supersports, not just the quickest, most powerful Bentley in history but, as the company is proud to boast, the fastest four-seat car in the world today, its 209mph top speed beating that of Ferrari's GTC Lusso by a single mile per hour.

Depending on what kind of Bentley fan you are, that Supersports name can elicit two rather different images. Some might now be thinking of the 1925 3-litre Supersports, the first Bentley guaranteed to be capable of 100mph, others the ►



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stripped-out, pumped-up 2009 Supersports which featured a more rear-biased torque distribution, a wider rear track, revised suspension and a weight-saving regime so extreme the rear seats were deleted, at least until almost all prospective buyers asked Bentley to put them back.

By those standards, this Supersports can seem half-hearted. Compared to the Continental Speed on which it is based it has the same torque split, track, suspension and tyres, its 40kg weight saving merely a by-product of its standard ceramic discs and the titanium exhaust box taken from 2014's V8-powered Continental GT3-R. Other than also acquiring the GT3-R's passive torque-vectoring system, the chassis is completely standard.

But the engine is not. Believe it or not, Bentley now has two 6-litre twin-turbo W12 motors on its books, an effectively new direct-injection motor for the Bentayga, and this port-injected unit closely related to the 2003 original. It won't quite die when the Continental is replaced this autumn because it will live on for a while in the Flying Spur saloon, but it would be fair to say it's in the autumn of its life. Nevertheless new vim has been breathed into it by a pair of larger turbos, blowing

at 1.4bar as opposed to 0.9bar for the Speed: the effect is to whack power up from 636bhp to a nice round 700bhp. More impressive still is the additional 130lb ft of torque that comes with it.

It is no exaggeration to call the car's performance transformed: we're used to Bentleys performing strongly at low revs, but this one is unlike any other to wear the wings. The bigger difference comes at the other end when the smaller turbos of the W12 literally ran out of puff. No longer: the Supersports feels as eager at 6000rpm as it does at 2000rpm, stretching the car's powerband further still, imbuing its performance with an elasticity I've never encountered in other cars regardless of badge. The result is indecently fast, a near 2.3-tonne cathedral of a car, capable of hitting 100mph from rest in 7.2sec. ►

"NOTHING FEELS AS MASSIVELY ENGINEERED AS A BENTLEY; ITS REFINEMENT AT SPEED IS EXCEPTIONAL"



But it's frustrating too, because while it accrues speed at a rate you'd have needed a Ferrari to match until very recently, its chassis has not been allowed to match this progress. The car is not only heavy, but much of the weight is in the wrong place, slung out ahead of the nose. It has an aversion to ambitious entry speeds every bit as pronounced as less powerful, less sporting versions of the same car. Be more realistic and the car will respond and deploy its torque vectoring software to help tuck the nose into the apex on the way into a corner and then stop it running prematurely wide at the exit. You can often feel the system at work and at times it can even seem a little contrived, but it is far better than a stodgy diet of nose-heavy understeer.

Nevertheless this is not a car you can bend to your will. You can enjoy driving it fast and there is a satisfying cerebral challenge in seeing how neat and precise you can make your lines in a car as vast and heavy as this. But if your dreams are of a fully engaging, indulgent driving experience, you will need to have them fulfilled elsewhere.

To me the problem is not so much the Bentley as its billing. Calling it a 'Supersports' is writing a

cheque the car beneath can't quite cash. I'd concede that it is a sporting car, but so is a Bentayga SUV. That is not the same as calling it a sports car, let alone a Supersports.

Even so, nothing feels quite as massively engineered as a Bentley; its ride is first-rate, its refinement at speed quite exceptional. Even that old-fashioned interior offers a superb place from which to watch the hours and miles roll by.

To be honest it would be naïve to hope for more. In brutal commercial terms, this car exists because everyone knows an all-new car is not far away and Bentley needs to maintain interest in the old car and provide it with an orderly and effective run-out. Far more than a 209mph top speed, that's what Bentley is hoping its 700bhp will achieve, at least for the 710 units that will be sold to the public.

The Supersports is a car I found frustrating at first but eventually quite likeable. However, my search for the first proper Bentley sports car of my lifetime continues, and what better reason will Bentley have to produce one than its centenary in 2019? And if it too has 700bhp I shall be pleased; but if it weighs less than 2000kg, I would likely be absolutely ecstatic. ■

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1996 Bentley Continental R

1997 Bentley Continental "R" finished in Peacock blue with contrasting light grey hide interior and best quality Wilton carpet and fitted with lamb's wool over rugs. This superb example has covered only 70,000 miles and comes with an excellent service history, including an Hydraulic service at a cost of just under £7,000 carried out in 2018. One viewing of this motor car will tell a prospective buyer that it is of the highest quality and has been maintained regardless of cost. The file contains a copy of the original build specification together with numerous invoices and previous mot certificates thus providing a comprehensive history of this beautiful motor car. On the road, this model is equally at home on country lanes or at high speed on motorways and is a delight to drive. Traditionally it is the 2 door versions of Bentley Motor Cars that have seen the greatest increase in values as they become collectable and we consider that this model will be no exception. Very reasonably priced for one in this superb condition at **£47,950**

1965 Bentley S3 Saloon

1965 Bentley S3 finished in Bordeaux with a black hide interior with perfect Walnut Veneers. Presented in excellent condition throughout having had just 4 former keepers, this car was kept in the same family for many years and maintained to an extremely high standard. The exterior of the car is in outstanding condition with perfect bodywork and a deep lustre to the Bordeaux paintwork, the chrome is equally fine. The interior is trimmed in Black hide with sandstone Wilton carpets and presents extremely well. Complete with correct tools, Handbook, circular door mirrors and a history file which contains invoices for works carried out and 17 past MOT test certificates showing a steady increase of mileages over the years. The car performs faultlessly on the road with all gauges reading correctly and all electrical components in excellent working order. A real pleasure to drive and a stunning example of this desirable model. Now very realistically priced at **£42,950**



1998 Rolls Royce Silver Seraph

1998 Rolls Royce Silver Seraph finished in Dark Emerald with contrasting Biscuit hide interior and best quality beige Wilton carpet throughout. The whole of the sumptuous interior is beautifully complimented with finest quality Burr Walnut to the dashboard, centre console and door cappings giving a feeling of extreme luxury to the interior of this exceptional motor car. Having had just 2 fastidious owners from new and with a total mileage covered of less than 40,000 miles, the car remains in completely unmarked condition. The Silver Seraph is powered by the BMW V12 engine with automatic 5 speed transmission giving the smoothest of rides. Standard electronics include digital engine management, adaptive ride control and ABS braking coupled with all of the refinements that are expected in a motor of this quality. Offering low mileage, coupled with low ownership, this is an opportunity to acquire a well-cared for Rolls Royce at reasonable cost. **£39,950**

2004 Bentley Continental GT

2004 Bentley Continental GT finished in Midnight Blue with contrasting pale grey hide interior, complimented with acres of Walnut Veneer and best quality dark blue Wilton carpet throughout. This is a beautiful example that has been correctly maintained from new by the Bentley Franchise and one additional recommended specialist and has 13 stamps in the service book with a recorded mileage of just 34,000 miles. This car is in fabulous condition throughout and drives accordingly. Seriously good value for such a low mileage example at **£28,950**.



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Bentley is not a name to be taken lightly. Indeed, the development of the Rolls-Royce-built cars has been steady, sensible and continuous, culminating in today's S-series 4.9-litre model, of which *Motor Sport* was recently able to conduct a road test extending over more than 1360 miles.

The modern Bentley has a specification in which traditional engineering is blended with the requirements of the present. The six-cylinder engine has a bore and stroke of 4887cc, but the power output remains locked in the bosoms of the Rolls-Royce technicians. The chassis is of closed-box-section construction with cruciform centre bracing, a steel front pan carrying the suspension and steering units.

The body lines of the S-series Bentley are beautifully proportioned, rendering this big car handsome as well as imposing. In a car of this price and reputation one expects every conceivable luxury, and the Bentley does not disappoint. The car we tried was the standard four-door 5/6-seater saloon of pressed-steel construction.

It is endowed with seats upholstered in deep high-grade leather, with every possible kind of armrest. The front squabs are adjustable for inclination, and their backs carry ashtrays and folding tables for rear-compartment travellers. They can be adjusted separately or set as a three-passenger bench seat. Dash and garnish rails are finished with French walnut veneer. Under the dash is a pull-out table, with the HMV radio above it. The air of high quality and refinement conveyed by the beautiful upholstery and veneered instrument panel is enhanced by the sense, from contemplation of small details, that this is a car in the true Rolls-Royce-built Bentley tradition.

The instrument panel contains a Smith's 110-mph speedometer, matched by a dial incorporating fuel gauge, water thermometer, oil gauge and ammeter. On the left of this panel is a cigar-lighter. Two further panels carry switches for

controlling demisting and ventilation, wipers and washer, panel and map lights and ventilation and heating. A button enables sump oil level to be read on the petrol gauge. Visibility through the big curved windscreen is excellent, thanks to slim screen pillars, and both front wings are just visible to a driver of average height.

One of the first impressions is of the wonderfully quiet functioning. The 4.9-litre engine is inaudible, so that it is possible to converse in low voices while cruising at a speed of 100 mph. A central scuttle-mounted mirror provides the driver with a good rear view. The hand-brake is a pull-out toggle on the right under the scuttle. The doors are amply wide for dignified entry and egress, although as the seats are high, one steps down quite a long way.

We set out to drive to Scotland and back, and, being gluttons for punishment we decided to return without an overnight stop, thus gaining experience of the modern Bentley in strenuous round-the-clock motoring. We had not thought of road conditions in Britain. From London that Sunday until over the border we had to contend with an almost continual stream of week-end traffic, nosing along at 20-30mph, as well as with congested towns (Doncaster!) and long hold-ups.

A very big car at the kerbside, it has that desirable quality of seeming quite small when gaps in tight-packed traffic have to be negotiated. Because of these characteristics we made comparative light of the appalling traffic conditions, arriving at Scotch Corner in 5hr 2min, and Gretna in 6hr 33min. Abington, where we branched off A74 for A73, was accomplished in 7 hr 28 min, after which in rain and mist we crossed to Edinburgh and, after about an hour's sleep at daybreak, were in Cambridge, looking at the new Formula 2 Lister, soon after 9am on Monday.

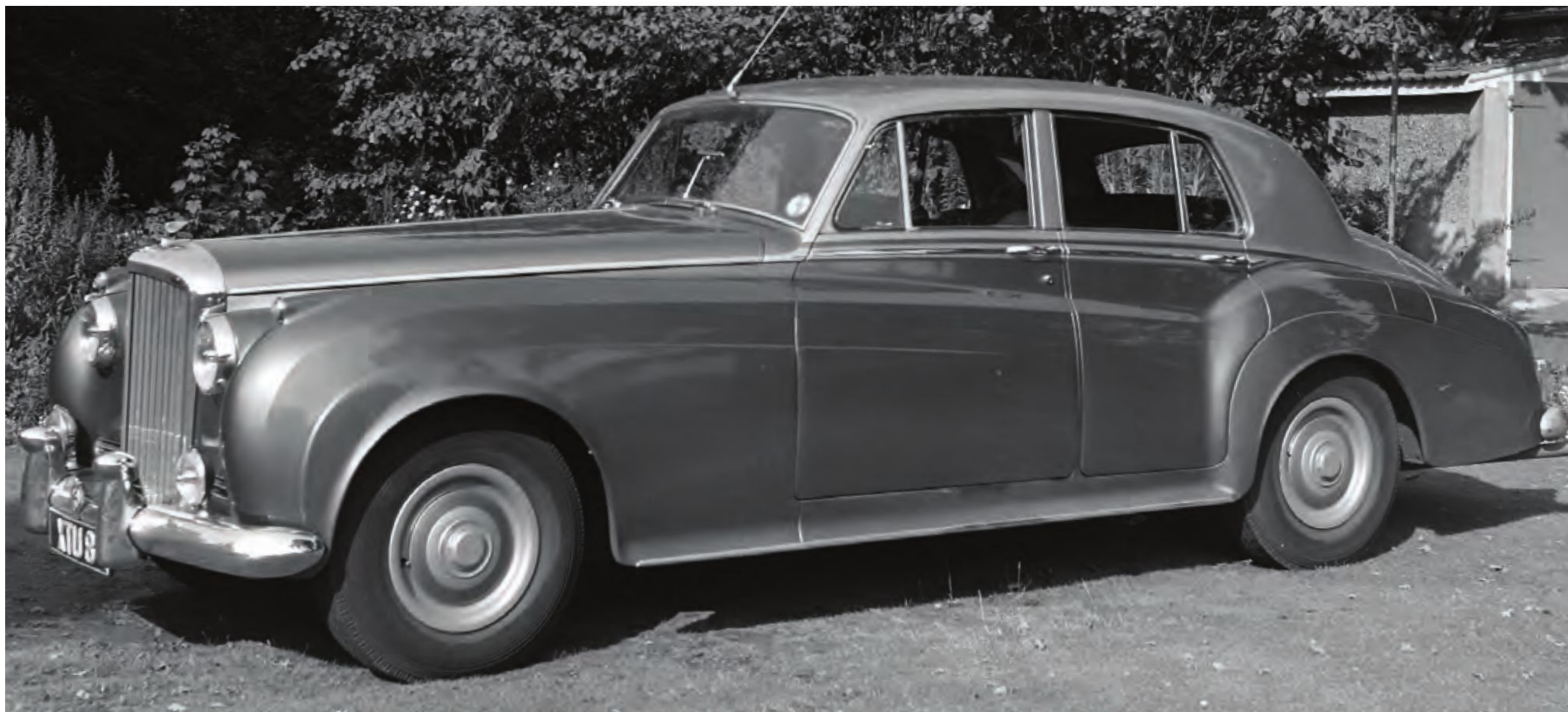
This journey had not been devoid of interest. Our best hour's average while hop-scooting the mimers was 53mph. Just before Boroughbridge a Type 44 Bugatti tourer was encountered, and towards the ►

