

# THE FATE OF THE BORDEAUX ORPHANS



**Kees Jansen**

Probably the first body fitted to Bugatti '547' with the children, Paul jr, Monique and Pierre Decker and their mother in front of the Chateau de Beaufort in 1950, but nothing more is known about it.

*Goy Feltes*

**A**t the beginning of 1939, the Bugatti factory was once again in serious financial trouble. As a result of the impending War, the sale of new cars had dropped to less than a third of levels of twelve months previously, fewer than 5 per month, for the first seven months in 1939; down from over 15 cars per month in the previous year and from 70 to 80 cars per month before the recession. The debt at the bank in Strasbourg now amounted to more than 20 Million Francs and if fate had not intervened, bankruptcy would have become unavoidable.

The French government, however, decided to impose a new policy: Bugatti was to be made part of the military machine being ordered to produce plane parts for the French air force. As it was very close to the German border and an easy target for bombardments, the government decided to relocate the entire factory to Bordeaux. The current production of cars had to be stopped and Bugatti made an inventory of the remaining stock of cars and other material. Some cars were finished as rolling chassis, some were unfinished and a number of cars from clients that were at that moment present were also recorded

- LISTE DU MATERIEL AUTOMOBILE -  
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**1° CHASSIS NEUFS:**

Moteur I10 C  
 " I09 C  
 " 546  
 " 539  
 " 547  
 " 548 (moteur à part)  
 " 557 ( " " )

**2° VOITURES USINES:**

Moteur 2 CS 57.454 Coupé Atlantic I244 W.5  
 Moteur 58 C.57.421 - Berline noire  
 Moteur 105 C.57.805 - Cabriolet crème et bleu  
 Moteur 335 57.445 - Berline noire  
 Moteur 513 57.700 - Berline bleue  
 Moteur 231 57.337 - Coach 36, 4 portes  
 Moteur 418 57.618 - Coupé Atlante  
 Moteur 511 57.703 - Cabriolet vert ex-PEIGUES  
 Moteur 530 57.744 - Berline noire  
 49.562 - Cabriolet noir - I311 NV.1  
 49.243 - Conduite intérieure rouge et noire  
 46.I20 - Conduite Intérieure noire (Ière 5 litres)  
 46.I33 - Conduite Intérieure noire avec sép.  
 42I.946 - Citroën II CV. Cond. verte - 3674 - R42

**3° VOITURES CLIENTS:**

Moteur 285 6 57.404 - Cabriolet marron - M.KOCH, STASBOURG  
 Moteur 73C - 57.779 - Cabriolet Gris - M. ADAMS, ZAGREB  
 Moteur 73C - 57.809 - Cabriolet noir - Mme MAC DONALD  
 Moteur 506 - 57.695 - Cabriolet noir - M.STUMPP, BERLIN  
 Moteur 445 - 57.628 - Coach bleu - M. SELLMANN, PARIS  
 Chassis 680 - 341 - Citroën I5 CV. Conduite Intérieure noire M. BEU(

**4° VEHICULES UTILITAIRES:**

46.489 - Chassis camionnette  
 Moteur 491 - Camionnette I500 cc. type 4d  
 I078 - 2102160 2 Camionnette Chevrolet I500 4g.  
 2962819 - Camion Chevrolet 2000 Kg.  
 3 lit. Auto-pompe Drouville  
 I.500 cc. Moto pompe

The Bordeaux List.

*Bernhard Simon*

The list comprised of 4 categories. There were 5 finished cars (2 type 57 'C's, 3 non-supercharged type 57's) and two unfinished cars, also non-supercharged. In addition, there were 14 cars of various types belonging to the factory - either used or bought back in exchange for other cars, 6 cars from clients and at least 7 utility vehicles, mainly camionettes including the Type 44 fire truck. As usual, the cars on the Bordeaux list were all depicted using their engine number, but if a chassis number had already been given, this was mentioned secondly. This present article describes the fate of five cars and engines that were newly made. We are grateful to anyone who has additional information as a result of this article and we are still looking for more information on the other ones.

The rolling chassis were all denoted by their respective engine numbers: They were:

Moteur 110C, 109C, 546, 539, 547 and two unfinished ones described as Moteur à part: 548 and 557.

None of the finished or unfinished rolling chassis were given a chassis number, which was usually only allotted at the very last moment when the chassis left the factory. And none of these would ever be given a chassis number by the factory, even at a later date. All had merely been stamped with the engine number, and the chassis numbers that were later used were 'numbers of convenience'; in one case given by the factory, in other cases given by the client and in some cases it was not clear who gave the number to the authorities for registration for road use.

