

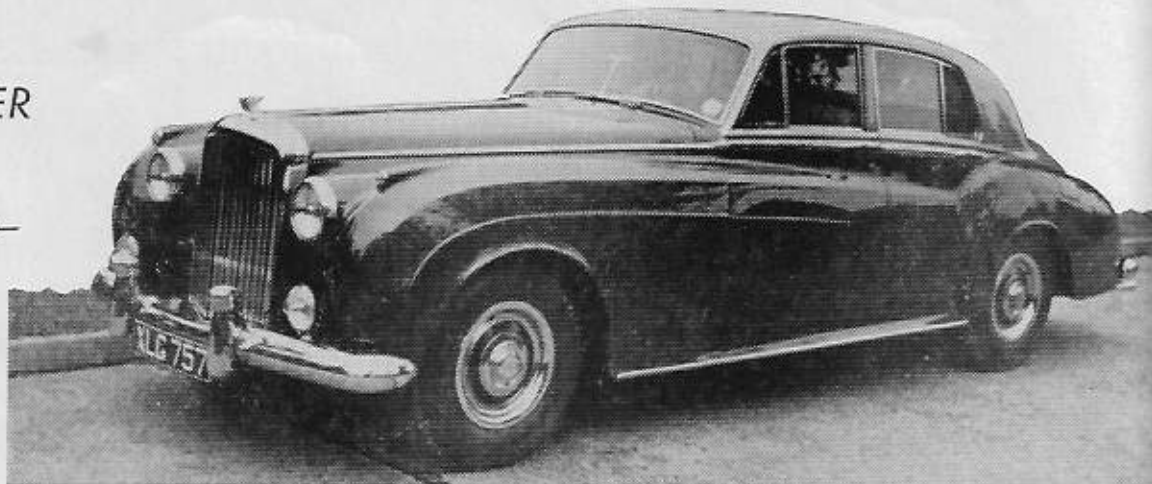
**ROAD TEST**  
**OF THE**  
**BENTLEY "S" Series**



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JOHN BOLSTER

tests a car  
for the perfectionist—  
something near the  
ultimate in  
hand-made  
luxury—  
in fact, the



## Bentley "S" Series

THERE is something extremely satisfying about sheer quality. One can be fascinated by the ingenuity of modern small car designers, who get a quart out of a pint pot. It is also entrancing to study mass production technique, as hundreds of identical saloons roll off the lines in a day. Yet, the hand-made quality car, built to a standard with mere cost an afterthought, probably exerts a greater attraction than ever it did.

I have had the good fortune to try most of the world's fine cars, but I have never seen anything to compare with the workmanship and finish of the new "S" Series Bentley. Particularly in the interior of the body, the absolute perfection of detail, and the excellent taste shown throughout, make almost any other car seem cheap and tawdry by comparison. This is a much bigger vehicle than any previous Bentley of the Rolls-Royce line. Among its ancestors, one must go back to the almost apocryphal 8-litre Bentley or the Phantom II Rolls-Royce for comparison. There is, in fact, a good deal to remind one of the "PII" about this car, though the similarity is difficult to put into words.

The design is entirely conventional, with helical springs and wishbones in front and a hypoid axle on semi-elliptic springs behind. Yet, there is much novelty in the detail work. The rear axle has a torque member above it which

also acts as an anti-roll bar. It permits the use of long, supple springs without the embarrassments occasioned by "winding up" on acceleration, while functioning as a torsion bar against roll. It is displaced towards the offside of the axle to combat propeller shaft torque, and a two-way switch gives an electrical control to the rear dampers, the "hard" setting being useful when the body is heavily laden.

The box section frame, of great depth, has cruciform bracing, and the front suspension is reinforced by a normal anti-roll bar. The cam and roller steering box is coupled by a short, transverse link to the three-piece track rod with two slave arms. The propeller shaft is divided, and the usual Rolls-Royce centralized chassis lubrication system is fitted.

The engine is a remarkably big six-cylinder unit, of nearly 5-litres capacity. The exhaust valves are in the cast-iron cylinder block, and the push rod operated inlet valves are in the detachable head. The twin SU carburettors are of the new type with diaphragm seals, and there is an automatic cold-starting arrangement.

A fully automatic gearbox, with four forward speeds, is standardized. If desired, under exceptional conditions, the driver can override the mechanism and select a lower gear manually.

