

NEWS

THOUGHTS FROM THE SHOWROOM...

Welcome to Frank Dale & Stepsons Review of 2019

...a little late I admit and my apologies for not writing our newsletters during 2019, however it was one of the busiest years Frank Dale & Stepsons has ever experienced! There is lots to tell and by the time you finish reading you may well feel as exhausted as we did, but it was a great year and one we will remember fondly when looking back in the future. So here goes, my thoughts on the year that was...



BENTLEY

100 YEARS ANNIVERSARY

2019 represented a huge milestone in the history of Bentley Motors, the 100th anniversary of the company. As the centenary year approached so did numerous invitations for Frank Dale & Stepsons to attend, present and display Bentleys at events all over the world. Whilst we would have been delighted to accept every invitation we simply couldn't be in all these places at once, so we chose carefully.





The year began for us in Germany with the Essen Techno Classica

Our stand had possibly our best ever line up of cars to date, with most major models shown with a heavy Bentley theme. The show was very well attended as always and we caught up with old customers and made new acquaintances. Most notably for us Essen has always provided a platform from which to further our reach in to the European market. However this has not been helped

in recent times by the ongoing saga that is Brexit, a topic which continued to dominate not only in the UK but across the channel throughout 2019. However, following the British general election last month, it will be interesting to see how this now plays out under the stewardship of a majority Conservative government.



Our first local event came at the end of May, with the South of England RREC rally at Stansted House, Hampshire. It was arguably the best attended Southern rally I can remember in recent years, with many of our more localised customers cars clearly recognisable in the grounds line up, which was very gratifying to see.

We chose to take an R Type Continental for a run down the A3 to the venue which was great fun. A couple of hours looking around the cars in attendance, an ice cream and a chat with various friends at the event was a Sunday afternoon well spent.





The annual RREC Rally returned to its familiar home at the stunning Burghley House grounds in Lincolnshire in June and we merrily arrived with seven lovely cars to display once again. Fortunately the weather was particularly kind to the large crowds and dozens of our fellow traders. This year we also entered an S1 Continental Drophead coupe by Park Ward into the concours on behalf of the owner. This car was supplied by Emma and I through our showroom and then restored by our team.

On concours morning, following the judges fine toothcomb inspection we were thrilled to win best in class for this S1 Continental. Later in the day four beautifully prepared cars, including our Bentley, were selected as finalists for the rally's best in show honours and in a Crufts like moment we were overwhelmed to see the head judge pointing at us and walking towards us with the winning rosette and a huge smile.



Our show stand at Burghley House





2019 Rolls-Royce National Rally and Concours *Best in Show Winner*



1957 Bentley S1 Continental
Drophead Coupe by Park Ward,
Chassis No BC93BG.

Supplied, restored and prepared by
Frank Dale & Stepsons.



CHANTILLY
ARTS & ELEGANCE
RICHARD MILLE

The concours circuit continued on in late June to the fabulous Arts and Elegance Concours at the wonderful Chateau de Chantilly.



I had the enviable task of taking three magnificent cars to the event for entry into the concours, all of which we have previously supplied.

The weather in France in late June was nothing short of unprecedented, with 40 degree heat, but I am pleased to report that the cars coped beautifully even in these oppressive conditions. We chose to drive a beautiful S1 Continental drophead coupe by Park Ward for the 75 mile tour on the Saturday morning which was really enjoyable, seeing some of the beautiful French countryside along the well planned route. The spectacular gala dinner followed that evening in the historic stables which set the tone for concours day on Sunday.





We were delighted to win two prizes; a best in class award for the Bentley Cresta by Facel/Farina and "The most elegant Bentley" in all classes was awarded to our 4 1/4 Litre drophead coupe by Veth & Zoon.

Best in show honours were awarded to Chip Connor for his fantastic 8 Litre Bentley and to Robert Kudela for his stylish Talbot Lago. It was a wonderful event to be part of at one of the world's most spectacular venues.