ROUND THE CLOCK WITH A BENTLEY S-SERIES

A fast return run from London to Scotland underlines the silent high performance, powerful braking and luxurious specification of the latest model of this famous make

writer **BILL BODDY**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, NOVEMBER 1956



end of Bowes Moor a Cooper was spotted on its trailer outside a garage. The object of the run, however, was to check the behaviour and habits of the Bentley. Its automatic gearbox provides a brisk step off; the gear-lever enables second and third gears to be held up to the normal maxima when desired, and by dropping into the third position excellent acceleration can be obtained.

This acceleration, accomplished in complete silence without any suggestion that the big six-cylinder engine is even running, carries one past the worst of the hold-ups, and along the double-track piece of road before Scotch Corner the speedometer went to the stop at 110mph, as it was to do again on several occasions.

Roadholding and cornering are very good for a large and heavy luxury car of this sort, and rapid cornering calls forth only mild protest from the Dunlop Fort tubeless tyres. There is neither appreciable over or understeer and roll is subdued, especially with the ride-control set to 'hard', although the ride is fairly hard on both settings.

The steering asks four turns from one to other of a generous lock and is exceptionally smooth and light at all times save for very low-speed manoeuvring, although it is essentially spongy steering. The driver is called upon to do considerable wheel twirling when making pronounced changes of direction. In future power steering will be fitted. The automatic transmission does not jerk excessively, although on slippery roads automatic upward gear changes tend to promote momentary wheelspin and loss of adhesion. Incidentally, it seems a pity that this transmission is of American origin, especially as once upon a time Rolls-Royce made most of their own equipment, even the electrical components.

There is no gainsaying the ease of control provided by the Bentley in its present form. As one eases up to a traffic obstruction, the car ready to glide away in bottom gear, engine inaudible, one's appreciation of first-class engineering is unrivalled, especially in view of the very high performance and road-ability combined in this comfortable and elegant motor car.

We made a careful check on our fast run to Scotland and back – petrol consumption was 13.6mpg. Unfortunately, this represents a fuel range of only 245 miles, which on Continental roads could be covered in some four hours. A larger tank seems called for. On long runs the front seats, for all their depth of cushion, feel hard and a headrest would be a welcome addition. In the back compartment however, sheer luxury prevails.

Other cars can equal the Bentley's top speed and its vivid acceleration, but it is the astonishing mechanical silence allied to the manner in which it can be driven in and out of traffic that render it the supreme high-performance luxury car. At its price of £5243 not many can afford it, but for those who can the genuine quality of its interior appointments, no less than the air of security imparted by the deep veneered dash and broad bonnet, will be a source of constant pleasure and inspiration.

The British lion may spend much of its time lying down these days but it is still capable of getting up and facing the world in a bold and dignified manner, and such productions as the Bentley S-series remind us that this is so. This is the company director's motor car par excellence, and it is fitting that men who control British destiny should drive these fine cars from Crewe rather than chromium-draped floating drawing rooms of other than British origin. ■

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1960 Bentley S2 Continental Flying Spur

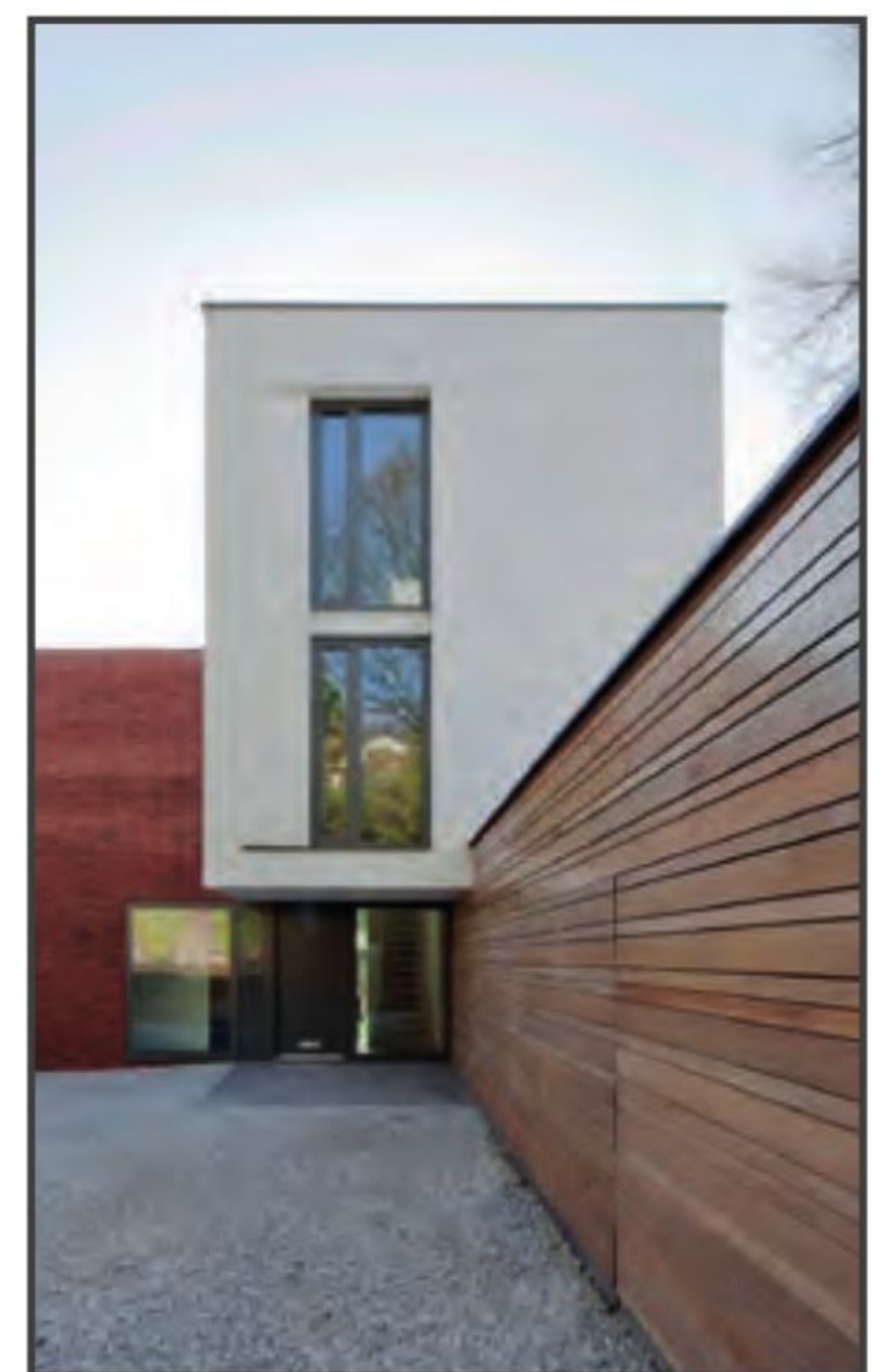
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hy do they make it so difficult? Before you can settle into those large deep chairs and appreciate the most panoramic view ever afforded by a closed Bentley, you have first to be happy to tell people you drive a Bentayga, and second to put up with a shape that is stunningly lacking in presence for a car of its size. It's also woefully short of the beauty that for too long has failed to be a hallmark of Bentley design.

It gets in the way. I know it shouldn't, because my job is to tell you how this car drives and what it might be like to live with, not waste precious words bemoaning its looks and curious name (which you are at least as well qualified to judge as I), but to me it all forms part of the picture.

However, I find the potentially larger – albeit philosophical – stumbling block, concerning what on earth Bentley thinks it's doing building an SUV, somewhat easier to negotiate. It doesn't bother me at all, and for two reasons.

Firstly, it is not as if Bentley has spent its entire existence building lightweight two-door sports cars, as had Porsche at the time of the Cayenne's introduction. Second, the Cayenne business model shows that, far from damaging great brands, these SUVs have such high margins and sell in such vast numbers that their enormous profits mean more money can be spent on perhaps more 'proper' models than would otherwise have been conceivably possible. Why do you think Porsche makes a greater range of GT models – Cayman GT4, 911 GT3, GT3 RS and soon GT3 R – and sells more of them than ever before? Because it can afford to. Thanks to its SUVs, Porsche is the most profitable car company in the world: even before the introduction of the Macan, the Cayenne outsold all other Porsche models combined.

So I have high hopes the Bentayga's success (demand is so great that Bentley has already upped production from 3600 units per year to 5500) will result at the very least in the firm building the Speed Six two-seater, which promises to be the most entertaining Bentley production car since Rolls-Royce stepped in, saving the company but spoiling the fun back in 1931.

But for now we should look more closely at the vast edifice before us. Elsewhere journalists will obsess about the fact it shares a wheelbase and a few substructures with the Audi Q7 – as will the next Porsche Cayenne. The Continental GT was ►



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COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD



BENTLEY BENTAYGA

The looks might be inelegant - and its name more so still - but the company's first SUV is an engineering triumph

writer **ANDREW FRANKEL**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, APRIL 2016

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“MY BENTAYGA CAME WITH ENOUGH GOODIES TO BUY A NEW 911 AS WELL”

pointlessly lambasted for its even looser links to the VW Phaeton, so it's reasonable to assume the same will happen here. Ignore them; what matters is that the moment the massive door heaves shut behind you, this thing feels like a Bentley.

Scrutinise the wood, the leather, the chrome, the fit, the finish and the options list ('my' Bentayga came with a gasp-inducing £75,000-worth of new goodies, enough if sacrificed to put a brand-new 911 in the garage next to it), and in these regards it is as worthy of the wings as any Continental GT or Flying Spur ever was.

It sounds like a Bentley, too. As per the modern vogue, the car is being launched in 'top down' fashion, so while a 400bhp V8 diesel and similarly powered V6 hybrid are on the way, the only Bentayga for sale right now has the full-fat 6-litre

twin-turbo W12 motor under its bonnet. Or, I should say, a 6-litre twin-turbo W12. Although it retains the same external and internal dimensions as the engine that first appeared in a Bentley in 2003, the company claims not a nut, screw or bolt has been carried over. It has 599bhp, which sounds impressive but is in fact an uncommonly lazy output for the forced induction engine of a high-performance car these days. If it had the specific output of a common-or-garden VW Golf R, it would be close to 900bhp...

Then again, while the Bentayga will gain extra power when Speed models come along (as they most assuredly will), for now it doesn't need it. More counter-intuition is required here, because when I tell you that, at 2400kg, the car is actually relatively light, you might now be spluttering into your cornflakes. But thanks to its predominately aluminium construction (it accounts for almost all the body and underlying structure save areas where, for safety, high-tensile steel is required), this massive SUV is lighter than the convertible Continental GT. It's lighter too than a Cayenne hybrid, and only 90kg heavier than a Turbo S.

