



# Back before the night



Bentley commemorated Woolf Barnato's Blue Train victory with a limited





ON 13 MARCH 1930, three-time Le Mans winner, Bentley Boy and chairman of Bentley Motors Captain Woolf Barnato, set off with amateur golfer Dale Bourne as his co-driver at 5.45pm to race the famously rapid *Le Train Bleu* from Cannes. Barnato wagered £200 that he could be upstairs at the Conservative Club in London before The Blue Train could reach Calais.

Almost 600 miles, one puncture, a missed refuelling stop and a £160 fine for racing on public roads later, they reached Calais at 10:30 the next morning. Rather than wait for a ferry across the Channel they boarded a packet steamer and completed the 80-mile run to St James's Street at 3:20pm, arriving ahead of the train with four minutes to spare.

It was incorrectly thought for many years that the Speed Six Barnato and Bourne drove was the streamlined Gurney Nutting two-door coupé HM2855. However, Bentley historian Clare Hay has shown it was a relatively conservative Speed Six Weymann saloon chassis BA2592, not the rakish coupé, that was used in the race. Barnato had taken delivery of this saloon in June 1929, and drove it more than 16,000 miles in the next 12 months. The day after the Cannes-London run the saloon was reported to be at Bentley's Kingsbury Service Station for a new starter bendix. The coupé, however, wasn't passed off test and given its five-year guarantee until 21 May 1930 – two months after the Blue Train victory.

What appears to have caused the confusion was that Barnato named his newly acquired coupé the Blue Train Special as a tribute to his previous car outrunning the Blue Train and most people assumed that he had been driving the coupé. This theory was reinforced by artist Terence Cuneo's detailed 1972 painting *Bentley v. The Blue Train* which shows the coupé and locomotive racing side by side – although it is unlikely that Barnato ever saw the train because the road did not run close to the track and in fact it would have been dark at the point where the painting is set.

Bentley commemorated 75 years of its 1930 success with the announcement of the Blue Train Series Arnage. Conceived as a limited run of 30 model year 2006 special editions, the majority were intended for the USA and all orders were already filled by the time the car was publicly announced. This LHD production run of 30 was supplemented by a further six RHD cars. A dashboard plaque on the publicity car features a silhouette of the Blue Train coupé and the words: 'One of Thirty Cars' but this is amended to '75th Anniversary Limited Edition' on at least one of the six additional RHD examples.

The Blue Train Series Arnage featured the 450bhp version of the 6.75-litre twin-turbo V8 from the high performance Arnage T, allied to the chassis and suspension set-up of the refined and supple Arnage R. Among many other enhancements, these cars

edition Arnage in 2005 and again ten years later with a special Mulsanne Speed in 2015



## “The Arnage Blue Train uses the 450bhp V8 from the Arnage T and



Sports front bumper with stainless steel matrix inserts

Chromed radiator shell with black enamel badging

Chrome plated 19-inch seven-spoke wheels

Arnage T-spec 450bhp twin turbo engine

Chromed mirror caps

Lower front wing vents, Blue Train wing badging and tread plates

Winged “B” badge and chrome strip inset to waistrails

Veneer door panels

Contrast seat piping with Blue Train embroidery to headrests



Sunroof

Privacy rear window (optional)

Black enamel badging

Sports rear bumper

Quad exhaust tail pipes





# the chassis and suspension of the refined and supple Arnage R”

Wood and hide steering wheel

Black instrument faces

Blue Train badging to console



featured vertical slatted vents, painted in body colour, behind the trailing edge of the front wheel arches in homage to the slatted bonnet of the Bentley Speed Six ‘Blue Train’ coupé.

The 2015 Mulsanne Speed Blue Train by Mulliner also pays homage to the coupé and is even more exclusive than the Arnage Series. Just four examples were built for the European market, in recognition of the four-minute winning margin in 1930.

Each features a number of references to design details of the original Speed Six Blue Train Special. For example, the fluting in the door panels and the rear quarter inserts echo the interior of Barnato’s car and the dashboard features a veneer image of the Speed Six coupé.

The first Mulsanne Speed Blue Train to be delivered included a personalised hamper, trimmed with Burnt Oak and Camel hide to match the interior of the car, leather cutlery holders and a leather rug wrap-around, both featuring Blue Train embroidery. The hamper contained Robbe & Berking silver plated cutlery, Haviland Limoges porcelain crockery, crystal champagne flutes by David Linley and a pure Angora picnic rug, woven in Scotland.

Richard Charlesworth, Head of the Bentley Heritage Collection, said at the time: “The Blue Train is one of the most famous and celebrated cars in the world, and it perfectly embodies the racing spirit of the Bentley. Winning the race captured the public’s imagination and fuelled the legend of the Bentley Boys. By beating the Calais-Mediterranée Express he guaranteed the Speed Six’s place in automotive history.”

Right: one of only four Bentley Mulsanne Speed Blue Trains by Mulliner was shown to the public at the Techno-Classica Show in Essen from 15 to 19 April 2015

Below: the base of the retractable Flying B is engraved with the words ‘Blue Train’ and ‘85 years’ and the treadplate plaques also bear the wording ‘Blue Train 85 Years’

Below right: the dashboard features a veneer image of Barnato’s ‘Blue Train Special’ Gurney Nutting coupé-bodied Bentley Speed Six chassis HM2855

Below far right: references to Woolf Barnato’s 1930 coupé include fluting in the door panels and rear quarter inserts that echo the interior of his coupé

