

Hispano Drivers Club Newsletter

Newsletter 15

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TWO EXCEPTIONAL DASHING FRENCH WIDOWS

This edition of the Newsletter starts with an article about Anne de Rochechouart de Mortemart, the Dowager Duchesse d'Uzès, a most remarkable lady to whose life a long article is dedicated. Anne was the great-granddaughter of Barbe-Nicole Ponsardin, the famous Veuve Clicquot-Ponsardin whose yellow label champagne is known to all as Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin, or simply Veuve Clicquot. A special 10-page Supplement is dedicated to Veuve Clicquot-Ponsardin and her champagne.

This year the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, celebrating its 70th anniversary, was back again in full swing after an interruption in 2020 which hopefully was a one-time occurrence. Several Hispanos adorned the show field, two in the long line-up of past Best of Show Winners, and a fabulous newcomer which won the Alec Ulmann Trophy.

The surprise of the Monterey week was perhaps the re-appearance after some 30-years absence of the 'Tulipwood', André Dubonnet's famous 1924 Targa Florio H6C **11.012**, shown in the Blackhawk Collection Expo, and for sale!

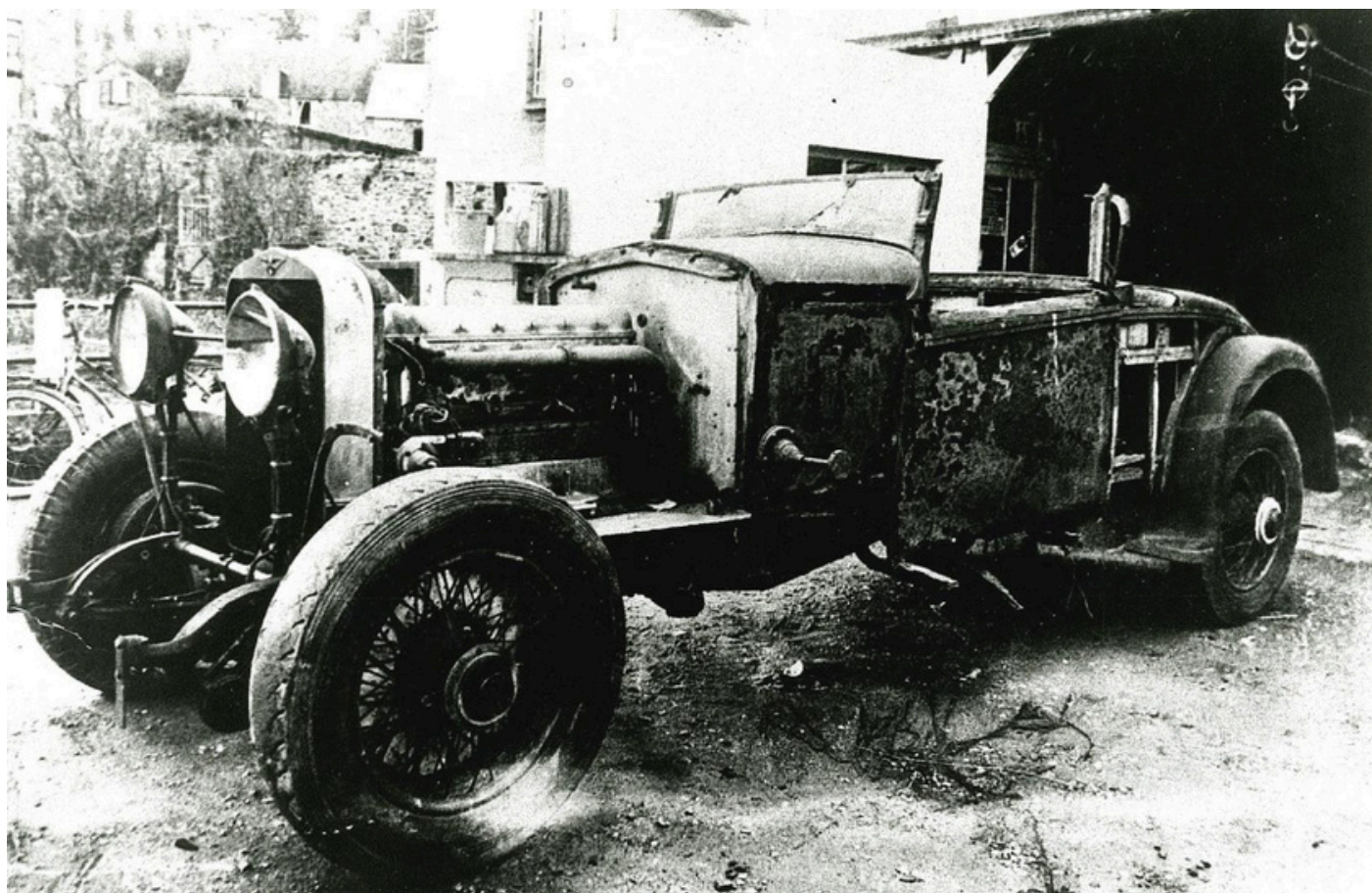
A Hispano-Suiza show was also put up last July at the Goodwood Festival of Speed with the Cartier Style et Luxe Concours.