So with all that power (not to mention the accompanying cliff face of torque), it does things other SUVs cannot, such as reach 62mph from ►



rest in 4.0sec, which is as fast as an AMG GT and quicker than a BMW M5, the aforementioned Cayenne Turbo and, perhaps most implausibly of all, every other Bentley on sale.

In short, it is quick enough. Impressively however, it doesn't feel that way. There's no uncouth urgency here, no sense of having to rein in the power, even in the most aggressive of its many driver-configurable settings. It does what a Bentley should so, which is glide inexorably forwards on part throttle, keeping gearchanges to a minimum, letting the torque do the work to the accompaniment of far-off thunder.

At once you notice the superb ride quality. I'd call it quite the best of any SUV I've driven were I not inherently suspicious of the way all cars ride in California, where the launch took place. Then you realise just how quiet the thing is. Being rather familiar with the local law enforcement community in this part of the world, I'll skip the details and say simply that at any speed at which you are likely ever to want to cruise anywhere in the world, not even a Range Rover gets close to these levels of refinement.

We did, of course, do all the off-road stuff too, on dirt tracks, sand dunes and even a desert racetrack, and it coped as well as you

could imagine for a 2.4-tonne SUV. It wasn't fun, in a 'balance the throttle and let it drift' kind of way, but what were you expecting? All Bentaygas have suspension that allows everything from literally zero roll to almost uncoupled anti-roll bars, depending on what terrain you are on, and this feature combined with sound suspension design, a stiff structure and a whole lot of rubber provides a phenomenally wide operating envelope. It was impressive in the sand and mud it simply won't see in normal life, and never less than enjoyable on the limit with that W12 power-plant howling away.

Bentley has a hit on its hands, and that's not my judgment, but that of the market place: for now at the £160,000 price point it occupies, it has the field to itself. Others will come and make things tougher, but they will find they're up against an immensely capable and, if you can get past the looks and the name, likeable car. Does it deserve to be called a Bentley? So far as I can see, as much as any from the VW era with the possible exception of the flawed but wonderful Mulsanne. Yes, it's a car I liked more than loved, but I'm not exactly the target audience. Plutocrats, sports people and self-made entrepreneurs will likely absolutely adore it. ■

FACT FILE

PRICE	£160,000
ENGINE	6.0 litres, 12 cylinders, twin-turbocharged
POWER	599bhp@5000rpm
TORQUE	663lb ft@1350rpm
TRANSMISSION	eight-speed automatic, four-wheel drive
WEIGHT	2400kg
POWER TO WEIGHT	250bhp per tonne
0-62MPH	4.0sec
TOP SPEED	187mph
ECONOMY	21.6mpg
CO₂	296g/km

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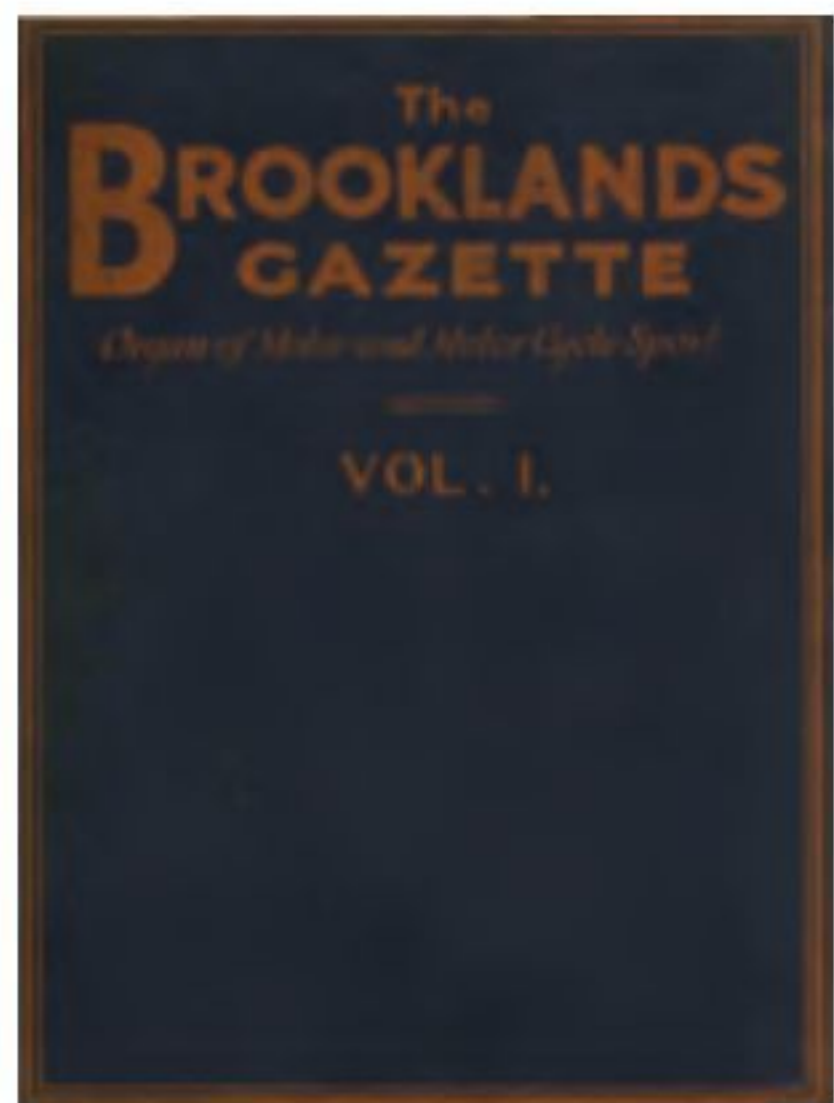
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BENTLEY 3-LITRE

Our very first road test from our very first issue, before we changed our name

writer **FULL THROTTLE***

TAKEN FROM *THE BROOKLANDS GAZETTE*, JULY 1924

The sporting car, as a class, has characteristically more distinction than that possessed by touring types. Being out of the ordinary, and intended to emphasise particular motoring qualities, the sporting car usually has quite an individuality. Some sporting cars, of course, seem to stand quite apart from orthodox standards.

In the latter category one may place the 3-litre Speed Model Bentley. This car embodies all the qualities one has come to consider essential in a sporting car.

A brief review of the chassis reveals at once how interesting a proposition the Speed Model Bentley is, and this opinion is vastly enhanced when one takes the car for a trial. The engine is a four-cylinder monobloc of 2996cc capacity. Its design has much originality: there are two inlet and two exhaust valves in each cylinder, operated by a totally enclosed overhead camshaft and rockers, running in oil. The pistons are of aluminium, designed for high compression.

On a sporting car one usually has to 'drive on the spark' more than is requisite on a touring car, and to obtain really the best running from the Speed Model Bentley one makes no exception. The system of dual-controlled magnetos enables one to obtain particularly effective ignition. A notable point is that a petrol consumption of 25mpg at 30mph is guaranteed, which, considering its wide capabilities, is not excessive. The four-speed gearbox is operated by a simple right-hand gate change carried on an extension of the box.

In a car of such advanced design, one naturally expects to find front-wheel brakes, and the system of fully compensated internal expanding brakes operating on all four wheels and controlled by pedal is very effective. The handbrake operates on the rear wheels. The tank holds 11 gallons of petrol, and a two-way tap near the filling cap gives access to a reserve supply of two gallons.

Chassis lubrication is by oil, supplied from an oil-gun through screwed oil plugs. The only grease cup on the chassis is situated on the water pump. After the chassis has been lubricated it can be run for three months of normal mileage without further lubrication, apart, of course, from the engine's requirements.

From the foregoing it will be appreciated that the Speed Model Bentley is a particularly interesting car. Our road experiences with this model, although not at the moment as extensive as we should like, have convinced us that it must possess a fascination for every sporting motorist. It is naturally fast, but that is by no means the sum total of its outstanding attraction. Very few sporting cars are really docile in control, many are not at all comfortable. The Speed Model Bentley is a happy exception.

Owing to its high gear range one must, of course, remember that the four speeds are there to be used. Gear-changing is so easy a matter, however, that one finds not the smallest objection to always starting on first and to a fairly frequent use of the lower ratios in traffic. On each gear the car is instantly responsive.

There is one feature of the Bentley that may be described as unique, and to this we would give due prominence: how many sporting cars, or cars of any sort, will do 70 miles an hour on second gear? The Bentley makes light of this.

The acceleration is quite remarkable. The Bentley will hang on to about the 70 mark on second gear indefinitely, and the change down at speed with a quick double-clutch is not unduly difficult.

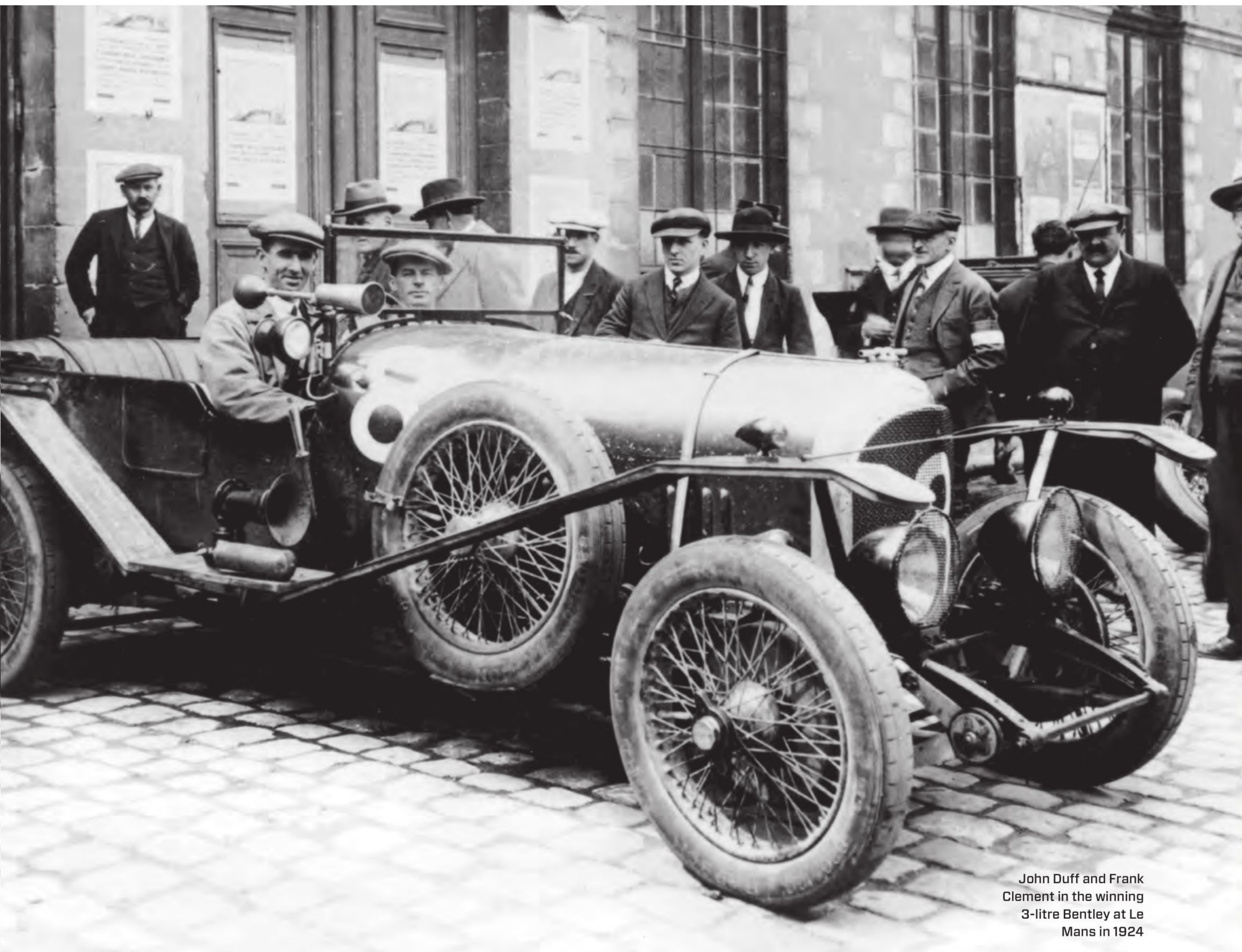
One can change into top at practically any speed, slow as well as fast, and the Bentley will attain the neighbourhood of the 80 mark without much forcing.

