

25 21 Février 1927  
2 Magasin gd 43158 8 xp 12.4.27

**TYPE:** 43  
**CHASSIS NO:** 43158  
**ENGINE NO:** 8  
**PRODUCED (NO):** Feb 1927 (2)  
**ORDER DATE:** 3.2.1927  
**DELIVERY DATE:** 12.4.1927  
**PRICE:** Frs 100.000.- *pr except*  
**INVOICED TO:** Magasin de Vente, Paris  
**CLIENT:**  
**REG NO:** 1 Q 75 (F)  
**COACHWORK:** Grand Sport  
 Grand Sport.  
**LAST OWNER:** Michel Dovaz, then stolen  
**ACQUISITION:** 1975  
**FORMER OWNERS:** Alain Balleyguier

**HISTORY:** 43158 was one of the early types 43 in the second month after production had started, produced in February 1927<sup>1</sup> with engine # 8- when the factory was still at full production capacity before the impending recession- in a batch of 65 cars (5 types 37, 20 types 38, 35 types 40 and 5 types 43), ordered by the Magasin de Vente Bugatti on the Avenue Montaigne in Paris on 3/2/1927, and delivered as a factory made Grand Sport on 12.4.1927<sup>2</sup> for a *Prix Exceptionnel* of Frs 100.000.-<sup>3</sup>. It had been specifically mentioned that it was *fin Avril* in the EB orderbooks.

It was likely delivered by lorry or by train as no temporary license plate was issued.<sup>4</sup> On February 3 the Magasin had ordered 9 cars: 2 types 35 (then still called 'GP') 2 types 37, 2 types 39 and 3 types 43.

The first owner is not known and so is the history until the sixties

Next known is that a car registered with this number was owned by Alain Balleyguier in the sixties, when it was registered with the Parisian plate 1 Q 75 (F). He however decided to sell it as he did not want his son to drive such a fast and in his eyes dangerous car. He must have had connections with the Suchard chocolate factory as he had it parked at one of their premises in Montreuil. He thus sold the car to Michel Dovaz who picked it up there<sup>5</sup>. At that moment it had an different, but attractive body with a low profiled door on the drivers side- for which the location of the spare wheel had to be removed- alloy wheels and a hole for the compressor relief valve. Dovaz wrote that the car was in excellent condition but it needed some minor repairs. At the advise of his 'friend' Robert Cornière he took it to a small garage in the outskirts of Paris- *Banlieue Est*. However there it suddenly disappeared and was presumed stolen. Dovaz filed a report of the theft with the police on February 17, 1975<sup>6</sup>. This report and the original Carte Grise is still in his possession.



43158 with plate 1 Q 75 is 43158 and as such recognized by Michel Dovaz at Vernelle near the home of Robert Cornière,, which is likely taken after the theft. (Photo Jack Du Gan, see ref 7)

There exists a photo, which was published in Jack du Gan's oeuvre about the type 43<sup>7</sup> depicted as unidentified but placed on the page of 43158. The car was pictured on a location, which later would be recognized by Michel Dovaz as near the house of Cornière although there are few specific details on the background and no houses. There are only trees and bushes. However as Dovaz has never taken the car there he suggested this picture most likely had been taken after the theft.

According to Dovaz it was Cornière who had advised Dovaz to take it to the garage in Paris and according to an article in the *Rétrovisseur* quoting Giordano it also was Cornière who later sold a car called '43186' car to René Giordano with mention of previous ownership of Dovaz.

The car must have been broken up in parts, and the majority, or at least a number of parts- including the frame- have reportedly ended up in a car which was now called '43251' by the present owner and which is at present in Cannes.

Below: information from the EB orderbook 1927

43158 3/2 St<sup>e</sup> Gertrude Bugatti fin Avril Paris pr. except. 100.000.- 4



**TYPE:** 43  
**CHASSIS NO:** '43186'  
**ENGINE NO:** '97' (assembly number?)  
**PRODUCED (NO):**  
**ORDER DATE:**  
**DELIVERY DATE:**  
**PRICE:**  
**INVOICED TO:**  
**CLIENT:**  
**REG NO:** unregistered  
**COACHWORK:** Grand Sport by  
 Crostwaithe & Gardiner  
 undisclosed  
**OWNER:**  
**ACQUISITION:** 2008  
**FORMER OWNERS:** Robert Cornière, René  
 Giordano, Roger Hanauer.

**HISTORY:** The original 43186 was produced in May 1927 with engine # 22 in a batch of 69 cars (2 types 35, 5 types 37, 17 types 38, 3 types 39, 35 types 40 and 7 types 43) and all 43's except one were delivered to the Magasin de Vente on the Avenue Montaigne in Paris. The car had been ordered by the Magasin with a *Usine Grand Sport* body with a standard price of Frs 107.500.- and it was delivered on July 6, 1927 for an unknown first owner.

