

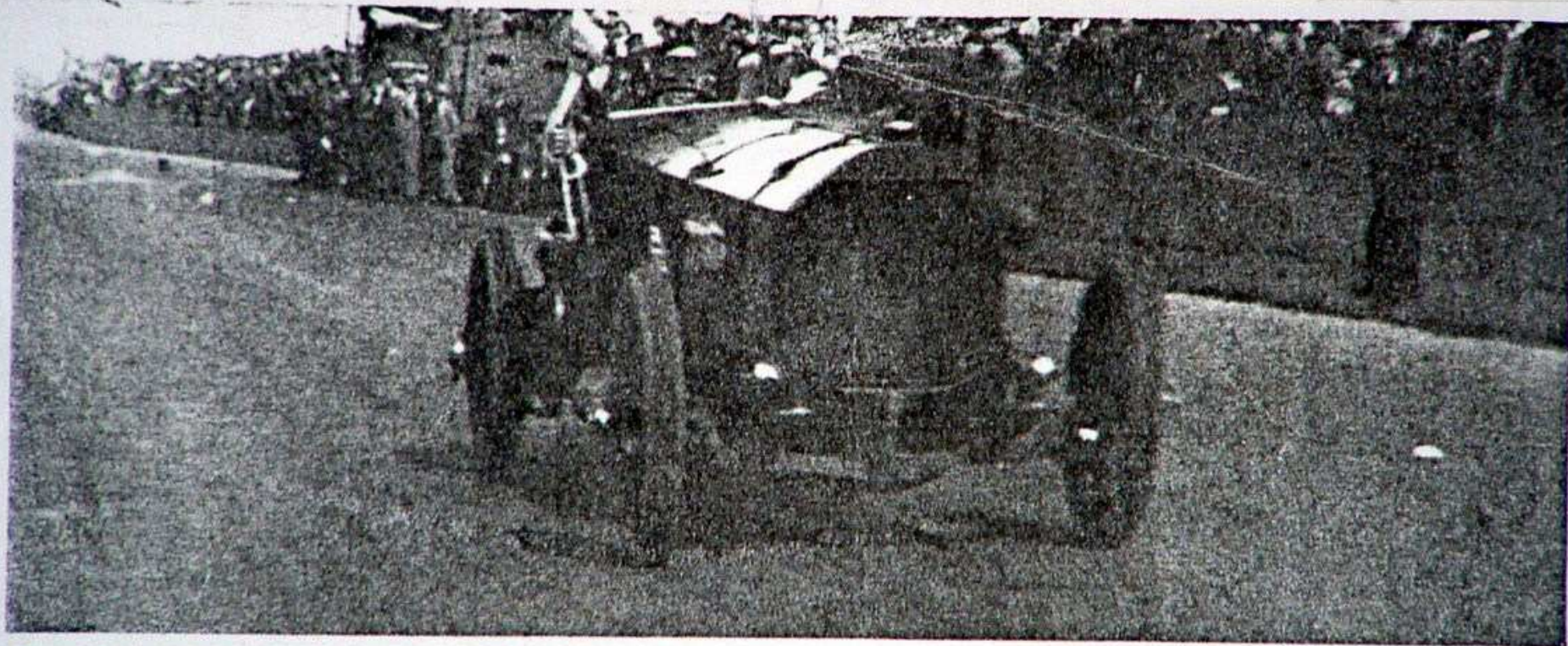


*How Chitty I finished up after the accident in practice at Brooklands in 1922. It burst a tyre, hit the parapet of the Track, slid down the Home banking, demolished a wooden hut, cutting off the fingers of an official as it did so, tore off its front axle, discarded its mechanic, and ended up as shown, the off-side tyre having left the rim. Zborowski, still in the driving seat, was uninjured and Chitty was rebuilt.*

*(Photo: Montagu Motor Museum)*







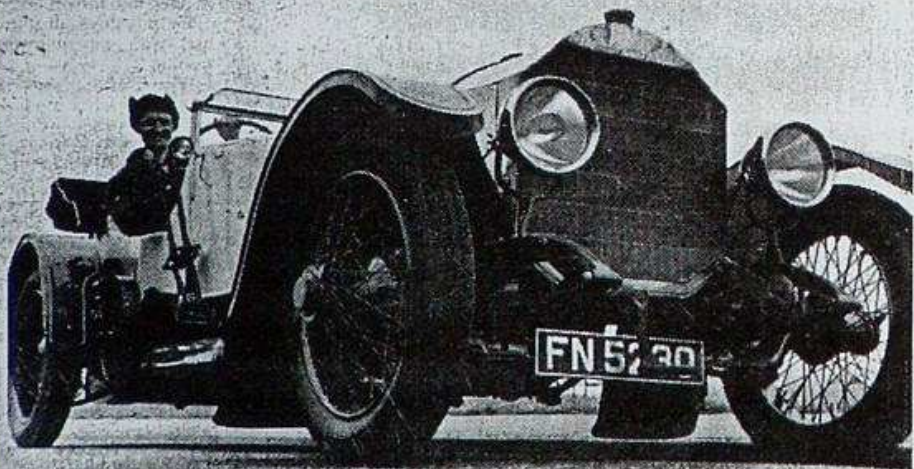
*Chitty I pulling up at the end of the course, during the 1922 Southsea Speed Trials.*