Steering on the Bentley is delightfully easy, comparable in its comfort to that experienced on a high-quality light car. The four-wheel brakes, operated by pedal, are remarkably powerful, and very easy and smooth in operation. Although there is not an overabundance of seating room, the Speed Model Bentley is quite comfortable to ride in.

The electrical and other equipment is very complete, and the general layout of the car very pleasing to those



*"HOW MANY SPORTING CARS,
OR CARS OF ANY SORT, WILL DO
70MPH ON SECOND GEAR?"*



John Duff and Frank Clement in the winning 3-litre Bentley at Le Mans in 1924

who desire a high-quality sporting vehicle that is quite practicable for ordinary touring and exceptionally attractive among sporting designs for town and general use.

The price of the Speed Model Bentley with four-seater body is £1125 and with two-seater body £1100, purchasers being afforded the option of choosing the colour of body and upholstery. The manufacturers are Messrs Bentley Motors Ltd of Hanover Street, London, W1. The extensive Bentley factories are at Cricklewood, London.

Interest in the Bentley is naturally enhanced by this car's splendid victory in the French Grand Prix d'Endurance last month. The Bentley was the only British car among 40 competitors, and its outstanding performance throughout the race provides a notable tribute to British engineering in general, and to Bentley

design and workmanship in particular.

Magnificently driven by Duff and Clement, the Bentley maintained a thrilling struggle with some of the best representatives of French automobile science throughout the 24 hours that the race occupied. This event is indeed appropriately named, a trial of endurance, for it is difficult to imagine a more exacting test under road conditions than this gruelling struggle of speed throughout a day and a night.

The Bentley had no mechanical trouble, and at the end of the race was in good condition and still lapping consistently. The distance covered by the Bentley in 24 hours, with Duff and Clement alternately at the wheel, was exactly 2188km, or 128 laps of the course. Second place was taken by the Lorraine-Dietrich, driven by Stoffel and Brisson, with 2061km to its credit. ■

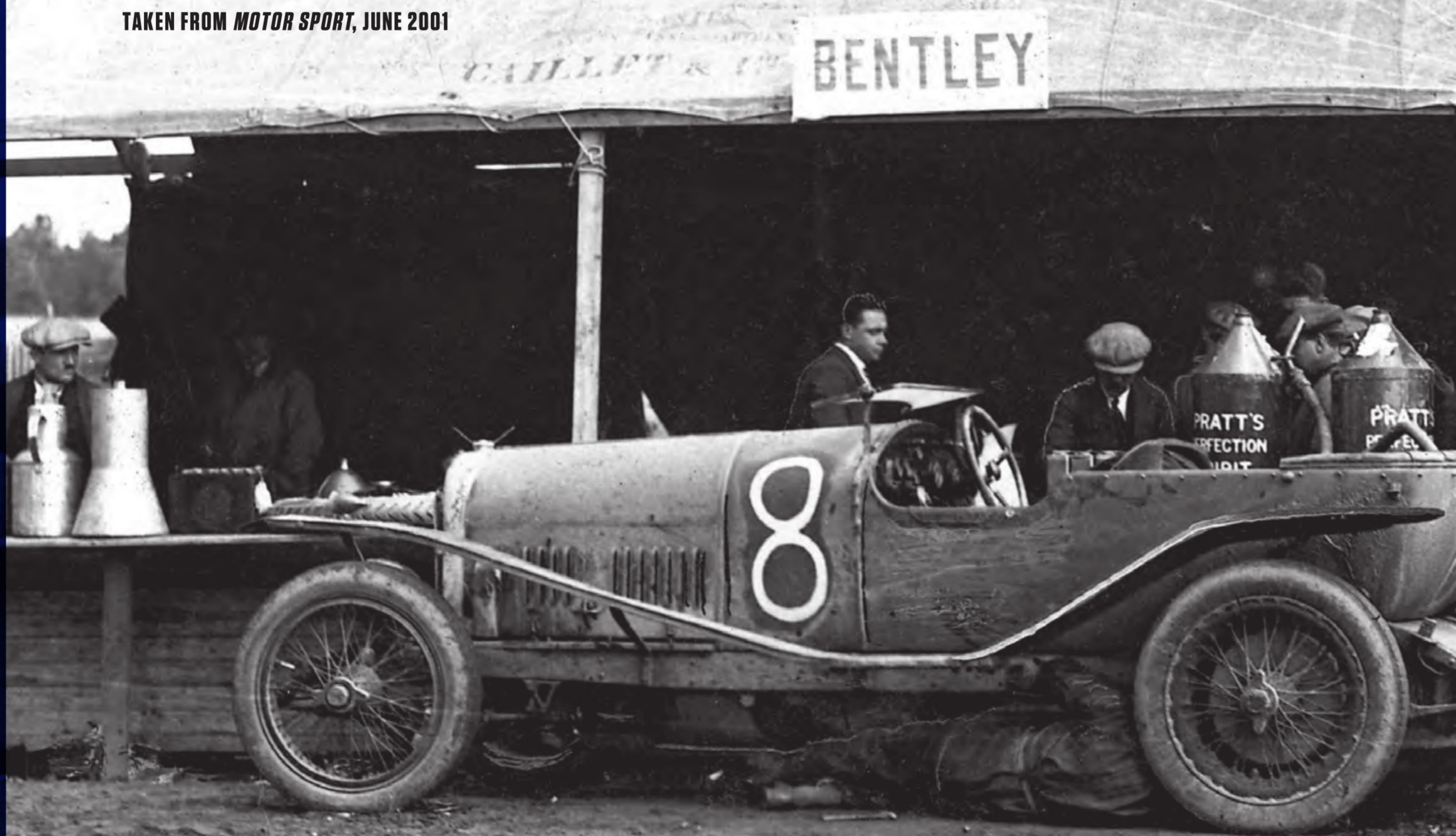
**We don't know who he was!*

GREEN SHOOTS OF GLORY

Only misfortune prevented a privateer Bentley from winning the inaugural Le Mans 24 Hours - and the lessons learned yielded success

writer **ANDREW FRANKEL**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, JUNE 2001



May 21, 1923: a lone 3-litre Bentley leaves London bound for the Continent. At the wheel is Bentley dealer John Duff; by his side is Frank Clement, the only professional racing driver the factory ever employed. In the back sit Arthur Saunders and Jack Besant, mechanics from Bentley's experimental department. Together with the few spares and tools they carry strapped to the cars, they amount to the entire resource of a team which will try to win the new Grand Prix d'Endurance at a track to the south of the cathedral city of Le Mans. No matter that the car is privately owned and entered, nor that it will be the sole foreign competitor, ranged against a legion of French works machines. History has already shown that John Duff is not a man easily put off by adversity.

In September the previous year, he had decided to attack the British Double 12 record — two 12-hour runs on consecutive days at Brooklands — with his own short-chassis 3-litre. He drove single-handed.

The late Walter Hassan, Bentley boy and designer of Jaguar's V12 engine, remembered the event well: "Duff really was tough. After the first 12-hour run he had to be lifted from the car and carried to the Hand and Spear in Weybridge and it didn't seem to us that he could carry on the next day. But he never questioned it."

Leslie Pennal, one of Bentley's chief mechanics recalled: "His back was absolutely raw. He'd made his own seat with no stuffing with the peak just under his shoulder blades. He thought it was fine but had forgotten he had to do 24 hours grinding in that seat". When, late on the second day, Duff peeled himself off

his seat to answer a call of nature behind a shed, his hands were so numb that Pennal had to assist. Hours later, the Double 12 record was his after 2082 miles on the track, along with every Class D record from 3 hours to 1000 miles. It is easy to see why Duff felt he had little to fear from 24 hours with a co-driver.

WO Bentley, on the other hand, thought it was lunacy. "I think the whole thing's crazy. Nobody'll finish. Cars aren't designed to stand that sort of strain for 24 hours", was his comment at the time, and in his autobiography he noted, "No other British manufacturer was supporting the event and I thought they were probably very wise; I viewed the whole thing with the gravest suspicion."

And he felt guilty too. He had sold the car to Duff at a discount and prepared it at favourable rates, but still it gnawed at his conscience: he should be there, and he knew it. At the last moment he took the Friday night boat to Dieppe, endured a foul train journey and arrived at Le Mans at midday, just four hours before the flag. Clement and Duff could not have been more surprised. But if those few months provide some background into what took Bentley to Le Mans, to find how there came to be a 24-hour race there at all that year you have to look back a further 50 years. Le Mans itself has existed on the world map for around 1000 years and was owned by England as one of the many possessions of Eleanor of Aquitaine.

It was put on the automotive map over a decade before the first contraption accepted to be a car even ran. In 1873, Amédée Bollée built his *L'Obeissante* steam carriage in Le Mans and duly steamed to Paris and back in it. The Automobile Club de la Sarthe — ►



the forerunner of today's ACO — was formed in 1905 and the following year it hosted the French Grand Prix over a 64-mile course to the east of the city. Wilbur Wright also took to the air for the first time in Europe just yards away from the Mulsanne straight, while the Grand Prix de France returned to the city in 1911. This time the course was 33.5 miles long and, significantly, the Mulsanne straight was included in its length. The circuit as Duff and Clement saw it was mapped out in 1919, used for the first time in 1920, and famously hosted the French GP in 1921, won by Jimmy Murphy's Duesenberg, the first major win for an American car and driver combination on European soil. Even so, by the time the Bentley eased onto the startline it was not much of a racing facility, even by the standards of 1923: the pits were tents and the track surface was simply appalling, rutted, muddy and strewn with stones, one of which would change the course of the race.

Clement was horrified: "It was simply dreadful. I mean to say we had holes a foot deep. And the stones — they seemed to be a foot deep too, they were so bad." The weather did not help either. As today, the race started at 4pm, coinciding nicely with a hailstorm which turned into four hours of relentless rain; the circuit was already beginning to break up when Duff came in at 8pm to hand over.

While the rain had just stopped, the Bentley now encountered one of the two stones which would deny it victory. This first went straight through a

*"THE PITS WERE TENTS
AND THE TRACK
APPALLING, RUTTED,
MUDDY, AND STREWN
WITH STONES*

headlamp. So hobbled, Clement and Duff raced through the night, clinging to second place behind a Chenard et Walcker; by daybreak they were nearly 20 miles behind. The fightback commenced at once, Duff breaking the lap record on consecutive laps but finding the brakes, fitted only to the rear axle, woefully inadequate at slowing the Bentley at the end of the straight. More than once he had to take to the escape road but still he gained on the leader until, for the first time since the start of the race, Bentley led Le Mans. The car was running perfectly, seemingly able to set new lap records at will. Then came the second stone.

This one went through the fuel tank and stranded the car at Amage. Duff, not wishing to be defeated by such a trifling inconvenience, ran four



miles to the pit and dispatched Clement to cycle the wrong way round the track with two flagons of fuel to patch up the Bentley and get it back to the pit. Though terrified of being mown down, Clement reached the Bentley, filed out the hole to accept a wooden bung, threw the bicycle on the back seat and roared back to the pit. But by the time the repair had been made permanent too much time had been lost and the two drivers idled away the remaining hours breaking the lap record over and over again. They were fourth behind two Chenards and a Bignan.

By then, however, WO had come around to the Le Mans way of thinking: "I was quite certain this was the best race I had ever seen," he enthused. So when Duff announced he was going back to finish



A brace of French Excelsiors lead off the first-ever Le Mans race, in filthy weather on terrible surfaces. But for a flying stone, Bentley no8, left, could have won

the job in 1924, nothing was too much trouble. WO seconded Pennal to the project, gave him a corner of the workshop and months to work on Duff's car. This time it would have headlamp shields, a properly protected tank and four-wheel brakes. Nothing was left to chance, and the car, which was new, was stripped and rebuilt part by part.

By now, the French too, were wise to the threat from Bentley, again the sole foreigner among 40 French entries. Pennal remembers the scrutineers being "unbelievably strict" with the car, insisting the front wings were too narrow by 3/16in (4mm). But the car passed and duly took the start. At first, it seemed the Bentley had met its match. Ninth after the first lap, it appeared able to stay the pace at the front but no more. In particular a new straight-eight

Chenard looked very threatening. In fact, this was just an early manifestation of WO's latterly legendary strategy of conserving the car and concealing its speed wherever possible.

