

The Automobile

The Automobile



Oily Rag
Renault



Small is Beautiful

1927, 1100cc, 120mph!



Known Unknowns:
Lea-Francis 2½ Sports



Auto-biography:
Charles Howard



Back on the Road:
1908 Coventry Humber

£4.95 February 2015
Volume 32 Number 12



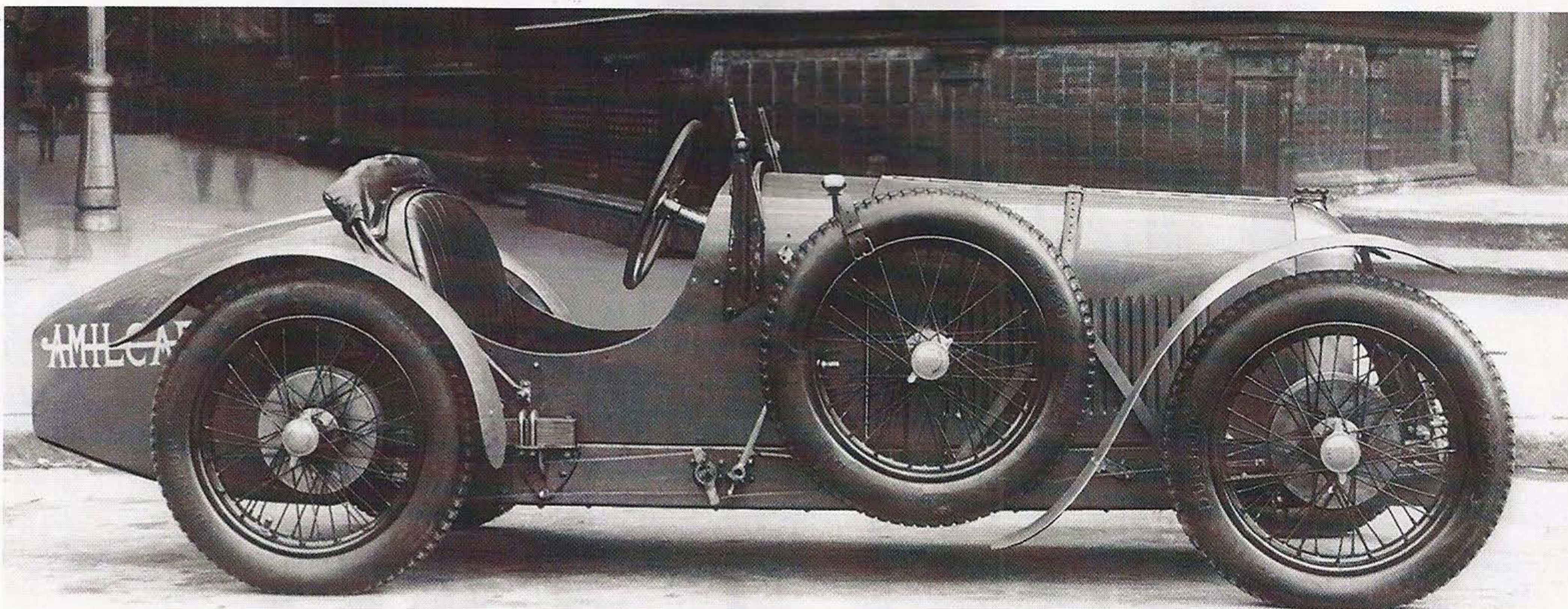
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AMILCAR'S JEWEL

