



B12MR, Bentley 4-1/4-Litre Vanvooren Pillarless Saloon
owned by David Simons.

BENTLEY



The Last Silent Sports Car

BENTLEY: LAST OF THE SILENT SPORTS CAR 1938-9
by Ian Strang and John Boothman

Hardcover, 384 pages, many color and B&W images
11.75" x 8.75"

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Featured in *Side Mount Mirror* issue 1-2020 as part of the "Separated at Birth" theme is coverage of the Derby Bentley's evolution out of the Rolls-Royce small horsepower models. Fans of these Bentleys generally consider the final series of the 4-1/4-litre model equipped with overdrive to be the best of the bunch. While there are a number of books that cover the entire Derby Bentley range, this book focuses solely on those MR and MX chassis.

The development and running changes leading up to this series are chronicled, pointing out the three major mechanical differences:

1. A fourth gear overdrive ratio of .85: to 1
2. The switch from 18" to 17" wheels
(which were also 1" wider at 6.5")
3. The Marles-designed steering box providing lighter steering.

These changes resulted in a car better suited to high-speed touring, summed up by the authors as, "The overdrive model is the apotheosis of the series, combining the charm and sporting characteristics of the original 3-1/2 with the greater practicality and faster acceleration of later variants, including longer legs and lighter steering for effortless high-speed long-distance touring."

Four of the MR series appeared on the Bentley stand at the Earls Court Motor Show in October of 1938, supplemented by examples on these coachbuilder stands: James Young, Freestone & Webb, Carlton, J. Gurney Nutting, Hooper, H.J. Mulliner, Vanden Plas, Mann Egerton, William Arnold, Joseph Cockshoot, Rippon Brothers, Park Ward and Thrupp & Maberly, for a total of 17 MR cars displayed.

Period road tests and press evaluations are discussed along with sections covering the record-setting Embiricos car (B27LE) and the experimental Corniche. Of the 201 MR and MX chassis produced, a reported 175 still exist, a remarkably high survival rate of 87% and a testimony to the desirability of these cars when new and today. Each survivor is covered in detail with ownership history and photographs. You will be impressed with the wide range of coachwork found on these chassis.

Chassis tables, coachbuilder summaries and original registration numbers are found in the appendices. This may be a very narrow slice of the Classic car world, but it covers the most desirable post-Cricklewood Bentleys produced. •



B3MX, another Vanvooren
Pillarless Saloon, this
one owned by Nick Lemieux

