

The Silent Sports Car Club

Cars for Sale

November 2009

The Derby Bentley marketplace seems to be strong these days, with a limited number of cars available and those in good to excellent condition with rare and attractive body styles easily commanding six figure sums. Generally, there are reports of dealers being low on stock of classic cars at the moment and prices firming across the board.

In this context, the results of the RM auction in London on 28 Oct 2009 bear witness: There were four Derby Bentleys, all of which found buyers. The range of styles, condition and rarity is instructive. From low to high, the results are as follows:

B109 CW, a Park Ward 3 ½ litre standard saloon of their second style. Recent research indicates strongly that Park Ward produced 325 examples of this enlarged boot style, compared with 50 examples of their first style with a swept rear. This car was originally owned by Bentley Boy Bernard Rubin, just before his death. It had had money spent on the engine and steering box at Will Fiennes, but its coachwork was not in the first flush of youth and the seats looked original but tired. It looked to be a car to drive and enjoy, rather than show. It sold for £38,500, right in the middle of the £35-45k estimate range.

B157 BL, a Park Ward 3 ½ litre standard drophead, of which they produced 100 on the 3 ½ litre and 50 on the 4 ¼ litre chassis. This one is an early example in good condition. I love these Park Ward dropheads: the design is just right. I own one myself and drove it over 5,000 miles round Europe in 2008, one day covering 700 miles from Marbella to Costa Brava in 18 hours. Lovely, in good condition but not rare, although much less numerous than the Park Ward saloon. It sold for £105,600, right in the middle of the £90-110k estimate range. Those among you with eagle eyes will see it re-offered for sale at £129,000 below, by a dealer who clearly thinks he got a bargain! A Barker drophead coupe listed below in excellent condition is being offered at £155,000, and is very similar in style but somewhat rarer.

B32 EF, a Barker 3½ litre 2-door swept-tail coupe. Barker produced just 4 examples of this style on the 3 ½ litre chassis (this and one other survive), 1 on the 4 ¼ litre chassis and 1 on the Overdrive chassis after the Hooper takeover of Barker. This last went to India and is still there, so unavailable for export! B32 EF also went to India in October 1935, to the Nawab of Bahawalpur. With its rear spats, sweeping roof line and unframed windows, I love the style, and the rarity. I own a later 4 ¼ litre pillarless curvilinear coupe by Barker, which I think is marginally more attractive and which is definitely even rarer (one of three 4 ¼ litres produced and two survive!). The condition of this example looked good from the photos, but an older restoration looks like it will need work in due course to bring it to excellent condition. It sold for £110,000, mid estimate, and I think the purchaser got a good buy.

B79 KU, an H J Mulliner 4¼ litre concealed drophead, and indeed the first example of their successful Design 5969, of which they produced 8 examples, all of which survive. This one was

displayed at the 1937 London Earls Court Motor Show. It looked to be in very good condition, although the leather of the seats was worn and could have been much improved by feeding. It failed to reach its low estimate of £150k, selling for £143,000, but this was probably held back because the purchaser would have to pay import duty of 5% and VAT on top if it was kept in the UK. Even so, I suspect the purchaser will be very pleased, as this was not expensive for one of the loveliest Derby Bentleys, from one of the best British coachbuilders. As a thing of beauty, and also more importantly as a method of rapid, comfortable trans-continental driving, I believe that such a beautiful and rare Derby Bentley should stand well in comparison with the 1938 T57C Stelvio drophead Bugatti sold also by RM for £440,000. Certainly, I do not think the difference in beauty and driving characteristics is worth £300,000. But that is fashion for you!

Now to our table of cars currently offered for sale:

Chassis	Body style	Coachbuilder	Colour	Location	Rarity/attractiveness	Asking Price
B184 AH	Saloon	H J Mulliner	Black/Silver	UK	xx	
B136 CR	Saloon	Mann Egerton	Grey	USA	xxx	\$79,000
B68 DG	Saloon	Park Ward II	Blue	Belgium	x	Euros c75,000
B120 FB	Saloon	Park Ward II	Green	UK	x	
B9 FC	Saloon	Freestone & Webb	BRG	S Africa	xxxx	
4 ¼ litre	Saloon	Park Ward III	Red/Black	UK	x	£56,750
B48 JD	Saloon	H J Mulliner	Black	UK	xxx	
B82 JD	Saloon	Park Ward II	Ivory/Black	UK	x	£52,995
B97 BL	DHC	Swallow	Red/Black	UK	x	£78,500
B157 BL	DHC	Park Ward	Grey/Blue	UK	xxx	£129,000
B84 CR	DHC	Barker	Blue	UK	xxxx	£155,000
B7 JY	DHC	Hooper	Cream	UK	xxxx	£148,000
4 ¼ litre	DHC	Vanden Plas	Burgundy	UK	xxx	
4 ¼ litre	DHC	Vanden Plas	Light Blue	UK	xxx	
B105 MX	DHC	Vanden Plas	Green	UK	xxx	c£130,000
B107 MX	DHC	Vanden Plas	Blue	UK	xxx	£155,000
B68 JD	Sedan	Gurney Nutting	Blue/Black	UK	xxxxx	£325,000
B115 JY	Sedan DHC	Barker	Dark Blue	Spain	xxxx	Euros 175,000
B93 GP	OF Tourer	Vanden Plas	Silver Green	UK	xxxx	£129,000
B65 EJ	Roadster	Rebody	Green	UK	x	
B62 KT	Roadster	Petersen replica	Black	UK	xx	£145,000

Clearly open body styles are commanding more than saloons, and have always done so. Of note is the fact that there are no 2 door coupes being offered for sale. Variations in price can usually be accounted for by condition. The Gurney Nutting Owen Sedan is in concours condition and is from P&A Wood. At the other end of the scale, it is blatant mis-description to refer to a standard

Park Ward saloon of their second style as “very rare”, when as noted above Park Ward produced 325 examples! To ask 75,000 euros for the same car is somewhat unrealistic when another has just been sold for under £40,000. However, it is part of our service here at the Silent Sports Car Club to highlight such anomalies and create a knowledgeable and sensible market place.