The hot summer weather we experienced in France happily found its way to the UK in July for the Goodwood Festival of Speed. We were invited by Lord March to supply a car for the Bentley concours line up and duly obliged with an S2 Continental coupe by H.J.Mulliner.

The Bentley display was first class with, amongst others, an R Type Continental drophead coupe by Park Ward and also the original Embericos Bentley which is one of my personal favourites. Another exquisitely executed event by Lord March and his team at the Goodwood Estate, they continue to impress year on year.





Monterey Week & Pebble Beach Concours

Being invited to show a car at Pebble Beach was truly an ambition achieved in 2019 - and not just any car! We were asked to bring the 4¼ Litre open tourer by Vanden Plas, known affectionately to many as Honeysuckle, and in the Californian sunshine her golden coachwork literally shone.

With a base in the charming town of Carmel, we enjoyed an action packed week, attending auctions, dinners with customers and friends, events in Carmel and The Quail, plus some obligatory tourist stops at the Monterey Aquarium and some whale watching in the bay. However the two main events of the week for me were the famous Pebble Beach Rolex tour on Thursday morning and then the concours on Sunday. Thursday was an early start and the tour consisted of around 150 amazing cars, split into two groups of around 75. The route was initially

through the forests that surround Monterey but then out onto California One.

We headed south along the spectacular coastal road to Big Sur and then back again. Several thousand spectators lined the streets of Carmel to greet the cars upon arrival which created a wonderful atmosphere. It really was a magical experience and one I hope to take part in many more times in future years.



Monterey's famous Bixby Creek Bridge



Sunday morning was an even earlier start for the concours itself. I drove in at around 6.30am still under the cover of the lifting darkness. Huge crowds were already in place to welcome the procession of amazing motor cars, such is the following at this most prestigious event.

We didn't win a prize, but taking part was more than enough for me on this occasion. I was really pleased to see the cars that finished second and third in the Derby class were both cars I had previously sold to their respective owners. The winner of the coveted best in show prize was Sir Michael Kadoorie with his magnificent 8 Litre Bentley, restored by P & A Wood making them the first British restorer ever to win best in show at Pebble Beach. A very worthy and poetic winner in the year of Bentleys 100th birthday. We departed Monterey happy, worn out but with a head full of great memories and ambitions to be back at Pebble Beach again as soon as possible.



Best in Show Winner





CONCOURS OF ELEGANCE HAMPTON COURT PALACE

The end of August and the start of September sees the end of the summer holidays in Europe and a mad crush of the final motoring events in the UK before the weather fades and the days become shorter. And 2019 with the Bentley anniversary saw this usually busy period for us reach a whole new level, with three events over the same weekend.



A selection of fabulous Bentleys



Best in Show Winner



CONCOURS OF ELEGANCE
HAMPTON COURT PALACE

My particular posting for the three day weekend was at the glorious Hampton Court for the Concours of Elegance, one of our favourite events of the year. We showed three

Bentleys from the three important eras of production, with examples from Cricklewood (1929 6 1/2 litre Vanden Plas style open tourer), Derby (1936 4 1/4 litre saloon by Carlton) and Crewe (1955 S1 Continental drophead coupe by Park Ward) all present on our stand.

I was delighted to see Best in Show honours go to John Fasal and his magnificent 1919 Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost by Barker.

I wouldn't fancy keeping it clean though.



