

The 4½-litre supercharged Bentley after reconstruction. Originally a long chassis with a different type of body, this car has been shortened and re-equipped exactly like one of the Le Mans team cars.

RETURN to GLORY

Restoration of a Bentley of the Early 'Thirties

IN those days when we were driving the famous Bentleys it never occurred to any of us that the great green battle-cruiser-like machines of which we were so fond would achieve an almost legendary fame years and years afterwards. Yet so it seems today. Take this small tale, for instance.

Somewhere about 1931, MS 3942, a supercharged 4½-litre, began its life as a long chassis open four-seater, doubtless had many adventures, and then retired into what seemed the limbo of aged things forgotten.

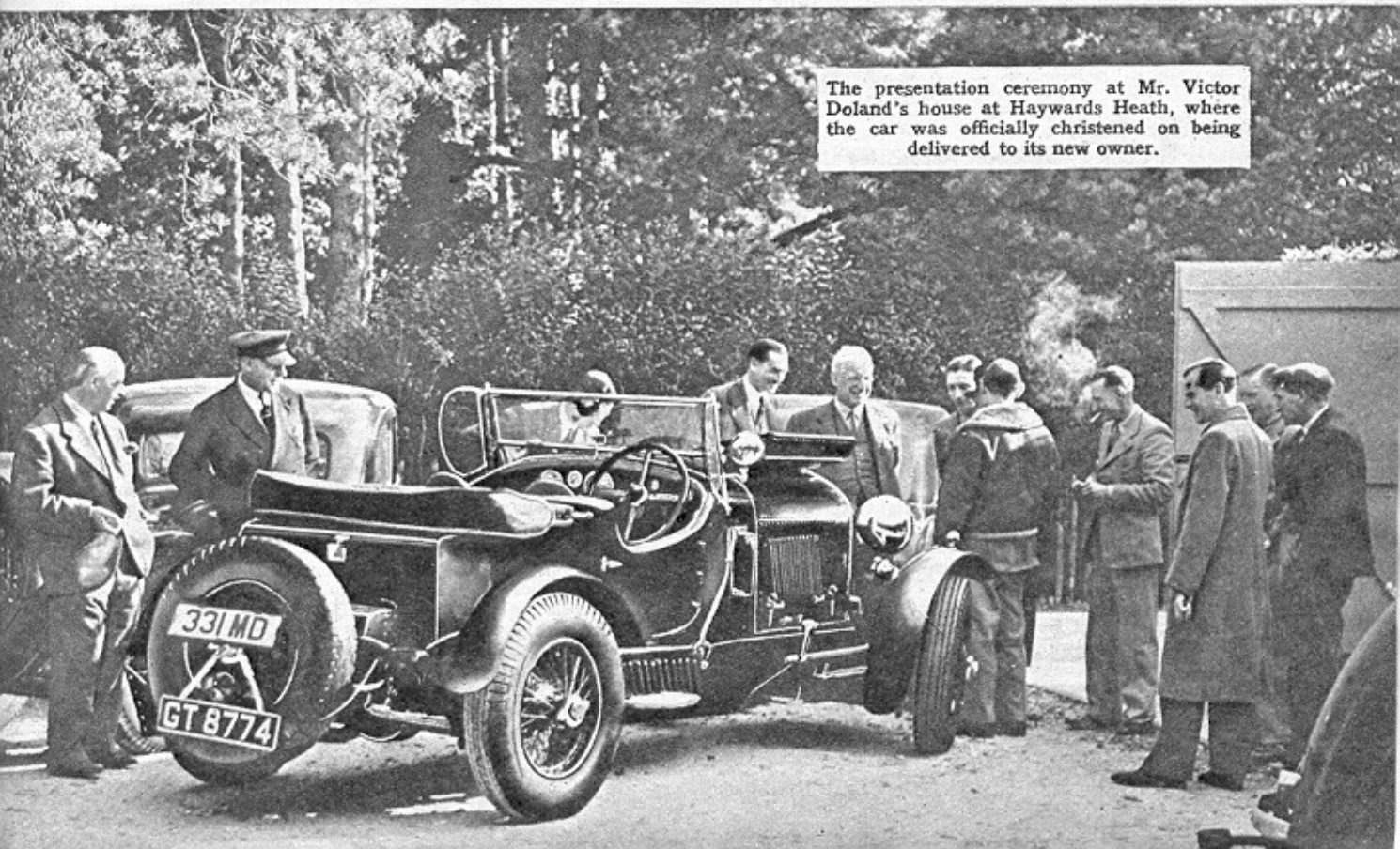
But in 1946 a real enthusiast, Mr. Victor Doland, of Haywards Heath (which once was anathema to all motorists on account of police traps), urgently desired a real, genuine, "blower" 4½ Bentley, complete to the last detail. MS 3942 came back to life to be stripped and rebuilt by Vanden Plas, who made so many of the Le Mans car bodies, and S. Lawrence, of M.L. Motors, of Mill Hill. Jointly these two shortened the chassis, restored it in detail, cut the body down to a racing-type two-seater, upholstered in genuine hunting pink, and produced, in effect, a brand new car, spotlessly clean even to the underside of the sump. It is chromium plated as requisite and bears a silver plate with this quotation from Byron:—

"There are forms which time adorns, not wears, and to which duty obstinately clings."

But—and this has the element of tragedy—Victor Doland, who had looked forward so much to this especial car, was crippled with infantile paralysis. So it was that on a certain Sunday I had the privilege of taking the car for its first run under new ownership, after it had been ceremonially christened by Mrs. Doland with traditional champagne accompaniment. And the old car brought back vividly good memories. It took a moment or two to remember the midships throttle pedal, the way things used to work, and to get the feel of the machine; once or twice instinct groped for the handle of a pressure pump now superseded by S.U. mechanism, but after that there returned all the old delight of a gear change which one could "feel," together with a real urge as the throttle opened. And, of course, we met policemen everywhere, just as in the old days.

Well, the old car is in just the hands she desires, and one thing is certain: that the 4½-litre, more than any other factor, will help its owner to recover his full physical strength, better than which one cannot wish.

S. C. H. D.



The presentation ceremony at Mr. Victor Doland's house at Haywards Heath, where the car was officially christened on being delivered to its new owner.