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# 1931 BENTLEY 8 LITRE PARK WARD

## 1931 Bentley 8 Litre Sports Saloon by Park Ward

- Ordered new by Sir Ed Shaw in black over green with all the most lavish accoutrements
- Multiple Concours winner including Kensington Gardens Concours, from 1952-54
- Purchased by current family in 1979, who flew to New York on Concorde and brought her back on QE2
- Rarely seen, retains matching numbers original body, chassis and engine
- Offered from 45-year family ownership, accompanied by a 2024 Clare Hay report

Striking from every angle, this is the most handsome 8 Litre Bentley of all, according to renowned marque authority Dr. Clare Hay. Supercar of its day, the 8 Litre was the ultimate development of W.O. Bentley's design philosophy, and the fastest production car in the world. Capable of nearly silent 100 m.p.h. performance, even when fitted with heavy limousine coachwork, the 8 Litre had a legitimate claim to be the world's finest automotive thoroughbred. In captain W. Gordon Aston's words in a period review for "The Tatler", never had he known "a vehicle in which such a prodigious performance was linked to such a smooth unobtrusive quietness", summarizing perfectly the 8 Litre's purpose and stature.

The 62<sup>nd</sup> of just 100 produced, YM 5037 was sold in chassis form on 11 June 1931 and sent to Park Ward for fitment of the outstandingly attractive coachwork seen today. Constructed for first owner Sir Edward Shaw on the longer 13' chassis, this was the solitary sister to Park Ward's Olympia show car for 1930. YM 5037 was fitted with dramatic close coupled saloon bodywork, enhanced with a flattering waistline moulding, finished (as today) in black over a well-appointed green interior. Poignantly, Bentley Motors had slipped into receivership just days before she passed final test on 22 July 1931 – strained by developing its most magnificent creation, and a victim of the Great Depression.

Registered GP 8271, she passed in 1937 to second owner AA. Stuart Marshall of Penarth, Glamorgan, South Wales, likely via Brooklands Motors. After a vow to acquire one, having seen the sister car at the 1930 Motor Show, Stuart Marshall attained his dream: "I never drove her without getting a proud thrill over her magnificent appearance, and her exceptional performance – not to mention the admiration and attention which she invariably created." Stuart Marshall's long ownership saw her appear before the King and Queen at the London Cavalcade of Motoring of July 1946, taking awards at the Bentley Kensington Garden Concours of 1952, 1953, and 1954, and even recording a demonstration run at Filton Aerodrome, nearly touching the magic 100 m.p.h. on pool petrol with no special tuning.

From 1958, YM 5037 began twenty years in America, first with John Ballantine of Connecticut, then for a longer period with William B. Ruger, co-founder of the legendary Sturm, Ruger & Company gunmakers, one of the largest in America. A self-taught engineer compared to Samuel Colt and John Browning, Ruger had a boyhood obsession with firearms and had done wartime service in the OSS (forerunner of the CIA). A fine restoration by Gustav Reuter was commissioned during Ruger's ownership, with a repaint and retrim in the original black over green livery.

After periods with Jim Stickley in Iowa then Eric Weissberg of New York, YM 5037 was purchased by Layton Roberts in 1979 who flew out to pick her up on the Concorde and made a triumphant and entirely fitting return to Britain aboard the Atlantic liner QE2, flagship of the Cunard fleet and another icon of British design. As Layton Roberts recorded, "I will always remember the excitement as the QE2 docked and my father and myself were running up the gangplank to see this beautiful car, where it lived up to all expectations."

Since arriving on the Southampton docks in 1979, this 8 Litre has remarkably remained in continuous single-family ownership, passing from father to son, leading a well-cared for and relatively discreet existence, largely away from the glare of major events. Newly serviced by Parkes Restorations and still in outstanding condition, the accompanying fresh report from Dr. Clare Hay especially praises the coachwork and originality of major components, with YM 5037 known to be a personal favourite of this foremost authority – in her well-informed judgment the most handsome 8 Litre of all.

With the original Park Ward coachwork looking "so right" from every angle, this is surely one of the most special examples of Bentley's ultimate creation, the motorcar W.O. simply said was "the best car we ever made." Superlative in appearance and in performance, and remarkably original throughout, she is worthy of any

outstanding collection, suitable for effortless fast touring and for the world's greatest motoring events.

**SOLD**