(Photo: Montagu Motor Museum)





Count Zborowski at the wheel of Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang at Brooklands in the 1920s. Note the chain drive.



Peter Harris-Mayes takes the legendary car for a drive after spending years on its restoration.

# Tony Arnold recalls a motoring legend Car that inspired a book and film

ONE of the most famous racing cars of all time — Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang—once had its home in Deal.

The car thrilled speed enthusiasts in the 1920s and inspired the late Ian Fleming to break away from James Bond stories and write a book for children.

Later it formed the basis of the film, shown on TV this Christmas.

Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang was designed and made by the late Count Louis Zborowski, who lived at Higham (now Highland Court), near Canterbury.

The Count raced the giant car at Brooklands, where he lapped at 113mph, he also drove it on a tour of the Sahara Desert venturing over 150 miles into the heart of the forbidding sand.

It was powered by a 230 hp Benz engine on a lengthened Mercedes chassis and was chain driven. The engine was similar to those used to power the giant Gotha bombers of World War I.

### Drank fuel

Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang was a great achievement in design, with its engine developing 230 bhp at around 1,400 rpm to give terrific acceleration, especially on hills. But, it drank fuel, doing only seven miles to the gallon.

When Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang was put on the road it sported the registration number FN 5230. And it was often on local roads with the high-flying Count at the wheel and his beautiful American-born Countess at his side.

Zborowski was a typical product of the 20s, a man who could have



Count Louis Zborowski

walked from the pages of Sapper of Dornford Yates. He was rich and brave; wild and full of schoolboy pranks.

Of Polish origin (his father used to steeplechase at midnight and was killed in a car accident in 1903) he was educated at Eton.

He wakened up the sleepy countryside of East Kent. Villagers wondered what would happen next, for as well a car enthusiast he also had a passion for explosives.

Once a bathing party at Higham abruptly ended when an underwater explosion wrecked the pool and demolished most of the summerhouse.

One of the Count's favourite pastimes was to take his

houseparty guests in the garage and let them choose from the fantastic group of cars.

They could have a Benz, Mercedes, Hispano-Suiza, Ballot, or Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang. After the decision had been made the fun started.

There would be a road race to Dover, then into Deal and back home by way of the villages.

The Count competed in the famous Indianapolis race of 1923. And he put a great deal of money into the Aston Martin business at a time of financial difficulties.

He died in a crash while taking part in the 1924 Italian Grand Prix. His Mercedes Straight Eight went into a skid and hit a tree.

### Court action

What happened to Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang after that is not known, until Peter Harris-Mayes, then living in London Road, Deal, discovered the old car axle deep in mud and with chickens roosting on its seats at a farm outside Dover.

