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ANGLO-FRENCH ALLIANCE

Rediscovering the Crossley-built Bugatti



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BOOK REVIEWS

DELAGE - CHAMPION DU MONDE

Authors: Daniel Cabart and Christophe Pund

Publisher: OREP Editions.

www.orepeditions.com

Price: €90. Hardback (9.5 by 11.6in).

240 pages with hundreds of colour and

b&w illustrations. Text in French and English

ISBN: 978-2-8151-0362-6

'The sporting glory of Delage is part of France's national heritage, but nowadays it's rather forgotten...' laments the introduction to this splendid book, which certainly sets the record straight. In detailing the history and achievements of the peerless 15 S 8 racer, it celebrates the 90th anniversary of Delage's *annus mirabilis*, in which the 15 S 8 and its heroic driver Robert Benoist won every Grand Prix in the 1927 sporting calendar to take the proud title of World Champion.

A technical *tour de force*, the 15 S 8 was arguably the most successful racing car of all time, for it was still capable of winning major races against much younger cars more than two decades after it first took to the tracks in 1926. Yet, as a fascinating chapter details, that superiority was not the result of pure innovation but rather the skill of designer Albert Lory in painstakingly blending state-of-the-art technology – mostly Italian in origin – with the use of the finest materials then available.

The fruit of many years of research by Daniel Cabart, aided by Christophe Pund, this book chronicles the origins and racing career of the 15 S 8, with the results of every race in which the four original cars – and the two 'new' cars constructed on Lory-designed chassis with ifs in 1937 and 1946 – competed during their front-line careers, which spanned the years 1926 to 1952. Nor is their subsequent history forgotten; all six have survived, despite many vicissitudes along the way (though No 3, wrapped round a tree by Earl Howe in 1932, is incomplete and awaiting restoration).

There are biographies of all the drivers and engineers, not only praising the great names but also giving due honour to the forgotten heroes such as the tragic Ernest Eimer or David Hampshire, whose fortune came from Zubes cough sweets...

The Talbot GPLB and the T39D Bugatti – the two main rivals to, yet totally eclipsed by, the 15 S 8 – are analysed, the Talbot by Sebastien Faurès, the Bugatti by Pierre-Yves Laugier. One has to say that in comparison to the Delage and Talbot, the 1927 GP Bugatti looked remarkably old-fashioned, and seemed to have been prepared almost as an afterthought.

Fascinating appendices give facsimile reproductions and transcripts of internal correspondence, including a revealing letter of August, 1923, from Louis Delage to Albert Lory instructing him to take over the preparation of the firm's racing cars in the absence of designer Planchon, 'who has chosen very badly the date of his departure on leave'. That lapse was to result in his sacking.

In facsimile, too, are Lory's meticulous notes on the Monthéry test sessions of Spring, 1927, plus his description of the 15 S 8, written circa 1960, and a copy of the Ministry of Mines 1926 homologation report of chassis No 1.

What is important about this book is the way it analyses the development of the 15 S 8 and corrects the many misapprehensions and legends that have grown up around this car, not least of which is the impression that involvement in racing led to Delage's downfall. Not so, it would seem. Total 'special and exceptional' expenses involved in contesting the World Championship in 1927 amounted to just four per cent of the company's turnover.

Nor, as often reported, were the changes made for the 1927 season just a simple matter of reversing the cylinder block to bring the exhaust round to the nearside to prevent a repeat of the blistering events of 1926, when the proximity of the exhaust to the cockpit side led to the unfortunate team members suffering burnt feet. The changes were legion, and only the camboxes and covers, pistons, conrods and bottom end of the engine were retained.

Important, too, are the hundreds of photographs, many previously unseen, which are both comprehensive and informative, in themselves a record of the changing nature of motor racing over a quarter of a century.

'This model deserved a book,' says Daniel Cabart. He has certainly filled that gap with distinction.