1929 6 1/2 litre Vanden Plas style open tourer



1955 S1 Continental drophead coupe by Park Ward



1936 4 1/4 litre saloon by Carlton



My dealer talk on Bentley S1 Continental drophead coupe



SALON PRIVÉ

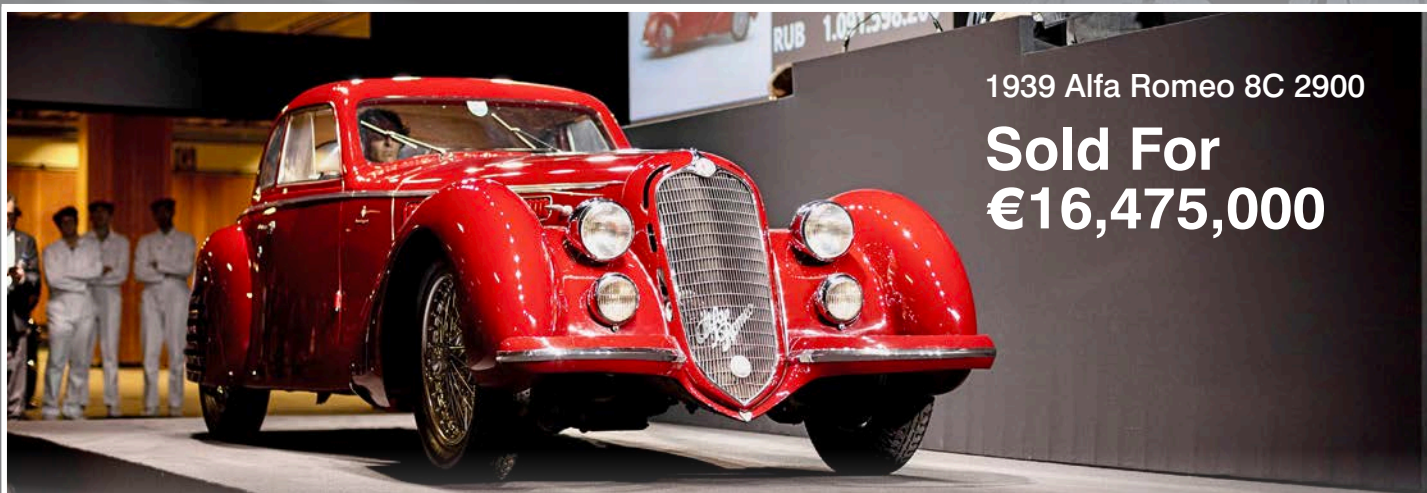


Running simultaneously to Hampton Court was Salon Privé at Blenheim Palace, another spectacular venue. We had two Bentleys entered into their Bentley Masters line up on Saturday afternoon. It was great to see a number of special Bentleys all gathered together again.



The events at Blenheim Palace continued the following day with the Bentley Drivers Club concours and annual rally. The ambition of the BDC was to gather 1000 Bentleys on the lawns of Blenheim for the day, an ambition they well and truly surpassed with over 1200 cars attending. We were there to support the event with our trade stand, with an early morning drive up to Oxfordshire from London in three Derby's and three wonderful post war examples with Emma on hand to present the Frank Dale trophy to its worthy winner for best R/S Type Continental. It was a magnificent effort by the BDC to arrange this event and bring together so many cars, collectors and enthusiasts.

And so our hectic year of events, concours and rallies came to a close.



1939 Alfa Romeo 8C 2900

**Sold For
€16,475,000**

**2019 was hardly a vintage year for sales, but it wasn't
a disaster either, just a bit more challenging...**

...and we like a challenge!

There has been a slow down on sales and prices have contracted a little in most areas over the past 12 months. Could it have been the uncertainty surrounding Brexit? Or perhaps an increase in the number of auctions each year, with fewer top cars coming to market? With a large number of no reserve lots there have been a few bargains to be had for sure, however quality is what we always try to provide and quality always sells. It's also fair to say that the numerous deals we completed in 2019 were largely achieved when both the buyer and seller were willing to be flexible on price.

I would also suggest that the current downturn may reverse itself in the next 12 to 24 months. The classic car sales market seems to move in seven year cycles. From around 2007 to 2014 the market was on the up in a

major way, perhaps too swiftly in some areas. From the end of 2014 to the end of 2019, things were not so frothy. So, perhaps the end of the down cycle is approaching if history is anything to go by. However you view the result of the EU referendum, it seems (at last!) there is now some certainty of a pathway forward instead of being stuck at a crossroads. The trade war between China and the U.S appears to have been resolved and whilst things are far from perfect a global recession no longer seems inevitable. However, as I have said before, if you stick to two basic rules you can't go too far wrong - buy the very best quality car your budget will allow, preferably from a trusted source, and buy a car because you love it, because you want to own it and drive it. In the long run, everything else then takes care of itself.