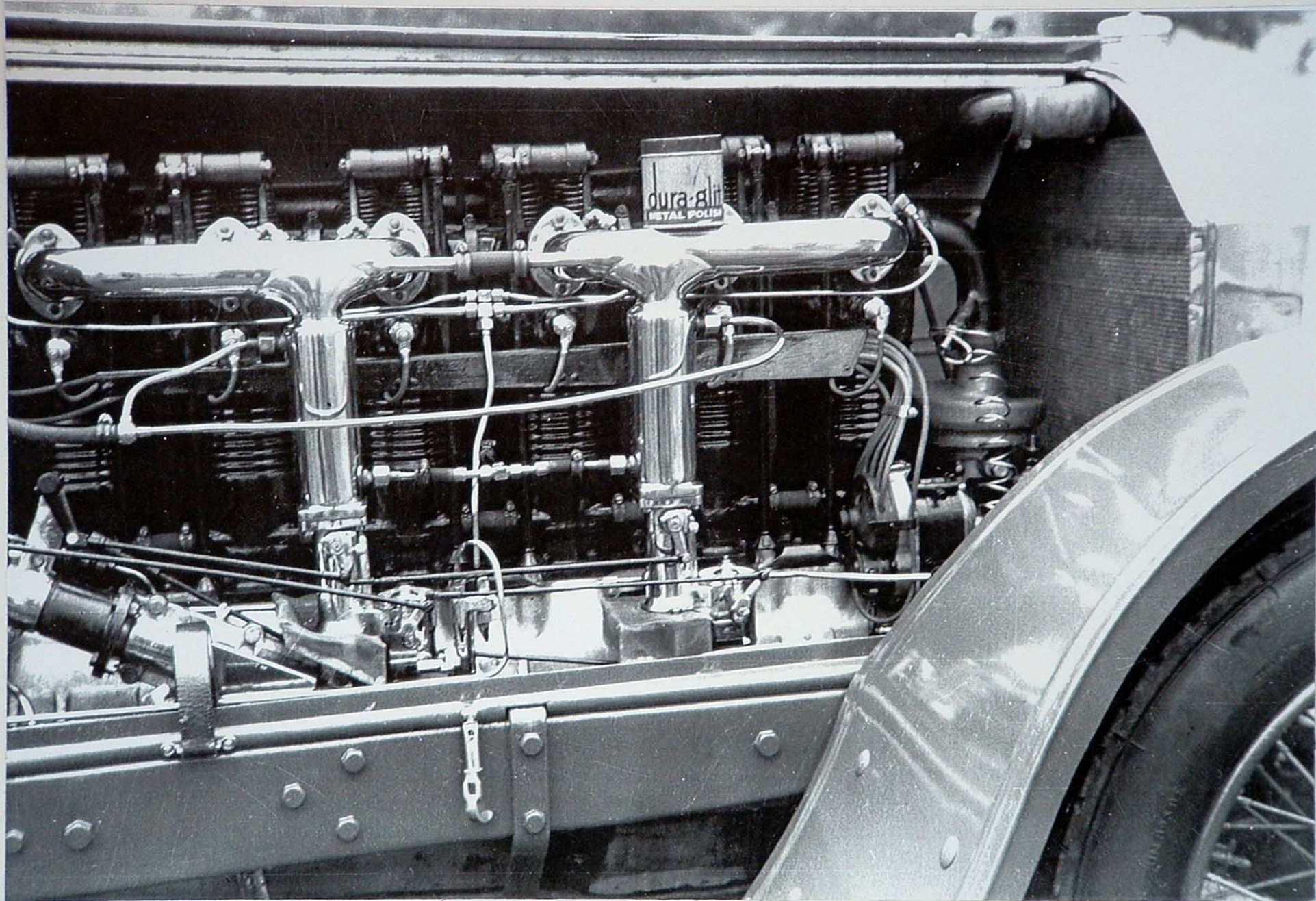
He spent hundreds on its restoration, which he carried out himself. He was then able to drive it on local roads.

In 1968 he sold it to an American enthusiast for £16,500 — no mean sum in those days. And that sparked off a High Court action.

The late William Hollis, of Dover, claimed ownership. But after a four-day hearing Hollis abandoned his claim and paid towards Harris-Mayes costs.

Harris-Mayes, who now lives on the Isle of Man, says Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang now has pride of place in an automobile museum in America.



