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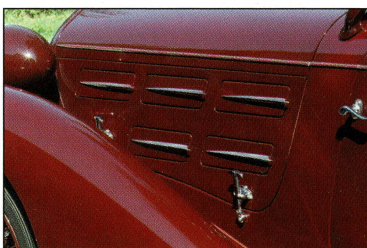
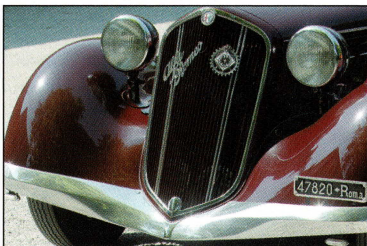


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**ESTIMATE £600,000 – 800,000**

## 1935 Alfa Romeo 6C 2300 Pescara Spyder

*Ex Benito Mussolini & 1936 Mille Miglia*



By the early 1930s, Alfa Romeo was accumulating silverware and losing money in seemingly equal measure. Nigh on bankrupt at the end of the 1932 season, it was rescued by the state backed I.R.I. (Institute for Industrial Reconstruction) but forced to hand over its competition activities to Scuderia Ferrari. Born of the need to attract new customers while maintaining the marque's sporting credentials, the 6C 2300 was launched at the 1934 Milan Motor Show. Successor to the iconic 6C 1750 and stopgap 6C 1900, the newcomer was engineered by the legendary Vittorio Jano. Based around a ladder-frame box-section chassis equipped with all round leaf-sprung suspension, worm and wheel steering and four-wheel finned drum brakes, the model was powered by a clean-sheet 2309cc DOHC straight-six engine.

A decade after designing his first Alfa Romeo powerplant (the 2-litre straight-eight fitted to the P2 Grand Prix car), Jano felt able to imbue the 6C 2300 with such technological advances as an alloy cylinder head, integral crankcase / block casting, seven-bearing crankshaft and partial chain drive for its twin overhead camshafts. Eschewing the superchargers favoured by its 6C 1750 and 8C 2300 predecessors, the new unit relied on improved carburetion and higher compression ratios for more horsepower. Notably smooth and torquey, it was available in three states of tune, the most powerful of which developed 95bhp @ 4,500rpm (some 10bhp up on the blown 6C 1750 Gran Sport).

Quick to realize the 6C 2300's competition potential and no doubt encouraged to do so by the Alfa Romeo management, Enzo Ferrari procured a number of cars for his Scuderia. Although finishing 2nd, 4th and 5th on the gruelling, 3,535 mile long 1934

<b>Reg No.</b>	Un-Reg
<b>Chassis</b>	700635
<b>Colour</b>	Dark Red
<b>Interior</b>	Black
<b>MOT</b>	None



Giro Automobilistico d'Italia - Coppa d'Oro del Littorio was an impressive feat, it was for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd overall places achieved on that year's Targa Abruzzo 24-hours that the 6C 2300 would become renown. A city on Italy's Adriatic coast, Pescara played host to both the Targa Abruzzo and Coppa Acerbo (Enzo Ferrari recording one of his best victories as a driver on the latter event in 1924). Roughly triangular in shape and a daunting 16 miles long, the Pescara circuit climbed through the hills behind the city to Villa St Maria before heading downhill to the village of Capelle sul Tavo in the valley of the River Tavo. From there drivers faced a high-speed run to the coastal town of Montesilvano and then an almost flat-out four mile sprint beside the sea back to Pescara.

Driven by Franco Cortese / Francesco Severi, Mario Taldini / Nando Barbieri and Archimede Rosa / Gianfranco Comotti respectively, the trio of triumphant Scuderia Ferrari 6C 2300 racers were built on the shorter Gran Turismo 2925mm (as opposed to Turismo 3210mm) wheelbase and featured special twin carburettor engines. Aided by a handicap system and aerodynamic Carrozzeria Touring bodywork, they kept ahead of a chasing pack that included no fewer than eleven Alfa Romeo 8C 2300s driven by the likes of Tazio Nuvolari / Raymond Sommer, Guy Moll / Pietro Ghersi and Earl Howe / Tim Rose Richards. Impressively, the winning car of Cortese / Severi covered some 2482.082km at an average speed of 103.42km/h. To celebrate its historic victory Alfa Romeo sanctioned the production of just sixty 6C 2300 Pescara chassis all of which shared the same 2925mm wheelbase and potent twin carburettor engine. Slower but more refined and less temperamental than its supercharged 8C 2300 siblings, the Pescara attracted a select clientele. Though, even the lesser Turismo and Gran Turismo 6C 2300 variants were hardly commonplace with the entire first generation of 6C 2300 production amounting to a mere 758 cars (compared to 1,177 Bentley 3.5 Litres for example).