By morning the Bentley was second and gaining on the big Chenard, though without rear shock absorbers or a windscreen, which had broken up under the pounding the car was receiving. The first near disaster occurred when the official lap chart and those recorded by A F C Hillstead disagreed by one lap. WO was livid but Halstead was adamant, telling his boss: "My figures are correct and you can bet your life they're trying to do us out of a lap because we have a chance of winning".

Bentley grabbed the carbon copies and marched off to the timekeepers – who duly returned the lap and, in time, witnessed the big Chenard's effort to keep the Bentley at bay go up in flames.

Then a coachbuilder's staple came adrift and lodged in the gearbox, making selection of third impossible and costing Duff 40 minutes in the pit in an eventually successful attempt to free it. But even with this delay the Bentley led Le Mans and there was nothing any other competitor could do to stop it. There was, however, always sabotage.

With just 90 minutes remaining, Duff came in to change tyres only to discover one of the rear wheels would not budge. This was reported in the press as being due to 'swollen hubs', but Arthur Saunders, back for the second year, knew better. A hardened steel metal instrument, about the shape of a darning needle, had been jammed in the hub splines and tore them as attempts were made to pull the wheel off. And even though this, ultimately, did not immobilise the Bentley, the saboteur still very nearly succeeded for, despite the car's healthy lead, each car had to maintain a pre-set minimum average speed between stops for those laps to count towards the overall distance. Problem solved, Clement left and drove flat out to the end of the race, to no avail: these laps were not counted and the 90 miles he covered were removed from the record. The history books therefore state the Bentley covered just 1290 miles in 24 hours – but the truth is it actually did 1380.

In the end, happily, it was all academic. The second-placed La Lorraine Dietrich had covered just 1280 miles, and no-one could deny that Bentley had won its first Le Mans. No-one that is, apart from those who maintain to this day that, under the technical rules of the first three Le Mans, there were no winners as such, and that these were merely rounds of the Triennial Cup. And, pedantically, they are correct, though what value can be ascribed to an award that finally went to the tenth-placed Chenard in 1925 is debatable. By all normal methods of record, be they of speed or distance, Bentley won the 1924 Le Mans, a fact now formally acknowledged by the ACO's own records. The Triennial Cup was never awarded again, but for Bentley this was just the start. ■

BENTLEY

COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD



ROAD
TEST

BENTLEY MULSANNE TURBO

A unique motoring experience, at a price!

writer **ALAN HENRY**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, MAY 1983

No fewer than 30 years passed between the introduction of the R-Type Bentley Continental and the subject of this month's *Motor Sport* colour test, the Bentley Mulsanne Turbo; more than a generation during which those offerings marketed behind the Bentley radiator were basically Rolls-Royce models bearing cosmetic alterations. That's not really meant to sound pejorative, for we're not dealing with run-of-the-mill machinery; but the fact remains that this policy would have delighted those Rolls-Royce directors who presided when it acquired the assets of the Bentley company way back in 1931. Immediately after that takeover, the Rolls-Royce company devoted itself to obliterating Bentley's own individual character, a process which continued after 1952 with equal effect, if not with the same premeditated ruthlessness that had characterised the 1931-39 period. The Bentley marque may have had its loyal devotees over the past quarter-century, but since the era of the Continental, mechanically they've had to rely on variations of the Silver Cloud, Silver Shadow and Silver Spirit theme. Now Bentley



individuality is on offer once again with the £61,744 Mulsanne Turbo, the first forced-induction machine to carry the winged 'B' motif for half a century.

The Mulsanne Turbo is based on the large, stylish Rolls-Royce Silver Spirit/Bentley Mulsanne model which appeared at the end of 1980. With the advent of this new model, some enthusiasts confessed to being a trifle disappointed: instead of endeavouring to take on Jaguar and Mercedes-Benz in the agility stakes, Rolls-Royce decided to concentrate on what it knew it could do best. The Silver Spirit and Mulsanne are high quality, beautifully-built luxury saloons constructed to an impressively high standard, quiet, refined and relaxing cars in which to cruise at speed, but with a 0-60mph time in the order of 10sec and a top speed of around 116mph, they were hardly likely to electrify the wealthy businessman used to a Mercedes-Benz 500SEC or a Jaguar XJ12. That's where the Mulsanne Turbo comes onto the scene. Adding a turbocharger to the 6750cc aluminium-alloy V8 engine catapults this two-and-a-half ton luxury saloon into a new performance class. The

Bentley Mulsanne Turbo is now a very fast car indeed, although it does take some time to get to grips with its sensitive controls. It was with trepidation that we nosed out onto a rain-soaked M6, viewing the world from the imperious comfort of the Bentley's leather-trimmed, high-backed seats, and it is only with time that one comes to appreciate that the Mulsanne Turbo keeps its 235/70VR15 Avon tyres well and truly in contact with the road, notwithstanding initially disconcerting levels of roll, dive and squat.

Of one thing there is no doubt: this Bentley has no shortage of power. The turbocharger has helped raise the power output from 198 to 298bhp, while throttle lag is kept to a minimum by a valve to recirculate unwanted air pressure back to the intake side to keep the turbine spinning when the throttles are closed, a system similar to that on Ferrari's Formula 1 V6 turbocharged engines during 1981.

The turbocharged V8 engine is unobtrusive, but certainly not quiet in the manner of Jaguar's fuel-injected V12-cylinder unit. For sheer performance, however, the Bentley is quite ►



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The vehicle has had a chassis off restoration to concours standard, with no expense spared to make this a truly concours winning contender. The car comes with its original toolkit, handbook, a large history file and a full photographic record of the the restoration.

The car was featured earlier in the year in Classic and Sportscar magazine and given a 5 page spread entitled "Hell Bent on Perfection".

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Impeccably finished, the Bentley surrounds its occupants with Connolly leather, Wilton carpets and walnut veneer



“THE INTERIOR OF THE MULSANNE TURBO IS A WORLD APART – AN AIR OF UNCOMPROMISING LUXURY”

remarkable. On a pretty damp tarmac surface, and with four adults ensconced within its club-like interior, the Mulsanne Turbo reached 60mph from rest in 7.5sec and then surged on to 100mph in a fraction more than 18sec. Not only does the Mulsanne Turbo knock its normally aspirated stablemate into a cocked hat in terms of sheer performance, but it also beats the much-vaunted Jaguar XJ12 from standstill to 130mph – although we could never coax it over 13mpg! Thus a full 23.5-gallon tank would last about 270 miles.

Once the driver has come to terms with the supple suspension, and learnt to have faith in the ultimate adhesion despite its rolling gait, this very large saloon can be hustled along at remarkable speeds, even on twisting country roads.

The power steering is very light, and the large steering wheel endowed with a notably thin rim, but one soon gets into the habit of gripping it delicately and placing the Bentley into corners with considerable confidence. On wet roads, if you keep your foot planted firmly on the throttle, you can induce slight oversteer, even to the point of losing rear grip, but a touch of corrective lock brings the Mulsanne Turbo back into line with all the responsiveness of a taut little sports saloon.

Over deep ripples and bumps on my local lanes

the Mulsanne Turbo rode serenely without any problems. On dry roads I found myself covering familiar country over secondary roads no less quickly in the Mulsanne Turbo than in my normal staff car, a Capri 2.8i, which is a great fun car on twisting routes and covers the ground with impressive efficiency. That, for me, says a great deal about the way in which the Bentley Mulsanne Turbo has been developed.

The interior of the Mulsanne Turbo is, quite simply, a world apart. You enter, rather than get into, this impeccably finished environment, and immediately the senses are assailed with the fragrance of quality. Our test car's exterior was finished in a restrained shade of green, complemented by the light tan Connolly leather upholstery. Beneath one's feet lie deep pile Wilton carpets, and there are sheepskin rugs on top of these as well. Just to complete the aura of uncompromising luxury, rear seat passengers are provided with individual sloping footrests on which to place their weary hand-crafted shoes!

The seats are quite outstanding. I suppose it is possible to argue that a little more lateral support could be appreciated, but I found them splendid in every way. They offer superb comfort, and the adjustments provided, electrically, by the control on the centre console, enable anybody to find a comfortable position. Rear seat passengers are catered for with individual reading lights and mirrors.

Through the two-spoke steering wheel the driver is faced by a discreetly labelled 140mph speedometer bearing white lettering and needle ►



on a matt black background. To the left of the driver there is a digital read-out panel including a clock, on-board computer readings and the exterior temperature. On the far right of the fascia is the ignition control, below which is fitted a three-position knob to control sidelights and headlights. Steering column controls deal with gear selection for the automatic 'box (right) and indicators (left). The parking brake is foot-operated with a release lever behind the fascia and the lights are dipped by means of a good old traditional foot switch which makes a pleasant change from most cars that come our way these days.

The automatic split-level heating and air conditioning functions with impressive promptness. This was one of the few cars in which it was possible to channel warm air onto one's feet and cool air onto one's face without any undue drama or difficulty, while the radio/stereo system was first class, as one would expect.

The large bonnet swings forward to reveal the daunting mechanical package beneath, while the capacious, carpet-lined boot houses the Bentley's spare wheel beneath the floor and provides a generous tool kit which is fitted on a special tray.

Distinguished visually from its normally aspirated counterpart, the Mulsanne Turbo sports a radiator shell painted to match the rest of the car's bodywork: from a purely personal point of view I would have preferred the normal, unpainted, radiator, but then these things are all subjective. . . . Right near the end of the car's spell in our hands a worrying high-speed misfire developed, and this was eventually traced to a faulty sparking plug on the Mulsanne Turbo's return to Crewe. That was



Body-coloured radiator surround announces that the huge bonnet conceals a 298bhp power plant with locomotive levels of torque

the only mechanical blot on this Bentley's copybook, an unfortunate minor footnote to an otherwise trouble-free week's motoring.

As we mentioned earlier, the Mulsanne Turbo's price is £61,743.50 of which £12,000 is tax, so our Government will doubtless be happy to see as many of these Bentleys sold as possible! Which leads us to the ultimate question — is it actually worth the money?

Assessed purely as a motor car against its significantly less expensive rivals, it must be questionable as to whether the Mulsanne Turbo can justify its price tag. However, for the well-heeled connoisseur who has the means to finance this sort of outlay, who prides himself on impeccable taste and appreciates near-flawless standards of finish and refinement, it probably is. There are certainly other luxury cars that deliver comparable performance allied to better overall handling, but there is nothing, in my experience, that delivers these qualities in the same distinguished, haughtily upper-crust, and oh-so-British style as this turbocharged Bentley saloon. ■



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BENTLEY

COLLECTORS' EDITION / FROM RACE TO ROAD



BENTLEY'S BRILLIANT



BLOWOUT

To celebrate 100 years of one of Britain's greatest marques we gathered together three of its most famous racing cars from three very different eras of competition. In a world exclusive, Andrew Frankel channelled his inner Bentley Boy for a track test like no other.

writer **ANDREW FRANKEL** photographer **LYNDON MCNEIL & BENTLEY**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, AUGUST 2019

This is quite something: the first time that cars from all three eras of Bentley's racing history have been driven together. Each has their claim to fame: the GT3 is Bentley's latest competition car, a state of the art racer in the most competitive category of sports car racing. The old Blower is not merely Sir Henry Birkin's own car, not only the one in which he led Le Mans in 1930, but the one that exists today as the most original of all racing vintage Bentleys. And the one that sits in the middle chronologically? It's the 2003 Le Mans winner – not one of a type of car that won that race but the actual winner.

They have come together at Silverstone to

celebrate Bentley's centenary. It's not true that Bentley has always been a racing brand – for 71 of those 100 years Bentley did not race at all. But racing was there from the start – indeed Bentley raced long before it got around to delivering a car to a paying customer in September 1921. Over the decade that followed, Bentley put Britain on the racing map. True, Bugatti and Alfa Romeo dominated grand prix racing, but Bentley's five wins at Le Mans between 1924-30 announced Britain's presence on the global racing stage, a position from where the country has rarely looked back.

It was Rolls-Royce which denied Bentley the opportunity to race after it hoovered up the bankrupt company in 1931. Had it been Napier as originally intended, Bentley might not have had to wait a lifetime before returning to the track. But



when it did under Volkswagen ownership in 2001, the results were swift, culminating in that 2003 Le Mans win, breaking the records for both the greatest distance covered in the 24 hours and the shortest time spent in the pits. Fast and reliable: WO would have been buzzing with pride.