Usually, Pracht noted in his Carnets the chassis number in pencil and added the engine number, the customer and the delivery date later; this was made definite in ink once the car left the factory. He had noted in pencil the following chassis numbers for these cars:

57780, 57781, 57782 for the non-supercharged cars and there was only one missing chassis number: 57839 for the supercharged car. In addition it was noted that 57774, with engine 543, which is now a Galibier, but not a Molsheim built one, was sold from Bordeaux.

### **Bugatti moteur 547, currently Type 57 '44480'**

As a result of the outbreak of World War II this car, which is now registered as a Type 44 with the chassis number '44480', has a very complicated history



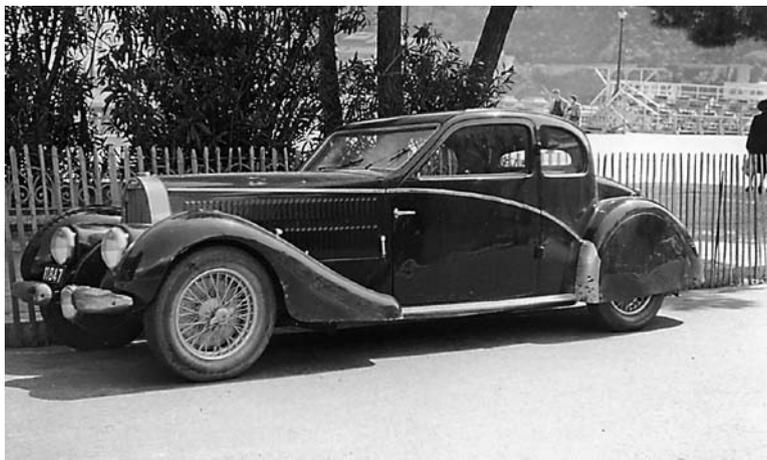
**Gaston Greven (with cigarette) in front of his nightclub 'Royal Bugatti' just before starting the Rallye Monte Carlo des Voitures Anciennes in 1974 with the car then registered as '547', later '57547' but which was in fact 57432 with modified roof.**

*Gaston Greven*

and, therefore, requires a more elaborate explanation. According to the factory records it should have become 57782.

As a result of documents still available at the factory and the Luxembourg Bugatti Register written and researched by the member of the Bugatti Identification Group (BIG), Goy Feltes, the complete history is now known.

Just before the outbreak of the War, Arthur Thill, an architect from Luxemburg, travelled to the Bugatti factory with his friend, J. Last, from The Hague.



**Following the cabriolet body in the heading photograph, in 1953 '547' was fitted with a Ventoux body by Gangloff. This picture was taken by Leo Keoshian during a holiday in Luxembourg**

*Peter Mullin Collection*

Last, a lawyer, not a doctor as often thought, was the owner of a Grand Prix car, a Type 35 with chassis number 4490 which he had bought in 1925 direct from the factory. He also had it serviced at the factory so was a frequent visitor to Molsheim.

During his visit with Last to Molsheim, Arthur Thill bought a non-numbered rolling chassis. The engine was numbered 547, as were the other parts, but the chassis number, which, as noted previously, was normally only given at the very last moment, just before a car left the factory, was, in this case, not provided, probably due to the hectic activity just prior to the Second World War. It was also not noted by Pracht. The car had already been put on the Bordeaux liste for shipment, but it was sold in Molsheim. Although the factory did not give the number 57782, it was already written in pencil (with two other cars) and from the sequence of the other two, it should have become 57782. It was the latest model, with vertical telescopic shock absorbers, factory hydraulic brakes (standard since 1938) and a type III 57 engine and, as such, can be considered the last Type 57 chassis made at Molsheim before the War.

Shortly after Thill had taken the rolling chassis to Luxembourg the War broke out and he decided to hide it in the atelier R. Lecorsais, rue Goethe, in Luxembourg City and later in Limpertsberg outside the city.

The car survived the War and was registered after the War as '547', which was thought to be the chassis number since this number was stamped on the engine. It was registered as such by Arthur Thill on June 5, 1947 and the rolling chassis with temporary doors was registered with the plates 5289.