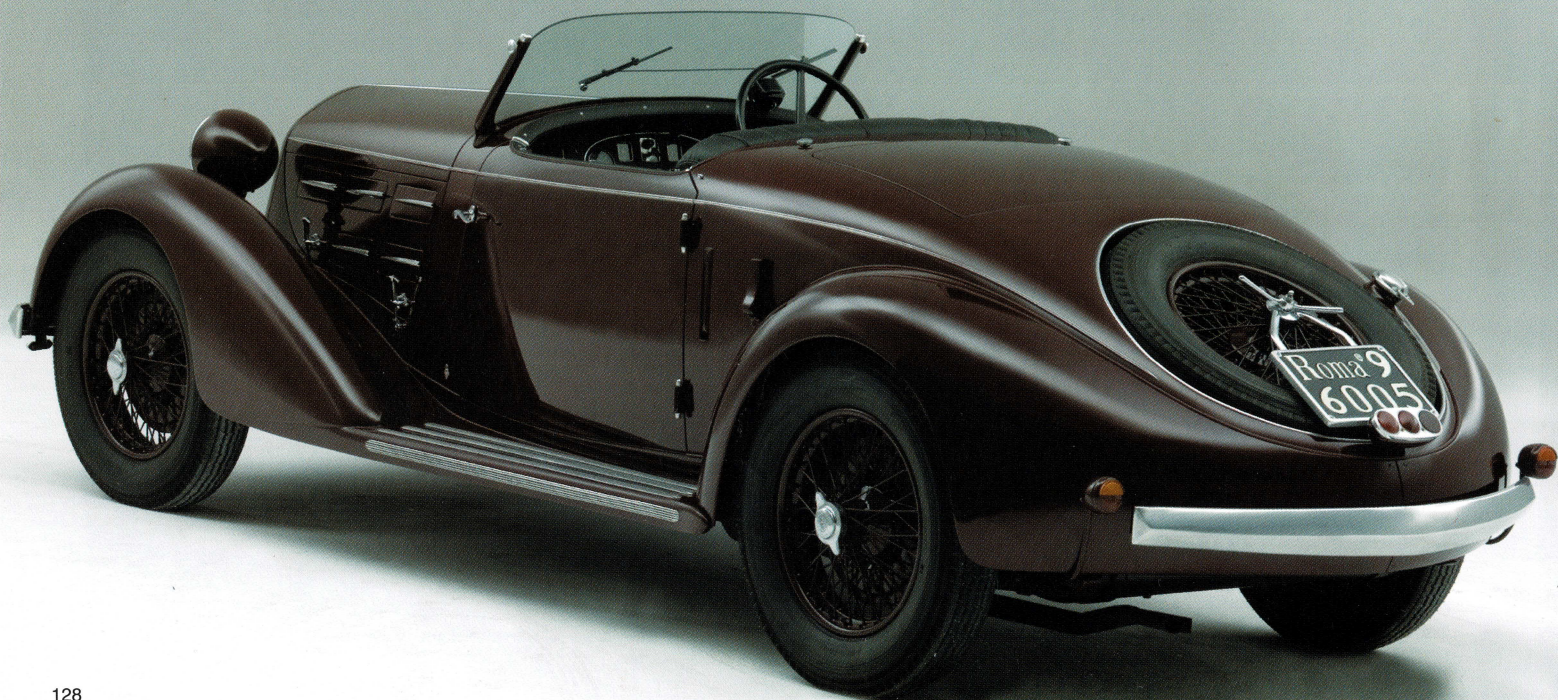
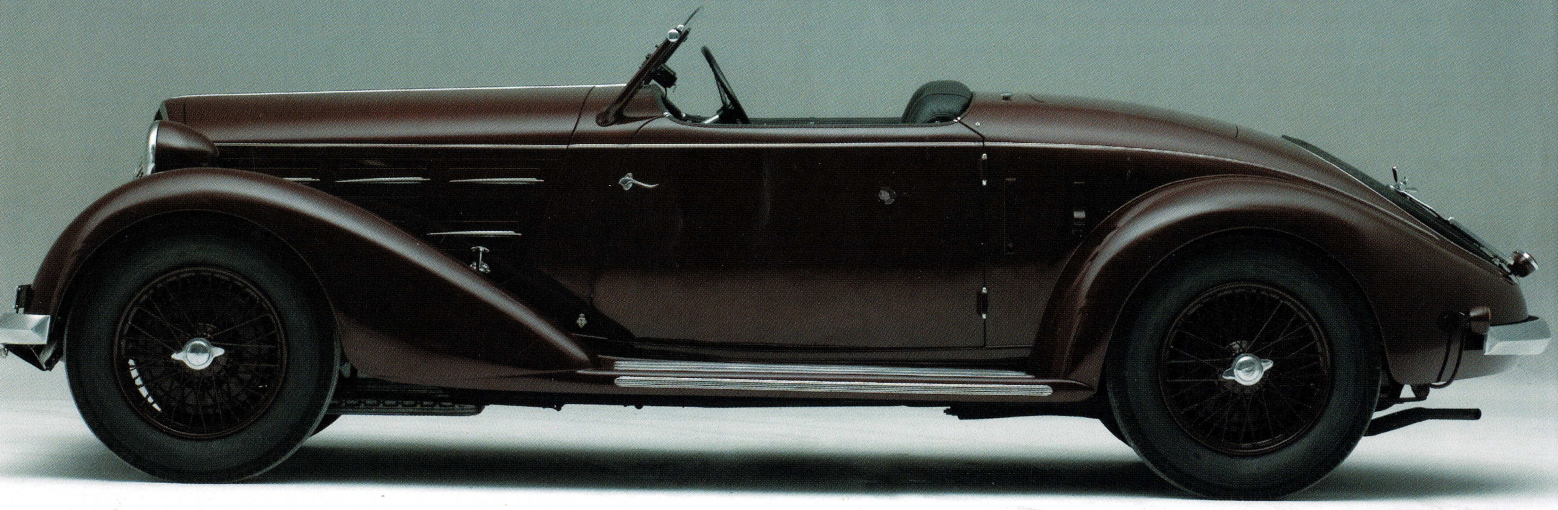