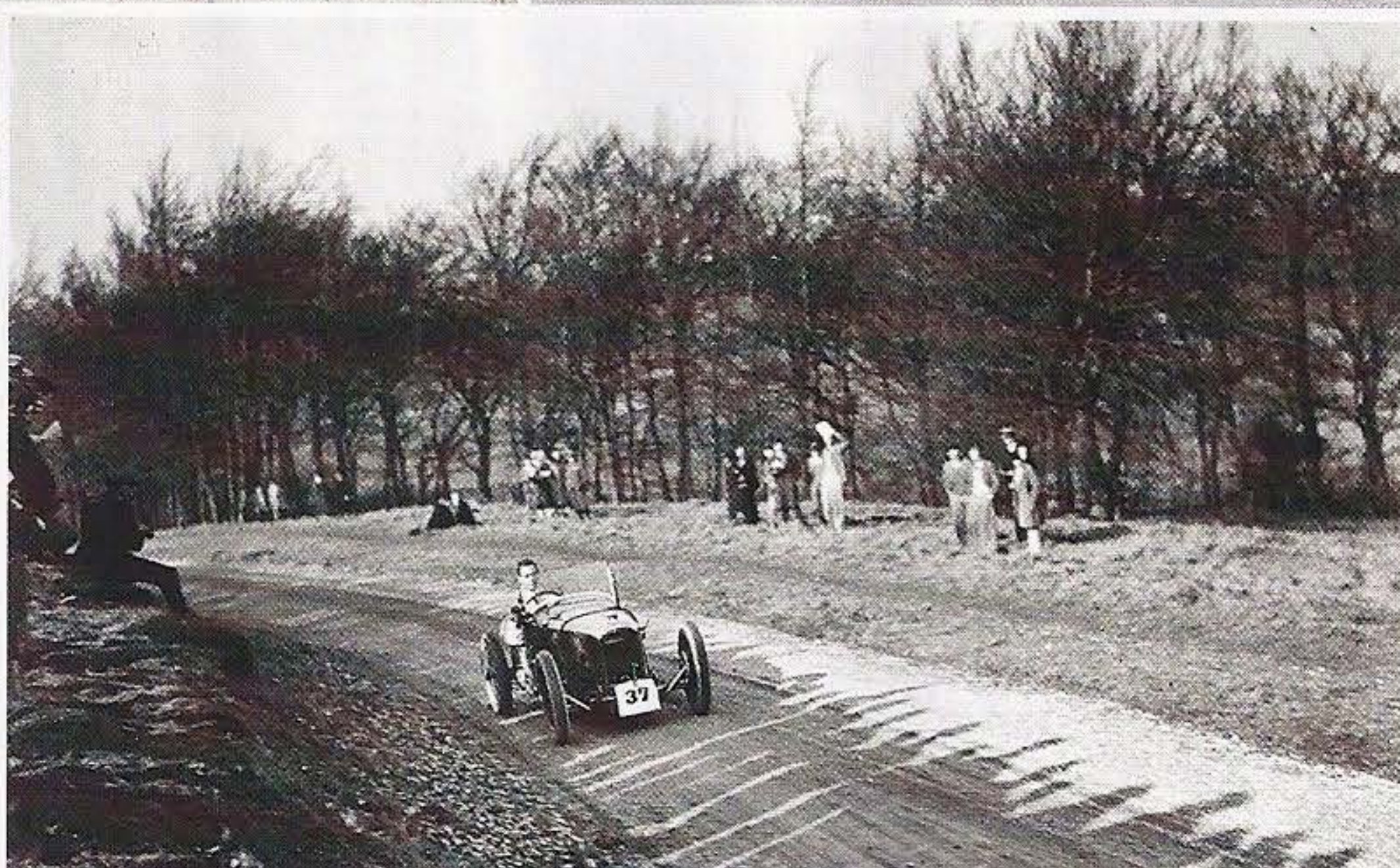
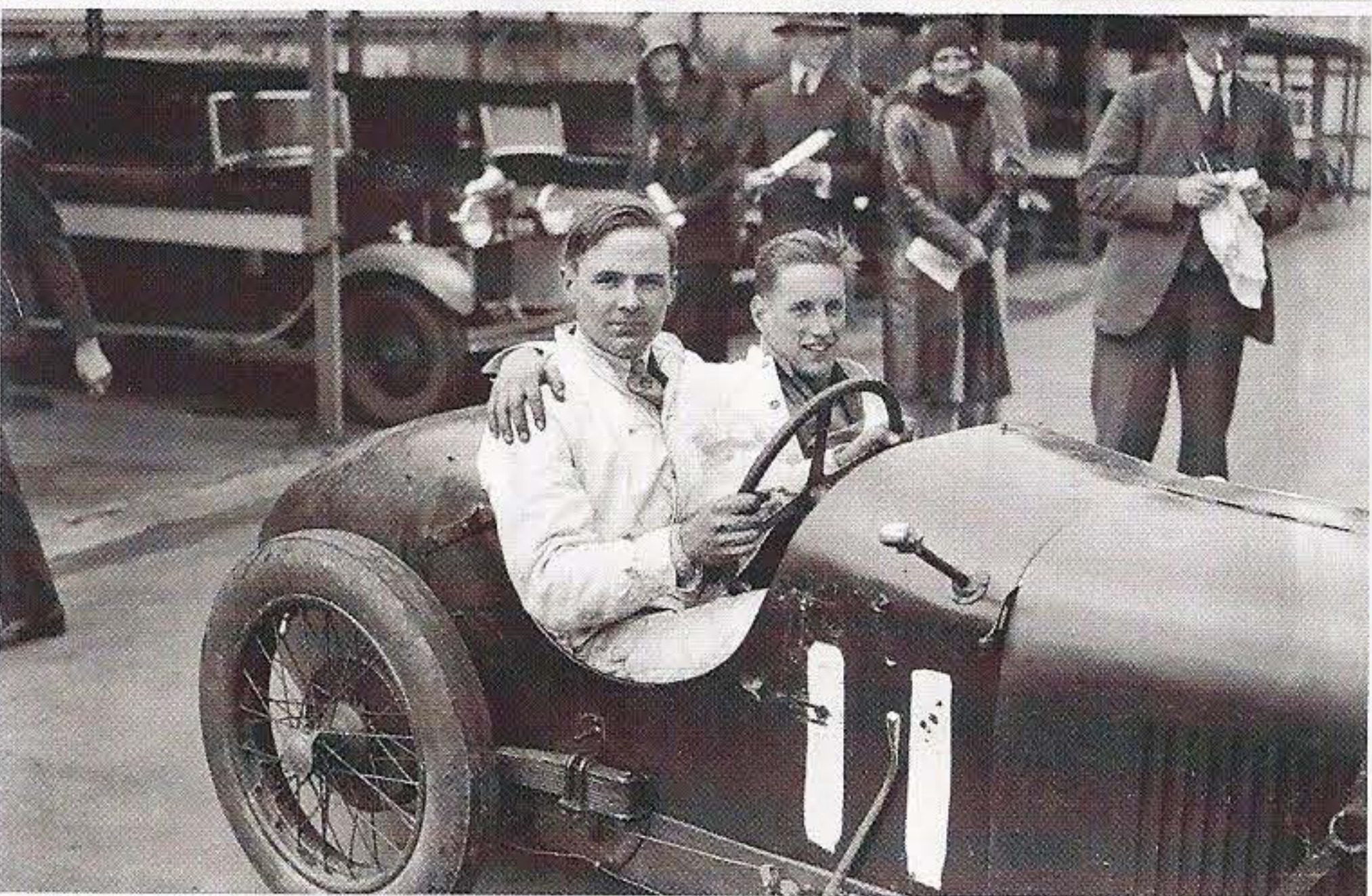
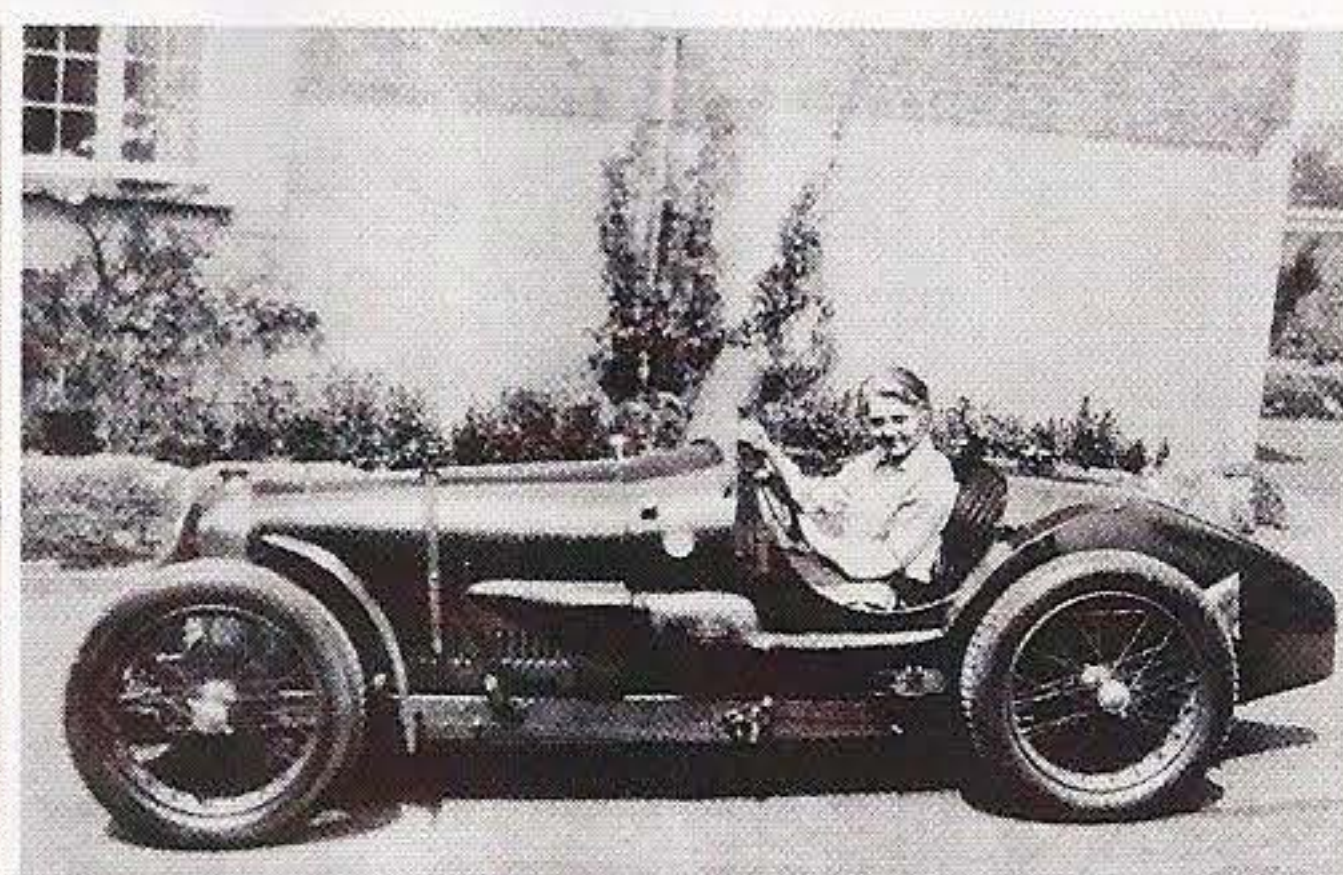
The C0 and C6 PART TWO

