

CLASSIC DRIVER

Could this be the mother of all pre-war Bentleys?

Lead

'Old Mother Gun' was one of the fastest race cars on Europe's circuits between WW1 and WW2, and now this historic Le Mans-winning Bentley could be yours thanks to Thiesen Hamburg.

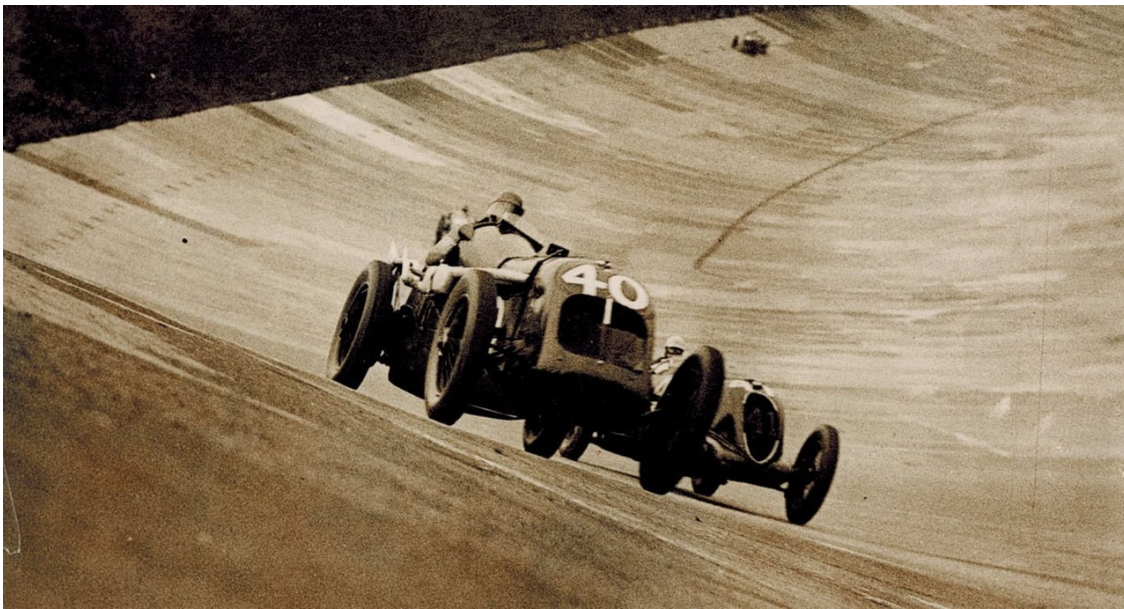


The automotive connoisseurs at [Thiesen Hamburg](#) are no strangers to the stranger side of the car world, having brought us weird and wonderful machines such as a [six-wheeler Mini Moke](#) and the [outrageous Bell Aurens Longnose](#). Now they have blessed the Classic Driver Market with something truly remarkable, a [1927 Bentley Jackson Special](#), better known by its nickname 'Old Mother Gun'.

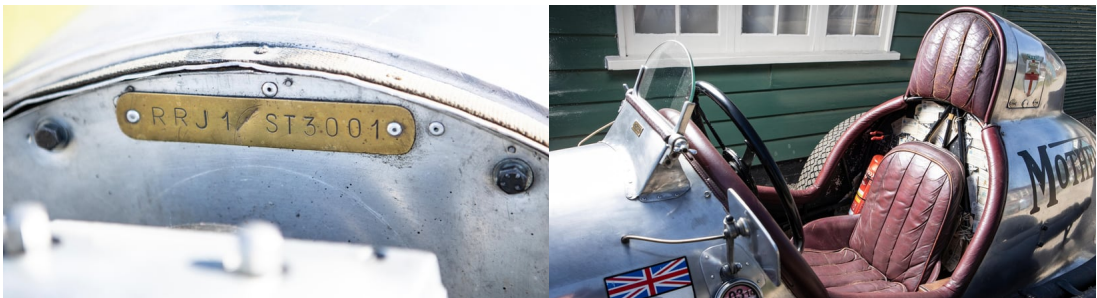


'Old Mother Gun' — chassis number 'ST3001' — was the first ever Bentley 4½-Litre off the Cricklewood production line, and was intended for use as a Bentley Motors team car. Delivered to Captain Woolf Barnato, who gave it the nickname, Old Mother Gun had an unfortunate start to its racing career with a DNF at the 1927 Le Mans 24 Hour race.

Undeterred, Barnato — now sharing driving duties with Bernard Ruben — returned to Le Sarthe in 1928 in impeccable form, taking home first place despite suffering from a cracked subframe. The next year, Old Mother Gun's final Le Mans outing proved almost as successful, finishing second behind the newer and faster Bentley Speed Six Old Number One with its larger 6 1/2-litre power plant.



Following its career at Le Mans, Old Mother Gun was acquired by Richard Marker, who intended to tackle Brooklands with his newly acquired speed machine. However, Brooklands was an incredibly demanding track, and during the 1934 500 Miles Race on September 22nd, the flywheel sheared off the end of the crankshaft, wrecking the original 4½-litre engine. It was replaced with the modified 6½-Litre from a Speed Six, making Old Mother Gun more potent than ever. In fact, with its newfound pace, Old Mother Gun was photographed at Brooklands in 1935 with all four wheels off the ground due to the track's notoriously bumpy surface.



Having been awarded Brooklands' 120 mph badge the year before, on 14th March 1936, Marker and Old Mother Gun lapped the Brooklands outer circuit at an average speed of over 130mph, bagging Marker the extremely rare Brooklands 130mph badge. However, Marker's need for speed was far from satiated, and he enlisted the help of Robin Jackson, a racing driver in his own right, who was well known for building Brooklands 'Specials'.

During the frosty months between 1936 and 1937, Jackson began Old Mother Gun's overhaul in secret. A new extended chassis was specially constructed to accommodate the all-aluminium single-seater body, being narrower than standard from the engine back, and lower slung below the rear axle. Once the modifications were complete, Jackson added 'RRJ1' to the chassis number 'ST3001' and the Bentley Jackson Special was born. The car's identity and the name Old Mother Gun have remained unchanged ever since.



On August 7th 1939, during the last meeting ever held at Brooklands before the track's final closure, George P Harvey Noble also secured his 130mph badge with Old Mother Gun, the last of only 17 130mph badges ever awarded, three of which went to drivers of Old Mother Gun. Not only was this the last car to record a 130mph lap of Brooklands prior to its closure, but earlier in 1939, she was officially timed on the railway straight at a frankly terrifying 148mph. Still track-ready and more than willing to put your bravery to the test, Old Mother Gun is waiting for its next custodian.

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