Nothing further is known about the original car until a car with this chassis number and possibly assembly number # 97 on the engine in query Non Molsheim stampings ended up with René Giordano. He stated that he had bought it in parts from Robert Cornière. The latter was a Parisian who owned at least 17 Bugattis in the seventies many of which were at some stage of dismantling such as a Brescia (1649) a type 38 (38169), and also a car which he called '44100' (a number never issued by the factory)<sup>8</sup>. These cars have disappeared and may have been renumbered. He also owned cars that are still around such as 49469, '57294' (also a car with an intriguing history) and 57330. In his garage were also cars such as 57397, and the two 'James Brown' cars 57645 and 57723, still with their fibreglass body although it is not known whether he owned these.

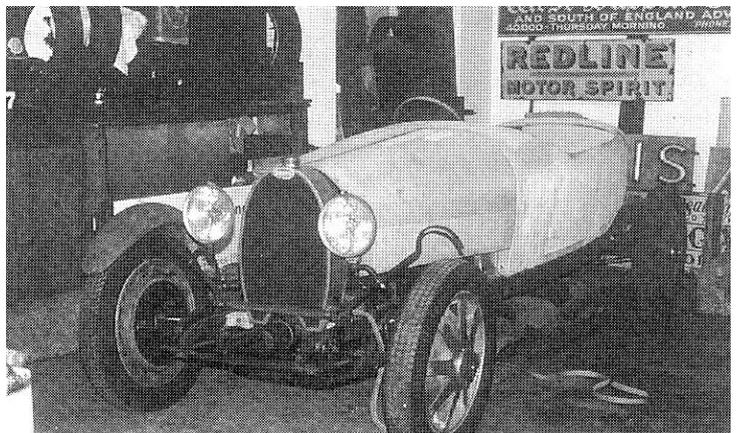
Giordano put the car he called '43186' up for sale at the end of the nineties. The story he reportedly told to the intended buyer Roger Hanauer was that it was stored with the well-known Bugatti trader Gaston Docime of Neuilly during the war and that the owner failed to show up after the war. It was then finally taken to a scrap yard in Paris from where it was bought by Robert Cornière in 1958. Cornière reportedly sold it to René Giordano in 1973, who started building a car with these parts. The upper crankcase and cambox were missing, and so were part of the body but the door and a number of the body panels such as the undertray were still with the car. This has all been reported in UK3, the British Bugatti Register<sup>9</sup>.



*Cornière's garage with 57330, the most original Atalante Toit ouvrant around. On the left rear 57645, on the right 57397. The car in the middle is a 37A and according to Ronald van Ramshorst Cornière did not want Ronald to take close ups of the cars in the rear but '43186' was not there at that moment (Photo Ronald van Ramshorst)*



*Photo taken at René Giordano's place of '43186' when a start had been made to make a new body (photo Bugattibuilder)*



*When with Roger Hanauer in 1999 (Photo UK3 ref 13)*

Giordano stated that he bought four Bugattis in 1976 and a lot of parts (7 metric tons) from Cornière<sup>10</sup>. He stated that he bought the car in parts and it was depicted as '43186'. However as Cornière is not alive anymore this cannot be verified. At some point in time a multitude of numbers have been stamped on the frame and crankcase whilst others have been ground off.

The upper crankcase and cambox were used for a type 35 and some other parts may have been used for another type 43 that Giordano also owned and which he called '43251', also bought from Cornière.

Giordano had embarked on a project to give it a new aluminium body on an ash-wood frame but this project stalled and in 1999 he sold '43186' to an English Bugattist Roger Hanauer who must have been totally unaware of its provenance as he went to great length to discover the true identity of the car.

He commissioned David Sewell to inspect the car and to write a report, which he did on March 15, 1999. David who had flown to France to inspect the car- peculiarly- in a lock-up garage in Nice and not at the garage of Giordano in Cannes- concluded that it was without question an original frame and parts but also without question not '43186'<sup>11</sup>. However it now turns out that the parts Giordano had stacked in the garage-box were not the parts now on the car: the front axle in the box was a correct 43/44 numbered 167, but it now had a painted # 172 (44 axle). The engine over stamped 43186 of which the engine number had been ground off had assembly number 57S; now the number 97 has been found although it was a correct 43 (or 38A) sump. It is unknown whether he changed the frame but this is very feasible and verifiable as the frame David saw had the number '886' on it (which is not possible, but it could have been an original 8 (for 43158) with a new number on each side.