The industrialist and Bugattiste, Rudi Cloos, subsequently bought the car. Cloos had many Bugattis. One of them was an 'Atalante toit ouvrant' or 'roll top' Atalante, 57432, that he bought in 1947 without papers and then sold in 1951 to Albert de Lay. Cloos had commissioned the production of a closed and sleek Atalante top by the carrossier Jos Metz, at the garage Loll Lambert, Boulevard Grand-Duchesse Charlotte, Luxembourg.

During the process the upper part of the engine and the gearbox of 57432 and that of 547 were also exchanged. After the closed Atalante was completed it was put on the road with the papers for '547' and licence plate 5289, based on Thill's paperwork. The Atalante was subsequently, years later, registered as '57547'. Incidentally, the real 57547 is a Ventoux, which still exists in France.

This meant, however, that the subject car, which in the meantime received a body, firstly it seems a 2-door cabriolet and shortly afterwards a Gangloff Ventoux body, needed other papers.



**Karl Mohr, who bought '547' in 1971, did not like the shape of the wings so he had them modified. This photograph was taken during his ownership, in Düren in 1975.**

*Goy Feltes*

This problem was solved by using the papers belonging to a totally different Bugatti type, a Type 44, with chassis number '44480'. These papers and the car were originally belonged to a dentist, Paul Decker, in Luxembourg who must have sold the papers and plate to Cloos, who subsequently used them to register the 57 as '44480' with the Luxembourg authorities in 1947. Two years later, in

1949, the car was sold to Decker who thus got his old papers back.

The original numbers of the 57 engine were ground off and replaced by the number '+44480+'. The original Bugatti chassis plate of 44480 was attached and at some point in time, probably later in Germany, a second identity plate was attached.

It is not known what happened to the real 44480. It could be that the Germans had impounded it during the War, whereas Decker had kept the papers and the chassis plate. A car reported as 44480, however, with a Type 49 engine, L 367 ex 4915, was recorded as being in the possession of Sign Saccardo in Italy in Bugantics in 1965 (Vol 28, No.1: p 64). Nine years later, in 1974, in the Spring edition of Bugantics it was reported that the owner was Dubbini in Padova (Bugantics 1974; Vol 74, No.1: p 64). The year before, a member of the Bugatti Identification Group, Jack Du Gan, had visited Saccardo, who was the President of the Italian Bugatti Club and who lived near Vicenza, and together they visited the private collection of Giulio Dubbini, but he did not mention this particular car (Pur Sang 1973; Vol.14, No.1 p 38-42).

Rudi Cloos' ownership of both Types 57 (57432 and '547') at the end of the forties is well documented. The Atalante 57432, on paper called '547', was sold to Albert de Lay, whilst Paul Decker sold the Ventoux with the papers of 44480 in 1961 to Gaston Greven. He was the owner of a nightclub Royal Bugatti in Luxembourg, a notorious meeting place for Bugattisti in the sixties and seventies. He later also bought 57432, so both cars were owned of one owner on two separate occasions.

Gaston had a Type 46 radiator hanging in the bar and a walkway behind the club to the garage where he kept the Bugattis, a sanctuary where only true Bugattisti were allowed, after closing time, for another drink. The '547' was sold in 1971 to Karl Mohr in Düren, Germany, who modified the front wings to his taste and who sold it in 1977 to Heinz Wiemeier from München.



**'547' with Leonhard Helmreich at the International Bugatti meeting in 2010, here at Peter Mullin's premises 'Bien Sûr' in Big Sur on the Californian coast.**

*Kees Jansen*

He undid the modifications and the car was sold to Leonhard Helmreich in 1988 who still owns it and who has participated at several meetings with it. In

fact this is the last type 57 made before the War in Molsheim. During the War one car was finished and sold (57221, see below) and after the War in 1949 only one more type 57 was made from spare parts, 57801 with engine 580 which is not on the Bordeaux list, but that one was not fabricated in Molsheim but in Levallois (close to Paris).

### **Bugatti moteur 546, currently '57757': The 'Olga Giardoni' car**

This car has always been, and still is, registered as 546. It was never registered as '57757', a number made up by Paul Girardoni after the body had been installed and then continued to be used by successive owners. It was one of the other unnumbered 'Bordeaux orphans' but the number pencilled in the factory records was 57780 and this is clearly what it would have become had circumstances not dictated otherwise and it was not completed until after the war. The rolling chassis with engine 546 was sent to Bordeaux. After the War this car it was given the cabriolet body by Vanvooren numbered 2940 from another car with chassis number 57757. The car was given the chassis number of the donor car; the original 57757 received another Gangloff body and was renumbered to '57404', which was a blown car, with a supercharger cut-out. The present car, however, was registered with the local Department of Motor Vehicles with its engine number, 546. The original 57404, which has vanished, was also on the Bordeaux liste. Probably at the end of or just after the War the body was taken off of 57757. This car had been exhibited at the Salon De Paris in 1939 not on the Bugatti stand but on the stand of the coach maker Vanvooren, and pictured in the Bois de Boulogne for promotional purposes. This body was later put on '546' (57780).