Mussolini on a propaganda tour of northern Italy, 1936 - © Publifoto Milano



700635 on the 1936 Mille Miglia - Controllo Succedanei.







The last 6C 2300 Pescara to be made, chassis 700635 was supplied new to Sua Eccellenza Cavaliere Benito Mussolini on August 10th 1935. A long term supporter of the Milanese marque who once described it as a "national jewel", the fascist dictator owned twelve Alfa Romeo sports cars. Quite why he chose the older 6C 2300 Pescara design in preference to its 6C 2300B Pescara successor is unclear. Although, it may have had something to do with the second generation car being bigger and heavier (the newer design's 3000mm wheelbase chassis was substantially reinforced to allow its freshly developed all-round independent suspension to function properly). Jano seemed to have a particular gift when it came to setting up a beam / 'live' axle car. Indeed, the interplay he achieved between a ladder chassis and its leaf springs has been likened to that between a harp frame and its strings.

The reasoning behind Il Duce's choice of a Spyder is rather more straightforward, especially given the memoirs of his long term chauffeur and confidante, Ercole Boratto. An ex-Alfa Romeo test driver who was at Mussolini's beck and call from October 1922 until July 1943, Boratto was tracked down by 'Dusty' an Italian informer of the OSS (US Office of Strategic Services - forerunner of the modern CIA) in December 1945. Reassured that his memoirs would (a) never be published in Italy, (b) remain anonymous and (c) earn him a 'small lorry' by way of recompense, Boratto settled down to write an incredibly detailed and revealing account of his time with the dictator. Left languishing in the US National Archives Centre at College Park, Maryland for nearly sixty years, the memoirs reveal that Mussolini "adored machines, especially motor cars and parading about in them. He loved to be recognized by the people and to be noticed principally by the female sex . . . If by chance some young thing caught his eye, he was quite capable of taking the same street several times in succession so as to pass by the target woman".

