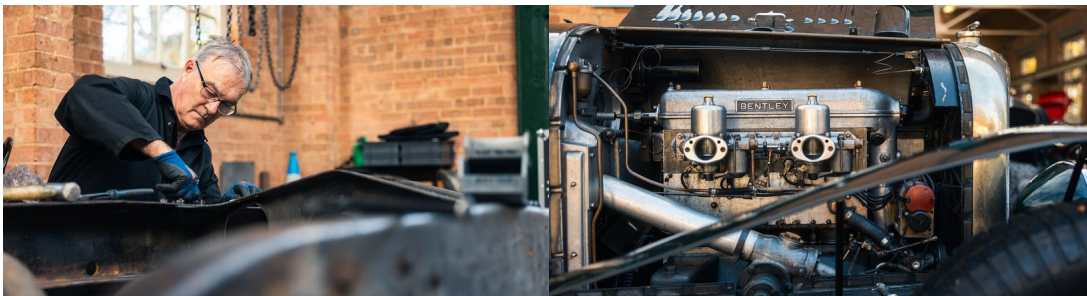


CLASSIC DRIVER

Meet the sisters who are racing their grandfather's pre-war Bentley to new heights

Lead

Defying conformity and traditions, mid-twenties sisters Anna and Louisa Getley are successfully carving their way into the stubborn world of historic racing. Staff Editor Elliot Newton caught up with the duo and went for a spot of lunch in their Bentleys!



If you've ever been lucky enough to take a stroll along the leafy grounds of Bicester Heritage, a 444-acre former WW2 RAF Bomber Training Station that now acts as a marina-like cluster that houses all manner of classic and collector car businesses, you're almost guaranteed to run into a motoring icon or two. As I brushed the amber-shaded leaves away with my feet, the piercing rumble of a [pre-war Bentley](#) bursting into life told me I was in the right place - [Kingsbury Racing](#). As I approached, out came two beaming smiles from [Anna and Louisa Getley](#), two ladies that have shaken up this oh-so-traditional motoring niche for the better, with zero plans of letting their feet off the accelerator anytime soon.

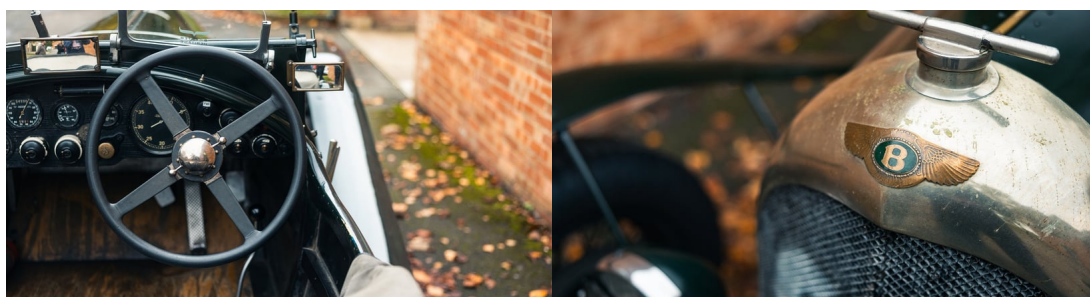


Working out of the Engine Test House within the grounds of Bicester Heritage, Kingsbury Racing was founded by Anna and Louisa's father, Ewen, who admits it was only

recently that his daughters announced their intrigue in the family-focused business of [pre-1940s Bentleys](#). Ewen certainly knows his way around the delights and nuisances of these British bruisers, having raced many of his own Bentleys, including the two featured, all over Europe. It was, therefore, a wonderful surprise when his daughters proclaimed their desire to give historic racing a go and become more involved, almost immediately making their names known amongst a formidable grid of drivers and teams. A quote taken from the sister's Instagram bio pokes fun at their position, "Technically the prodigy, realistically the liability."



As Anna and Louisa guided me through the treasure trove-esque workshop, bursting with natural light and the rich smell of fuel, I was intrigued to find out more about their racing endeavours; "2023 was the year we truly started, both of us with very little experience in driving the Bentleys, let alone in anger amongst a grid of other racers! Nevertheless, we had a fantastic opening season, and continued it through to this year, racing at some of the world's greatest circuits and learning every inch of the cars we are lucky enough to drive." As a testament to their successes, Anna recently scooped the 'Lady Driver of the Year', and Louisa claimed 'Best Young Driver' awards at the Bentley Driver's Club end of year ceremony.