Each of these two concours is covered in this edition.

Complementing these articles is an array of shorter items, including a period cartoon. This cartoon is the lead in to a broader coverage of the World War I *Escadrille des Cigognes* and Georges Guynemer, etc. in editions planned for 2022.

And, at the very end of this edition readers are treated to an amusing and topical advertisement.

Your editor/publisher wishes all his readers much enjoyment with this 43-page edition.



The subject of this short article – the sad remains of H6B '10.734' as unearthed in France in the early 1950s.

THE VICISSITUDES OF THE H6B DUBBED 10.734

Your editor has vivid recollections of this H6B, which he went to inspect in 1995 in the Netherlands as part of his plan to buy a Hispano. Price and condition eventually put him off and instead he acquired another H6B project, notably from Australia.

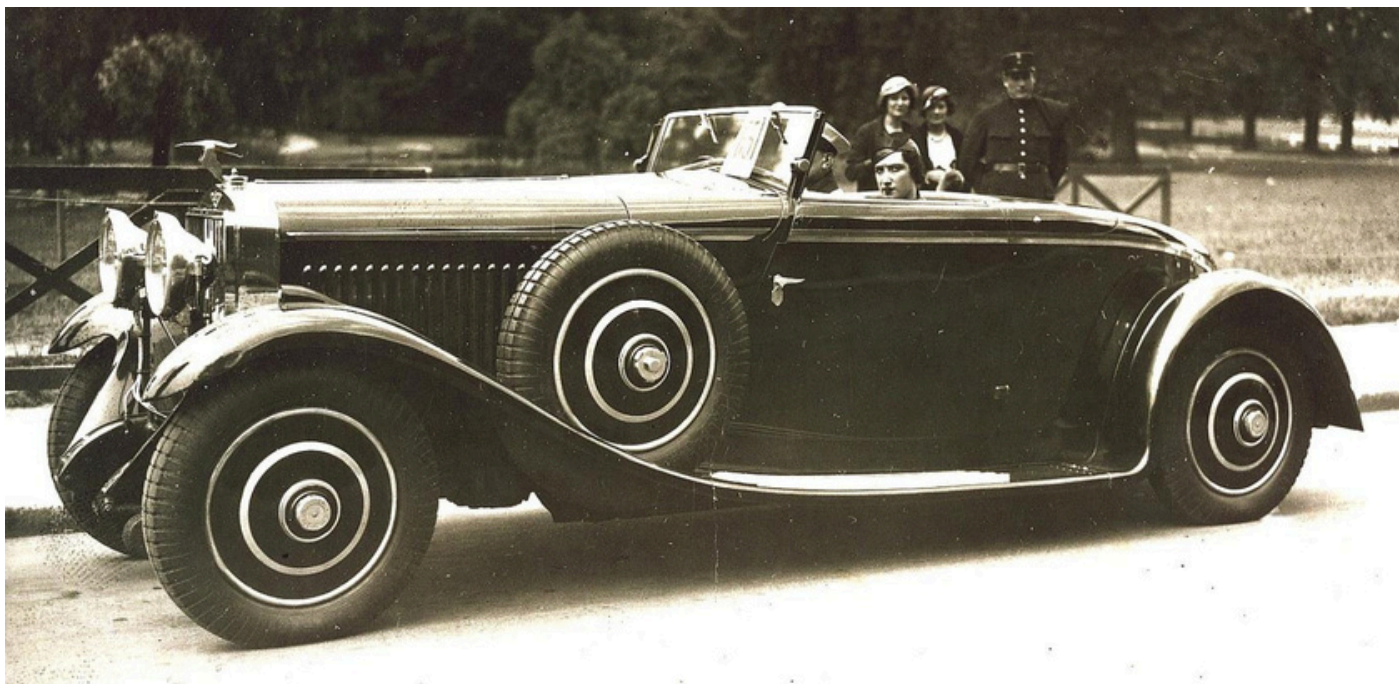
The H6B pictured above was for sale at J.A. (Jan) Bruijn's Deventer Automobielmuseum. Grossly incomplete and with many parts from other H6Bs, Jan had some work done to the wooden frame by a local carpenter, who was not a professional coachbuilder but rather someone who specialized in making wooden wheels for carts, etc.