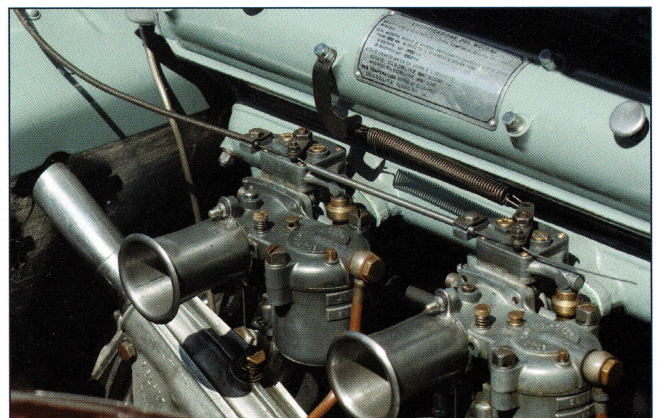
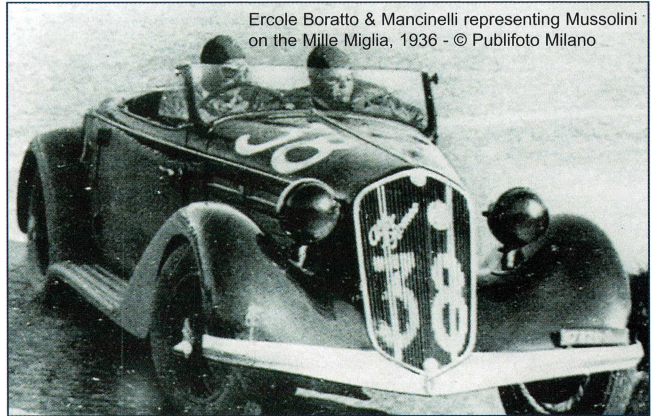
Personally overseen by Carrozzeria Touring founder Felice Bianchi Anderloni, the bodywork fitted to chassis 700635 did not have an easy genesis. Bereft of any bullet proof glass or armour plating, the Spyder was initially rejected by Mussolini (who had undergone numerous assassination attempts) not because it lacked such protective measures but due to the absence of a dicky seat. Rarely without his chauffeur Il Duce perhaps felt the need to accommodate any 'target women' or other passengers he might encounter. Touring took just ten days or so to reconfigure the Alfa Romeo but then again it would be a brave man, woman or child who kept a fascist dictator waiting. Forced to raise the height of the car's rear deck so as to integrate the new 'due posti dietro' seating, Anderloni took the opportunity to mount the spare wheel almost flush with the bodywork (a trick he also used on the Scuderia Ferrari 6C 2300 Berlinettas). These changes in turn meant repositioning the fuel tank, reshaping the rear wings and fitting a discreet foldaway step etc. Concerned that his creation now looked too elongated from the B-post backwards, the Touring founder had the bonnet altered so that its cooling vents ran horizontally rather than vertically thus giving the impression of greater length.

Mussolini was delighted with the result (though, he is reputed to have never noticed the bespoke bonnet) and duly paid 50,000 lira for the Pescara - something of a discount on its true cost. A familiar sight from August 1935 onwards, chassis 700635 accompanied Il Duce on various troop inspections and propaganda tours including one to the Ligurian Riviera. In an attempt to carry favour, Alfa Romeo staged an annual parade for Mussolini during which its latest wares were showcased. Tasked with demonstrating a 6C 2300B saloon running on a 70:30 alcohol / petrol blend, senior test engineer and driver Giovanni Battista Guidotti was disconcerted when Mussolini asked to take the wheel. However, his surprise turned to shock as Il Duce commanded that chassis 700635 be similarly converted to run on an alcohol / petrol mixture in time for the forthcoming 1936 Mille Miglia (a few short weeks away). With the ongoing Italian occupation of Abyssinia drawing international condemnation and sanctions, the fascist state was keen to reassure its people that a number of alternative fuels were being evaluated.

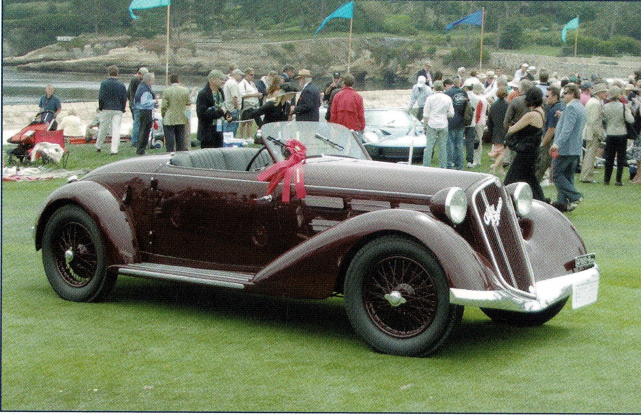
Mussolini conferring with General Badoglio during military manoeuvres, 1935 - © Publifoto Milano



Ercole Boratto & Mancinelli representing Mussolini on the Mille Miglia, 1936 - © Publifoto Milano







Returned to the Alfa Works, the Spyder was hurriedly fitted with an alcohol tank (in place of its dickey seat), second fuel pump and some auxiliary pipework. Although, the car appeared set-up to run on an alcohol biased mixture, it is thought to have run the majority of the race on petrol (something that Guidotti admitted in later years). The only open 6C 2300 of a quartet entered for the 1936 Mille Miglia, chassis 700635 was piloted by Ercole Boratto and Guido Mancinelli. Sporting the number '38' the duo finished a strong 3rd in the over 2-litre unsupercharged class (13th overall) behind team mates Guido Cattaneo / Renato Donati (9th overall) and Vittorio Belmondo / F. Balbis (11th overall). Interestingly, the average speed posted by Boratto / Mancinelli aboard the comparatively luxurious 6C 2300 was faster than that of the Giuseppe Campari / Giulio Ramponi Alfa Romeo 6C 1750 SS Zagato Spyder which won the 1929 Mille Miglia (93.111 km/h versus 89.67km/h). A motor racing enthusiast who had done much to promote and support the Mille Miglia since its 1927 inception, Mussolini was no doubt thrilled at his car's performance and gratified that the RACI and La Domenica Sportiva obediently ascribed it to an alcohol rich fuel!