Last month **Simon Moore** looked at the history of the lovely six-cylinder Amilcars. This month's article covers the stories of two survivors, one early and one late, that have recently been restored. Colour photography by **Ashley Border**





						Interest on Cash	06	15085	
Sept 14	Trait	67.8	40301.60	38	6 Sept.	Paid Cash	21.8	45534.70	
	Report	44.8	5000 --			Interest on Cash	06	36690	
						Charges	56	1500 --	
Dec. 1	To Credit. Cal.	21.8	22474.00	22.7	Oct	Caliber	22.5	21.8	22941
Nov. 30	-do -	21	45534.70	Sept.	October	11014	28	22500	
	-do - foods	21	256.00			11015	28	22500	



Top The photograph used by Vernon Balls in his advertisement (*Michael Gluckman Collection*) **Middle left** An extract from Balls's sales ledger, showing 11014 (*Desmond Peacock Collection*) **Middle right** Miss Falkner poses in the car (*Michael Gluckman Collection*) **Above left** Brian Twist on 24th May, 1930, at Brooklands. Note the unique sidelamp mounting and the anchor for the top above the spring hanger (LAT) **Above right** With full width windscreen, 11014 taking part in the Inter-Varsity Speed Trials (LAT)

The history of chassis number 11014

Vernon Balls tried to promote the C6 as a road-going sports car initially, although there was seriously little room for a passenger. His advertisements at the time showed a car with seemingly unique pedestal mounting for the sidelamps, quite different from those used on his TT entries. Chassis 11014, one of the first two imported, had that feature so it is not impossible it was the car featured in the advertisement. The photograph above was taken outside Cresswell Brothers Sponge Importers in Red Lion Square, Holborn, just down the road from Balls's office.