The car was modified later, with the spare wheel removed and the recess in the wing was filled although the traces can still be seen. In addition the trunk was modified in order to accommodate the spare wheel and the rear wings were changed in shape and shortened, probably to the taste of the new owner. This incidentally was not done to the standards for which either Molsheim or Vanvooren were known. It may be that a German coach maker with the name of Erwin Leun, Dammstraße 14 Gießen, Kleinlinden in Deutschland was involved, as the name written inside the door panel in old German handwriting, which was officially used until 1945. Interestingly, it now also has a provision for a tow bar, a rare item for Bugattis. This, in contrast, was done very professionally.

In 1951 it was sold to the Austrian Paul Girardoni. Later it was inherited to Olga Girardoni, and it was registered as B 13.133 (Burgenland) and then S 33.696 (Salzburg). It was sold to the Swedish collector, Allan Söderström in 1965.

Olga Girardoni was told by her husband- and told the Austrian Bugatti registrar Helge Hauk that the first owner was King Michael of Bulgaria. The last King Michael of Bulgaria, however, lived in the 13th century, which would have made him the first Bugattist ever, in the year 625BE (Before Ettore) which is quite unlikely! There was a King Michael I of Romania who was exiled to Switzerland in 1947 and who was a car lover, (owning Mercedes SSK's and the like) about which his nephew recently wrote a book but it was not mentioned therein and afterwards the exiled King, who is still alive and well in 2014, has confirmed that, in spite of the fact that he thought it was a beautiful car, he had



Promotional pictures taken in the Bois de Boulogne near Paris for the 1939 Salon de Paris, where it was on display at the stand of the coach maker Vanvooren  
*Ronald van Ramshorst*



**One of a series of promotional pictures of 57703, one of the 'Bordeaux Orphans', with a Gangloff S on display at the Bugatti stand. A fine looking motorcar.**



telvio body, taken in the Bois de Boulogne for the Salon de Paris in October 1938 where the car was

*Ronald van Ramshorst*



**Olga Girardoni and her son with '57757'.**

*Olga Girardoni via Helge Hauk*

never owned it.

The car was described in the book by Pierre Fouquet-Hatevilain, which however does contain some mistakes such as the mentioning of King Michael of Bulgaria but as Pierre knew Olga personally that mistake can easily be traced back to its origins.

Allan Söderström's son sold the car to Francky Dumontant, who in turn sold it to Pierre Alain Bonnigal in 1996. It received a new coat of paint and



**Francky Du Montant tried to sell the car to Jaap Braam Ruben but it was sold to Alain Bonnigal in 1996.**

*Francky DuMontant via Jaap Braam Ruben*

participated at the Rallye des Grandes Marques in Blois in 2006, it's first public appearance after a long time in obscurity. It came up for sale with the dealer, Andreas Haas from the company 'Wunscholdtimer', in 2007 and some years later came into the ownership of another dealer, Bruno Vendiesse, who sold it to Mr Martin Waltz in Germany. He was particularly interested in the car, not because it is a Bugatti, but because it has a Vanvooren body.

Martin now owns seven Vanvooren bodied cars (with an eighth in prospect) and with these he almost certainly owns the largest collection of Vanvooren bodied cars in the world. It is of interest that the engine # 546 has survived untouched in every aspect. After 75 years it still shows all the numbers given by the factory.



**Photo taken in January 2014 by Bruno Vendiesse on the occasion of the sale to Martin Waltz, who has the largest collection of Vanvooren bodied cars in the world**  
*Bruno Vendiesse*

Although this car has no connection to The Netherlands or Belgium, it will nevertheless get a mention in Vol IV of the Register because of its relation to the d'leteren car 57757 and the mystery that has long surrounded it. Its identity has been resolved by the members of the Bugatti Identification Group (BIG) Patrick Arnaud and Sandy Leith.

### **Bugatti moteur 557, currently '57221'.**

The rolling chassis with engine 557 was the last car from Molsheim that was still unfinished when it was sent to Bordeaux. After the Germans occupied France the workers of the factory went back home, the Nazis confiscated the factory, called it Trippelwerke and started producing amphibious cars for the German military. The last car sold was Bugatti 57703 with engine 511, which was from the stock of Voitures usines on the Bordeaux liste that Mr Peigues had driven.