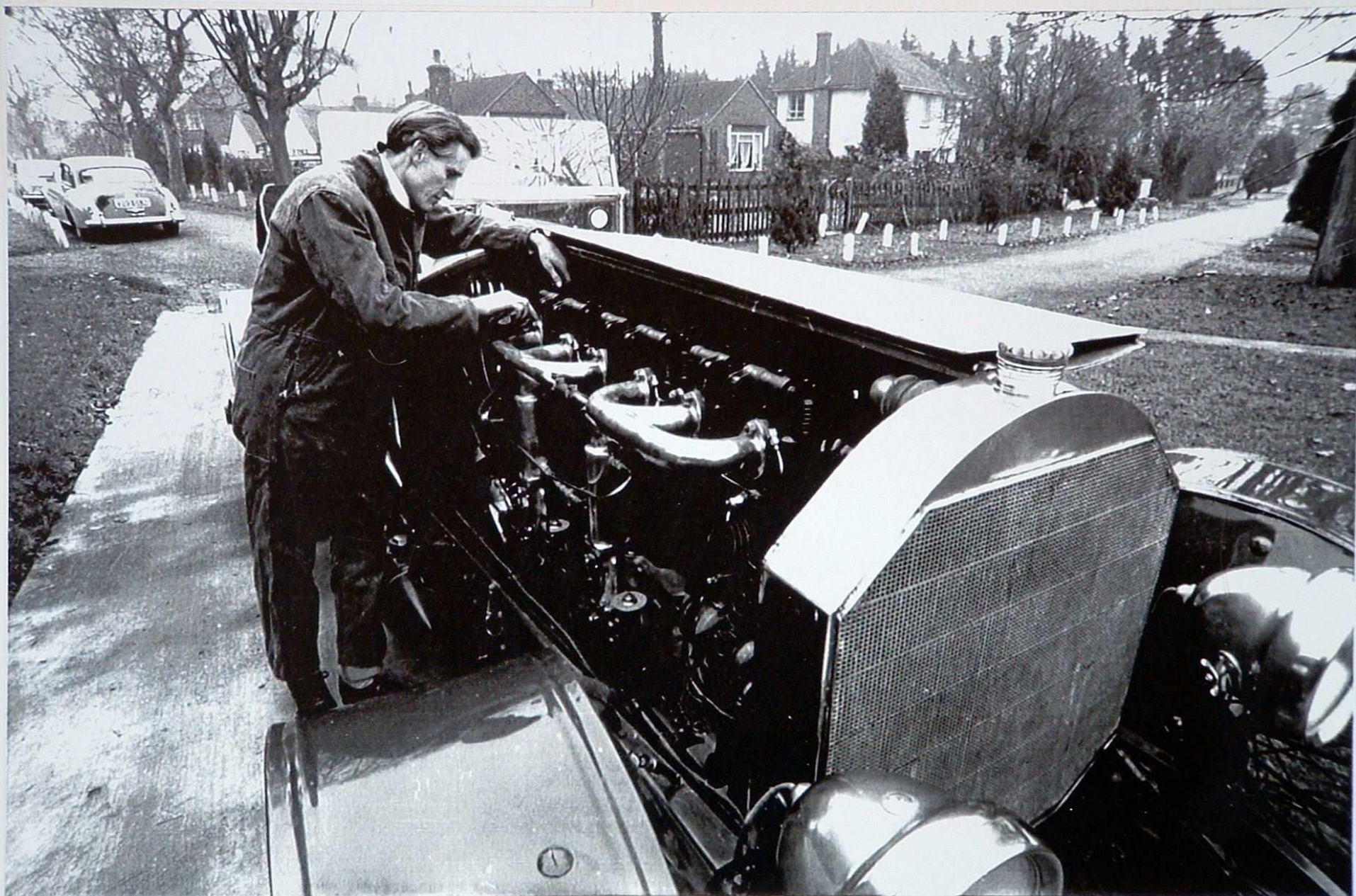


Chitty Bang Bang II 230 Bhp Benz 18.8 litre airship engine





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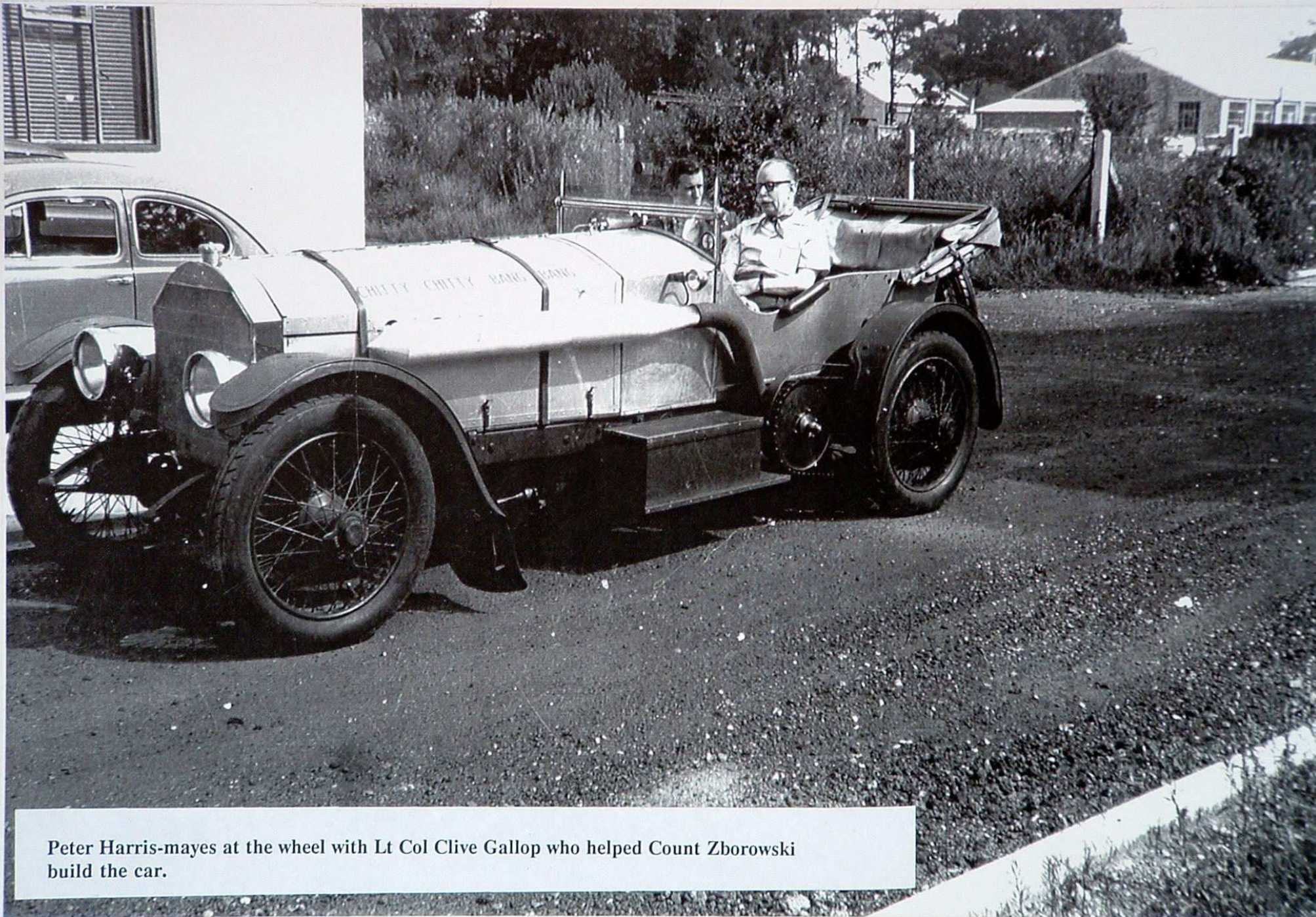