Of all the cars that Vernon Balls imported, this one seems to have had the least frontline competition before the war. It was registered YU 12 in 1927 and purchased by a consortium of Cambridge undergraduates – Arthur Llewellyn,

Brian Twist, Bob Porter and Maurice Falkner. First time out was at the Inter-Varsity hill climb at Ewelme Down on 3rd March, 1928, where Llewellyn won the 1100cc class and set fastest time of the day. A couple more outings and the car then disappeared until Brian Twist competed in it at Brooklands on several occasions in 1930. It was painted red at that time, according to Bill Boddy's *History*. Twist won an Outer Circuit handicap in May and then, sharing with Bob Porter, finished fifth overall (winning the class) in the BRDC 500 Mile Outer Circuit race at an average of 88.16mph in a time of six hours 20 minutes. He was second in a race at the opening meeting in 1931 and the car was then apparently sold back to Vernon Balls.

According to the current keeper, the next owner was Maurice Falkner who ran at three

Brooklands meetings in March, May and June, 1932, but was unplaced in every race. He painted the car blue and fitted some rudimentary road equipment but then sold it back to Balls in 1933 'in poor condition'; a photograph survives of him tuning the car at Brooklands, fitted with wings and a large windscreen.

Vernon Balls sold it in a dismantled state to Edvard Paul Zere of ZN Motors in the Harrow Road, West London. Zere had apparently tuned Widengren's record breaker a year earlier; he was a Russian émigré, christened Elie Pavlovich Zerekidze. The car evidently had had a rod through the side of the crankcase, as described in *Motor Sport* for March, 1936 (pp181-182). Zere cut triangular sections from the side rails and drilled holes in the cross members to lighten it; they are still evident today. He also fitted

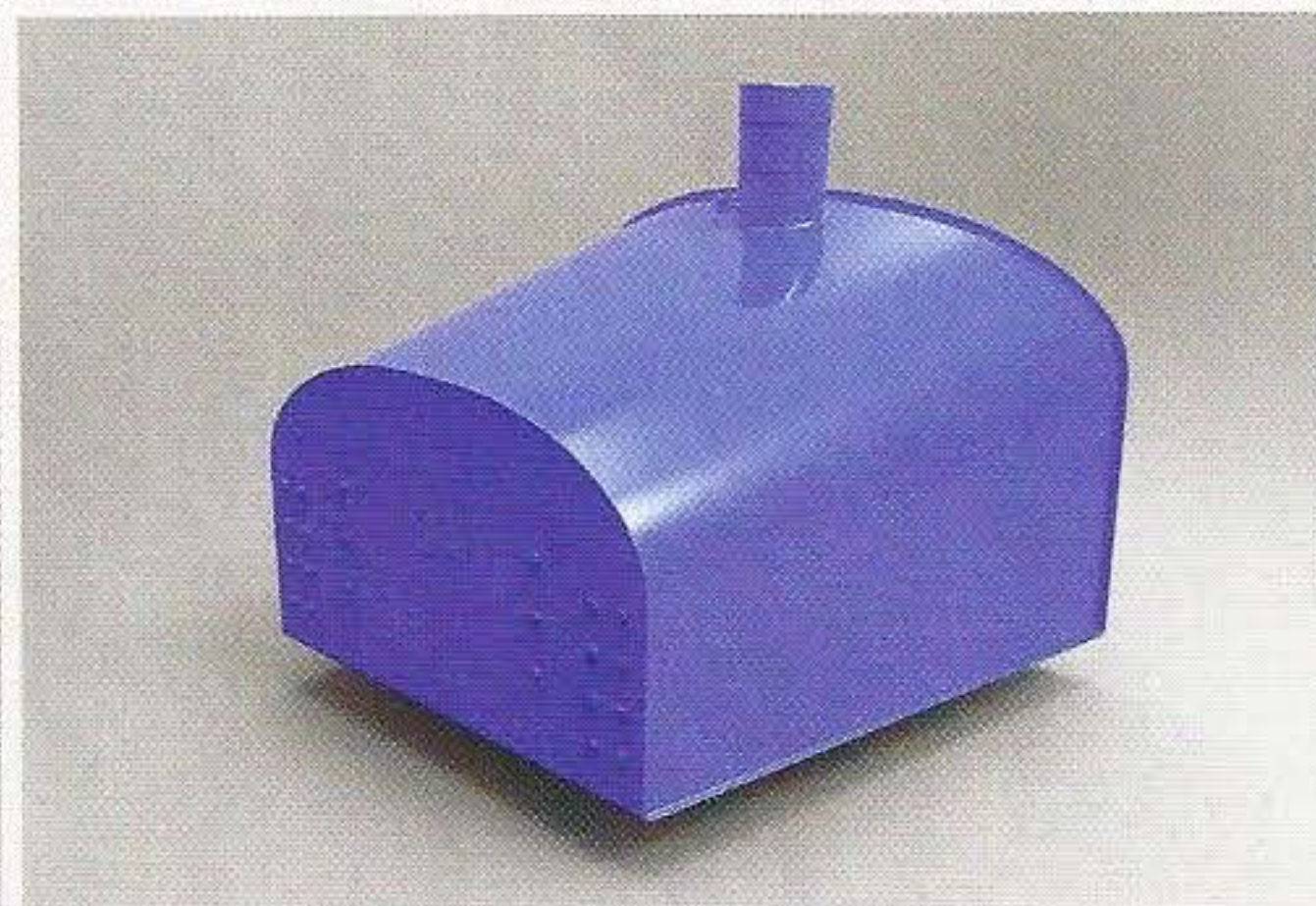
FOR SALE—continued

ONE F.I.A.T. 1,100-C.C. MODEL 508C, pillarless saloon, body in first-class condition; complete with all trimming; £60. One Humber "Super Snipe" engine, complete, £30. One Riley Nine engine, gearbox and clutch, completely overhauled, £30. Apply, H. A. Pierpoint, 48, Catherine Place, Westminster, S.W.1.

TWO SIX-CYLINDER RACING AMILCARS for sale. One brand new, less body, engine specially prepared for very high speed. Other dismantled, in perfect condition. Would act as spares for new one. Also many new spare parts for both cars. Z. N. Motors Ltd., 904, Harrow Road, London, N.W.10. Tel.: Ladbroke 2944.

