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1958 BENTLEY S1 HONEYMOON EXPRESS

1958 Bentley S1 Honeymoon Express by Freestone & Webb

- One-off Bentley bodied to this extravagant "Honeymoon Express" design
- One of the rarest and most important post-war coachbuilt Bentleys
- Sensationally finned two-seat drophead coachwork, the last built by Freestone & Webb
- New to Manny Cussins, Chairman of Leeds United, then tycoon John Bloom
- Shown at Hampton Court, outstanding entry for major Concours

The sole Bentley example, this S1 Honeymoon Express is one of the rarest and most important post-war coachbuilt Bentleys, the last word in the coachbuilders' art and surely a pinnacle in design as one of the most self-indulgent personal cars imaginable.

At the 1957 Earls Court Motor Show, Freestone & Webb unveiled a Rolls-Royce bodied in this style to huge acclaim, an exotic exhibition piece transparently aimed at the heights of the playboy market. With five-deep crowds thronging the stand, journalists christened it the "Honeymoon Express," built to transport only two in ostentatious comfort with bucket seats and ample luggage space. Only two were built in Rolls-Royce form, the motorcar offered being the sole Bentley example.

Commissioned to the order of dealer H.R. Owen Ltd, chassis B377EK was delivered to coachbuilders Freestone & Webb on 15 August 1957, receiving the Honeymoon Express two-seater drophead coupé coachwork. Complete with concave flanks, hooded headlamps, and automatic disappearing roof, the distinctively jet-age fins were likely the most memorable and definitive feature, reminiscent of the Spitfire wingtips Freestone & Webb had manufactured during the second world war.

As one might expect, first owner Manny Cussins was a self-made business titan, with a large chain of retail furniture stores including John Peters and Waring & Gillow. The Honeymoon Express was purchased through John Peters (Furnishing Stores) Ltd. and very suitably registered MC 98. A director from 1961 and later Chairman of Leeds United from 1972-1983, Cussins presided over the club's famous 1972 win at Wembley in the FA Cup final over Arsenal.

In a suitable brush with notoriety, the Honeymoon Express was acquired in the early 60s by retail entrepreneur John Bloom, suitably paired with Bloom's 150-foot motor yacht *Ariane III*. Another self-made man born in London's East End, Bloom is remembered for his role in the "washing machine wars" of the 1960s, revolutionizing the market by selling white goods direct to consumers. With the Bentley doubtless symbolic of his 1960s heyday, Bloom's business later infamously folded, resulting in charges and personal bankruptcy, by which time the Honeymoon Express of course moved on.

After a period in the United States with a Pittsburgh doctor then briefly with collector Rick Carroll, the Honeymoon Express was acquired in 1990 by the father of the present owner through a major public auction, meaning she is offered from near thirty-five years of continuous family ownership. Centrepiece of a discreet collection, she was beautifully restored in the present black over maroon coving livery and largely kept out of the public eye, save for a 1995 feature in *Classic & Sports Car*. More recently she broke cover at the 2021 Concours of Elegance at Hampton Court, attracting much attention just like the original Earl's Court show car.

Offered in outstanding condition and immediately impressive, the Honeymoon Express remains a supreme example of the coachbuilder's art, an arrestingly attention-getting motorcar suitable for those for whom only the best will do. Literally a show-stopper and the only one constructed, she will be suitable to join any significant collection, and for display at major concours events.