Chitty Bang Bang II with Peter Harris-Mayes



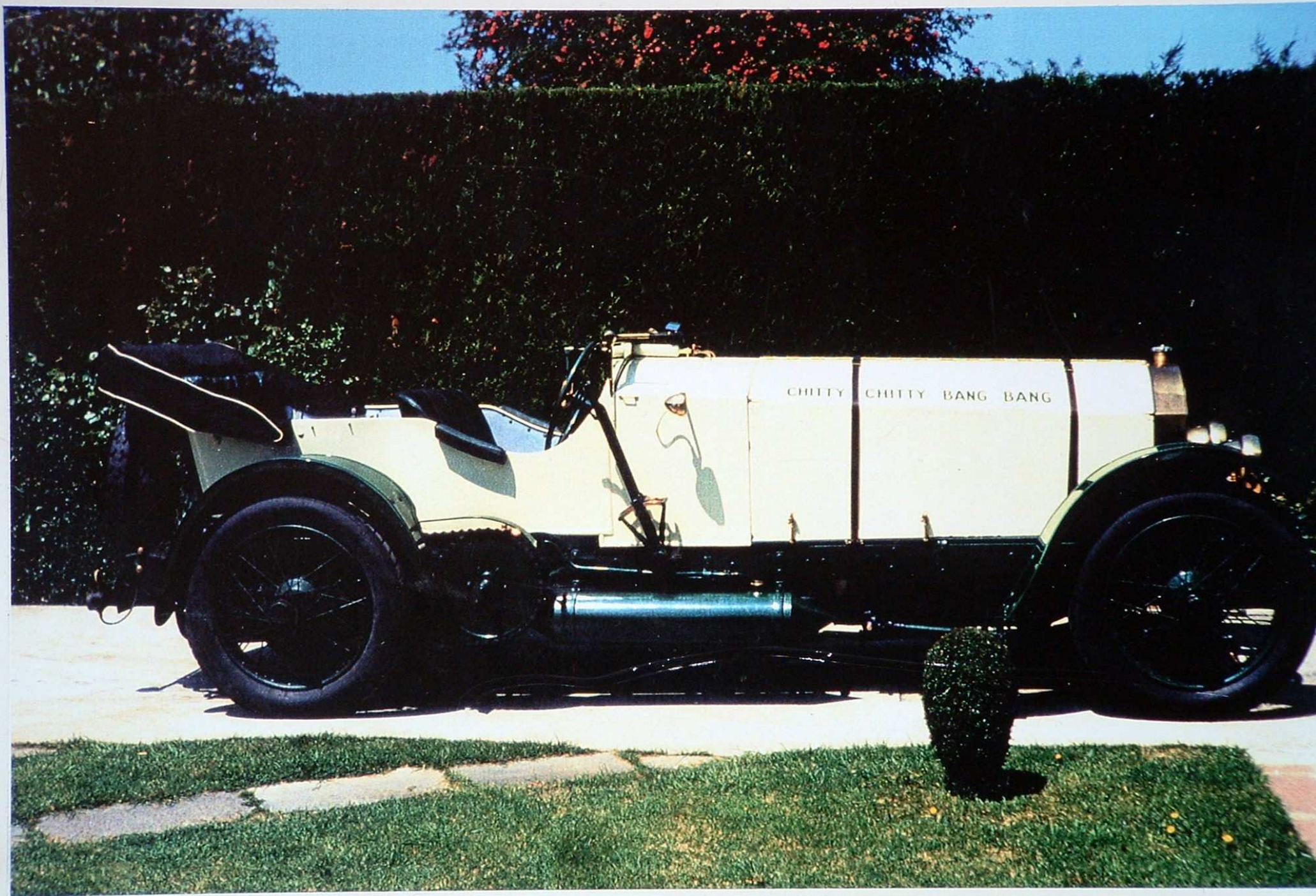


Chitty Bang Bang II with Peter Harris-Mayes



