

CLASSIC DRIVER



1903 Clement 12/16-hp

Lot sold	USD 487 330 - 556 948 GBP 350 000 - 400 000 (listed)	Lenkung	Links
Baujahr	1903	Zustand	Gebraucht
Chassisnummer	AC4R	Standort	
Zahl der Sitze	2	Kraftstoff	Benzin
Antrieb	Zweirad	Außenfarbe	Sonstige
Losnummer	217	Motornummer	166

Beschreibung

1903 Clément 12/16hp Four-Cylinder Rear-Entrance Tonneau
Chassis no. AC4R
Engine no. 166

Already a successful maker of bicycles and pneumatic tyres he owned the Dunlop patents in France - Adolphe Clément diversified into automobile manufacture in 1899, taking an interest in the existing Gladiator concern. Rear-engined tricycles and quadricycles were made at the Gladiator works in Levallois-sur-Seine before Clément began building a conventional front-engined light car around 1901. Clément's early vehicles were powered by Aster, Panhard and De Dion engines, all three makes being at the forefront of automobile development.

By January 1903 Clément et Gladiator claimed to have an annual capacity of 1,200 cars but in October that year Adolphe Clément broke his connection with the company and set up a new factory in Levallois-Perret, manufacturing cars under the 'Clément-Bayard' name. At the beginning of that same year Clément had introduced the 2,121cc 12/16hp model. One of the most advanced cars of its day, the 12/16 featured a pair-cast four-cylinder 'L-head' engine, four-speed transmission and a channel steel chassis at a time when many of its rivals still relied on the old-fashioned flitch-plated wooden frame. An ingenious pressurised lubrication system fed oil from the pump-fed cooling system to oil baths for the engine's big-end bearings.

This particular car's first owner - Don Francisco Serramalera Abadal, familiarly known as Paco Abadal

- ranks among the highest in the annals of the pioneering years of motoring in Spain. Born in 1875, Abadal won fame as a cycle racer in the closing years of the 19th Century, competing in events organised by the Sociedad de Velocipedistas de Cataluña and the Sportsmen Club de Barcelona. When motor vehicles began to arrive in Spain at the beginning of the 20th Century, he bought and raced a 1¾hp Clément tricycle.

In 1902 Paco Abadal opened the Auto-Garaje Central at 343 Calle Consejo de Ciento in Barcelona, selling cars, motorcycles, bicycles and accessories. His clients soon included Spain's youthful King Alfonso XIII. In April 1905, Paco introduced the King to the new Hispano-Suiza marque for which he had held the concession since November 1904 (and after whom, thanks to Abadal's influence, one of its most famous models would be named). Abadal's business prospered and in 1908 its headquarters relocated to larger premises in the Calle Aragon while additional branches were opened at Calle Sepulveda, Plaza Letamendi and Carretera de Sarria. He also started a coachbuilding business under the name of Carrocería Francisco Abadal y Cia. When Hispano-Suiza cancelled his contract in 1913, Abadal introduced a pair of sporting luxury cars under his own name. Close copies of the Hispano-Suiza 'Alfonso XIII', these 15/30hp and 45hp models were built for him by Impéria of Belgium until the outbreak of war in 1914.

Paco Abadal brought his clients the pick of French automobiles and was personally responsible for their collection and delivery. In July 1903 a press report noted: 'Sr Abadal, owner of the Auto-Garaje Central, has arrived in our capital driving a magnificent 12hp Clement, completing the journey from Paris to here without the slightest difficulty. The car has been purchased by a well-known inhabitant of our city, well aware of the fact that our friend Abadal has had several orders for this particular model.'

We are advised that this car, chassis number '4010', has been certified by the Asociación Cultural Paco Abadal as being the one driven by Paco Abadal when he won the 6.5km Vista Rica (Rabassada) hill climb in Barcelona in a record 9min 43sec on 26th February 1904. Abadal was pictured on the front cover of the magazine Los Deportes at the wheel of his victorious Clément. He subsequently sold the car, fitted with a coachbuilt rear-entrance tonneau body, to a customer in Madrid where it was registered as 'M-95' when number plates were introduced in 1907; it still carries that historic registration.

The Clément survived the turmoil of the Spanish Civil War and around 1950 was acquired by the pioneering Spanish collector Juan Puigcerver of Barcelona, who is understood to have found it in a scrap yard on the outskirts of Madrid. Puigcerver kept the car for some 30 years before it entered the Vilanova Brothers' Collection, also in Barcelona.

An older (circa 1970) restoration, the Clement is finished in blue with cream coachlining and has been re-trimmed in leather to the original pattern, with the old upholstery preserved underneath. It comes with a detachable canopy and windscreen as well as a custom made cover and has a full lighting set: BRC lenticular parabolic acetylene headlamps and a Besnard generator plus Blériot paraffin side lamps.

Since 1959 the Clément has been a regular entrant in the Barcelona to Sitges Run and has also taken part in the Tour du Lac Lemman in Switzerland. It was the oldest car in the 1998 International Madrid-Lisbon rally and in 2006 successfully completed the London to Brighton Veteran Car Run. The Clément has also been displayed at the Museu de la Ciència i de la Tècnica de Catalunya as part of an exhibition celebrating the life and work of Paco Abadal.

Since acquisition by the vendor the car has benefited from extensive renovation, which has been undertaken by 'Tattersall's Veteran to Classic', automotive and manufacturing engineers of Greetland, West Yorkshire. Works carried out include fitting a starter motor and ring gear; reconditioning the steering box and sorting the steering geometry; reconditioning the suspension; fitting a water temperature gauge; connecting the gearbox greaser; refurbishing the drip-feed oiler; and re-manufacturing the crankcase breathers (see bills totalling £11,588 on file). With four cylinders, four-speed transmission and four seats, as well as a proven record of reliability, this recently refurbished historic Veteran represents the ideal acquisition with which to enjoy future

London-Brighton Runs and is offered with an entry in this year's Run, start number 617.

Bonhams 1793

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