"CREAM-CRACKER" M.G., JB 7525, PB-type. Fitted Martlet pistons, 4-branch exhaust system, and new pair S.U. carbs. (Marshall "blower" available if required). Choice of six wheels and tyre sizes. Full details and photograph supplied. £295 or reasonable offer. Hase, 14, Knightstone Road, Weston-super-Mare.

MOTOR SPORT MARCH 1949 p. 104



Top left March, 1949, *Motor Sport* advertisement for the two cars by Zere **Top right** 28th June, 1958, at Silverstone: the two TNC cars together, with 11014 on the left (*Michael Gluckman Collection*) **Above left** The restored chassis, showing the unique lightening performed by Zere **Middle right** The standard fuel tank, as fitted to this car **Above right** The flywheel fitted by Balls with an additional ring of holes to take his special clutch plate, turned by his addition of a Scintilla electric starter motor

longer rear springs. Despite expectations mentioned in the *Motor Sport* article, it seems Zere never raced the car.

After the war it was advertised in *Motor Sport* for March, 1949, and purchased from Zere by a group of friends who had formed a team called TNC, along with another C6 chassis but only part of one body (subsequently discarded). The pair was re-registered OXW 1 and OXW 2. A lightweight alloy body was made by John Tozer and a number of minor modifications made prior to OXW 1 appearing in VSCC competition, always with John Tozer as driver. His list of successes is as long as your arm between 1954 and 1962, and his trophy cabinet today contains a huge amount of silverware.

Tozer raced the car with a vertical Wade blower with a skew gear turning at 1.3 times engine speed after the original Amilcar blower started to lose boost. He used 7200rpm when racing the car

in the 1950s. Many readers will recall him racing it with success at VSCC meetings.

