

# BONHAM'S VOYAGEUR IDENTIFIED



*Credit:- Bonhams*

There was quite a stir in the historic caravan world in March 2012 when an interesting Bertram Hutchings caravan was auctioned by Bonham's. The interest was as much for the hammer price as for the make and model of the caravan. Generally, when compared to the values of rare historic cars, caravans have been somewhat undervalued. The caravan in question was a "Voyageur" model. These are quite rare with only 5 known to exist.

From factory records we know that "Voyageurs" were built by Bertram Hutchings Caravans Ltd in Winchester from 1927 to about 1931. There was a previous horse drawn design called a Voyager and a 1950s design again called Voyageur with a full width lantern roof.

Soon after the sale the Club was approached by the new owner, a club member, for help in identifying and certifying it. We were told that it was a near thing that it stayed in the UK as there were strong bids from overseas.

The auction description stated 1926 but just the look of it did not seem right for that, even though the axle was dated as such. Photographs were studied in detail by two members with extensive BH experience to try and pin it down.

The design and features of this van do not match the axle date. However axles were date marked by the axle maker not Bertram Hutchings. The axle was probably made earlier and stamped by the manufacturer, and later drawn from stock for the 'van. The design suggests a much later 'van than 1926 with some features such as the steel chassis only appearing in 1930 on the Winchester models. There were also unique features on it which do not appear on any 'van in the brochures.

We had virtually decided on 1929-1930 when, by chance, attention was drawn to the only picture of the 1930 BH motor show stand where a Voyageur is featured and all visible features matched this caravan. Generally at the time no two vans were identical so we are as certain as anybody can be that this is the show caravan.



### **Voyageur at 1930 Motor Show**

## **Features which match 1930 Motor Show caravan picture.**

Size and number of window diamonds. (All other illustrations show smaller diamonds)

Steel "A" frame chassis. (All other illustrations show wooden chassis and single tow pole)

Half round skirt beading. (All other illustrations show flat skirting boards)

6 stud wheels. (Used on later vans post 1928 only)

Ratchet corner steadies.

Screw down jockey wheel.

Other fine detail visible in high res. pictures.

If this is the 1930 Motor Show Caravan it was sold to David Way in March 1931. It next comes to light when auctioned at the Dorset Steam Fair in 1995. At that time it had solid panelling where the rear window would normally be fitted. Pictures taken at Dorset show the rear panelling and the size of the panels suggests that originally it had a bay window. It was in very poor condition at that time but the new owner restored it fitting a new flat rear window and rallied it for a short time, but died soon after. It was then sold we believe to the Lovedown Collection but have no information on this. Finally purchased by present owners at Bonham's Oxford Auction 3/3/2012.



Dorset Steam Fair Auction



After restoration as sold in 1998



Current condition

*Credit:- Bonhams*

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