On taking one's seat, the Bentley feels

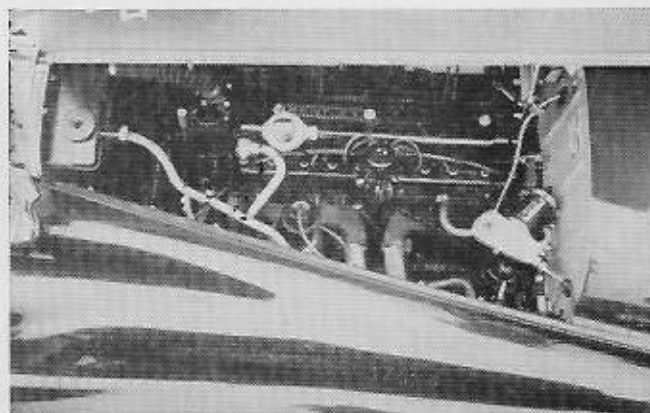
*FLAWLESS* modern lines have been successfully allied to the traditional Bentley radiator in the latest of the line.

a very big car. It has a long bonnet, but visibility is good. The engine starts by an extra movement of the ignition key, in line with current Continental and American practice. All the controls are as usual, except that the direction indicator is mounted on the fascia instead of projecting from the steering column.

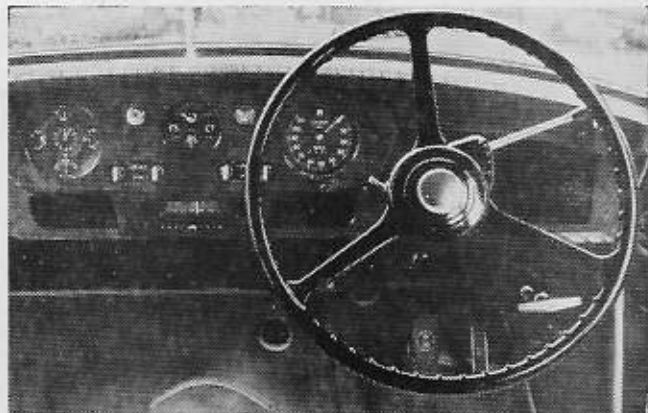
If the gear lever is placed in the normal driving position, a gentle pressure on the accelerator will cause the car to glide away. First and second speeds, being very low, are disposed of almost at once, but third is held for longer before the direct drive is engaged. Driven in this manner, the changes in and out of the two lower gears can be felt, but one seldom knows, or cares, whether third or top is being employed.

Violent use of the accelerator gives a very rapid getaway indeed. The big engine can then be felt and heard at work to some extent, till third speed is found, and all mechanical sensation virtually disappears. In comparison with the best American V8s, the six-cylinder Bentley engine is not quite so smooth in initial acceleration, but it has a gloriously long stride which gives the most effortless high speed cruising imaginable.

The suspension is, if anything, on the firm side. The ride is very comfortable, and there are no sharp up and down movements, but there is not the slightest suspicion of transatlantic "float". I found that the softer position of the ride control gave the best roadholding,



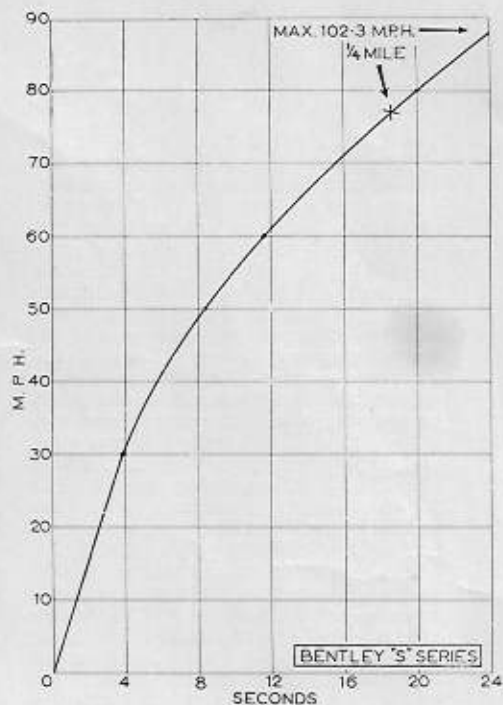
**DO NOT TOUCH:** Not designed for owner-driver maintenance, the highly finished engine is not too accessible.



**QUALITY** of finish extends to the instrument and control layout, impeccably functional. There are now only two pedals.



**ENTRANCE HALL:** The big car is luxuriously furnished, and dignity of entry and exit is assured. Note the folding tables.