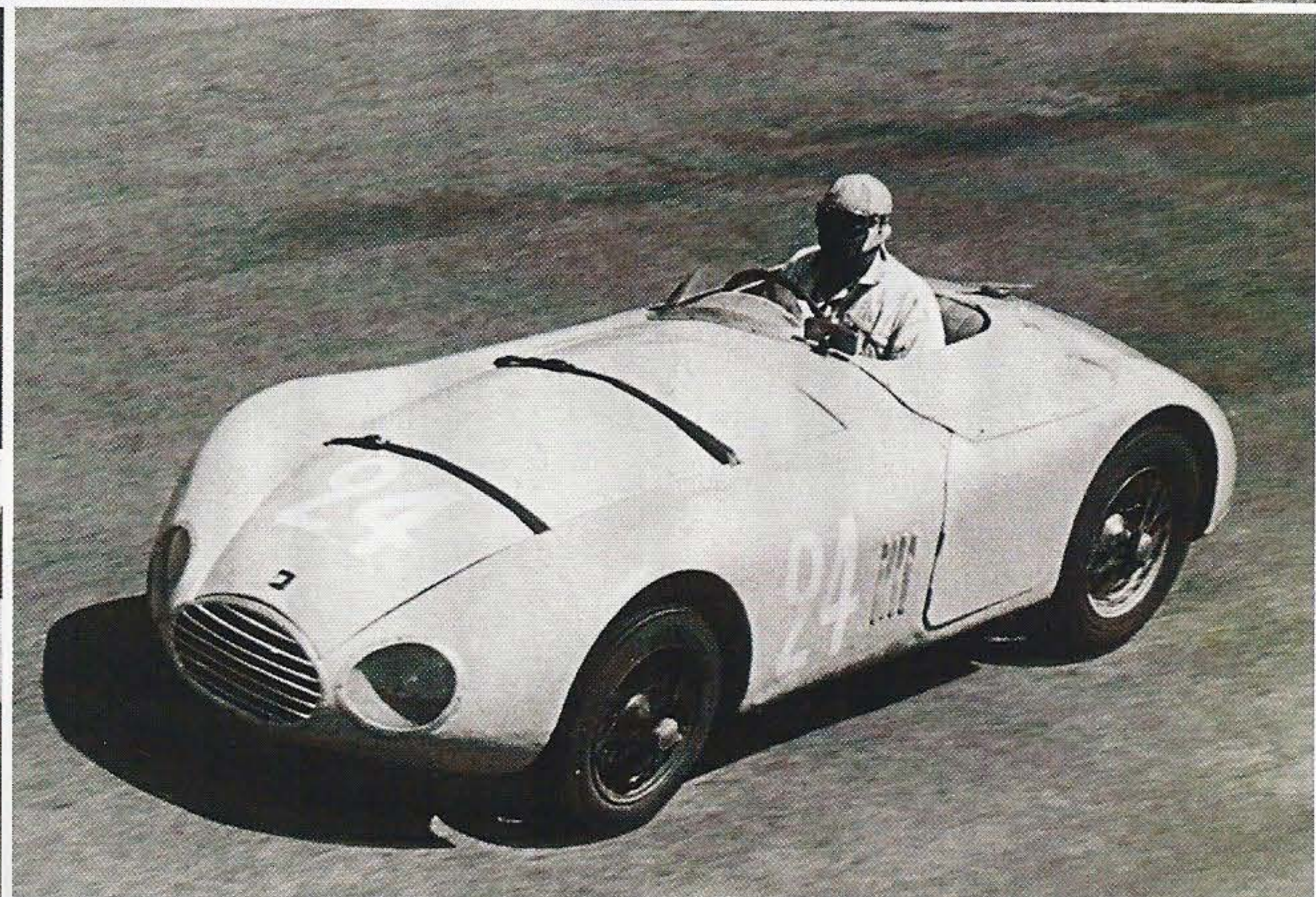
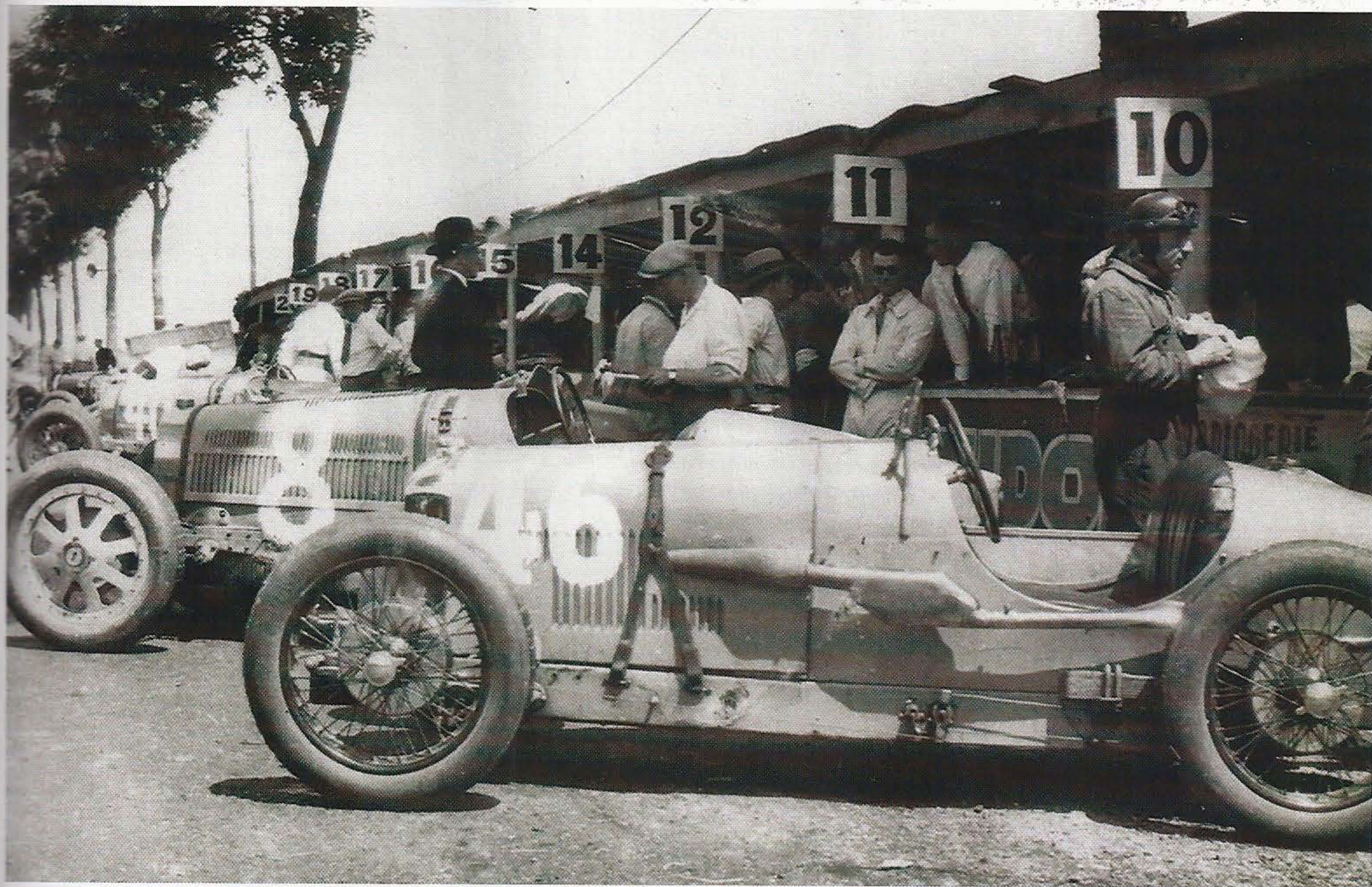
In the early 1960s it was sold to the Lyndhurst brothers, although Tozer kept the registration plate OXW 1 on his modern car (he still has it). Ownership then passed to Dudley Gahagan and Len Battyll in partnership. Richard Battyll, Len's son, was bequeathed Dudley's 55 per cent share and the car was finally sold in November, 2010, to Michael Gluckman. The Lyndhurst brothers retained the cache of spares and subsequently sold them to John Blake. Some of them have ended up with Peter Groh in Switzerland.

The recent restoration of 11014 at Thornley Kelham has concentrated on bringing the car back to original specification, including fitting standard rear springs and correct rear shock absorbers, the correct Amilcar blower (replacing the Wade), fuel tank and instruments. A new body was made before Michael was offered, and

bought, the original body from the car with engine number 90032. The new body is fitted at present. It should be noted that no two bodies were identical.

One weakness of the original engine design was that the head studs screwed into lugs in the block which were not supported by the outside of the bores and were open at the bottom to the water circulating through the engine. This arrangement eventually caused corrosion: the studs would then pull up, resulting in many cars being detuned to run less boost with the aim of increasing reliability. This of course was not an issue with the works C0 engine, which had a one-piece fixed block and head. The late Bob Graves decided to redesign the lugs so they were sealed from the water system and better supported. Several cars now have these blocks, cast by Cosworth, including this car.

The engine is numbered 90017.



