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1926 BENTLEY 3/4.5 LITRE

1926 Bentley 3 / 4½ Litre, Registration No. YM57

- 3 Litre Speed Model fitted with 4½ Litre engine in the 1950s
- Retains its original Vanden Plas four-seater tourer bodywork
- Extensively documented history, with full report by Bentley authority Clare Hay
- Active recent history, participation in the Flying Scotsman and Goodwood Revival

With their robust engineering and Le Mans-winning pedigree, it is little wonder that Cricklewood-era Bentleys continue to inspire such a strong following. This particular car follows the time-honoured recipe of combining the powerful 4½ Litre engine with the agile 3 Litre chassis, and the result is an extremely versatile and attractive British vintage.

Chassis number NR507 was built as a 1926 3 Litre Speed Model and originally fitted with a Supersports-specification engine. The four-seater sports body was ordered from Vanden Plas on 16 December 1925, with an invoice for £157 and 10s issued by the coachbuilder on 29 January 1926. T

Registered on 2 March 1926, and issued with the registration number YM 57, which it still wears today, the car was delivered to its first owner – Ernest Gordon Craig, who had ordered YM57, his second Bentley, in a striking configuration. The body was given a 'scratched aluminium' finish, while the wings and chassis were painted Parsons Long Acre red, matching the red Connolly leather interior. Craig, a veteran of the Great War, was the founder of New Era Films Ltd in London during the early 1920s and later became managing director of British Movietone News, earning him a knighthood in 1929.

With its distinctive colour scheme, YM 57 would certainly have cut a dash around London's fashionable West End, but Craig's ownership was brief and the Bentley was sold to PJ Brooks in October 1926. The factory service records that form part of the car's extensive history file note various changes of ownership through the 1920s and '30s, and by 1939 it was in the hands of the Duchesne family in Wimborne, Dorset.

Following the war, Douglas Wilson-Spratt became the next custodian of YM57, a great marque enthusiast who was a member of the Bentley Drivers Club. Photographs show that the car's bodywork had been painted green by this point, and also that the intrepid Wilson-Spratt seemingly used it to tow a caravan!

Sold to Philip James Stanbury in 1947, then to Norman Hamilton Smith later that same year, Hamilton Smith took it with him when he moved from Toddington to Scotland, where he became the harbour master in Oban. Subsequent owners included George Teacher Dunlop, JF Denholm and George Hilton Middleton.

In November 1953, YM 57 was acquired by Roley Fraser, a keen driver and racer of a Jaguar XK 120 at the time. Fraser later recalled buying the Bentley for £100 from Middleton, who he described as being 'an impoverished vet', and said that the engine was very worn. He was therefore encouraged by his friend Gordon Lockart to replace it with a 4½ Litre engine, which was duly sourced from Whetstone-based breaker Terry Breen.

The car has remained in 3/4½ specification ever since, and must have made quite an impression on Fraser, despite the fact that he sold it to Edinburgh-based Hamish Gunn in 1955. Twenty-one years later, Gunn sold it back to Fraser, who soon converted the front brakes to hydraulic operation and fitted an alternator, electric fuel pump and an overdrive unit.

Fraser clearly relished being reacquainted with his old Bentley, and during his long second stint as its custodian, he took it around the world on road trips to Monte Carlo, Jordan, and even China! His numerous trips to France included multiple laps of the Le

Mans circuit. Fraser kept the car until 2011 – selling it on shortly after treating it to a comprehensive engine rebuild.

In more recent years, YM 57 has been restored by renowned Bentley specialist Neil Davis – a process that included removing the hydraulic front brakes and returning them to standard specification. Since then, the car has been successfully entered in blue-ribbon events such as the Flying Scotsman and the Brooklands Trophy at the Goodwood Revival. It also took part in the Bentley Centenary Trophy at the 2019 Silverstone Classic, and the Benjafield's Double Twelve at Goodwood the following year.