The chassis in question didn't have a number and the engine had the number 300.786, which dated it to 1923. However, the small plate block did not match with that.

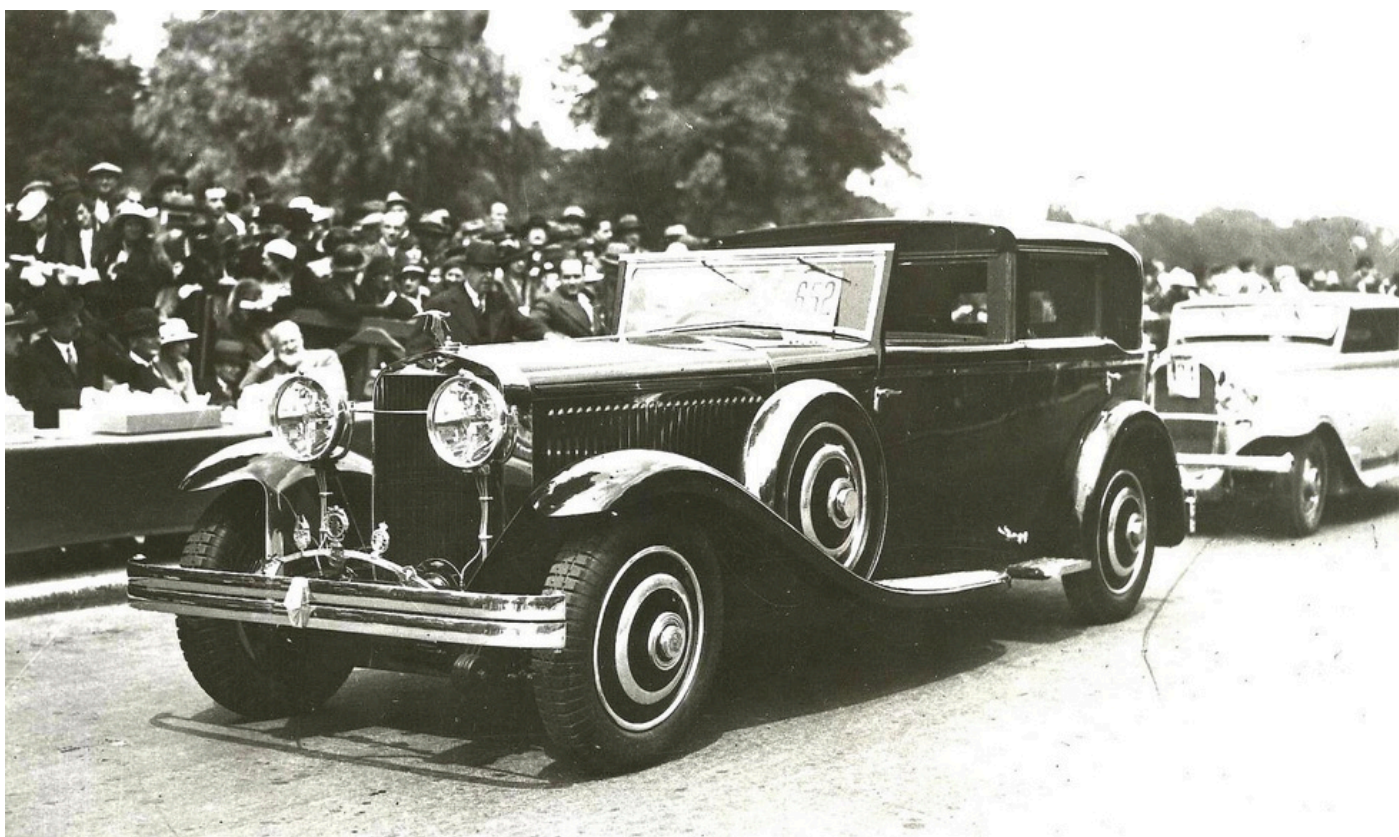
If the engine was original to the chassis, then this is chassis **10.734**, delivered on November 16th 1923 to Lafond, and its subsequent owner was Albert Venot. Albert Venot was the co-owner of the Société Venot Peslin et Cie from Onnaing in the

