

BUGATTI TYPE 23

Brescia 1922





Bitten by the Bug

Small, quick, and fun to drive—the Brescia Bugatti stole the heart of voiturette racers around the globe.

After World War I, Ettore Bugatti unearthed the Type 13 for the 1920 Grand Prix des Voiturettes at Le Mans. Using six-year-old technology that had been hidden during the war, Ettore lost no time in capitalizing on the renewed interest in racing. He won the race and launched the Bugatti name.

In 1921 four of these new models competed in the Italian Grand Prix des

Voiturettes near Brescia, Italy. They came in first, second, third, and fourth place and set a new speed record that averaged seventy-two miles per hour over three hours. After this resounding victory, the Type 13 became known as the Brescia. It dominated early voiturette racing in Europe, winning numerous events and continuing to build the Bugatti name.

About two thousand Brescia models were built between 1920 and 1926 ranging from Types 13-27. The Type 23 Brescia model was introduced in 1922. As was typical for



the time, only the rear wheels were equipped with brakes, enhancing the legendary claim that Bugatti built his cars to go, not stop.

Although few models exist today, their charm has not dwindled. Enthusiasts such as the Mullin Brescia's previous owner, J. L. Kearney, pursue these autos as diligent researchers, carefully documenting provenance and ensuring the restoration accurately meets factory specifications. When Kearney first purchased the car in 1949, it arrived in boxes, and he began the painstaking process of piecing it back together. At some point author and Bugatti scholar Hugh Conway urged Kearney to determine the factory production date of the chassis. Thus began the chase. Using old tax records, he managed to track down many of the original owners. Meeting with each one, he collected miscellaneous pieces of the puzzle, and acquired even more pieces of the car itself. The restoration was completed in 1958. "Bitten by the Bug," the story of Kearney's quest for, and restoration of, the Brescia was published in

Bugantics magazine in 1959.

The rolling chassis for the Bugatti Type 23 was produced and sent to the company's showroom in Paris in 1922.

At the time, the Bugatti factory did not create bodies for its cars, and the coachbuilder for this car remains unknown. Records indicate that in 1925, a wealthy gentleman from Londonderry, in northern Ireland, purchased the car. The Irishman drove his Brescia until about 1930, when it was put in storage. Londonderry tax records from 1939 indicate that the original body was removed and the car was dismantled.

In 1949 J. L. Kearney found the Brescia in Belfast, bought it, and began the process of reassembly and restoration. Of the original coachwork, only the firewall, hood, radiator, and seats remained. The original chassis and driveline were intact. It took Kearney nearly ten years, but the restoration was completed in 1958. Author and Bugatti scholar Hugh Conway owned the car from 1961 until 1971. It then passed through the hands of a number of

European owners until Peter Mullin purchased the car in Germany in 2008.



PROFILE

Coachbuilder	Unknown
Chassis number	1361
Profile type	Touring
Body type	Voiturette
Number made	2006
Production span	1920-1926
Acceleration	0
Top Speed	72

BODY | CHASSIS

Rear brakes type	Cable-operated
Front suspension type	Live axles with semielliptical leaf springs
Rear suspension type	Reversed quarter-elliptical leaf springs
Length	12' 2"
Height (Ground line to highest roof)	4' 7"
Width	4' 8"

ENGINE

Type	Inline
Number of cylinders	4
Bore x stroke	65 mm x 100 mm
Displacement	1496
Distribution	Single overhead camshaft
BHP at 3800 RPM	45
Gearbox	Manual
Number of gears	4
Overdrive	0