Top A typical scene of racing at a minor event somewhere in France, with what is believed to be 11052 in the foreground **Middle left** Two C6s racing in the immediate post-war period, with 'Jeff' in the car nearest the camera **Above left** Chassis number 11052 and 'Jeff' doing shake-down trials at Monthéry prior to fitting the new body (all Michael Gluckman Collection) **Above right** The all-enveloping body, seen here racing at Monthéry, belies the age of the Amilcar underneath (Dominique Pascal Collection)

The history of chassis number 11052

Before going into this, it is worth recording some history of 11051, owned today by Hans Matti. The car bears engine number 90044, and also 11054. Hans tells me 11051 was registered on 21st February, 1931, by Société Nîmes Autos in the Rue de la République in Nîmes. It ran in the Course de Côte des Alpilles at Saint Rémy de Provence, south of Avignon, in both 1931 and 1932, driven by Gaston Revéillet and with the registration plate 1914 FN 1 (see photograph in

Part One); Revéillet seems to have owned the garage in Nîmes. On 9th May, 1935, a second registration (2403 YV 3) was recorded in the name of Léon Grison at Garage du Palais, Place St Roc in Toulon. Then on 28th December, 1938, the car was re-registered in Paris with number 7864 RM 1, which is still visible today.

When Revéillet won the class in 1932 his time was 2min 37.6sec, which compares reasonably well with the other class-winning times which were as follows:

- De Caroli won the two/three-litre class in a new absolute record time of 2min 25.6sec (beating Zehender's Monza Alfa, which did 2min 27.8sec). De Caroli was driving a Bugatti Type 35B, chassis number 4817, ex-Chiron
- Trintignant won the up to two-litre class in 2min 27.8sec in Bugatti Type 35C, chassis number 4941
- Toselli won the 1500cc class in 2min 30.2sec in Bugatti Type 37A, chassis number 37376.

The last C6 chassis number known today is

11054. That car was raced by an Austrian Count, Engelbert Arco von Zinneberg, during the 1930s including at Klausen in both 1930 and 1932 (see photograph in Part One). Apparently he hid the car from the Germans in the late 1930s by walling it up in the basement of a sugar mill he owned. It was only retrieved in 1975, requiring the car to be turned on its side to get it up the stairs and through a door. Interestingly, 11052 and 11054 were both fitted with Dubonnet independent front suspension, which 11054 retained for many years in Maurice Louche's ownership. It was only removed in a recent restoration.

These later cars may have been assembled out of the last remaining parts available.

Chassis 11052 has the 3.5mm-thick frame of the C0 rather than the 4mm of the C6; the chassis plate in fact says C0. The car came with a three-lobe blower which seems to be the only one extant – drawings exist for this blower but it is uncertain if one was ever fitted to a works racing car. Other features that make this car of significant interest include an original extra large fuel tank that required modification to the rear of the chassis, different rear shock absorbers and a welded-up oil filler hole in the scuttle indicating that the car was fitted with an oil tank in the passenger compartment at one time rather than out front as on all the other C6s.

By May, 1929, this car belonged to French driver Louis Devaud. Whether it was built by

Amilcar or by C-A Martin out of spares is uncertain. He first raced it at the GP de Bourgogne in Dijon on 9th May but retired. He appeared in various 1100cc events over the following six years without any outstanding results.

By early 1936 the car was in the hands of Georges Grignard, who actually had two Amilears of this type at this time so it is not completely clear which he used when competing. One was a single-seater, so photographs can confirm wherever they exist. He had some successes with both, including finishing second (or maybe third, depending on the source) in the 1936 Bol d'Or and ninth in the 1938 GP on the sands at La Baule. He still had at least one car and ran at various events in the



immediate post-war period, including the *Coupe de la Libération* in September, 1945, in the Bois de Boulogne (failed to finish) and a race at St Etienne in 1946. After that he moved on to Lago-Talbots, but that is another story.

This car passed to René Ducreux, who also accumulated a large number of spares and was an acknowledged Amilcar expert based in Courbevoie. He raced under the pseudonym 'Jeff' at St Etienne and Nantes in 1946 and then at Montlhéry in 1947 without much success. He then fitted the car with a modern-looking full-width body and drove it in both the 1948 and 1949 running of the Bol d'Or at Montlhéry, failing to finish both times. Unhelpfully from the historian's point of view, a similar 'Amilcar-Jeff'

finished seventh in 1948 (Gauneau) and eighth in 1949 (Vinot).