Expertly maintained during its current ownership by Ewan Getley at Kingsbury Racing Shop, YM 57 is a car that we know well and which we are proud to once again be offering for sale. A rare example of the breed in that it retains its original body and boasts a continuous history from new, it makes for an invigorating road car, eligible for a wide range of prestigious events.

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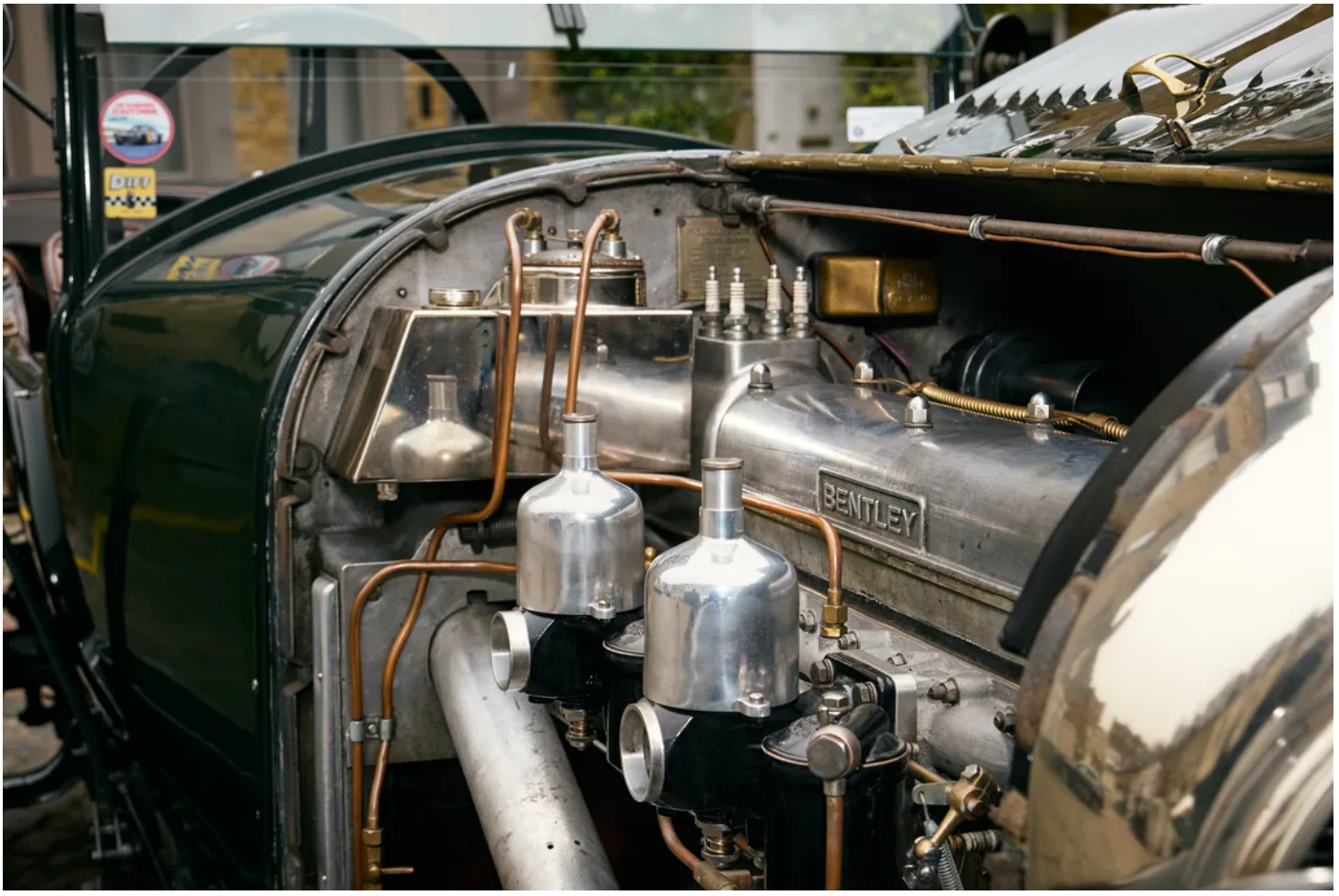