Reconfigured as a road car, the Pescara remained in Il Duce's possession until November 1939. Bought back by Alfa Romeo, chassis 700635 then passed into the hands of a lesser Fascist Party official who kept it for some three decades. Hidden away at the end of World War II (by which time it had been painted army green), the Spyder was acquired from his relatives by the noted Italian collector and historian Luigi R. Fittipaldi in 1972. Still highly original, the historic sports car was treated to a mechanical overhaul and took part in the Mille Miglia retrospective before entering the current ownership during May 1995. After several years' enjoyment, the decision was taken to restore the 6C 2300 to its former glory.







© The Spitzley Zagarl Archive - 700635 on the 1936 Mille Miglia.





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To this end, the vendor engaged the services of revered restorer Dino Cognolato (whose portfolio includes some of the world's most significant cars and the odd modern Ferrari prototype). Building on the research done by Fittipaldi, the present custodian was able to reunite the Alfa with Carlo Felice Bianchi 'Cicci' Anderloni who vividly recalled it being clothed in his father's workshops and acted as a consultant during the renovation. A typewritten manuscript recording Cicci Anderloni's joy at finding chalk marks made by Beniamino Colli (Touring's head metalworker) on the inner door panels etc is included in the history file.

While, the task of overhauling the original engine (number 700635) was entrusted to respected specialist Gianni Torelli who completed work some 300 kilometres ago. A just reward for all the meticulous care and attention to detail that went into the rejuvenation (including remaking the wonderful alloy bumpers from scratch), the Pescara placed second in class at the 2005 Pebble Beach concours. Going one better at that year's New York concours not long afterwards, the Alfa Romeo has since collected further accolades at the 2006 European Concours d'Elegance in Schwetzingen (1st in class 1931 - 1945) and Vernasca Silver Flag meeting (Best of Show). The subject of a recent article by Mick Walsh in *Classic & Sportscar* magazine (March 2008), the former Mille Miglia veteran seems to have made a favourable impression:

"Turn the large, clockwork-toy-style key in two stages and the fuel pump starts to thrum under the tail. Pull the choke, thumb the black button and the 2.3-litre straight-six wakes easily with a rorty bark. In classic pre-war sporting Alfa tradition, the throttle is in the centre, a button pedal set between higher brake and heavy clutch. Initially it takes real focus but heeling-and-toeing soon feels natural with this unfamiliar set-up. The gearlever sits high on a plinth with gears etched out in roman numerals on the polished gate cover.



First is right and forward in the four-speed 'box, while reverse is nearest in a dog-leg. The ratios are well-spaced in this quality gearbox. Slotting up and down the gate is a rewarding action, aided by Alfa Romeo's then newly developed synchromesh. Thanks to the torquey, responsive engine, the 6C-2300 lives comfortably with impatient modern traffic, humming along at a relaxed 4000rpm at 70mph.

The steering soon lightens with speed and quickly inspires with its crisp, precision feel. Remarkably for a 1935 design, there's no kickback over the bumps because the box is well braced between the crankcase and the chassis rail. Not surprisingly, the roadholding is limited on narrow Dunlops, yet the handling impresses with an unexpectedly neutral bias compared to the oversteering character of Jano's earlier sports car. Even the ride is good, the rubber spring mounts and friction shock absorbers soaking up most bumps . . . it's easy to appreciate why the 6C 2300 did so well in Italian road races. The torquey motor and well-mannered chassis all work for the driver, making it a relaxing car in which to eat up the miles".

As far as we are aware, chassis 700635 is the only first generation 6C 2300 Pescara to have been bodied as a Spyder by Touring. Although, some sources claim that the Milanese firm fitted open coachwork to another such car, the modifications requested by Mussolini (and added to by Anderloni) must surely make this particular example unique. A historically significant prewar Alfa Romeo that has benefited from precious few owners and a concours standard restoration, this exquisite 6C 2300 Pescara is offered for sale with a copy of its original Italian registration document, sundry magazine articles, restoration details and an entry to the 2008 Mille Miglia retrospective.

