THE SPIRITUAL HOME OF BUGATTI IN ENGLAND FOR MORE THAN 90 YEARS



Founded in London in 1929, the world's first Bugatti Owners' Club moved to Prescott in the beautiful English Cotswolds region in 1937. There, it established its very own hill climb course and — in 1987 — the Bugatti Trust, maintaining and celebrating the magic of the Bugatti brand for more than 90 years.

Located in the mid-west of England, Prescott Estate is home to The Bugatti Owners' Club, a unique organization that houses its very own competitive hill climb course and the Bugatti Trust, a store of almost forty thousand historic documents and images dedicated to the Bugatti marque. Its connections with the Bugatti brand run right back to the Bugatti family itself, with personal visits from both Ettore and his son Jean during the '30s.

2026 BUGATTI AUTOMOBILES S.A.S.

The Bugatti Owners' Club was founded in 1929, just two decades after Ettore launched the automobile company that bore his name. Born out of a shared passion for Bugatti models and the superior design, engineering and driving experience they provided, the Club held its inaugural meeting at one of London's oldest and most famous restaurants, 'Simpson's in the Strand'.

''Our birth occurred on December 18th, 1929, when three total strangers met to discuss over a meal the possibilities of starting a Club in order to bring together the particular enthusiasts who own Bugatti cars,'' wrote D.B. Madeley two years later in the first issue of Bugantics, the Bugatti Owners' Club magazine.

By then, the Club was already hosting driving events on various loose-surface hill climb courses in England, enabling members to indulge in the type of judicious full-throttle exercises their cherished Bugatti models had already established a fearsome reputation for on motor circuits throughout the world. However, these were temporary venues only, leading to the search for a permanent course.

A HOME WORTHY OF THE MARQUE

In 1937, Colonel (later Brigadier-General) G.M. Giles, who had been present at the first Bugatti Owners' Club meeting at Simpsons, and his brother Eric, purchased the Prescott Estate and country house. Realizing the potential of the then rutted, muddy drive to the house, work began on rendering the surface more suitable for motorsport. After all, a home in celebration of Bugatti must have some form of race track — the two go hand-in-hand.

In April 1938, Colonel Giles led a convoy of 130 Bugatti Owners' Club members and guests in his Type 18 Bugatti 'Black Bess' to Prescott, where the first untimed runs of the hill were held. At the first proper meeting in May of that year, Arthur Baron blasted his Type 51 Bugatti to the summit. Setting the fastest time of the day of 50.70 seconds, Baron triumphed over the similar car of Jack Lemon Burton by a mere 0.04 seconds.

ARRIVAL OF THE BUGATTI 'WORKS' TEAM

In July the following year, the Bugatti Owners' Club held its first international event, attracting the attendance of Jean Bugatti and the company's star driver, Jean-Pierre Wimille, who had just won the Le Mans 24 Hours for the marque. ''It is a grand thing to realize that the Bugatti equipe, including Monsieur Jean Bugatti himself, has come here specially for today's event, all the way from Molsheim in Alsace, and we wish him a pleasant visit and the best of good luck,'' recorded the race programme.

Wimille's 'works' Bugatti was based on a Type 59 chassis with a Type 50B engine of 4700cc. Unfortunately, the car did not prove the ideal choice for the track and the French driver was disappointed not to take the fastest time of the day. This elicited an apology from Jean Bugatti. ''I am sorry,'' he said, ''I have brought a car that is unsuitable for your hill. Next year we will bring over a 1.5 litre car — one of our new ones — and I hope that we shall do better.''

Ettore himself was also a visitor to the Club, presenting a version of the Type 51 to its members in 1937, and it's possible that one of the Club's modern members himself rebuilt this very car.

Member John Horton said: "The historical details were a little sketchy, but the car was believed to be based on the one that Ettore Bugatti presented to the Club at a dinner in London in 1937. The car later ended up in the hands of a P Monkhouse, and it ran at the first event at Prescott after the war but was then involved in a severe road accident and indeed was said by some to be completely written off. But I rebuilt it with a Bugatti engine and now it resides in the Caister Castle Car Collection on England's Norfolk coast."

DRIVING IN THE WHEEL TRACKS OF LEGENDS

When Prescott House was sold, the Bugatti Owners' Club retained ownership of the 69-acre (28-hectare) estate and the Prescott Speed Hill Climb course. The technically challenging 1127-yards (1-km) long course rises more than 200 feet (60 metres) incorporating short straights, fast and slow corners, and a breath-taking hairpin.

Today, the hill still resonates to the sound of Bugatti models, like those that joined Colonel Giles and 'Black Bess' to Prescott in 1938, being pushed to the limit. Rupert Marks is a regular and extremely rapid competitor on the hill in his 1934 Bugatti Type 59. And he never fails to appreciate the experience every time he takes to the course.

"We are so incredibly fortunate to be able to drive this hill today, especially when you consider that so few historic racing venues have survived with the passage of time," says Marks. "Set here in the magnificent surroundings of the Cotswolds, it makes your spine tingle every time you drive. We really do owe a great debt to those pioneering members of the Bugatti Owners' Club who created it and passed it on for future generations to enjoy today."

TRUST IN THE FUTURE

Also located on the Prescott Estate is the Bugatti Trust. Operating as an independent entity to the Bugatti Owners' Club, the trust provides an unprecedented wealth of Bugatti resources including some 27,000 historic documents and 10,000 images.

The Bugatti Trust was set up by Hugh Conway in 1987, and today, his son, also called Hugh, serves as Chairman. "My father was a huge Bugatti enthusiast and collected an enormous wealth of resources relating to the marque, which visitors are welcome to access today. The Bugatti Trust is here not only to provide a resource for knowledgeable Bugatti enthusiasts, but also to inspire the next generation of engineers. If, through our exhibits, we can inspire younger visitors to use their imagination, then we will keep the engineering spirit of Ettore Bugatti and his son Jean alive."

The Bugatti Trust is dedicated to the study of the works of Ettore Bugatti and preservation of the heritage of the marque. It is an independently funded UK registered charity with educational aims and objectives. Current display highlights include a stunning Bugatti Type 57S Atlantic — which has been totally rebuilt after a crash, the Type 1 Prinetti & Stucchi tricycle by Ettore Bugatti on loan from The Pearl Collection and Jean Bugatti's personal diary from 1939 on loan from the Musée National de l'Automobile — Collection Schlumpf, Mulhouse (France).

Press Contact
Nicole Auger
Head of Marketing and Communications
communications@bugatti.com