**Acceleration Graph**

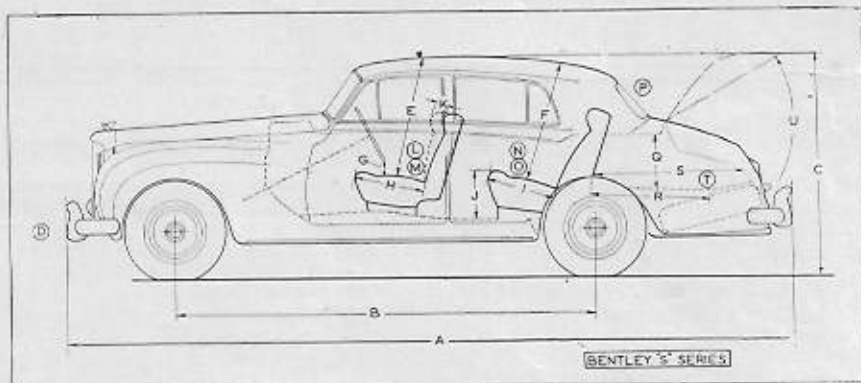
and I would only employ the harder setting if the large boot were full of luggage.

Very high marks indeed must be given to the new Bentley for its handling on wet roads. It is a fundamentally safe machine, and the method of locating the back axle has greatly improved the rear end behaviour compared with the previous model. Even on really greasy surfaces, there is a remarkable absence of wheelspin, because the springs are relieved of undesirable torque effects which would tend to promote axle patter or tramp.

As one covers the miles, there is a great sense of well-being. The seats, with their exceptionally high backs, may be set in a moment to any angle desired. The steering is not heavy, though no power assistance is provided. It is only when manoeuvring or parking in a confined space that more work at the wheel is needed than in the case of a smaller car. A very elaborate heating and ventilating system is built in, so the windows may be kept closed under all normal conditions. The touch of a switch opens the flap over the petrol filler cap, so removal of the ignition key at once safeguards the fuel. There is a master key which will unlock the dashboard locker and the luggage boot as well as fitting the doors and ignition. An ordinary ignition key is also provided, with which the garage man can start the car, but he cannot gain access to your documents or baggage. The car is full of thoughtful ideas for the comfort and convenience of the occupants.

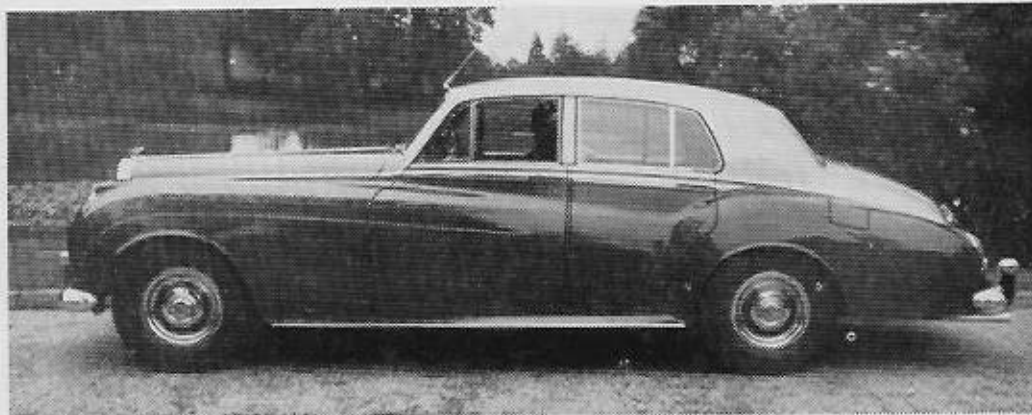
It is impossible to choose any "best" speed for the Bentley. Thus, there is no difference in mechanical sound if one cruises at 30 m.p.h. or 80 m.p.h. At the timed maximum speed of over 102 m.p.h. the machine ran straight without conscious direction from the driver, and the engine still refrained from joining in the conversation. A speedometer reading of 110 m.p.h. was occasionally seen. Perhaps the most endearing characteristic of the car is its remarkable liveliness, in top gear, between 65 and 80 m.p.h. This facilitates overtaking, and is another potent safety feature.

(Continued overleaf)