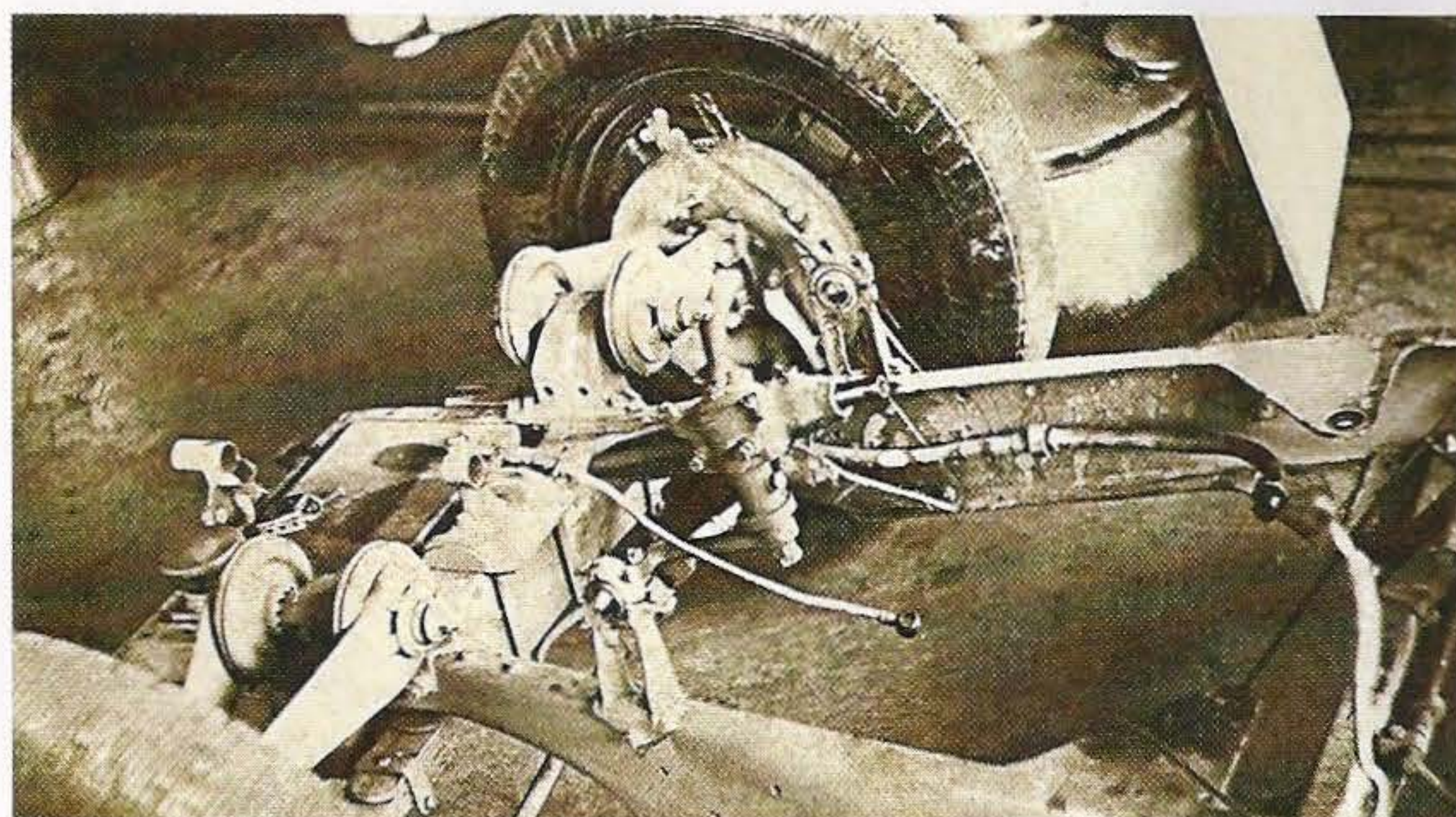
It is not clear when the Dubonnet front suspension was fitted, but possibly when this new body was made. Maybe it was also around this time that the oil tank was moved, although that may have been done earlier since the original body shows clear signs of having had the oil tank in the passenger compartment.

I spoke at length to later owner Jacques Iuri at *Rétromobile* in 2013. He told me he bought the car in about 1975 from Alexis Dreye, who had in turn bought it from 'Jeff'. Dreye removed the full-width sports car body and hung it on ropes above the car in his museum near Cambrai. That body stayed with Dreye after

Jacques bought the car.

Jacques then set about trying to find 'Jeff' and succeeded, working from a copy of the original invoice to Dreye when he had bought the car. 'Jeff' by then was living in a small house in the Rue Hoche in Courbevoie, outside Paris. 'Jeff' took him to his workshop, which had been closed up for maybe 20 years, and there was a treasure trove of Amilcar C6 parts. In particular there were the original front axle, oil tank and body from 11052, as well as many smaller pieces that enabled Jacques to restore the car back to original. Jacques stressed to me that everything removed from 11052 by 'Jeff' was returned to the car. In fact he invited 'Jeff' to stay with





Top left The Dubonnet independent front suspension as fitted to the car when it was purchased by Jacques Iuri (*Jacques Iuri*) **Top right** The unique three-lobe blower **Middle left** The car's chassis plate – note that it says C0, not C6 **Middle right** The modified rear to the frame of 11052, to accommodate the larger fuel tank **Above left** The beautiful but functional dashboard of the C6 **Above right** The larger fuel tank on 11052, to be compared to the standard tank illustrated on page 35

him at his house near Avignon to help with the restoration, which he did on a number of occasions, totalling maybe six weeks. The car's history was confirmed by 'Jeff' in a letter to Jacques dated 24th July, 1978.

'Jeff' had had two cars and there was another chassis frame that had been sold to Alexis Dreye. That passed to Marcel Lamoureux, who still has it, and Jacques made sure enough parts from the 'Jeff' collection went with that frame so that the car was complete except for a body. The rest of the horde of spares went to Gilles Fournier and the Amilcar Club.

Jacques sold the car in around 1980 to a Mr Poisson. The 'Jeff' body meanwhile was sold when all the remaining cars at Dreye's museum went to Maag, but its current whereabouts are unknown. As an aside, Jacques now owns one of

the MC0s which has been restored for him by Auto Restorations in New Zealand and looked wonderful when I visited him in 2013.

The car then passed through a Mr Howald before it was acquired by Michael Gluckman in July, 2009. It seemed to run well, but after a while it became clear a complete rebuild was required and this was also entrusted to Thornley Kelham in Gloucestershire.

Both 11052 and 11054 were white originally, and Michael has returned the car to that colour. It ran at the Vintage Revival Montlhéry event in April, 2013, and your Editor had a ride. There were then some engine issues which required another rebuild, but both cars are now running as shown in the photographs here. Sadly, the author is much too big to fit into a C6 Amilcar...

The engine number is 90041.

Conclusion

The Amilcar C0 and C6 cars were extremely quick for 1100cc at the time and scored many race wins. They continued to be raced right up to 1939 and beyond. The engines are little jewels. Within the small production run there were differences. All the bodies were hand-made, so they differ in detail.

With special thanks to Donatella Biffignandi, Adriano Cimarosti, Lionel Decrey, Hans Etzrodt, Sébastien Faurès, Gilles Fournier, Michael Gluckman, Jacques Iuri, Pierre-Yves Laugier, Hans Matti, Desmond Peacock and Alessandro Silva for their help in preparing this article. Recommended further reading is Gilles Fournier's book Amilcar and Sébastien Faurès's Fiat en Grand Prix.