



The Pavilion Gardens (89)

Wed, 20th Jun 2007, The Pavilion Gardens

Lot 60

Estimate: £18000 - £20000 + Fees

1951 Bristol 401

Registration No: HJU 172

Chassis No: 401/1004

Mot Expiry: April 2008

"This, indeed, is the car for the connoisseur. It can only be modesty on the part of the Bristol publicity boys which has prevented them from quoting as the 401's slogan 'The Best Car in Britain'" (Motor Sport magazine, January 1953).

Introduced in Autumn 1949, the 401 was characterised by its super-smooth, aerodynamic bodywork. Honed in the Bristol Aeroplane Company's wind tunnel and built using Milanese coachbuilder Touring's 'Superleggera' technique (aluminium panelling cinched over a chassis mounted tubular steel superstructure), it boasted a commendably lithe kerb weight of approximately 2,700lbs. Equipped with transverse-leaf independent front suspension and hydraulic drum brakes, the new Bristol proved a notably fine handler taking Touring Class wins in both the Cannes Rally of the Sun and Tulip Rally for 1951. Powered by a BMW-inspired 1971cc OHV straight-six engine allied to four-speed manual transmission, the elegant sports saloon promised nigh-on 100mph performance and spirited acceleration. Only in production for four years (by which time a mere 618 are thought to have been made), the model's exclusive £3,212 13s 4d price tag was a reflection of the aircraft quality materials used in its construction.

Finished in gold with light beige leather upholstery, the refurbishment history of this particular example is described by the vendor as follows: "In 1996 a Bristol 401 in very poor condition was purchased, then another very good chassis with complete body but no running gear was bought. After reconditioning of the engine, gearbox and rear axle, they were fitted to the cleaned-up and painted chassis. Steering gear, suspension and brakes were also reconditioned. A factory recommended remote vacuum servo unit has given the car sharp stopping power. Interior was professionally restored to a very high standard using new leather and carpets. Paintwork although again professionally done is now showing some blistering in parts. Flashers have been fitted within the existing tail and side lights so as not to spoil the beautiful lines of the car. New semaphore trafficators ensure that the original system can operate. All chrome parts are excellent. A full restoration file has been kept with receipts amounting to well over £29,000. End result was by 2001 the Bristol was returned to its former glory and is used for rallies and shows. It has achieved firsts and seconds in its class on many occasions". Strikingly elegant, this former award-winning 401 is offered for sale with MOT certificate valid until April 3rd 2008 and historic class (free) road tax valid until February 29th 2008.