For the sisters, though, it's not about the awards or the glory, it's about creating memories and refining their skills behind the wheel of their grandfather's once daily driver. As we readied ourselves for a blast around Bicester's airfield, I took some time to absorb the history behind the car the sisters call 'DD'. Built in 1924, DD started life as a 3-litre model but was then converted to 4.5-litre specification. This was to become a very popular transplant for the 3-litre, as it combined the lightweight 3-litre body and more powerful engine, making it an ideal machine for touring and racing.



Almost from the get-go, long before the Getley family had acquired it, DD was used to the fullest, taking part in many 'car gymkhana' events during the early 1930s. While they aren't quite as high-octane as the late great Ken Block's antics, these gymkhana events often necessitated a level of driving skill and athletic ability to claim the glory. Louisa continued with a wonderful story of how the Bentley ended up in their family, "Our great uncle served alongside Colonel Andrew Duncan OBE, who later sold DD to him, and promptly sold it onto our grandfather in 1956 for £50 (roughly £1,564 in today's money). He used it as his daily commuter whilst studying at Cambridge University. Our grandmother would often drive DD with all the kids in the back." With the whole Getley clan laughing together, Louisa continued "To this day, she claims it's easy to change gear if you listen to the musicality of the revs - I think we haven't quite got the same ears as her!"



It was clear to see DD was far more than just a machine to the Getleys, it was a loyal companion, similar to the family Labrador, showing unrivalled affection and a willingness to explore wherever they desired to venture. Anna continued her tale from behind the wheel, "The car has been in the family ever since. All three generations have now raced the car and driven her to Le Mans. There are some great diary entries from our grandfather's drive to Le Mans, mostly tales of speeding, side-of-the-road repairs and an overall lack of headlights!" With a stellar racing record and silverware galore, including a win at the Portimao 24 hrs this year, DD has spent her time gliding around some of the world's most challenging circuits, from Silverstone to Spa, Zandvoort to the Nürburgring, and just about everywhere else in between.



"Fancy a spot of lunch?" Always a welcome phrase on a damp autumnal day in The Cotswolds. Without even a second thought, Louisa had fired up and emerged from the green-doored garage in a pristine 1929 Bentley Blower, a mighty machine with more than enough space for both myself and photographer Tom Shaxson. Louisa, suffering from an injured ankle, opted to be the car's co-pilot, leaving Anna to wrestle the Blower's comically large steering wheel and set off during a busy Monday afternoon.

For anyone who has been lucky enough to witness a Blower in the metal, or better still travel in one, you'll know that the experience is truly unforgettable. Its acceleration is lose-your-hat levels of quick, planting you firmly into the patinated Connolly leather seats with almost nothing to securely grab onto. Just like DD and the other pre-war delights tucked away in Kingsbury's garage, this Blower wasn't your average grand tourer, as Louisa explained with a raised voice whilst trundling along a quaint B-road, "This one was restored in-house from the chassis upwards over a ten-year period, with the aim to have an exact copy of the first-ever Blower that made its debut at the 1929 Newtonards TT in Belfast. Of course, we wanted to put our own spin on it, and so we've made it as competitive as possible, but also enjoyable to drive to and from the races on the road."



After a brief sprint along Oxford's dual carriageways, an experience I fear both Tom and I will never forget due to the ferocity of wind and rain blasting our exposed faces and camera lenses, we arrived for lunch at Mollie's Motel and Diner, along the outskirts of Oxford. It was a location I'd been desperate to bring the car to, purely to showcase the

juxtaposition against this brutalist machine that proudly celebrates being over 100-year-old. Its legacy includes some of motorsport's greatest achievements, despite being relatively easy to drive to the local food spot, before being parked amongst the sea of clone-like crossover SUVs and EVs.



Anna and Louisa are seemingly born in the wrong era, and would no doubt dominate the racing scene in any decade they found themselves in, but to be racing pieces of history such as these Bentleys, during a time where female acceptance and celebration within motorsport is finally starting to come to fruition, suggests their future is looking brighter than ever.

Photographed by Tom Shaxson for Classic Driver 2024

Gallery

Source URL: <https://www.classicdriver.com/en/article/cars/meet-sisters-who-are-racing-their-grandfathers-pre-war-bentley-new-heights>
© Classic Driver. All rights reserved.