

GLOBE TROTTING RACER

by Rod Dew, *The Press*

Globe-trotting classic motor racing enthusiast Peter Giddings has been coming to New Zealand for 20 years with a variety of exotic machinery.

But the priceless 1933 Type 59 Bugatti grand prix racer, which will make its New Zealand debut in the Skope Classic at Ruapuna Park this weekend, is in a class of its own.

"That's the most beautiful car I've ever seen," Skope organiser Peter Grant said.

"I agree with him," Giddings said, before firing it up for its first official practice.

"Enthusiasts say this is the prettiest and most elegant of all classic pre-war cars. We are absolutely certain that this is the first time a Type 59 Bugatti has been brought to New Zealand. It's really nice for people to see the real thing."

The supercharged 3.3 litre Type 59, identified by its "piano wire" spoke wheels, was Ettore Bugatti's last attempt to match the government-backed might of Germany's Auto Unions and Mercedes-Benz. It was eventually outstripped by the German teams, but between 1934 and 1937 its race-winning record was exceptional. This included first and second in the 1934 Belgian Grand Prix, and a record lap of the old Brooklands circuit at an average of 138mph (222 kmh).

Giddings, originally from Eastbourne in England, is now based in California, but spends so much time racing classic cars that he jokes, "I live in suitcases".

He is in New Zealand for the Southern Festival Of Speed, a series of four classic car race meetings in the South Island. "It's winter where I come from, and that's one of the reasons I'm here. Coming here allows me to race all year round."

It also allows him to have his cars checked out by the world renowned Christchurch firm, Auto Restorations. "If I send a car to them to be restored, I can then race it here."

The Bugatti has just had its twin overhead camshaft engine rebuilt by the Christchurch company, and is in pristine condition.

After the New Zealand series, it will be shipped back to the United States for the American Bugatti Grand Prix at Laguna Seca. "I have previously won this and would like to maintain my record."

But before that, Giddings has an appointment at Phillip Island, near Melbourne, next month. The 1935 Alfa Romeo he raced in New Zealand last year - one of six classic racers he has parked around the world - will be the guest of honour.

Identifying Features

Bugatti piano wire wheels; front springs sliding in blocks above cross tube at front; external multi-tube oil cooler; large lightening holes in frame; external brake compensating chain-work; full width rear springs; De Ram shock absorbers

Years Made (approx): 1933-36

Number Made: 6 or 7



Engine

No of cylinders: 8
 Bore x stroke: 72 x 100mm (1933: 72 x 88mm)
 Capacity: 3257cc (1933: 2866)
 BHP (approx): 250
 RPM Limit (prudent): 5500
 Camshafts: dohc
 Valves (per cylinder): 2
 Camshaft drive: Rear, spur gears
 Crankshaft bearings: 6 plain, plain rods
 Supercharger: Roots
 Carburettor: 2 Zenith, 52mm
 Ignition: Scintilla Vertex magneto
 Plugs per cylinder: 1
 Firing Order: 1, 5, 3, 7, 4, 8, 2, 6
 Clutch: Dry, multi-plate, all metal

Gearbox

Location: Separate, central, 4-speed and reverse
 Gear change lever: external

Rear Axle

Normal Ratio: Double reduction, 2.9 to 4.5 available

Dimensions

Wheelbase: 102.3in (2.60m)
 Track: 49.2in (1.25m)
 Weight (approx): 1650lb (750kg)

Brakes

4-wheel cable operated

Wheels

Type: Bugatti piano wire
 Tyre size: original and modern fitment, 5.25 to 6.00 x 19

Crossbreeding with Other Types

Engine basically dry sump version of T57SC

Data from www.bugatti.co.uk