



1927 Vauxhall Type OE 30/98 Velox

Owner: Miles C. Collier of Naples, Florida

V A U X H A L L

Among the characters in *Those Barren Leaves*, Aldous Huxley's popular novel of the mid-twenties, was Lord Hovenden. He was a wimp, except when he was behind the wheel of his Vauxhall 30/98. It was only while doing seventy-five on the Great North Road that His Lordship was able to tell Mrs. Terebinth, seventeen years his senior, who had four children and adored her husband, that she was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. At eighty miles an hour he told her he loved her. With the 30/98 to give him courage, His Lordship could make all sorts of promises he couldn't keep when his car was in the garage. If only, he wished, one could spend all one's life in a Vauxhall.

Social satire, yes, but still a stirring testimonial for the car. Whether the 30/98 was the last of the Edwardians (as it was affectionately known) or the first British sports car worthy of the name (as its maker implied) is moot. Some cars defy logic. Other cars ooze character. The Vauxhall 30/98 did both.

In the 19th century, Scottish engineer Alexander Wilson had founded his iron works on the Thames near London. Interested in

heraldry, he chose the crest of Fawkes de Breauté, a vassal of William the Conqueror, to adorn his products and a variation of Fawkes Hall, as legend said de Breauté's estate was called, as the name for his company. Shortly after the turn of the century, Vauxhall moved into automobile manufacture and to Luton which, fortunately, didn't lessen the pertinence of the crest or name since de Breauté had also had a place there. Vauxhall's place in history followed the arrival of the estimable Laurence Pomeroy, Sr. as chief engineer.

Pomeroy's Prince Henry model of 1910 was named (like Porsche's Austro-Daimler) after the German trials in which it excelled. The Type 30/98 followed in 1914 and was a habitual winner at Brooklands for almost a generation. Beginning its career as the side-valve Type E, the 30/98 was revised to a 4224 cc overhead-valve four-cylinder OE for 1923. And front brakes were fitted, though Vauxhall was leery of them, advising owners "to check the car's progress" with the hand brake, reserving the foot "for emergency." The hydraulic brakes, added to the front wheels and transmission in late 1926, leaked copiously. This

apparently bothered owner enthusiasts not at all.

Many owners raced their cars. The 30/98 in Miles Collier's collection is typical. Its natural aluminum Velox body is standard except for the competition windscreen. The hydraulic brakes were competition modified, and the engine fitted with non-standard S.U. carburetors by an American owner shortly after World War II. Mention of just one of its races tells all. In the first U.S. Grand Prix, at Watkins Glen in 1948, this venerable 1927 Vauxhall finished fourth, behind a '38 supercharged 2.9-liter Alfa, Briggs Cunningham's '39 racing Bu-Merc and a brand-new supercharged M.G.—a singular performance.

Singular coachwork distinguishes the 30/98 owned by Charles Mallory: "This Derham is a one-off, the only 30/98 chassis exported to America to be bodied. I've owned the car since 1985 and drive it about 500 miles a year. Totally reliable, this Vauxhall is a better handling vintage Bentley with a booming exhaust note and comfortable 75 mph cruising speed. Back in the twenties, race tuned, the factory guaranteed a lap at Brooklands at 100 mph."

Alas for the 30/98, General Motors acquired Vauxhall Motors Ltd. in 1926 and replaced the low-production OE (310 were built in all) with models that would sell in greater numbers. Lord Hovenden wouldn't have been pleased.



1927 Vauxhall Type OE 30/98 Roadster, Derham

Owner: Charles Mallory of Stamford, Connecticut

