

FISKENS
FINE HISTORIC AUTOMOBILES

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1926 BENTLEY 3L LE MANS

The road to success in motorsport is never an easy one, and W.O Bentley – the founder of Bentley Motors – was determined to succeed at Le Mans in 1926 after the frustrations of the previous year. A total of three cars were entered: two works examples and, to complete the factory effort, a private entry to be run by the competition department. This was a special order car for Tommy 'Scrap' Thistlethwayte, a charismatic, wealthy playboy who was well known for his racing exploits at the time. The Bentley Boy who was to oversee the building and running of this special Bentley, as well as to co-pilot the car during the actual race, was wartime hero and Bentley Boy Captain Clive Gallop.

Thistlethwayte specified the short 9-foot chassis, making it one of only 14 Green Label '100 mph' Bentleys produced. It has the rare tapered radiator and a Super Sports engine, while the body is unique. Le Mans rules stipulated that all cars had to carry a four-seater body, which proved a problem with the short 9-foot chassis. This task was given to Martin Walter, a specialist coachbuilder of the day who constructed the racey body that it retains today. The race for 'Number Nine' (as commonly referred to throughout the Bentley's life due to its Le Mans event number) started well enough and by 4am on Sunday morning was lying third. However, fate played a cruel hand: at 8.30am on lap 105 a broken rocker cover finished its race.

As history would relate, while the other two Bentleys failed to finish in 1926, one of them – 'Old Number Seven' – would return the following year, securing victory and initiating Bentley's dominance at the famous La Sarthe circuit.

Following Le Mans, Number Nine went on to compete at Brooklands and the Boillot Cup race at the Boulogne race week before being retired from racing. Following World War II, the Bentley had a number of enthusiastic owners, one spanning more than 40 years, before being acquired by its current owner in 2010. Recently, Number Nine has been used regularly and was seen competing on the 2011 running of 'The Flying Scotsman'.

The importance of Number Nine cannot be underestimated: with a unique Martin Walter body, not only does it remain one of the most original vintage Bentleys in existence, notably retaining its period engine, but it is the only 100mph Super Sports to have competed at Le Mans. This is the first time in the modern age that Number Nine has been publically offered for sale and represents an unrepeatable opportunity to secure a hugely important vintage Bentley.

SOLD