

UPSCALE

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Magazine



“Experience The Difference”



Bentley Green Technology & Time Tested Luxury

| By Henry M. Holden

Bentley automobiles have a reputation for being fast, smooth, and elegant machines. A key element in the desirability of Bentleys has been their effortless performance, achieved through high levels of torque at relatively low engine speeds. Bentleys were widely known for their achievements during the 24-hour Le Mans races in the 1920s and 1930s, and their heritage as sports cars has lived on for more than nine decades.

Emerging soon after World War I, the company survived wars, and difficult economic times. W.O. Bentley started out as an engineering apprentice, on the railroad, and like many young men of his day, he started racing motorized bicycles, a popular sport before World War I, in England.

It was on a visit to a French factory in 1913, that Bentley noticed an aluminum paperweight - and was inspired to use



the lightweight metal instead of cast iron to make engine pistons.

The first Bentley pistons went into service in engines for the Sopwith Camel airplane, during World War I. After the war, Bentley opened an automobile manufacturing company, Bentley Motors, Ltd., in 1919, and began producing race-winning sportsters.

The first production car, a 3-liter machine, was delivered in 1921. In May 1922, Bentley made its first and so far only entry in the Indianapolis 500. Between 1923, and 1931 Bentley's racers won the grueling 24-hour Le Mans four times. During that period, his engines grew larger, with a 4.5-liter, 6.5-liter, a supercharged Speed Six, and an 8-liter six-

cylinder engine producing 240hp that weighed two and a half tons.

Realizing that there was a limited market for racecars, Bentley turned to building fast executive automobiles that went head-to-head with luxury British auto makers such as Rolls Royce. They were well-appointed, had powerful engines, and his clientele were enthusiastic for the brand. However, Bentley soon faced a major challenge. The Great Depression had dried up capital, and in 1931, Bentley found himself in partnership with Rolls Royce. His visions of executive motor cars were on hold while he watched the company produce Rolls Royce racing cars.

The 1960s saw turbulent times and the company became part of the Vickers conglomerate. In 1998, they sold the Rolls Royce brand to BMW, and the Bentley name, assets, and factory went to Volkswagen. Volkswagen returned the Bentley to its motorsport tradition and origins as a luxury car.

With the introduction of the 1982 Bentley Mulsanne Turbo, named for the straight at Le Mans, the brand saw a new popularity. The Mulsanne was capable of zero to 60mph acceleration in seven seconds, and a 135mph top speed. In 1984, the Bentley Corniche was renamed the Continental, harkening back to the company's roots. The Bentley Continental R, which debuted in 1991, was the first Bentley to have its own dedicated body since 1954.

Since its introduction at the 2003 Detroit Auto Show, the Bentley Continental lineup has expanded from one very fast coupe [with the Continental GT], to seven, including even faster sedans and convertibles, and one flex-fuel vehicle. Each has the 6-liter, 12-cylinder engine.

The Arnage, which debuted in 1998, has conveyed an air of sophisticated understatement as the four-door flagship of Bentley's Premium range. In 2009, Bentley ended Arnage production with the Arnage Final Series, with 150 examples priced at \$270,990. The Arnage Final Series featured the Arnage T 500 horsepower twin-turbo engine, dark-tinted radiator grille, 20 inch wheels, body-color trim, upgraded interior, and Final Series branding inside and out.

When the Bentley Brooklands went on sale in 2008, the 550 examples that were sold before the wheels hit the street. Among the features of the \$340,990, four-seat Brooklands: All-leather interior, special 20 inch wheels, and a 6.75-liter V8, 530 horsepower and 774 lb-ft of torque; which, according to Bentley, the highest torque rating of any automotive production V8 engine ever produced. The Brooklands will accelerate to 60 mph in five seconds!

With the introduction of the Bentley Mulsanne in the summer of 2010 [global reveal was summer of 2009], Bentley is back on firm ground with a long, luxurious, gasoline-powered sedan. Although its price has not been released it is expected to cost in the \$300,000 range.

Green Technology

The Bentley company is embracing green technology while remaining true to W.O. Bentley's simple ambition: to produce "a good car, a fast car, the best in its class."

As part of Bentley's efforts to reduce their carbon footprint, they introduced new manufacturing processes and reduced total energy consumption by almost 30 percent over the past decade. Manufacturing carbon dioxide emissions have declined by more than 20 percent. This environmental improvement was a significant achievement, since it coincided with record production and a tenfold sales growth to more than 10,000 cars annually.

"Over the years the color green has come to represent many things to the many legions of Bentley aficionados worldwide — from the shade of some of the company's most popular early models, to its many racing successes at Le Mans," said David Reuter, Head of Communications for the Americas. "For 2010, Bentley aims to yet again redefine its signature color with the launch of the Continental Supersports — a FlexFuel capable supercar that promises to be the greenest Bentley ever produced."

To that end, the Continental Supersports, priced at \$267,000, will run on either gasoline or biofuels or any combination of the two. The Supersports is the fastest and most powerful car in the company's 90-year history. The 621hp 12-cylinder engine, rockets it from zero to 60 in 3.7

seconds.

With this vehicle, Bentley is pioneering the use of FlexFuel technology in the luxury sector. When fueled with 85 percent ethanol, the Supersports, which is becoming available in the United States, next summer, will produce an estimated 70 percent less globally warming carbon dioxide on a well-to-wheel basis. This vehicle represents the first stage of the company's commitment to make its complete model range compatible with renewable fuels by 2012.

Bentley will also be introducing a new powertrain by 2012 that will deliver a 40% reduction in fuel consumption, while maintaining current levels of performance. †