YM 57

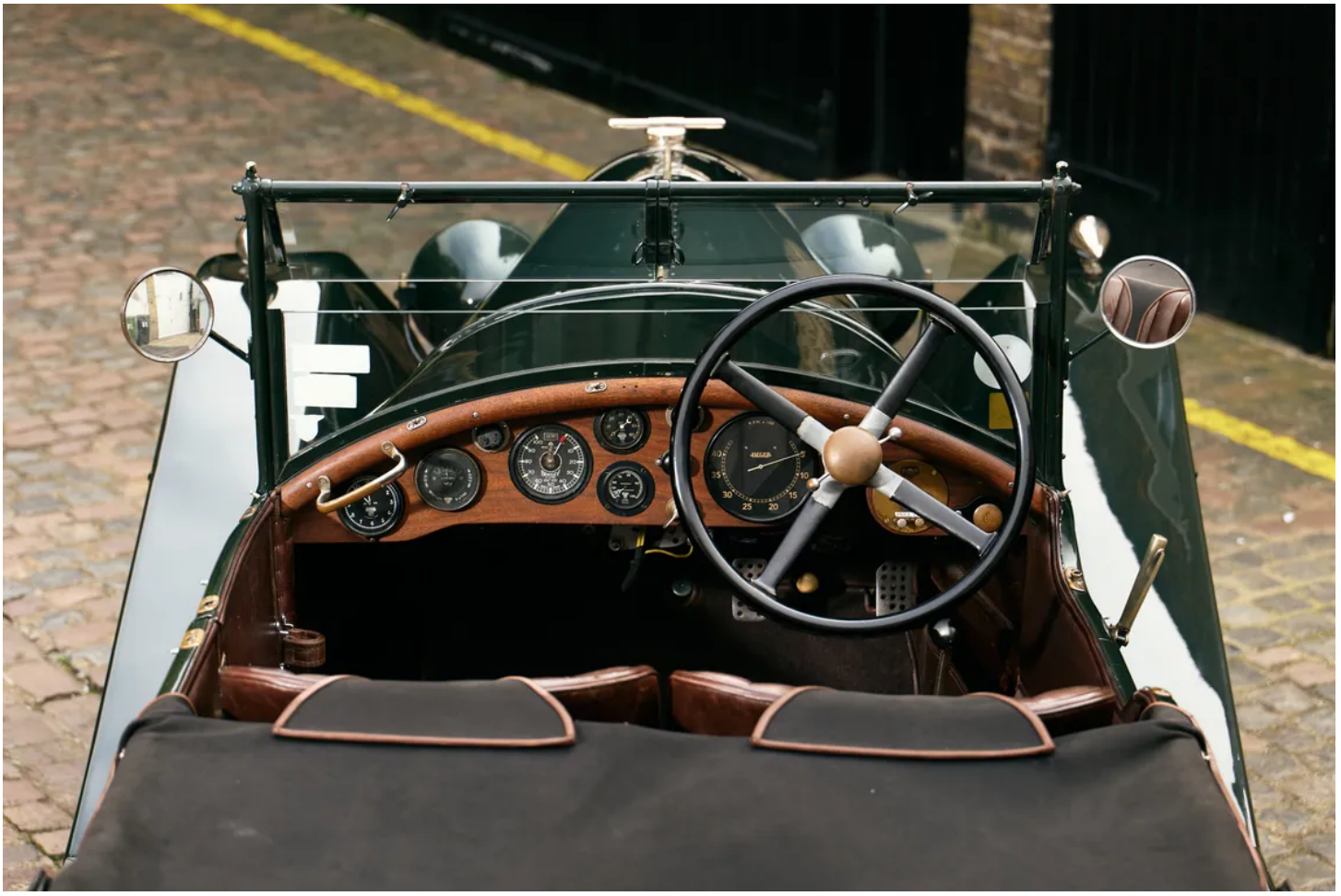









BENTLEY




Vanden Plas