



Imperial War Museum Duxford (191)

Wed, 14th Oct 2020

Estimate: £60000 - £70000 + Fees

1948 Bristol 400 First owned by (Lady) Diana White of Bristol fame

Registration No: JSV823

Chassis No: 400-1 442

MOT: Exempt

- First owned by Diana White whose husband George S.M. White effectively founded Bristol Cars and remained its chairman until 1973
- Extensively restored during the current eighteen-year ownership including a bare metal repaint, interior re-trim, engine overhaul and fitment of a close-ratio gearbox
- Engine uprated by Nicholas Finburgh Ltd: nitrided crankshaft, high-lift camshaft, 10:1 compression ratio, new flywheel Bristol long rods and Cosworth pistons etc
- Offered for sale with V5C Registration Document and history file

A second series 400 saloon complete with aluminium spare wheel cover and optional top-hinged opening rear window, chassis 421 was allocated new to none other than Diana White whose husband George S.M. White had effectively founded Bristol Cars. Thought to have been initially road registered as 'BAC 1' (Bristol Aeroplane Company), the four-seater is understood to have subsequently belonged to P. Buckley and to have spent time abroad before being re-registered as 'JSV 823' on August 13th 1982 when in the custody of D. Stephenson. Acquired by the Ball family during 1990, the 400 then passed to Channel Islands resident B. Ching from whom the vendor's late husband bought it in November 2002.

Despatched to Bristol Car Services Ltd of Chiswick the following October for some £6,000 worth of brake, suspension and back axle fettling, a further £3,619 was spent with the same company on repairing a blown head gasket and renewing the water pump etc. An ex-Works Porsche driver, the vendor's late husband decided to contest various historic rallies aboard 'JSV 823' and to this end he enlisted the services of classic car restorer and race preparation specialist Nicholas Finburgh who had learned his craft at his father's renowned firm Classic Autos of Kings Langley. Accompanying invoices for the ensuing engine overhaul total over £24,000 including a Farndon Engineering nitrided crankshaft, high lift camshaft, chromed rocker shaft, bespoke head gasket, Bristol long rods, Cosworth pistons / rings, new bearings, valves, Vokes air filters and titanium valve caps etc not to mention multiple specialist repairs to the cylinder block and head. Running a 10:1 compression ratio there is mention in the history file of the uprated engine developing 150bhp. However, there are no dyno sheets on file to confirm this output.

The engine work took two years to complete (2005 – 2007) and in the meantime the vendor's late husband had the 400 completely re-trimmed by Tony Fairweather of Fairweather Restorations in an authentic mixture of Red-piped Cream leather and Brown cloth (Bristol intending the latter to bear the brunt of any scuffing) at a cost of circa £10,000. New front and rear wings were sourced from Vintage Wings and

Radiators of Manchester and the car then treated to a bare metal bodywork restoration by Dennis Wright Body Repairs of Norfolk between 2007 and 2008 at an estimated cost of £20,000. A close-ratio (Type CR2) four-speed manual gearbox was obtained from Bristol Cars for £2,232 in January 2008 and a new clutch installed by Nicholas Finburgh that May. The front brakes were overhauled in 2009 and the fuel tank flushed by Classic Restorations Ltd of Bedford during September 2011 (£1,051.88).

Having covered a mere 1,500 miles or so over the past decade, 'JSV 823' is currently running and driving and may well be driven to the sale but would benefit from some recommissioning / servicing. Something of a wolf in sheep's clothing with its tuned engine and close ratio gearbox, this striking 400 is made doubly special by its White family provenance. Offered for sale with V5C Registration Document and history file.

Model Background:

With the support of the War Reparations Board, the rights to manufacture the BMW 326, 327 and 328 and their famed six-cylinder engine were secured by the Bristol Aeroplane Company's fledgling Car Division in 1946. Place a pre-war BMW 327 alongside Bristol's first offering, the 400, and the ancestry is self-evident, but there were many differences. The decision to make it a four-seater saw it based on the longer chassis of the 326. The aircraft grade Bristol body was more streamlined than that of the 327, while Bristol developed the already impressive 328 engine into one of the finest 2-litre units of the period, which powered not only all Bristol models until 1961, but various sports and racing cars from AC, Arnolt, Cooper, Frazer Nash, Lister, Lotus and Tojeiro. The 400's interior trim was an unmistakably British blend of leather and wood. With its lithe 1170kg kerb weight, rack and pinion steering, independent front suspension, torsion bar controlled rear axle and four-wheel drum brakes, the Bristol was among the fastest and best handling saloons of its generation capable of humbling rivals with far larger engines. However, such excellence did not come cheap and only 487 examples of the 400 were made.