departement du Nord, a large steel construction company, especially for the thriving mining industry, ports, etc. According to the Bois-Colombes ledger, he also owned H6B **12.199** of August 6th 1929. The car surfaced in the 1950s, when found by collector/dealer Edouard Bitel from Jugon-les-Lacs in Brittany and that is presumably when the above photo was taken. The car stayed with Bitel until acquired in 1989 via dealer Gérard Mimieux by Jan Bruijn. He obviously had great plans with the car, which was claimed to carry Fernandez et Darrin roadster coachwork of a later date than the chassis, so a later reboddy. Specifics of the body were its fold-flat windscreen, its top which folds under the rear deck and a second screen which could be fitted for the dickey seat.

About twenty years later, after many changes of ownership, including an investment company, the car surfaced again and was the subject of the late Jules Heumann's interest. Jules corresponded



*Could this perhaps be **10.734** with its fabulous new Fernandez et Darrin roadster body, seen here at a concours d'élégance with participant number 651?*



This Fernandez et Darrin bodied H6C participated in the same concours d'élégance with number 652.

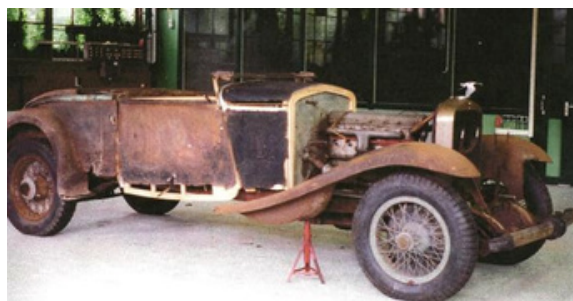
with your editor about the car with a view to acquire the project, despite its outrageous price. Here is what Jules had found out and wrote in an email to your editor on April 24th 2014: "I have been able to reconstruct the history of this car since the fifties and although I have a list of owners, there is still confusion as to accurate dates. Suffice to say that the car was discovered

in the early fifties by a French collector, Edouard Bitel. He sold the car through a French dealer, Gerard Mimieux to a dealer in the Netherlands, J. A. Bruijn. At one time the car went to Italy to Cesaro and work was done on it in all three countries. I was able to discover only two accurate dates: the car was received by Eric Limpalaer in

France from Italy on August 30th 1999 and sent by him to J.A. Bruijn in the Netherlands on February 24th 2000. The car was brought to the US by Charles Bronson for George Fernandez and was eventually sold to Otis Chandler. Chandler sold the car to parties unknown and the current owner bought this car along with others as an investment. I inspected the car yesterday and have come to some conclusions. This is an early chassis as indicated by the facts that the entire rear end assembly is an earlier type and the crankcase is also an earlier one. Both these components are rarely, if ever changed, particularly the rear end. The block is the later type but the carburetor, distributor caps and the valve cover are the early type. Based upon this evidence I believe that the engine number 300.786, shown on the oil filler cover, is correct for this chassis and that would presumably make the car chassis 10.734 that had had the block changed, a common procedure as the blocks were highly susceptible to corrosion. **10.734** with engine 300.786 was delivered November 16th 1923 to Lafond, then to Venot. Owners are unknown from

then until Bitel. Wheelbase is standard. The body is a rebody, ca. 1932, also a common procedure. Whether the body is from another car or whether it was made just for this chassis is unknown but it seems to be Fernandez and Darrin. Certain details (low windshield that folds flat, chrome trim from radiator to rear of the car, expanded firewall width) fit the coachbuilder. It is unknown as to whether the engine has been rebuilt. It is claimed that it runs but definite signs of corrosion have been noted. There are many parts not yet on the car, some original, some replicas but it is unknown that everything is there. I was not able to see the cover for the steering arm where it is fastened to the steering box, nor did I see the steering arm or the tie rod and tie rod joints. This does not mean they are not there as I may not have seen them, but it does introduce an element of doubt."

Since then there has been no news of '10.734', but it is believed the car is still in the process of reconstruction. Let's hope the present owner sees it through to the end and doesn't give up like so many before him.



Above: at Bitel in 1988. Right (top to bottom): loosely reassembled with some new wood at the Deventer Automobielmuseum; the severe corrosion is evident; the reconstructed body by Cesaro, Italy.