D B-W

PROTOTYPE CHAUSSON CHS

Author: Christophe Chausson

Publisher: Montisambert. Available from

www.chausson-chs.com

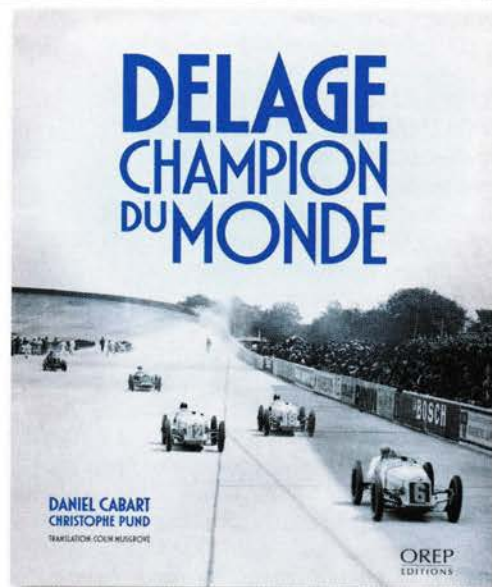
Price: €29.90. Softback (9 by 11in). 176 pages with many colour and b&w illustrations

ISBN: 978-2746693777

When the sorry remains of a tiny, two-seater economy car were sold at auction in 2012, only the most ardent enthusiasts would have been aware of the niche it occupied in motoring history. Along with the car were several boxes of files relating to its design and manufacture and it is these that form the backbone of this new book, which tells for the first time in detail the story of the car, the CHS, and the company that built it, the Société des Usines Chausson.

Brothers Jules and Gaston Chausson founded their manufacturing empire in 1907, initially building radiators and exhausts that were soon adorning a huge range of French cars. After a profitable war, supplying radiators and other equipment for Allied air forces, business boomed and in the 1930s Chausson branched out into car body pressings for other manufacturers, particularly Matford and Chenard-Walcker. Chausson eventually acquired the latter firm outright as well as taking over the Swiss Gallay radiator company, one of their main competitors in that field.

During the Second World War, as with so many firms in occupied France, Chausson



engineers were secretly working on projects to be built when hostilities ceased. The CHS economy car was one example. An attractive, open two-seater with independent suspension all round, front-wheel drive and powered by a 340cc single-cylinder engine, it was planned to be sold as a Chenard and was exhibited at the 1946 Paris Salon. Alas, there was no place in the *Plan Pons* for the car and the project was scrapped. A hopeful attempt to manufacture the car in Britain similarly came to naught.

This book, written by the grandson of one of the company's founders, is divided roughly in to two parts, the first dealing with the company history from its inception to its closure in the 1990s. The second section examines the CHS prototype in detail, documenting its design, construction, rediscovery and restoration. The finished result was proudly displayed for the first time at Rétromobile earlier this year.

Much more than a mere corporate history, this is a fascinating look at an unusual subject, coloured with period material from the company archive. The design, layout, paper

and reproduction quality are all exemplary, a surprise considering the reasonable price. The subject matter is highly specialised and the text is in French only, but for readers intrigued by motoring's hidden backwaters it is highly recommended.

THE LANCHESTER LEGACY, VOLUME TWO, 1931-1956

Author: Chris Clark

Publisher: Lanchester Legacy Ltd.
www.lanchesters.com or 01531 890204

Price: £75 plus p&p. Hardback (8 by 11.5in). 316 pages, almost 200 illustrations, 60 per cent in colour
ISBN: 978-0-9956573-1-1

What a satisfying thing is the Rule of Three! At Sunday School it may be 'A Story, a Hymn and a Prayer', on a street market stall a gadget 'For your garden shed, your workshop or your conservatory', or – in the words of the children's song – 'Sago, Rice and Tapioca'. But in Lanchester lore, apart from the Unholy Trinity of Frederick, George and Frank, it must refer to the trilogy assembled over so many years by Chris Clark. Since Volumes One and Three were published, 22 and 21 years respectively have passed.

Almost every leading marque has its apologist, but Clark is much more than that for Lanchester. Engineer, historian, researcher, restorer, event organiser, donor of Lanchester memorabilia to Coventry University, founder of the Lanchester Trust, he has also initiated research scholarships.

Published to commemorate the 70th anniversary of Frederick Lanchester's death, this book 'sits comfortably', as the author puts it, between Volume One, which recounted the company's history from 1895 to 1931, and Volume Three, a *Festschrift* to the Lanchester brothers. Instead of support from the Michael Sedgwick Memorial Trust, it is sponsored by companies and individuals.

Although it relies on the recollections of many former Lanchester employees and DLOC members, neither date nor context appears for these contributions. While this helps readability, it may offend historical purists. Nor are photographic sources given.

Laurence Pomeroy, Daimler's distinguished chief engineer and managing director, did not see eye to eye with George Lanchester, who held the same title, though in theory only, at the company which still bore his name. Other personalities include Bill Hancock, works manager, Percy Martin, BSA's managing director, who had tricked Fred Lanchester into agreeing a 'temporary' cut in salary as a consultant to Daimler, and of course the flamboyant and arrogant Sir Bernard Docker and his wife.

