

Milestones in the History of Bentley

1919

The first Bentley motor car, W.O. Bentley realises his ambition to become a motor manufacturer. Prototype Bentley shown at 1919 Motor Show.

1921

Production of 3-litre commences at Cricklewood, London.

1922

Modest competition debut for the marque yields 2nd, 4th and 5th and the Team Prize in the British Tourist Trophy.

1924

Bentley wins Le Mans in a 3-litre. Subsequently "Speed Model" 3-litre introduced, with improved performance.

1925

"Standard Six", 6 cylinder 6.5 litre model shown at Olympia. Features 140bhp engine and longer wheelbase, capable of taking larger saloon bodywork.

1927

Bentley 4.5 litre launched at Olympia. Specification includes a stiffer chassis and improved brakes. A second victory at Le Mans in a 3-litre Bentley.

1928

Le Mans victory number three in a 4.5 litre Bentley.

1929

Launch of Speed Six - based on the existing 6.5 litre but with a shorter wheelbase and producing 180bhp at 3500rpm. The marque's fourth Le Mans victory. The factory produced a supercharged 4.5 litre model, the famous "Blower Bentley". Fifty are produced.

1930

The company introduces the 8-litre. With a six-cylinder engine producing 220bhp and a choice of 12ft or 13ft wheelbase capable of taking both saloon and open bodywork, it marks the end of an era. Barnato and Kidston take the marque's fifth and final victory in a Speed Six, covering 2930km at an average speed of 122km/h.

1931

In the face of world-wide recession, the company is acquired by Rolls-Royce Limited and production moves from Cricklewood to Derby.

1933

Constructed at Derby, and known as the Silent Sports Car, the 3.5 litre is the first Bentley manufactured under the direction of Rolls-Royce Limited.

1936

The 3.5 litre is joined by a larger capacity sibling, the 4.5 litre. The 3.5 litre ceases production in 1937.

1939-45

Production of Bentley motor cars suspended for the duration of the Second World War.

1946

The first post-war Bentley and the first Crewe-built Bentley, the Mark VI which later evolves into the R-type. Another innovation: instead of producing a bare chassis to be bodied by independent coachbuilders, Bentley produce the entire car, body and all.

1952

The continental chassis is launched with a lightweight fastback body style as the R-type Continental by H J Mulliner. With a top speed of 120mph (over 190km/h), it is the fastest 4-seater in the world and cruises comfortably at over 100mph.

1955

The Bentley S-Series with its 4.9 litre, six-cylinder engine is introduced. H J Mulliner create in the S-Series Continental a successor to the R-type Continental, with a revised sweeping 2-door fastback body.

1963

The T-Series Bentley is a dramatic change to a lower, squarer and more modern body style. Self-levelling all independent suspension, monocoque construction and high pressure power operated four-wheel disc brakes are among the more notable features.

1980

The Mulsanne is launched as a Bentley equivalent of the Rolls-Royce Silver Spirit.

1982

A turbocharged version of the Mulsanne is launched at the Geneva Motor Show, dramatically increasing Bentley sales, and prompting acclaims such as "the return of the Blower Bentley".

1984

The Bentley Eight is launched with an intent to bring Bentley ownership within reach of new, younger customers.

1985

The ultra high performance Turbo R firmly re-establishes the Bentley name at the pinnacle of sporting motor cars. The Bentley Continental sporting convertible re-introducing open top motoring to the Bentley marque.

1991

The Continental R is launched at Geneva to international acclaim. The Bentley Grand Tourer is the natural successor to the classic R-type Continental. Designed to accommodate four in comfort, its turbocharged 6.75 litre V8 engine offers 150mph performance.

1992

Brooklands, the successor to the Bentley Eight and Mulsanne, combining exceptional comfort and space with a supple ride and agile cornering.

1995

Azure, the most sophisticated Bentley open tourer of the modern era - and the most powerful four-seat convertible in the world.

1996

The Continental T is introduced, with close-coupled chassis, massive alloy wheels and tyres, tuned, turbocharged and intercooled V8 engine developing 400bhp. Initially offered in limited production volumes, worldwide interest is so great that the Continental T becomes integral to the Bentley stable.

1997

Revised Continental T now features 420bhp engine with 650lb.ft of torque - the latter figure being the highest recorded for a production sporting motor car. 0-60mph acceleration in 5.7 seconds with a top speed of 170mph.

1998

The new 4.4 litre Bentley Arnage: an all new 4 door saloon with a modern curvaceous body style that recalls the elegant Bentleys of the past. A new twin turbocharged 4.4 litre V8 engine with an advanced all new body shell and suspension delivers the performance and road-holding demanded by Bentley enthusiasts, with refinement and comfort.