

Of the surviving Vauxhall 30-98s, only a very small proportion retain their original coachwork and fewer still can boast such a well-documented and photographed history as Chassis No. OE 180 offered for sale here.

Completed by Vauxhall motors in February 1925 this wonderful example of "The Finest of Sporting Cars" was sold new to a Ms. Amy Walker, and registered in London, XX 7454. Fitted with desirable and practical Velox sports-touring coachwork with the prettier lower radiator of the earlier OE-Types, it also featured twin-mounted spare wheels, ideal for the long-distance touring for which it was to be used.

Offered for sale with 'OE 180' are two superb photograph albums recording an extensive European tour carried out by two ladies and their chauffeur in 1931. The photograph albums were discovered by the foremost historian of early Vauxhalls, Nic Portway, and, although it is highly probable that one of the ladies is Ms. Amy Walker, this is not absolutely certain as they are simply named "Lady Links" and "Lady Rechts" in the albums. These albums show the Vauxhall in many familiar European locations including The Hotel Stephanie in Baden Baden (now Brenner Park Hotel) and on the Arlberg pass in Austria near the popular ski resorts of Lech and St. Anton. There are also some fantastic photographs of the car being loaded onto the ship at Calais, fully laden with all the accoutrements required for long distance European touring. Not only do these albums provide a superb record of the car's early travels, but also a fascinating insight into European high society life and travel of the time.

It is not known exactly when Ms. Walker sold 'OE 180,' but according to Portway's Centenary Index, the next recorded owner was a Mr. L Titywater in 1945. As with many vintage sports cars, 'OE180' changed hands a number of times during the 1950s sporadically appearing in various adverts in *Motorsport Magazine*. In 1962 'OE 180,' now in well-worn condition, was auctioned by Southern Counties Auctions (Now part of BCA) Douglass Sharp, the proprietor of USG Garages, Portsmouth, one of the UKs largest independent Vauxhall dealers, attempted to purchase 'OE 180' having always wanted a decent 30-98. He was outbid, however, by Vauxhall Motors who purchased 'OE 180' and restored the car in a rather "1960s" colour scheme with 19 inch wheels and bumpers. The car was a gift for Charles A. Chayne, then the retiring engineering director of General Motors. Charles A. Chayne is perhaps little known in the UK but he had a huge impact on Buick and General Motors' fortunes, was an avid car collector, a supporter and advisor to the early Pebble Beach Concours D'Elegance events and once owned a Bugatti Royale which he ultimately gifted to the Henry Ford Museum.

'OE 180' thus resided in America from May 1963, spending time in a museum in Ohio, and then with Philip Bray who brought the car to England for the centenary celebrations of Vauxhall Motors in 2003. Having suffered a main bearing failure Bray returned 'OE 180' to the USA. During his time in the UK, Bray had made contact with David Kirke, an employee of Vauxhall Motors, a

marque historian and keen volunteer at the heritage division. David Kirke was also a good friend of Douglas Sharp's having got to know him through 30-98 circles. Douglas had owned one of the very special and rare Wensum 30-98s (chassis no. OE 259 – originally of the W.H. Smith family) yet always coveted 'OE 180' having missed out on purchasing the car at auction 1962. Through David Kirke, Douglas Sharp, at the ripe young age of around 80 years old, managed to purchase 'OE 180' and repatriated the car to the UK, r-registering it with its original London registration number, XX 7454.

The Vauxhall was taken to Arthur Archers of Dunmow, Essex for a mechanical recommissioning that included a bottom end re-build with new white metal. The 19 inch wheels were replaced with 21" wheelbase wheels and various other remedial work carried out. Although Douglas Sharp always intended to repaint 'OE 180' or at the very least, its chassis, it was also pointed out by his friends and family that, due to advancing years, the more time he spent on the road with the car while he could the better. To this end, the re-paint was never commissioned, but Douglas continued to use the car until he was 90 years old, roaring up the Brooklands test during the 30-98 centenary celebrations in 2013 and attending Shelsley Walsh, during those same celebrations. Having suffered a stroke Douglas was eventually forced to stop driving 'OE 180' but retained ownership of the car until he passed away at the age of 92 years old last year. Your author had the pleasure of meeting Douglas, a fascinating character and full of stories and jokes, he was just the right sort of owner for a car with so many stories to tell itself.

Offered for sale by his family 'OE 180' retains its original engine, gearbox, and original coachwork. It is offered for sale complete with the photograph albums provided by Nic Portway, various photographs during the restoration by Vauxhall Motors and Charles Chayne's ownership in America, together with a large quantity of correspondence relating the car. An historic, well-documented and well-photographed car, 'OE 180' is sure to provide the new owner with many more opportunities for international touring.

FOOT NOTE to the VISIT of XX 7454 to

THE STEPHANIE HOTEL- BADEN-BADEN -- Germany -- 1931.

The current owner of XX 7454 , a very old and dear friend , asked me some time ago as I often travel in Germany , if I was ever near Baden-Baden to visit the town and locate the Hotel Stephanie which I did last Good Friday , 14th April 2017 .

The hotel is now called Brenners Park-Hotel and Spa, a high standard luxury hotel with the Spa part now situated in the old historic Villa Stephanie located within the hotel's main buildings in a beautiful natural private park and very close to the magnificent and famous Casino and Spa of Baden-Baden.

I found the main entrance to the hotel where you can see XX 7454 parked in 1931 as visited by "Lady Links" and "Lady Rechts"—German for left and right—as that was how they were known as one sat on the right and the other on the left behind the driver on the tour—(see photos in the album page 3) and I parked my car there that day .Having had many a happy outing in XX,(even my son was privileged to be chauffeured at his wedding in XX) I felt its spirit was with me that day in Baden-Baden !!

The only sad note is that I did not get around to carrying out this pilgrimage until this year and then it was too late to report back to the owner of XX 7545 who had sadly had passed away the month before .

Alfred Fleming – Hayling Island—October 2017 .

Alfred Fleming



HOTEL STEPHANIE 1931