Some of the post war Bentleys cars we sold in 2019



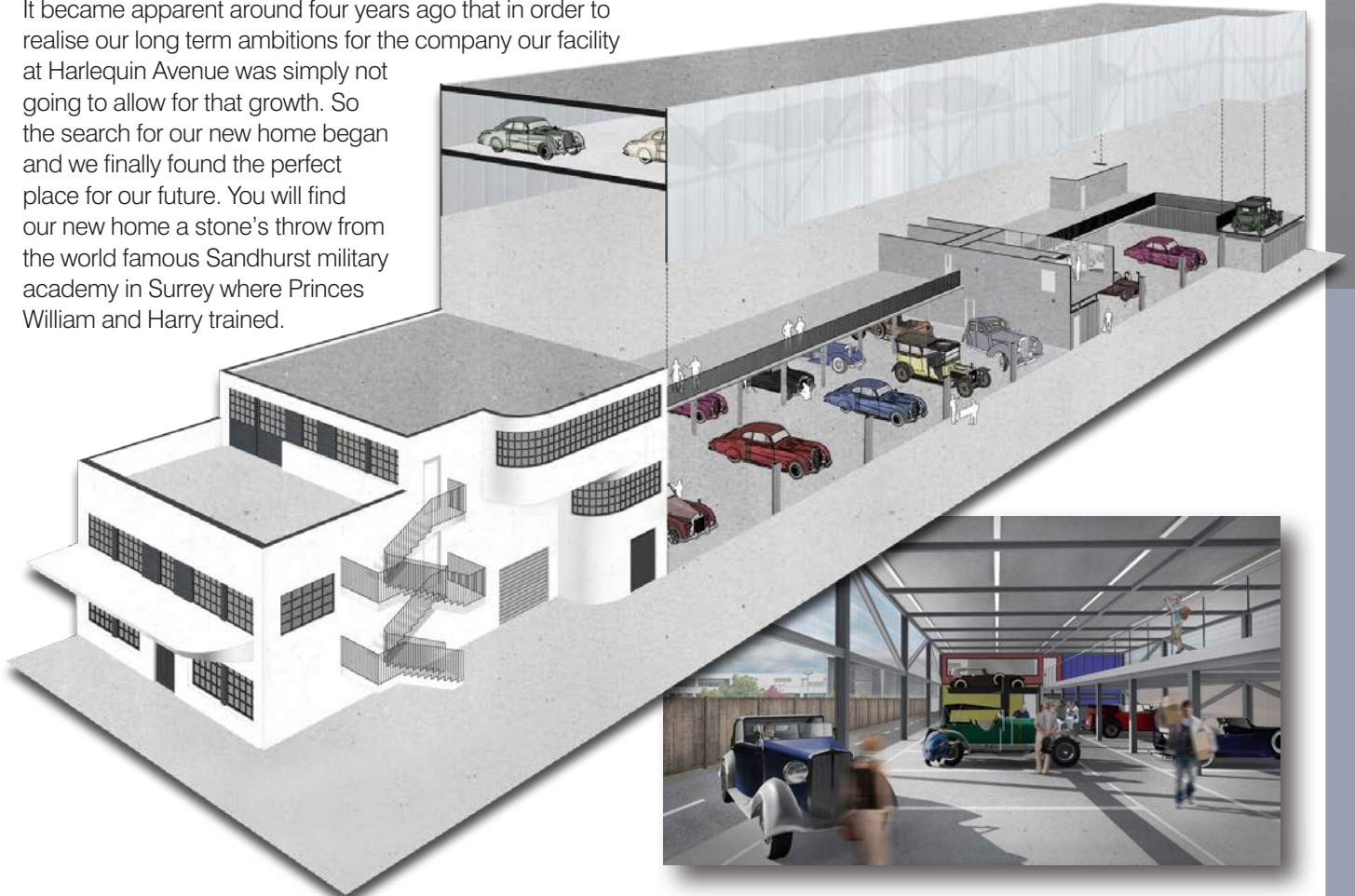
Our Future

We have had a busy year at Frank Dale & Stepsons with a great deal of travelling, events and commitments all over the world. However there has been a much larger story formulating in the background for some time, a project we can now share with you all.