Many still regard the decision not to defend the title in 2004 as a mistake, as the car would certainly have still been favourite to win. But by then VW had spent hundreds of millions designing a new Bentley road car, transforming the factory and putting Bentley back on the top step of Le Mans. It was time for the outbound flow of money to be reversed.

How then to regard the GT3? In some respects it's Bentley's most successful race car yet. It's the first to be sold as a racing car to private customers

– although in the 1920s plenty raced their Bentleys, including John Duff who took Bentley's first victory at Le Mans in his – and over five seasons the first-generation GT3 car won 45 races and earned over 120 visits to the podium. And this all-new second-generation car is quicker still.

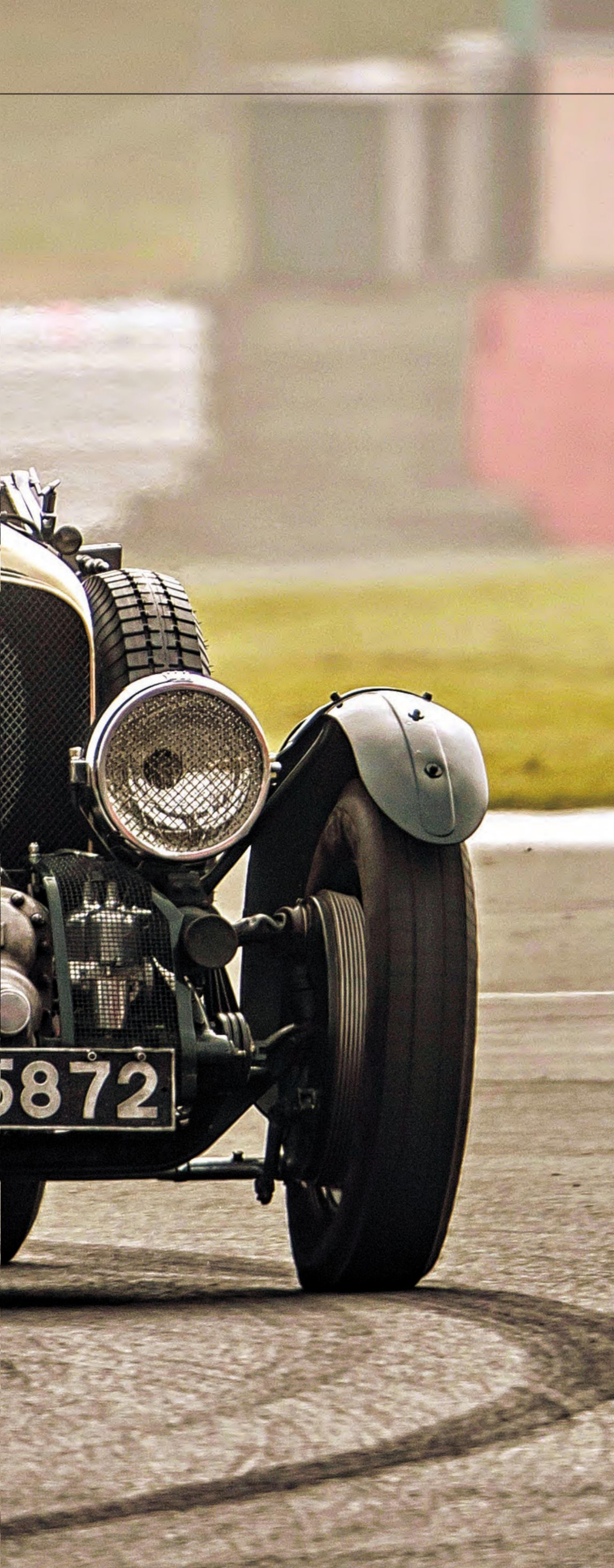
If there is one thing that links them it is Bentley's claim that as a factory team it never entered a race it did not have a chance of winning outright. So, glossing over Bentley's first international race – the 1922 Indy 500 in which it finished stone last – we'll move swiftly forward eight years to the other end of the original Bentley company's racing endeavours. ►



BENTLEY

COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD





BLOWER BENTLEY

It is Le Mans 1930 and you are Sir Henry 'Tim' Birkin. With the money of a wealthy lady called Dorothy Paget, you have taken the 4½-litre Bentley and fitted an Amherst Villiers supercharger. WO Bentley is livid and can be heard muttering, 'to supercharge a Bentley is to pervert its design and corrupt its performance'. It doesn't matter – WO lost control of his company years ago and chairman Woolf Barnato is delighted.

So you are happy for your two-car private entry to unite with the three works Speed Six Bentleys against a common foe the like of which has never been seen at Le Mans. A Mercedes-Benz SSK whose 7-litre engine is not only larger than that in the 6½-litre Speed Sixes, it's supercharged too. Worse, at its wheel is Rudi Caracciola, Germany's finest driver. Your job is to break it.

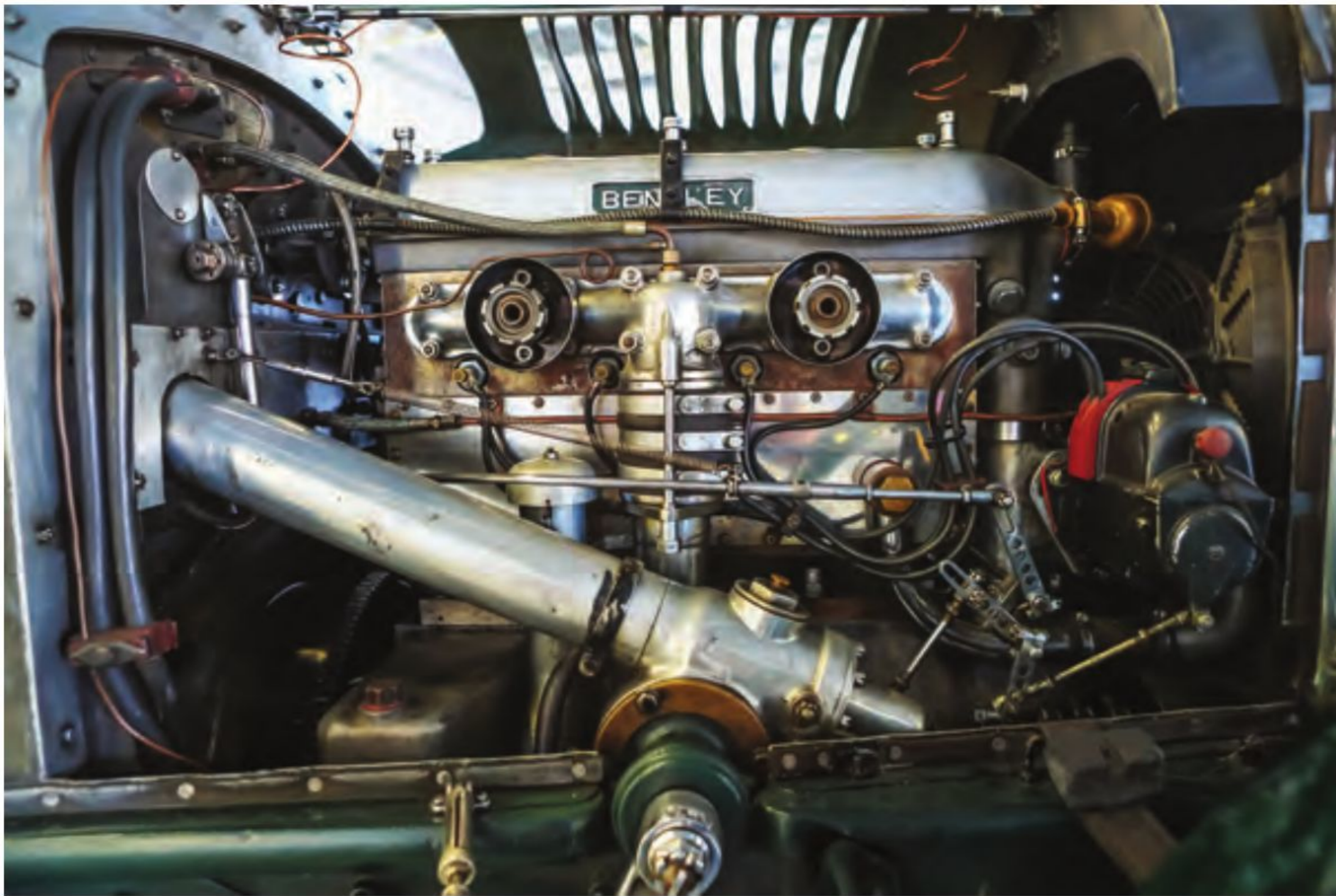
So you go haring after it. Unlike your supercharger, the Mercedes' is summoned by clutch according to need. Its engine is designed to tolerate the stress only briefly. So the game is make Caracciola use his blower all the time. Within three laps you've caught the huge Benz on the Mulsanne Straight. The road is narrow and the SSK is in the middle. But you're doing 125mph and gaining – until a rear tyre throws its tread, mangling your wing as it exits the scene. What should you do? Limp back to the pits, obviously. Obvious unless you're Birkin: what you actually do is sail past the Mercedes, half on the grass. You do not stop at the pits; instead you break the lap record.

Birkin didn't win this or any other race in a Blower, nor did anyone else. But as a child, that story more than any other lit my imagination, and in some small but significant way started me on a path that led to Silverstone and that very car.

Unlike the car that did win that race, Old Number 1, whose identity required a court case to settle so 'evolved' had it become, there's never been any doubt concerning the number two team Blower, UU5872. It's only had one significant accident, and that was before that fateful Le Mans, for which it was rebuilt in the form seen here. For most of its life it belonged to the Sears family – ►

*"THERE ARE THE PEDALS PRESSED
BY BIRKIN, AND THE INSTRUMENTS HE
WOULD PROBABLY HAVE IGNORED"*





It was never designed to be supercharged, yet Tim Birkin's car with its massive blower on the nose led at Le Mans and teased the Mercedes to a breakdown. Virtually unchanged since, this example is the quintessential Blower Bentley

Stanley, Jack and David whose motoring credentials speak for themselves. It was bought back by Bentley with VW's money and has since been maintained, but not restored. In its imperfect and oily state, it is perfect. There are the pedals pressed by Birkin, and there is the splat of instruments that, knowing what I do of him, he would have in all probability ignored.

Magnetos on, ignition retarded, thumb the button and it starts instantly with the noise referred to in Bentley circles as 'that bloody thump'. Like most vintage Bentleys, its accelerator is the middle pedal. The gearbox contains massive cogs that require precision timing if they are to mesh without protest. You just have to learn the ratios – a big pause between first and second, as fast as your hands can move between second and third and something between the two for selecting top, remembering to double-declutch always and apply the appropriate rev-match throttle blip on the way down.

You can see why it was quick at Le Mans: the Silverstone International Circuit has a good blend of fast and slow corners and the quicker you're going the happier it is. In the slowest turns it feels cumbersome, not just because of its age and tyres, but because that huge blower slung out ahead of the front wheels adds considerable mass to an already extremely nose-heavy car. Relative to its performance the drum brakes aren't great either, and would need management if they were to last.

But get it percolating in third and top gear and the old Bentley is magnificent. It has around 240bhp, over double what a standard unsupercharged 4½-litre generates, and it will get to around 90mph down the Hangar Straight, despite a slower entry and lengthy braking zone. What you want is a mile or three of Mulsanne so you can watch that gorgeous chronometric Jaeger speedometer flick into three figures and beyond, engine bellowing, steering shaking, hunched down below the aero screens, hoping the tyres can take the punishment, reeling in that damn Mercedes ahead...

It's hard to drive this car and not get an attack of the Birkins. ►

BENTLEY

COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD





BENTLEY GT3

Not so the GT3. If the Blower is a car you drive with your heart, the GT3 requires a diametrically opposed approach. If challenged to drive the old Blower as fast as I could, I reckon it would need three or four laps to do a time I could not significantly improve. I doubt I'd be able to say the same of the GT3 after an entire day.

It's not that the intervening 90 years have somehow made racing cars more difficult to drive; on the contrary, driving a modern GT3 car almost as fast as it can go is simplicity itself. And the only downside to that is that come race day you'll finish nowhere.

