

Coachbuilt bodies on the Lambda

by Costanza Lancia and Joachim Griese

For the first five series of Lambda production, the car was available only as an open Torpedo tourer. The only body variation offered by Lancia was the optional Ballon Smontabile, the detachable hard-top which converted the open tourer into a saloon.

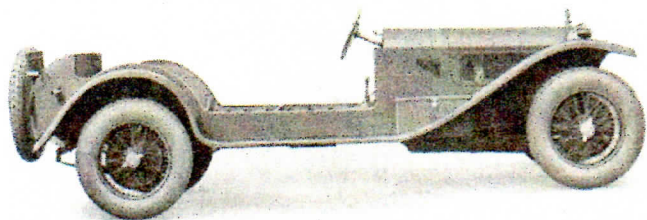
This situation did not please the coachbuilding industry, for the Lancia-built Lambda Torpedo offered little opportunity for the creative skills of the coachbuilders. In the 1920s, there were literally hundreds of coachbuilding companies in Italy – some small, some large – but all dependant on the car makers for their very existence.

Observing the popularity of the Lambda, some enterprising coachbuilders, such as Casaro and Castagna, took on the difficult assignment of converting the monocoque torpedo into something different and distinctive; in the case of Casaro into a stylish two-seater spider, and in the case of Castagna into an elegant four-door saloon.

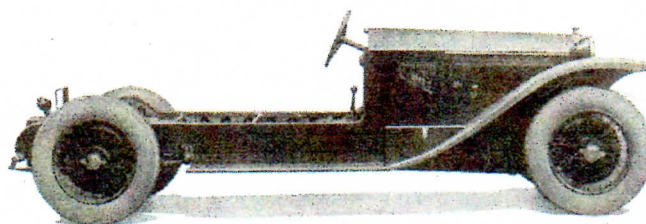
The influence of the newly-introduced Lambda on automobile design was so powerful that firstly coachbuilders and then car-makers began to produce bodies in the Lambda style. Notable examples were Viotti and Montescani on Fiat chassis, and then Fiat itself with the 1925 Milan Show Fiat 501, which at first glance might be mistaken for a Lambda.

Vincenzo Lancia, whose close friends included Battista 'Pinin' Farina, was well aware of the coachbuilders' unhappiness, so when the sixth series of the Lambda, with its longer body was introduced in September, 1925, the series included a 'platform' version, the Serie 217 frame, on which a variety of bodies could be built. All the subsequent series of the Lambda would include a 'platform' version.

In this article, we present (in alphabetical order), an overview of the coachbuilders and the Lambda body styles they offered.



'Platform' version of the 7th series (1, p. 152)



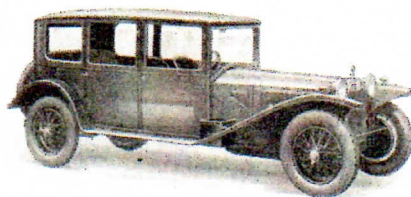
'Platform' version of the 8th and 9th series (1, p. 152)

Albany Carriage Company, London

Albany offered at least seven different Lambda models, including the distinctive 'Streamline' and 'Airway' saloon versions illustrated below.



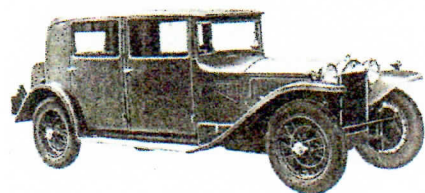
Drop-head coupé - 8th series platform (1, p.160)



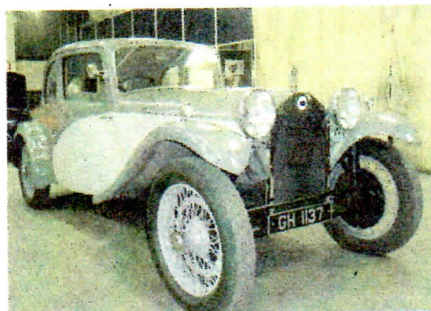
Six-Light Weymann Saloon (1, p.160)



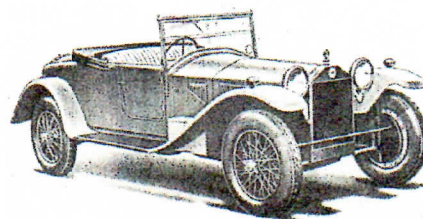
Airway Saloon - 7th series platform (9)



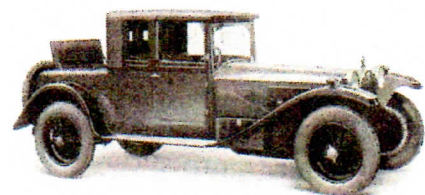
Four Light Weymann Saloon (1, p.160)



Airflow Streamline - 8th series platform (2)



De-luxe two-seater - 6th series platform (7)



Drop-head coupé - 7th series platform (1, p.160)