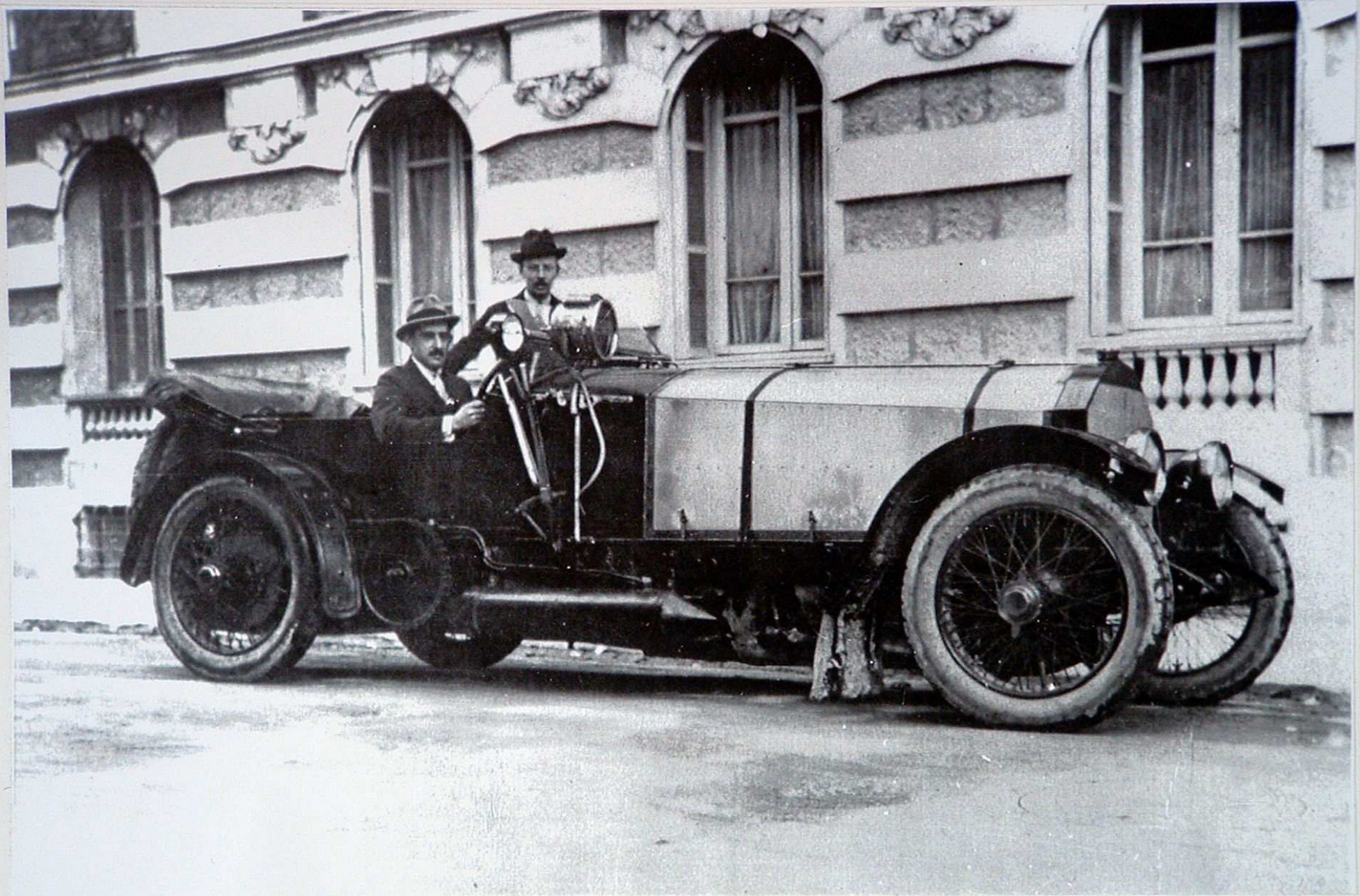
Peter Harris-mayes at the wheel with Lt Col Clive Gallop who helped Count Zborowski build the car.