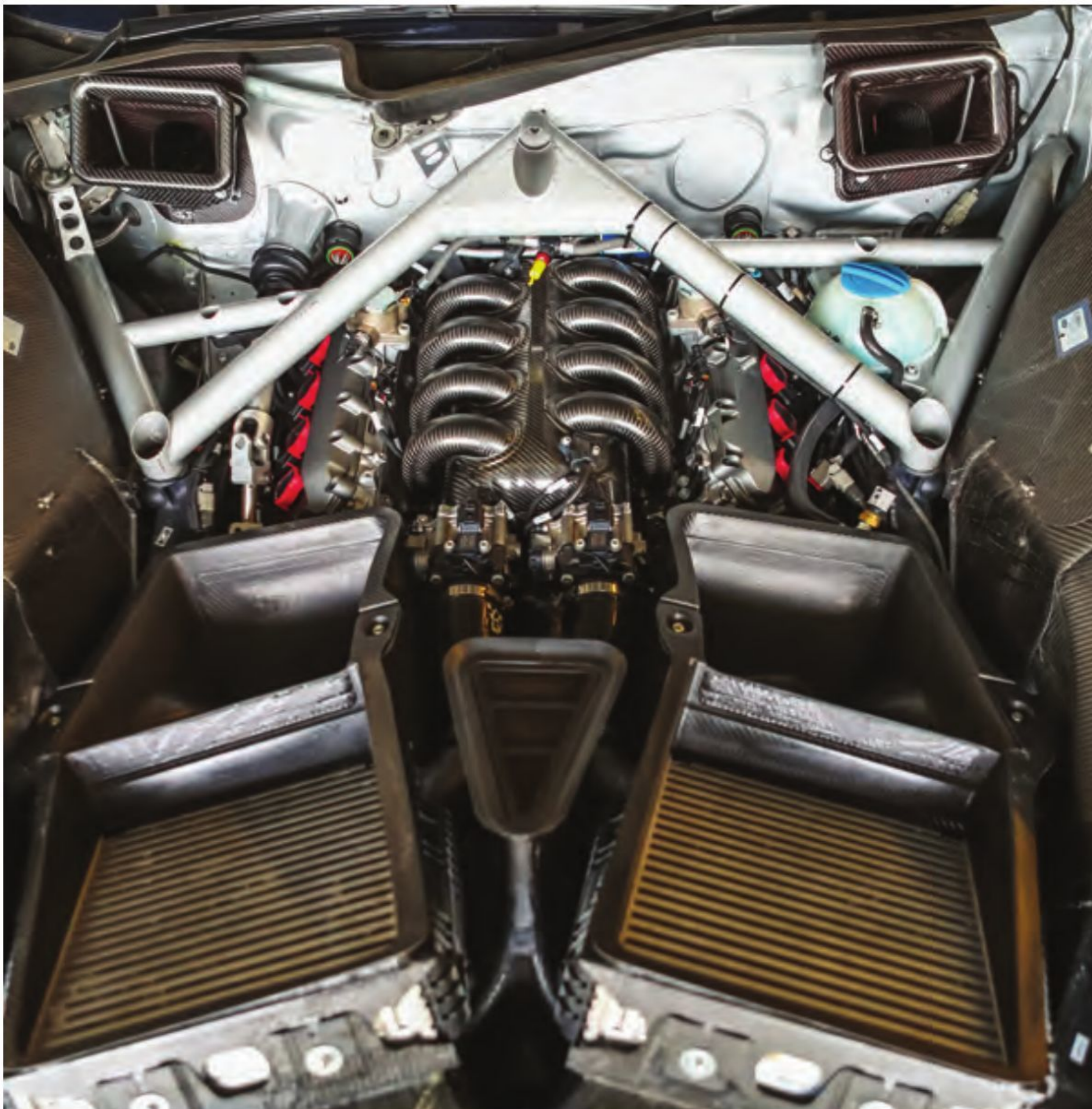
This second generation of Bentley Continental was a far easier car to turn into a competitive GT3 machine than the first, because it's based on the same aluminium-intensive platform as the Porsche Panamera. It is a fundamentally lighter car whose primary components are more easily sited for racing. Most importantly, a greater rear weight bias has been achieved because the old car was significantly limited for traction. It's more efficient through the air too, and easier for gentlemen drivers to manage in tough conditions. It's also so light it will carry ballast everywhere it races, a strange thing to say about a Bentley. But some nice touches from Crewe remain, such as leather door pulls and paddle shifters from the Mulsanne limousine.

The cockpit is sparse and less space-age in appearance than some rivals, but there's still a vast array of knobs and switches, few of which I will need today. The seating position is fixed both to aid ingress and exit and also to centralise one of the car's heavier components – the driver. Instead the wheel and pedals now come to you.

I'm told the engine has been made quieter, but when it starts the 4-litre twin turbo V8 still sounds like the charges going off under a high-rise building rigged for demolition. But ►



“ENGAGE LAUNCH MODE, PUT FOOT ON ACCELERATOR AND SLITHER UP THE PIT LANE, SMOKE POURING FROM THE ARCHES”



Top: driving position bears little resemblance to road-going Continental GT, with hand-operated clutch, digital readout and button-laden steering wheel. Above: paired horizontal radiators dominate engine bay ahead of twin-turbo 4-litre V8

you can't just pull away. The clutch is on the steering wheel and is, in effect, a large switch. There's no skill in what happens next: you engage launch mode with your hand gripping the clutch against the circumference of the wheel, put your foot hard on the accelerator and let go. But there is just a little courage needed because if you lift for an instant, the car stalls. So you keep your foot down and slither up the pit lane with smoke pouring out of your wheel arches. There appears to be no other way.

It's strange, then, that it doesn't feel that quick in a straight line. A supercar like a McLaren 720S would stay with it once the wheels stopped spinning and come past as the drag of the Bentley's wings started to tell. You thunder down the straight, feeding it gear after gear, but there's nothing other-worldly here, not yet at least.

That all comes in the braking where it doesn't matter how hard you hit the pedal because you're not going to trigger the ABS at high speed. To anyone used to road cars, or even old racing cars, this is where a modern GT3 car feels most alien. For a corner like Stowe you brake barely before the turning point, staying on the pedal all the way to the apex, but bleeding off the pressure as the downforce washes away.

Then it's just a question of how hard do you dare get back on the throttle, and how soon. So long as you've not dialled up too much traction control (which cleverly lets you control not only the level of intervention but the point of activation too), the car will slide amiably enough, but without time to talk to the engineers, study the data and learn how the tyre behaves over a stint, I don't have a feel for the best way to get the most from it.

Before I'd even think about racing it I'd want a stack of tuition, not in how to control it on the limit because it's an entirely forgiving car, but how to extract the best possible lap time from it. That's a subtly but significantly different thing. ►

BENTLEY

COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD





BENTLEY SPEED8

And then there is the Speed 8. I've loved the other two, but then I know vintage Bentleys well and I must have driven a dozen GT3 cars over the years. But the actual Le Mans-winning Speed 8, the car in whose pit I camped for the entire race, whose drivers I interviewed and whose mechanics I annoyed? This is something else.

The car was designed from scratch for the 2003 season, its rather more conservative EXP Speed 8 predecessor having been raced in 2001 and 2002. And yet there are still those who'll blithely tell you any Speed 8 is 'just an Audi R8 with the roof'. It's not and never was, not even in 2001.

"It's just sheer bloody ignorance," its designer Peter Ellerao told me. He had designed the R8C that raced without success in 1999, and people made far too great a mental leap. So I got him to put it in words anyone can understand: "Yes, we had that knowledge [from the Audi project]. But engine aside, there was not a single thing on the Bentley that had anything to do with the R8C or any other Audi."

It's a ridiculously hard car to get into, and once in there's a whole new level of intimidation. I can remember in 2003 peering at its LCD screens and steering wheel buttons and thinking it looked space-age, but compared to a modern LMP1 car it's seriously starting to show its age. But at least it has three pedals in its footwell.

A modern Le Mans prototype requires dozens of people to run it, but this one fires up angrily but easily at a push of the button. Its voice is metal-on-metal ugly, the harsh bark of its flat-plane crank sitting in stark contrast to the fabulous growl and howl of the cross-plane GT3 motor. The clutch strategy could barely be more different either: a tiny bit of throttle until you feel it bite, then just roll gently off the pedal before touching the gas.

Guy Smith, the only man to have raced both a Speed 8 and a GT3 Bentley, has been full of reassurance: "It's a lovely car; the harder you go, the better it gets. You have nothing to worry about – just trust it and you'll be fine." But it's scary in here. It's incredibly claustrophobic, the extremities of the car are hard to judge and every time I touch the accelerator it goes nuts – 600bhp tends to do that to 900kg of car. ►

BENTLEY

COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD

*"THE SPEED 8 IS A CAR OF EXQUISITE
PURITY AND FOCUS. IT'S ALSO A CARD-
CARRYING LE MANS WINNER..."*





Top: Audi-sourced V8 engine is the only element derived from the German firm. Otherwise the Speed 8 is an entirely British production. Above: at the helm the Bentley proves surprisingly simple to handle, despite astonishing downforce

The steering feels kart-like in its directness. It's lighter to handle than I expected and despite Guy's calming words I don't feel at home in here. But nor should it be reassuring for those who drive it slowly: a GT3 might tolerate being handled like it's a bomb waiting to explode, because ultimately it's based on a street car and comes with a street engine. The Speed 8 is not. If you're to find out anything other than how to scare yourself, you have to drive it.

So I do. I forget its value, its history and instead just go as hard and fast as I dare: in a car like this it is the only way. And here's the truth: this now quite old racing car is on another level to anything else I've driven, including Group C cars. The straight-line speed normalises quite rapidly and I've driven plenty that accelerate more quickly, but the brakes and grip are barely believable.

I'm told it will corner faster on wets than the GT3 does on slicks, and I believe it. It's probably doing 170mph at the end of the Hangar Straight, yet even ignoring what seems to be a sensible braking point, counting a bit, counting a bit more and only then braking and turning in, it still hits its marks every time.

And I can start to see what Guy means: above all the car is surreally stable: while the GT3 likes a big, physical fight, the Speed 8 is best at doing what it's told. Because it's so fast and intimidating and develops such enormous downforce, you just presume it's going to be impossibly hard to drive. But it's not. Smith says that even when you're extracting a time from it, it's always on your side.

I'd love to have learned more, more about its quick corner apex speed, how best to manage the brakes and how it behaves when it really starts to slide, but beyond a touch of understeer in the slowest corners, it just went where I pointed it.

Driving home, letting the day wash over me, I wondered which of these Bentleys spanning 90 years of competition I'd love to drive again. Would it be the GT3 car, but in a real race? It's mighty tempting and with some tuition I know how much I'd enjoy the experience. Or the old Blower, just for the sense of occasion, knowing what it is, and who once sat in that seat?

But no, it's the Speed 8, and not just because it's the one about which I still have the most to learn. Racing cars that were never designed to be anything else are just different; wonderful though they are, the road-based origins of both the Blower and the GT3 are clear. The Speed 8 is a car of simply exquisite purity and focus. It's also a card-carrying Le Mans winner. To me that fact alone makes it one of the most special cars anyone could hope to drive. ■

BENTLEY THROUGH THE AGES

1919

Bentley Motors founded at Cricklewood, London, by brothers Walter Owen and Horace M Bentley. New 3-litre Bentley runs for the first time in 1920, a robust 16-valve four that hints at WO's locomotive apprenticeship. First car delivered in 1921; gains reputation for performance and reliability.

1922

After racing at Brooklands, Bentley enters a 3-litre at the Indianapolis 500 and wins the team award in the Tourist Trophy. In 1923 Duff and Clement's private Bentley finishes fourth at the inaugural Le Mans 24 Hours. One year on a 3-litre wins Le Mans, and again in 1927 and '28 – but financial struggles begin.

1926

Diamond millionaire Woolf Barnato steps in as financier and chairman of the ailing firm, and also gifted works driver. New 6½-litre announced.

1927

To replace the ageing 3-litre a 4½-litre car is released, while the 180bhp Speed Six 6½-litre will go on to be the firm's most successful competition car, winning Le Mans in 1929 and '30 with Barnato.