That was in fact the car that was exhibited at the Salon de l'Automobile in Paris in November 1938 for the 1939 season. During the War it received engine 557 instead of 511, which was completed but also the engine hood was modified. No chassis number was stamped in on the engine, just like all the other Bordeaux orphans but it was put on the road in 1942 or 1943 as '57221', a number of convenience that had been used for several other factory related cars, including one currently in the Louwman Museum, which still is registered with that number. The other numbers on this Stelvio are 511 and were from the



**Another promotional pictures of 57703, one of the 'Bordeaux Orphans', with a Gangloff Stelvio body, taken at the same time as the centrespread.**

*Ronald van Ramshorst*  
 57703. It had received the Gangloff cabriolet body and before the Salon it was extensively photographed in the Bois de Boulogne at the end of 1938 near Paris for which the license plate 5264-NV2 of the prototype 57102 had been used.

In 1951 it was bought by Walter Schlumpf Sr in Switzerland (not related to the Schlumpf brothers), and has remained in the family ever since. It was totally restored by Roland Rüttschi in 1990-1991. Walter Schlumpf Jr now owns it and he has recently participated in the International Bugatti Rally in 2014 in Bamberg in Germany where he gave me all information and where I was



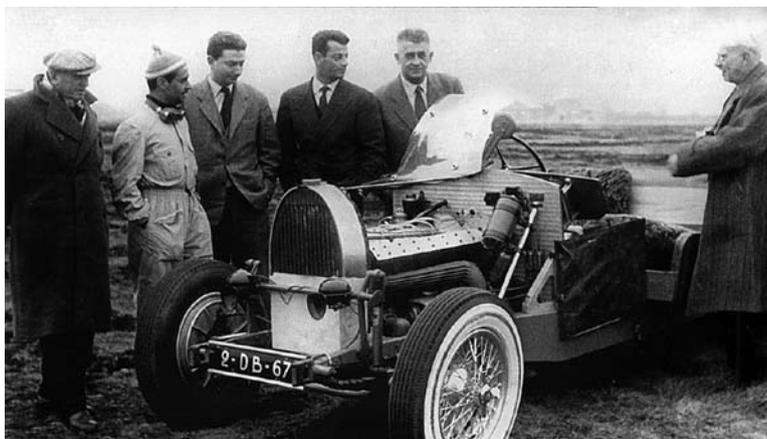
**'557' taken at the International Bugatti Rally in Bamberg, Germany in June 2014.**

*Kees Jansen*

allowed to inspect the car.

**Bugatti moteur 109C, currently 57841.**

The rolling chassis with engine 109 C is now called 57841 although this



**The rolling chassis was used for tests for the type 101, which in fact is a 57 C with chassis number 57841.**

*The Bugatti Trust via Barry Price*

number does not show up in the Pracht Carnets. This car was kept at the factory and used in slightly modified form called 'the prototype type 101' and carried the license plate 2 DB 67 for its tests. The plate was transferred to Robert Diebolt living in the castle of Oberhausbergen. It received a Letourneur et Marchand body and ended up in the USA, owned by Robert Bass.

It can compete with voiture moteur 547 for being the last Bugatti made in Molsheim, but if the Bordeaux liste is made in chronological order, the last one is the car with engine 547. At any rate, this is the last supercharged car.



**The car, now with a cabriolet body from Letourneur et Marchand in 2003.**

*Robert Bass via Sandy Leith*

### **Bugatti moteur 110 C, currently BC079**

Another orphan was the rolling chassis with supercharged engine 110C. The engine ended up in 57758 whose original engine 54C was placed in the Atalante 57401. The chassis with now engine 110C was sold in 1964 by Charles Downie to Walter Weimer and subsequently traded to Ray Jones 'for other considerations'. The car had reportedly gone to M. Glass in Monte Carlo as mentioned by Conway Sr but that is not likely as it finally ended up in one of the Atlantic Replica's built by Eric Koux, (57 R BC 079 with Koux Replica frame number \* 5 \*). This car originally had a fiberglass body but later received a new aluminium body by the Crailville coachbuilders commissioned by Charles Howard. The car is in the USA and now owned by the television celebrity and 'petrol head' Jay Leno.



**The replica Atlantic built up on Eric Koux replica frame using engine 110C and currently owned by Jay Leno.**

