

1957 FRAZER NASH BMW V8 CONTINENTAL

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BMW V8
CONTINENTAL

Year: 1957

Chassis no:

421/200/300

Registration: 50LMU

Price: £390,000

VEHICLE DETAILS

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION / SERVICE HISTORY

1957 Frazer Nash BMW V8 Continental

This was the first of two chassis built with V8 BMW engines. It was initially numbered 421/200/204 and was renumbered 421/200/300 when fitted with the BMW engine in 1956. Then in August 1957 it was registered with the unusual chassis number 521/1. It was however a normal 200-series parallel tube chassis with the usual transverse leaf-spring front suspension. It was fitted with a de Dion rear axle as used in a few Mk II Le Mans and Sebring cars in 1953/54. The rack and pinion steering gear was by MG/Morris, not Bristol; this may have been necessitated by the wide V8 engine. A large Serck radiator was used as well as Koni dampers front and rear, Al-fin brake drums and centre-lock wire wheels.

The engine used was an experimental 2.5-litre BMW V8 engine with the number M.29. AFN were the official UK importers of BMWs, and the Aldingtons had been thinking about using the BMW V8 engine since it was announced in 1954. The Motor of 19 October 1955 said that AFN have already announced that a larger FN using the V8 BMW engine is to be added to the range in the not too distant future'. An entry for a 2.6-litre car was made for Le Mans in 1955, but in the event, two 2-litre Bristol-engined cars (FN205 and FN 207) ran instead. Another entry for Le Mans was made in 1956 for a 2.5- litre car (the capacity limit for prototypes that year), but once again a Bristol- engined car (FN205) ran in the race.

The rolling chassis, complete with BMW engine and instruments, but no seats or body, was exhibited at the Earls Court Motor Show from 17 to 27 October 1956. It was described as the new Frazer Nash Continental, with open or closed bodywork to customer's choice. This presumably meant a Sebring or Le Mans Fixed Head Coupé body. After the Show, AFN invited the motoring press to examine the chassis at the works and, in due course, detailed articles were published in several magazines.

The chassis was purchased by Paul Fletcher and an entry made for Le Mans. In April 1957, Fletcher arranged for Peter Kirwan-Taylor to design an alloy coupé body, which was built by Peels of Kingston in six weeks. (Later that year Kirwan-Taylor designed the body for the Lotus Elite.) Fletcher's co-driver was to be Peter Lumsden, at that time a young unknown, but the organisers would not accept his participation in the race (though he would win his class at Le Mans in a Lotus Elite in 1959).

Eventually W.H. Aldington was able to resolve the problem but the car was not finished in time for the race in June. The Coupé was completed and registered 50LMU in August 1957, with chassis number 521/1 and engine number M.29 rated at 2,450cc. The number 521 was presumably meant to be the start of a new series, following on from the Bristol-engined 421 series.

However the only other BMW-engined car did not receive this number.

The Coupé was offered for sale in January 1959 and again in Autosport from August-September 1959 with 6,000 miles completed. It was bought by Brian Savage, but he did not keep it long and it was then owned by C.S. Ivor and R.R. Sullivan. It was acquired by Ivor Moseley Webb in November 1966 and he kept it for 20 years. It featured in Classic Cars in December 1975 March 1976 and Old Motor in September-November 1981, both times as a 'mystery car'.

The originally fitted rather ungainly 2 door coupe body under which guise it was used for commuting to London during the 1960's was subsequently discarded & the more appropriate open sports body we find on it today installed. The body incidentally comes with full weather equipment which is stowed in the very capacious rear boot area, also affording the ability to carry a good bit of overnight luggage.

The car is as a whole in perfect mint restored condition. It goes extremely well given the V8 power & the lack of weight, whilst making all the right noises. This is a very very rare machine being one of just two made & as such is an ideal candidate for shows & concours whilst being eminently suited to fast road use.

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