1929

Supercharged 'Blower', developed by Sir Henry Birkin, released, but suffers from poor reliability. Only Birkin's single-seater has any track credit, although he takes a Blower to second in the 1930 GP de Pau. Nevertheless the model becomes a marque icon.

1930

Despite serious finance problems following the Wall Street Crash, WO develops 4-litre and 8-litre cars. Now seen as his masterpiece, the latter is a rival to Rolls-Royce's Phantom but cannot save the firm; in July 1931 WO and Barnato, are forced to sell up, and Rolls secretly buys it.



Walter Owen Bentley, known as 'WO', who created the marque – and then saw it sold

1931

Rolls-Royce forms Bentley Motors Ltd, with production of a new 'Silent Sports car' restarting at Derby in 1933. It is built alongside Rolls-Royce products, sharing chassis and engine variants, all with coach-built bodies and a straight-six 3½-litre engine developed from Rolls-Royce 20/25, enlarged in 1936 to 4¼. No more works racing, though Eddie Hall races his car in three TTs; Bentley becomes the sporting RR alternative. In 1935 WO leaves for Lagonda.

1939

Capable of 120mph, a streamlined Portout-bodied 4¼ is built for amateur racer Nicky Embiricos as a test-bed for a future Continental design. MkV model with independent front suspension introduced but almost immediately Bentley production ceases for war. Experimental one-off Corniche crashes in high-speed testing in France; waiting in Dieppe for shipment home it is destroyed by bombs. Only 17 MkVs built – the last Derby Bentleys.

1946

Production resumes at Crewe with 4¼-litre MkVI, first Bentley to be sold with factory steel body. Improved 4½-litre R-type follows, then streamlined Continental of 1952 (below) – "the fastest saloon in the world".

Soltan Hay enters the Embiricos car in the first postwar Le Mans race, finishing sixth, plus the next two events.





Top left, 1965 T series; top right, 1930s Derby. Left, Embiricos special; right, winning team after 2003 Le Mans victory

1955

S-series Bentley introduced, identical to Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud barring grille and trim, with 4.9-litre six, upgraded to 6.2-litre V8 in 1959 (S2); twin-headlamp S3 followed in 1962. Coach-built bodies still available.

1965

T-series introduced – the first unitary-bodied Bentley. Two-door saloon unique to Bentley but four-door almost identical to Rolls-Royce Shadow, beginning a slide in the marque's distinctive identity and prestige. In fact, 95 per cent of buyers opted for the Rolls-Royce-badged version.

1980

Following collapse and nationalisation of Rolls-Royce parent group, Vickers acquires Rolls-Royce cars and Bentley; launches Mulsanne as Bentley version of Rolls-Royce Spirit; Turbo two years later begins moves to differentiate Bentley again, with performance variants up to 400bhp Turbo RT taking the marque into 1990s and arrival of Arnage with Cosworth-developed turbo BMW V8. Bentley/Rolls-Royce sales now equal.

1998

Vickers sells its automotive arm; BMW buys Rolls-Royce while VW group buys Bentley, separating the marques for first time since 1931. VW reverts to Bentley Turbo R V8 in Arnage as a stopgap, with improvements up to final 500bhp model of 2009.

2001

There's a works Bentley at Le Mans for the first time since 1930 – the 4-litre twin-turbo V8 Speed 8 EXP. It finishes third overall, behind the winning Audis, winning the LMGTP class.

2003

The evolved Speed 8 takes a resounding overall victory at Le Mans, scoring a one-two finish in its third and final year of participation. New era two-door Continental GT coupé and convertible launched, with VW W12 motor and 4WD – first sports Bentley for years, revitalising Bentley's sporting image.

2010

New Continental adds turbo V8 to range, with super-high performance variants topping 200mph, while opulent four-door Mulsanne saloon, powered by a radically modernised descendant of the 6.75-litre turbo V8, forms Bentley's Rolls-Royce rival.

2013

Bentley enters GT racing with Continental GT3, beginning a long and successful programme that continues today, including team victories in Blancpain and British GT in 2017.

2019

Bentley celebrates 100 years since WO founded the company in North London, creating a legend that has carried through to today. ■

BENTLEY

COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD

DANISH RACING GREEN



Before Bentley celebrated its centenary at the 2019 Silverstone Classic, we asked serial Le Mans winner Tom Kristensen to visit the track and test one of the marque's vintage icons which were on display at the event

writer **SIMON ARRON** photographer **LYNDON MCNEIL**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, AUGUST 2019





“**D**'you know Tivoli Gardens, in the centre of Copenhagen?” Tom Kristensen casts a quizzical glance across the table and perceives a slight shortfall in *Motor Sport's* grasp of Danish culture. “It’s almost as old as the city itself,” he continues, “a park with amusement rides and restaurants, fully pedestrianised. I never thought anybody would be allowed to take a car in there, not even our royal family, until we were waved through the gate in a vintage Bentley...”

That was August 2003, part of a promotional tour to celebrate Bentley’s sixth outright Le Mans victory and its first for 73 years. It was also the fifth of nine such conquests for Kristensen, a man who won Formula 3 titles, challenged to do likewise in F3000 and tested several F1 cars, yet never graced a grand prix grid. Instead, a chance to contest the 1997 Le Mans 24 Hours – a winning debut alongside Stefan Johansson and Michele Alboreto in a Joest-run TWR Porsche – defined the shape of his future career. Seven of his subsequent victories came in assorted Audi prototypes, while the other added him to a roster that includes Barnato, Birkin and Benjafield: he became a Bentley Boy of the modern age.

Kristensen has joined us to connect past with present. It’s the Silverstone Classic media day and he’s here to take a stint at the wheel of a 4½-litre Bentley, not an original Le Mans car but one with an interesting competition pedigree. First registered in January 1930, it was owned for a time by Archie Butterworth – designer of the flat-four engine that powered the Aston Butterworth F2 car, which

appeared occasionally in world championship grands prix during 1952. Butterworth raced the Bentley extensively in the late 1940s – taking part in Britain’s first post-war race meeting, the one and only fixture staged at Gransden Lodge. Current owner Eddie McGuire acquired the car in 2007, had it fully restored and added a supercharger that hadn’t been there originally. It still carries the British Racing Drivers’ Club and Bentley DC badges that once belonged to Butterworth.

“It is geared for 100mph at 2700rpm – and will do that all day long,” McGuire says. “It has 180bhp and huge torque, 250lb ft from 1000-3000rpm. It’s an absolute joy to drive. It has a 180-litre (39.5-gallon) tank and a 400-mile range. In each of the past two years I’ve driven it from the Nürburgring to Calais in about 4hrs 15min, non-stop. It’s brilliant, as good as a modern car, though it does require a mortgage to refuel it...”

Kristensen has driven vintage Bentleys before ▶





Tom Kristensen earned those Bentley overalls as a member of the victorious Le Mans squad in 2003 - but says he wouldn't want to race this Bentley there

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– “but not very often” – and first ventures out alongside McGuire, to observe and reacclimatise. “I’ve driven a 3-litre Bentley, a 1924 Le Mans car,” he says. “I’ve tested a 1949 Ferrari 166, the Chinetti/Lord Selsdon car. I’ve driven a Ford GT40 from 1967, the year of my birth, and an early ’70s Matra. For Audi I’ve driven the Auto Union Type C, but none of this has been in anger – it has been a great privilege to experience these cars in a way that approaches the limit but in no way reaches the limit.

“I always enjoy driving older machinery, but it’s very hard to align it with my competitive mindset. If I were to race something like this Bentley, I’d definitely be too late on the brakes, carrying too much speed into the corners, sliding around, running out of road... When it steps out a bit everything kind of flexes, so you’re not sure how much you can do. I don’t really want to know – I’m happy being respectful, keeping it well within the limit.”

After a couple of gentle laps, he’s set loose on his own. As he leaves the pits, his open-face helmet showcases a grin that has become broader still by the time he returns.

“The throttle is very responsive and there is huge torque from almost anywhere in the rev range,” he says, “plus the sound is incredibly distinctive. You have to double-declutch going up the gears, but it didn’t take too long to get the hang of that. Today you’re looking at microseconds to make sure the gears have engaged. Back then it was all about listening and timing – boom, up the box we go. Changing down, I’m not



sure I ever got it completely right during the few laps I did – and sometimes I stayed in third when I could perhaps have used second, but I felt staying in third and fourth was probably wise.

“I tried to keep an eye on the gauges, but with all the steering inputs and the strong winds – another Silverstone speciality – you are constantly concentrating on slight adjustments if you try to stay anywhere near the ideal line. You get into a corner and start to think, ‘Yeah, that feels good, good, good...’ then suddenly it’s a case of, ‘Whoa!’ The car starts pushing a little bit to the side, so you’re not completely sorted. In the same situation with a modern car you’d be thinking, ‘OK, that’s done, move on.’ With the Bentley it seems there’s always a little bit more to do.”

He looks across at the car’s owner, “Is it OK if I say that the brakes are rubbish?” McGuire nods and concedes that they are due a few adjustments. “I remember them being better than this, once ▶



Kristensen trades jokes before the Dane steers his Blower on to the Silverstone track

you've found them, that is, because the throttle of course is in the centre. When you hit the pedal you have to pump it a bit – and if you were travelling at 120mph or whatever, it would force you to think ahead if you just wanted to make the corner, never mind being on the correct line, because the car's so heavy.”

Although he raced for Bentley only once at Le Mans, sharing the winning car with Guy Smith and Rinaldo Capello, the Dane is something of a student of the company's competitive pedigree. “I'm aware that I don't have the same kind of association with the company as Henry Birkin, Woolf Barnato or the original Bentley Boys,” he says, “but I believe what Bentley did in the 1920s is at least partly responsible for the way the Le Mans 24 Hours evolved internationally. If Bentley hadn't gone there in 1923, there would

have been a couple of Belgian entries and the rest would all have been French. In those days Bentley was there every year with its flamboyant cast of drivers and the development going into these leviathans was well ahead of its time, because the cars were able to run for 24 hours at speeds that were remarkable by contemporary standards. The numbers might not look all that impressive today, but goddammit they were. And they were running with only two drivers back then.

“During the final phase of my career, an LMP1 prototype felt like my natural environment. It was a professional vocation that involved a lot of determination and passion, the same as it did for everybody else out there. But in the 1920s it was all very much an adventure; they were undertaking things that had not been done before – or at least had very rarely been done. Records were ►





constantly being established, or broken. For the Bentley drivers I'd imagine the whole thing was akin to conquering mountains, or reaching the North Pole. The whole concept of racing cars like this for 24 hours was completely crazy – but simultaneously fascinating and wonderful.

“WO Bentley clearly wanted to prove his cars were reliable and that is very much an engineer’s mentality. During that period there were debates about what you could or couldn’t do to a car – stuff like adding a supercharger, and whether or not you could make it reliable. There was a lot of innovation and some of the spin-offs can still be seen on the cars we drive today.”

Does he feel pampered, having done much of his racing in the carbon age? A quick smile. “Remember,” he says, “that I raced at Le Mans in three separate decades. Before that I drove a tubular chassis in Formula Ford 2000, then an aluminium honeycomb Ralt in German F3. And even when I was racing F3000 in Japan we had steel brakes, so I’d say I grew into the carbon era...”

He’d started out by saying that he was happier driving an old Bentley than he would be racing one. Has anything he experienced at Silverstone altered his feelings?

“In short, no!” he says. “I wouldn’t want to race a car from this period unless I owned it... and unfortunately I don’t. I always respect cars I get asked to drive, but you cannot allow yourself to

“THE BENTLEY IS PROBABLY A BIT TOO BEFORE MY TIME, SO IT’S OUT OF MY COMFORT ZONE”

get into full race-driver mode. You’re trying to settle into a rhythm and go as quickly as possible without endangering anybody or anything. I’m quite happy in cars from the 1950s or 1960s, because I like to slide them around and you can do that on the old-style Dunlop tyres. The Bentley is probably a little too before my time, so it would be hard to get into my comfort zone. I don’t like over-driving – and the temptation to do that might be too great.

“You can’t help but look for the limit and any modern driver will tell you the same – you enter any corner faster than should be possible, just a little bit, then deal with it. Then on the next lap you want to go a little faster – you’re doing that constantly. If you were to do the same thing with a pioneering car such as this, without understanding what feedback you were going to get...”

He shakes his head gently, but that familiar grin remains. ■





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