### Dimensions

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>A</b> Overall length, 17 ft. 7½ ins.                  | <b>M</b> Front seat width over arm rests, 4 ft. 5 ins.        |
| <b>B</b> Wheelbase, 10 ft. 3 ins.                        | <b>N</b> Rear seat width between arm rests, 3 ft. 9 ins.      |
| <b>C</b> Overall height, 5 ft. 4 ins.                    | <b>O</b> Rear seat width over arm rests, 4 ft. 6½ ins.        |
| <b>D</b> Overall width, 6 ft. 2½ ins.                    | <b>P</b> Width of rear window, 3 ft. 10 ins.                  |
| <b>E</b> Front head room, 3 ft. 1½ ins.                  | <b>Q</b> Minimum depth of luggage compartment, 1 ft. 3½ ins.  |
| <b>F</b> Rear head room, 3 ft. 1 in.                     | <b>R</b> Length of floor of luggage compartment, 2 ft. 9 ins. |
| <b>G</b> Steering wheel to seat cushion, 5 ins.          | <b>S</b> Maximum length of luggage compartment, 3 ft. 10 ins. |
| <b>H</b> Front seat depth, 1 ft. 7½ ins.                 | <b>T</b> Overall width of luggage compartment, 5 ft. 5 ins.   |
| <b>I</b> Rear seat depth, 1 ft. 7 ins.                   | <b>U</b> Door opening of luggage compartment, 6 ft. 2 ins.    |
| <b>J</b> Height of rear cushion, 1 ft. 3 ins.            |   |
| <b>K</b> Front seat squab adjustment, 8 ins.             |   |
| <b>L</b> Front seat width between arm rests, 4 ft. 1 in. |   |



For many years, Rolls-Royce and Bentley models have rejoiced in a superb braking system. In spite of adopting the automatic system of transmission, the makers have been able to retain their traditional gearbox-driven servo motor. This controls the whole of the braking force on the front wheels and just over half the effort on the rear wheels, by hydraulic means. About 40 per cent. of the rear braking is still taken from a mechanical hook-up direct to the pedal. In this way, "feel" is retained, and two fully independent braking systems, either of which is complete in itself, are in operation at all times. As there are also tandem master cylinders, with two separate fluid bottles, there is still further duplication for safety.

This method of application really works, and the heavy car can be pulled up from high speeds with never a thought of brake fade. It is in this respect that the Bentley completely dominates American cars of comparable size and speed. The brakes are just as powerful as those on last year's model, but a slight fierceness at very low speeds has now been completely eliminated.

## The Bentley "S" - Specification and Performance

**Car Tested:** Bentley "S" Series 4-door sports saloon. Price £3,295 (\$4,943 17s. with P.T.).

**Engine:** Six cylinders 95.25 mm. x 114.30 mm. (4,887 c.c.). Pushrod operated overhead inlet valves and side exhaust valves. Compression ratio 6.6 to 1. Twin SU carburettors. Lucas coil and distributor.

**Transmission:** Four-speed automatic gearbox, ratios 3.42, 4.96, 9.00 and 13.06 to 1. Open propeller shaft. Hypoid rear axle.

**Chassis:** Box section frame with cruciform bracing. Independent front suspension by wishbones and helical springs. Cam and roller steering box connected by transverse link to 3-piece track rod. Rear axle on semi-elliptic springs with combined torque resisting and anti-roll member. Piston-type dampers all round, with two-position electric control at rear. 8.20 x 15 ins. India tyres on five-stud disc wheels. Mechanical servo motor on gearbox operating front brakes entirely and rear brakes 60 per cent. hydraulically, in addition to

direct mechanical 40 per cent. application of rear shoes, in 11 ins. x 3 ins. cast iron ribbed drums.

**Dimensions:** Wheelbase, 10 ft. 3 ins. Track front, 4 ft. 10 ins.; rear, 5 ft. Overall length, 17 ft. 7½ ins.; width, 6 ft. 2½ ins. Height, 5 ft. 4 ins. Turning circle, 41 ft. 8 ins. Weight, 1 ton 19 cwt.

**Equipment:** 12-volt lighting and starting. Speedometer. Ammeter. Oil pressure, water temperature, petrol and sump level gauges with warning light. Two-speed self-parking wipers. Flashing direction indicators. Heater and demister. Radio. Clock. Spotlights. Picnic tables. Ladies' companions.

**Performance:** Maximum speed, 102.3 m.p.h. Speeds in gears (approx.), 3rd 67 m.p.h., 2nd 31 m.p.h., 1st 20 m.p.h. Standing quarter mile, 18.8 secs. Acceleration: 0-30 m.p.h., 3.8 secs.; 0-50 m.p.h., 8.4 secs.; 0-60 m.p.h., 11.6 secs.; 0-80 m.p.h., 20 secs.

**Fuel Consumption:** Driven hard, 15 m.p.g.

The Bentley, "S" Series, is a very attractive big car with superb lines, appearance, and finish. It costs a lot of money, but to the connoisseur who must have the best, it is worth every penny of it. It is schemed to require the very minimum of attention over large mileages, but it has the famed Rolls-Royce service behind it when any attention is required. A little on the large side in

crowded city streets, it becomes a remarkably easy car to handle when the open country is reached. Only a few of us can aspire to own such a magic carpet, but to drive it is to advance another step in one's motoring education. This will still be a glorious car in 45 years' time, just as my own 1911 Rolls-Royce is today.



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