It became apparent around four years ago that in order to realise our long term ambitions for the company our facility at Harlequin Avenue was simply not going to allow for that growth. So the search for our new home began and we finally found the perfect place for our future. You will find our new home a stone's throw from the world famous Sandhurst military academy in Surrey where Princes William and Harry trained.

The preparation and construction of the facility is underway and will be completed in late 2020.

This site is being built on three floors and will have the capacity to house around eighty cars offering every aspect of sales, service, maintenance and restoration works.



But before we invite you to our long term future facility, we would like to invite you to our new "stop gap" facility which is a modern 14,000 square foot property located just 200 yards away from our future home. This will enable us to upscale our workshop capacity with immediate effect allowing us to meet the rising demand for our services and to put down roots in our new community. Towards the end of 2020 our new permanent home will be ready for occupation, and at that point we will transplant and upscale the business

again. So a big change for the company is imminent, we hope you will come and see us in Sandhurst from January 2020 onwards.

A belated Happy New Year and safe driving.

Giles



THOUGHTS FROM THE WORKSHOP

Looking back on 2019 gives me great personal satisfaction. It was a year of several firsts from my perspective having worked at Frank Dale & Stepsons for over thirty years. The first best in class for one of our cars at a concours in continental Europe. The first time a car we have worked on has been invited to take part in the Pebble Beach concours. A first best in show winner for a car we have extensively restored at the RREC National Rally. It was a year I will look back on with immense pride.

It was also a year of tremendous change for the company with our move to Surrey which took place in December. I was sad to leave Brentford behind as I have worked in London all of my life, but seeing the facility we are now located at in Surrey has wiped away any sentiment as it is a huge improvement and a great step forward for the company. We have over twenty unimpeded, well-spaced bays in the new facility in Sandhurst which allows us to work on more cars simultaneously in a beautifully clean and organised environment. It's all any workshop manager could ever want and I am delighted. And this is just the first of two steps for the company, with our new larger permanent home being built just a few hundred yards away.

It's an exciting time and seeing the new premises being constructed will no doubt be a great thrill. I played a major role in the design process of the new workshops and restoration facility to come so it will be very gratifying to see some of my ideas come to life in the coming months.

In terms of projects on the go or recently completed, we finished and delivered a Bentley S2 Continental drophead coupe just before Christmas which was a huge project. The coachwork was particularly challenging on this car, with extensive corrosion that had to be addressed. But the finished product was magnificent and it was a car I was extremely pleased with.

The team are continuing to impress me with the work ethic and dedication to quality workmanship. Without exception they all take great pride in their work, a quality you cannot put a price on from a manager's perspective. We will look to grow the team during 2020 as well, to help keep up with the high demand we are experiencing. A nice problem to have.

If you would like to visit our new location in Surrey I would be delighted to welcome you and to show you around. Please just drop me a line to arrange an appointment.



TOP TIPS FROM THE WORKSHOP



If you have only enjoyed limited use in your Rolls-Royce and Bentley over the past year or so and you are considering skipping your annual service, think again. In previous newsletters I have touched upon what happens to your coolant when left which can cause bigger problems down the line. But regular oil changes are important too. If left, your engine oil will absorb moisture from the atmosphere

as well as microscopic carbon particles generated from the combustion process. This clearly isn't ideal, so my advice would be to ensure annual oil and fluid changes in your car, regardless of the mileage or frequency you take to the road. It can help avoid much bigger and more costly problems in the future.

Vincent