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Outside Negresco Hotel, Nice, January 1922. Count Zborowski at the wheel with Lt Col Clive Gallop.

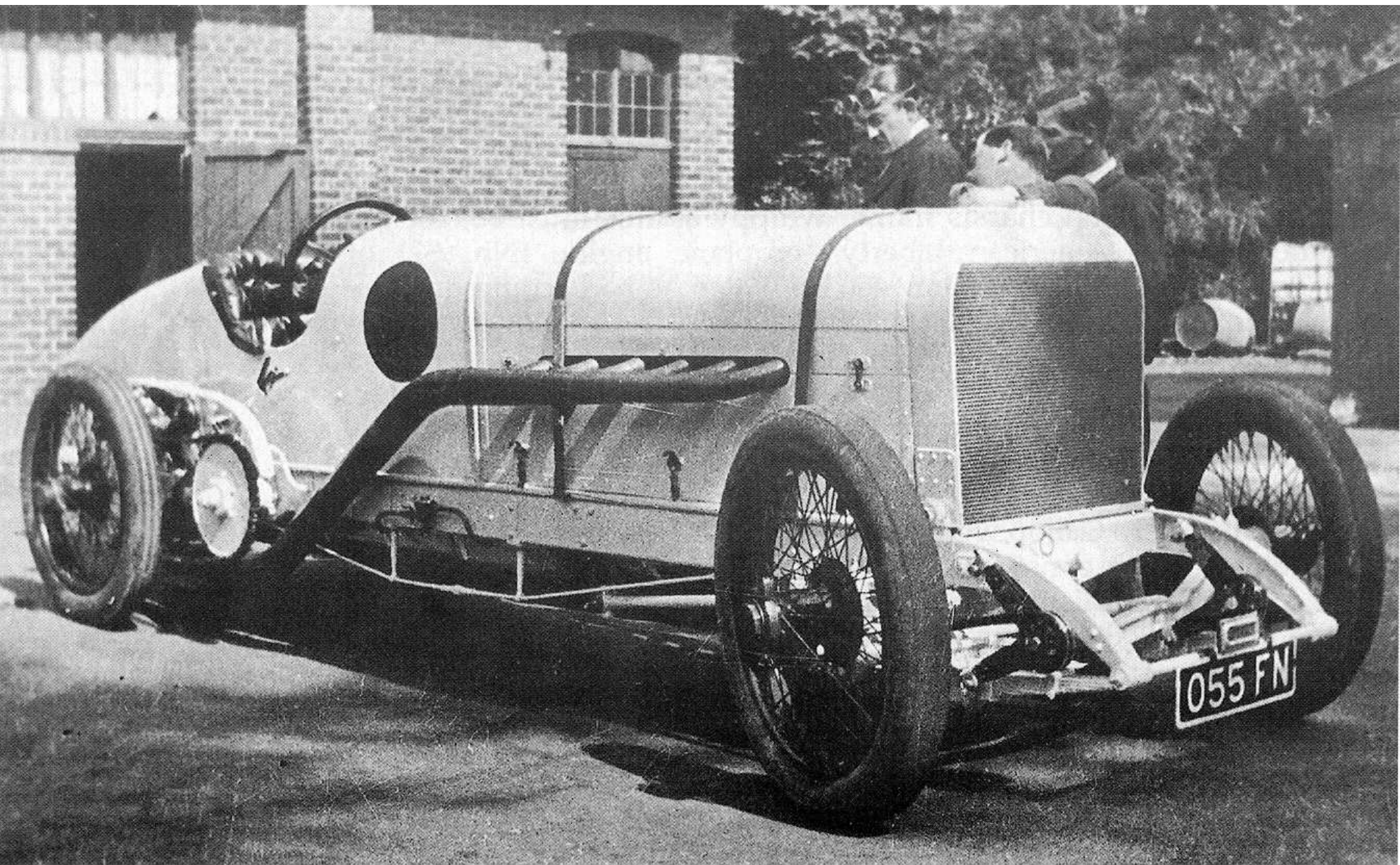


Outside Negresco Hotel, Nice, January 1922. Count Zborowski at the wheel with Lt Col Clive Gallop.