Subsequently Roger ordered chemical tests of possible hidden numbers on the engine and on the frame by a company called NDIS (Non-Destructive Inspection Services) on August 1, 2002. They tried to discover the numbers which were ground off but which were only partly visible after chemical tests. The number '97' on the lower crankcase had already been seen by David Sewell. They also discovered the number '0' or '8' next to the present chassis number '43186' which is a non-Molsheim over stamping. There was no number 57S visible.

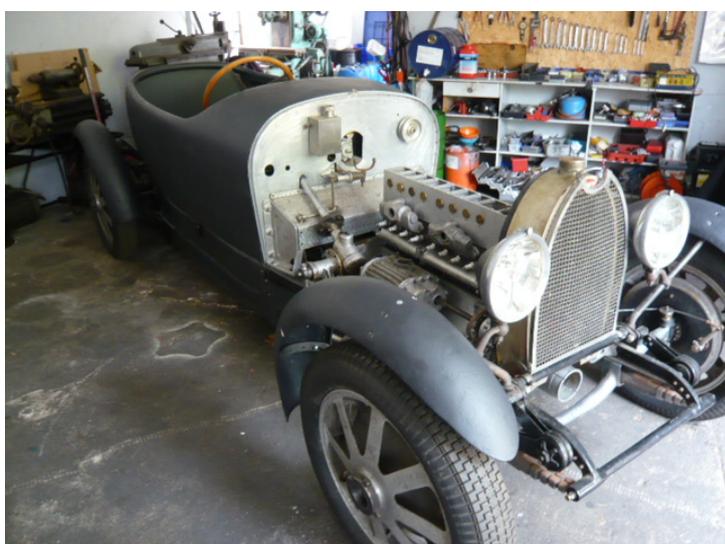
He contacted Bob Light of the BOC (Bugatti Owners Club) on 21 November 1999 requesting to have it included in the British Register. It was included without certain identity in the Third Register (UK3) in 2000.



*With John Barton for restoration (Photo John Barton)*



*As all bodies are hand made, not a single body is the same. The rear of this is one does look remarkably similar to the highly original Bugatti of Jan Cohen, 43183, which Jan bought at De Dobbeleer's for a couple of hundred guilders! Jan's car in the right lower corner. Photo below at ACCLIC. (Photos Yves and Severine Rebet)*



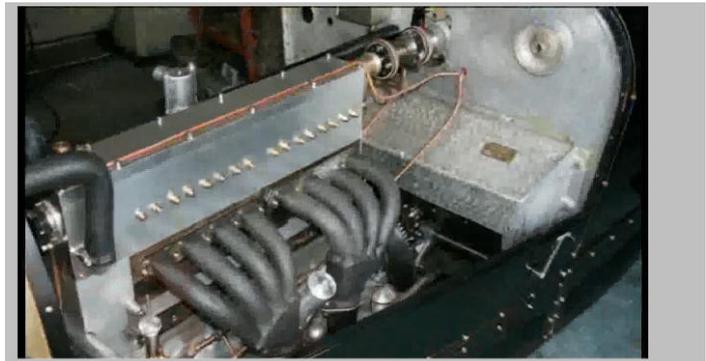
Hanauer continued the restoration by amongst others John Barton who worked on the car. John was amazed about the amount of numbers which were stamped everywhere such as '186' on many, many places (a practice never done by the factory); he was convinced that all parts were genuine but he was not sure about the chassis which he thought was a replica.

He showed it to an expert on the type 43, Robin Townsend, who was convinced it was real. John's problem was the multitude of numbers obviously somebody trying very hard to convince the spectator that it was '186' (Incidentally, the factory never stamped the last three digits of the chassis number on other parts of the frame). This frame was peculiarly stamped '886' which is an imaginary number never issued for the factory. In addition John claimed the he found a number of essential holes missing which he had to drill himself, suggesting it was a new and never used frame. He had a genuine sump and the blower drive, and he could see that the correct numbers had been removed. At that moment the gear change was from an Alfa<sup>12</sup>.

John Barton stated he bought a rear axle from a touring car at the Uno Ranch sale but I was not able to find this item in the auction catalogue (Bonham's sale July 2001). The upper crankcase was a type 35 coming via Andrew Crisford from Richard I'anson. As said the front axle # 172 had probably belonged to a type 44, and it was not polished as presumably the type 43's were.

The restoration was not finished and the car was sold as is.

Hanauer sold the car to the next owner mediated by Yves and Séverine Rebet of ACCLC (Automobiles Classic et Collection de la Clayette). They offered the car for sale in a brochure at the Rétromobile in 2008 when they were approached by an expert Pierre Yves Laugier who let them know it was not '43186', stating it was a 'bidouille'. They replied that they had understood that the independent Bugatti expert David Sewell had confirmed it was a genuine. However David Sewell was also at the Rétromobile and denied this categorically; then David let them know that they were mistaken and that his report was unambiguous. David agreed he would do more research but could not come further: he wrote a letter to Séverine dated February 25, 2008, stating clearly that it was certainly not '43186', but without further evidence speculating about what it really was.