The story resumes with BSA's renegeing on promises made when they took over Lanchester. After the first new model, the 2½-litre, six-cylinder 15-18hp (revamped for 1933 as the 18hp), declining demand for large cars prompted entry into the already crowded light car market. The resultant luxury 10, the 'minimum Lanchester', proved attractive to coachbuilders, including Mulliners, Abbott, Martin Walter, Tickford, Carbodies, and the less well known Berkeley and Butlin. Surprisingly

in a book so full of detail, we are not told that Lancefield's bizarre 'retro' brougham body was commissioned by Bruce & Co, nor that the Mulliner sports model illustrated was campaigned by John Archer.

S B On virtually the same chassis, the 12hp 1378cc Light-Six followed – the engine a much scaled down version of George's famous 40hp – and a larger six, the New 18. Then came the 14 Roadrider and the 11hp for 1937.

The autocratic Pomeroy departed in mid-1936, after designing the 14 Roadrider deluxe – confusingly, quite different from its namesake – with input from Cyril Simpson and from George Lanchester. Disgruntled at his diminished rôle, however, George had resigned some months earlier.

The New 10, conceived in 1939, entered production in 1946, followed by the 14 in 1951 and the all-steel Leda for the 1952 model year. Only one two-seater Roadster was made, all the other production versions, with the Conquest engine, being branded as Daimlers. Then came the Dauphin, a combination of the Lanchester 14 chassis and the new Daimler six-cylinder engine.

Lanchester's decline accelerated with the aborted Sprite, a chassisless 1622cc four with automatic gearbox, and by 1956 it was all over. Daimler dropped Lanchester and the company missed the Motor Show for the first time since the late 19th century. Less than four years later, Daimler themselves would be taken over by Jaguar.

Technical details are given of the fluid flywheel, the preselector gearbox and the Daimler transmission. Six separate chapters are devoted to each of the three brothers, prewar and postwar. There is coverage of the Royal cars and of wartime activities, including the 40hp armoured car.

The idiosyncratic appearance of this self-published book bears the firm stamp of the author. The opening pages of each chapter are overprinted with a different coloured tint which fades to a shadow on the fore-edge of the subsequent pages. Most of the illustrations are modern colour images, reproduced in overblown contrast, while some of the period black and white photographs are larger than the quality allows.

If you missed Volume One all those years

ago, the author is generously offering it free of charge, while stocks last, to buyers of Volume Two. But be warned: this well researched addition to the story, Chris Clark promises, 'is not the end of my mission, as the Lanchester campaign continues'.

R M S

HOTCHKISS: 60 ANS DE PAGES PUBLICITAIRES

Author: Jacques Paquereau

Publisher: Editions Itinéraires.

www.editionsitineraires.com

Price: €25. Softback (7 by 10in).

230 pages with colour and b&w illustrations

ISBN: 979-1093119120

The title of this book more or less tells you everything you need to know; a selection of advertisements for Hotchkiss cars covering the 60-year lifespan of the marque, the last few of which were occupied solely with the manufacture of military vehicles, private car production having come to an end in the 1950s.

Split into five chapters covering five distinct eras, each is prefaced with a short introduction in both English and French, but otherwise the advertisements are left to stand on their own merits. The earliest examples draw parallels with Hotchkiss's arms manufacture, ascribing the attributes of weaponry – precision, endurance – to the motor cars. Oddly, this practice continued well after the end of WW1, when one would assume the French buying public had had quite enough of guns.

The 10-year period starting in the mid-1920s was something of a golden age for both Hotchkiss sales and its advertising. The gunslinging was dispensed with in favour of the celebration of high style and competition success, both of which the marque possessed in abundance. The distinctive hand of Alex Kow is seen often during this period, although many of the other uncredited artists whose work is featured deserve to be equally celebrated.

The final years of the firm saw rapid financial downturn and, consequently, a smaller advertising budget. By the time the 1950s rolled into view, simple, unillustrated typeset notices in the back of magazines were deemed sufficient.

The selection here is not definitive, being drawn from the author's personal collection, but it is certainly illustrative of the

changing styles in advertising in the first half of the 20th century. Reproduction quality is decent, although there are obvious limitations with some of the source material. Overall it provides an interesting look at the changing fortunes of one of the great French motor manufacturers.

C P