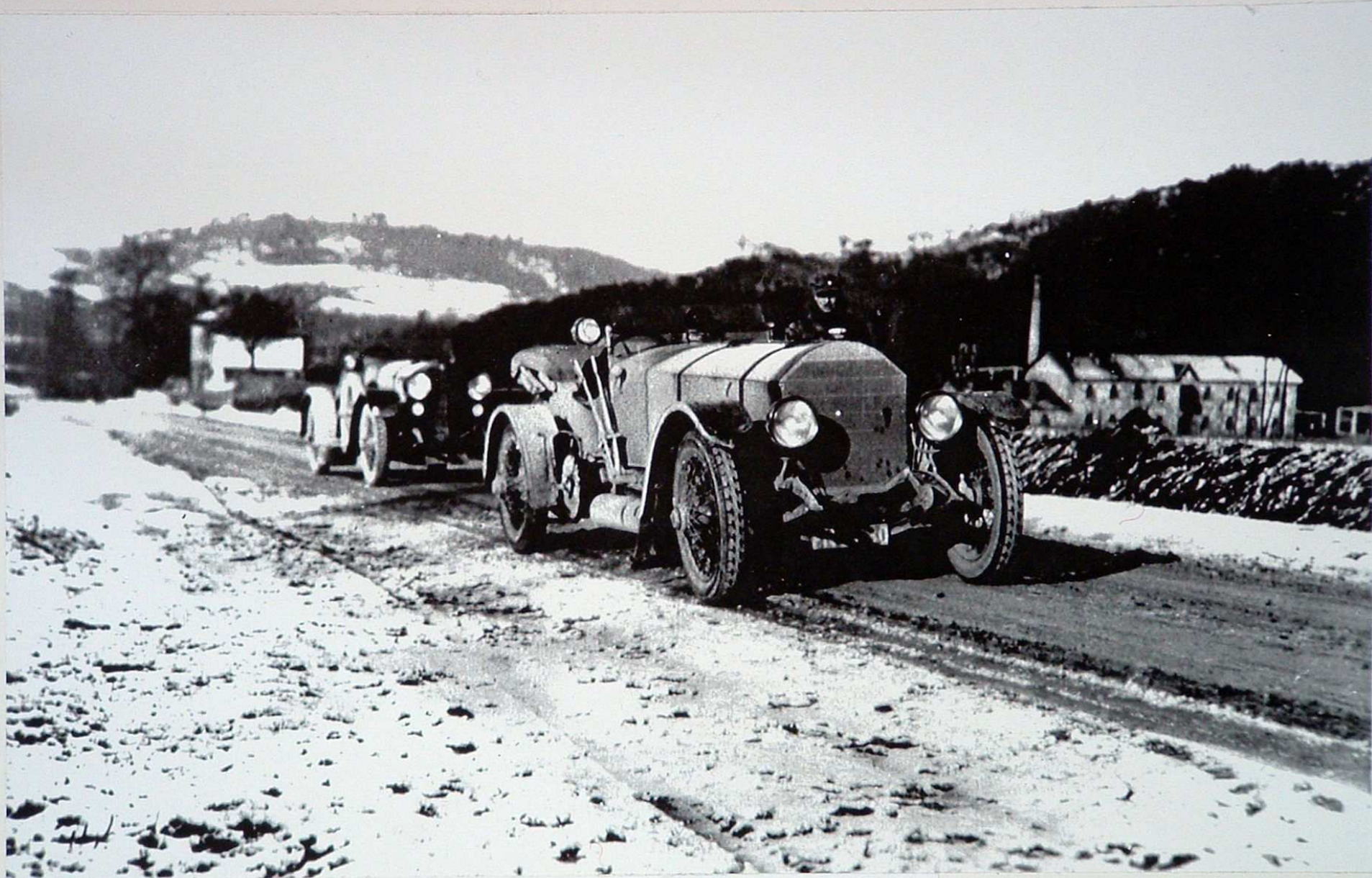
Chitty Bang Bang II and Mercedes 28/95 with the foothills of the Atlas Mountains.







Chitty Bang Bang II and Mercedes 28/95 with the foothills of the Atlas Mountains.



Chitty Bang Bang II in front with the Count and his wife Violet. Also Mercedes 28/95 two seater and luggage platform. Taken in Algeria en route for Biskra. Note the snow.