*All pictures from the professionally made internet video, put on the internet by the auction house. It was this video- highly emphasizing the virtues of originality, that triggered the making of this report. (Photos Oldtimer Galerie Toffen)*

The next owner completely restored the car. The body, which was begun by Giordano was reportedly made or completed by the British coachbuilder Crosthwaite & Gardiner. The finished car was shortly thereafter again offered for sale, again via mediation of ACCLC.

The connection to 43158- which had started this whole conundrum- was inappropriately suggested in June 2010: In preparation for the sale the Rebets commissioned an 'advertorial' in the Journal 'Rétroviseur'. This is a common practice of all traders: an article or editorial is written about the car in preparation for an upcoming sale basically with advertisement character. In this article clearly a connection was suggested with the car owned by Dovaz<sup>13</sup>, which is '43158'. It was mentioned he had taken his car to a garage in Paris, had lost interest and after the death of the garage-owner the car was pushed on the street by the widow, after which it came in the hands of Cornière via a junkyard. It was also mentioned that Cornière and or Giordano had broken it down into individual parts in order to make it unrecognisable for Dovaz!

The Rebets who gave this information to the journalist were obviously not aware that Dovaz had filed a report with the police about the theft of his only type 43 and when confronted with this Mme Rebet replied the information in the Rétroviseur was based upon a mix of stories which had been told to them and one story written by an unnamed specialist but as such can not be used as legal proof.

The Rebet family must have been unaware of the fact that the Dovaz car was stolen and may have acted in good faith but at the same token should have known it is not '43186'

However it is now reported that the frame of 43158 together with many parts from the stolen car is still in Cannes on a car now called '43251', and it is not certain which parts are on which car. This still leaves open the question whether the frame of '43186' is period or a replica, a problem which only can be resolved by metallurgical analysis (the composition of various substances prewar was different from post war in Pre War metal was different from post war metal)

The car was brought in at the auction of the Oldtimer Galerie Toffen on 27 November 2010 (lotnr 059) but remained unsold.

**In conclusion** the present car is built with a large number of original Molsheim parts; it has no connection to the stolen Dovaz car as suggested in the Rétroviseur. In my view 'bidouille' (fake) would be too harsh of a verdict, which I would reserve for cars like the 43 Pur Sangs (once the Bugatti plate has been screwed on) and which do not contain a single Molsheim part. Although

the present discussion has generated more heat than light on the subject it painfully highlights the inadequacy of the present nomenclature that does not depict a car with only a type 38 frame and furthermore all new parts (such as '43202') as a replica in contrast to a car with all Molsheim parts but a new frame, such as this car.

Until proven otherwise in my view this car has to be depicted as a replica with many essential original Molsheim parts.

Incidentally: given the uncertainty of the chassisnumber the car would effortlessly qualify for a BC number. Both '43186' and '43251' are built from a collection of original Molsheim parts, but the frame of '43186' still needs further investigation to prove whether or not it is original.

The only essential non-Molsheim parts are the frame and the body. Of course there are a number of other new parts such as the wheels, but if that would qualify for 'stamp of approval' I know many cars now considered original that would drop off. Especially GP's that still drive on their original wheels are few and far between.

As it is now certain that the parts that Giordano had shown in the garage-box in Nice were not the parts that are now on the car, the car would greatly benefit from a renewed inspection; especially to verify that the frame is different or the same as the one seen by David Sewell.

## References:

- <sup>1</sup> Pracht H *CarnetsProductions Usine* 1927
- <sup>2</sup> The annotation is exactly as written in the source material
- <sup>3</sup> Usine *EB Orderbooks and financial administration* 1927
- <sup>4</sup> Bugatti Factory *Issuance of garage license plates*,
- <sup>5</sup> Dovaz M *personal communication* 2010
- <sup>6</sup> Op de Weegh A et al *The fate of then Sleeping beauties* 2010: 76
- <sup>7</sup> Du Gan J *Bugatti Type 43 Register* 2008: 69
- <sup>8</sup> Little G *Bugatti People* 2000 (unpublished)
- <sup>9</sup> Morris M *British Bugatti Register* 2000: 114
- <sup>10</sup> Giordano R *Letter to David Sewell* 1999
- <sup>11</sup> Sewell D *Preliminary Report*, March 15, 1999
- <sup>12</sup> Barton J *Personal Communication*, March 13, 2009
- <sup>13</sup> Decker JP *Dans le Couloirs du Temps* Retroviseur 2010: 92- 99