

# *THE LAST TRIP* WILLYS OVERLAND WHIPPET SIX

## THE FIRST HEARSE AT TERCEIRA ISLAND



**WILLYS OVERLAND  
WHIPPET SIX**  
Hearse  
1926 / 1931, USA  
Metal, wood  
and glass  
MAHD2020.1312

FOTOGRAFIA: LUÍS ELMIRO MENDES  
TEXTO: TARCÍSIO PACHECO, TÉCNICO SUPERIOR DO MAH

### IGREJA DE NOSSA SENHORA DA GUIA 15 DE FEVEREIRO A ABRIL

In October 1943, in the middle of II World War, a British military deployment arrived to the island, under the old Portuguese British Alliance agreement, with the aim of building a runway at Lajes woodlands, to give support to the operations of the Allies military aviation. One year later, the North-Americans would arrive too, to Terceira and Santa Maria. After the end of the war, the British left and the USA settled down at Lajes, until the present. As they stayed, the North-American presence became a preponderant reference and, somehow, erased the British memory. However, while the British stayed in this island, they had to put up a whole life support structure, including, of course, the burial of their deceased ones.

The funeral services of the British community were at the charge of the

mortuary agency Azevedo, an old company, founded around 1883, by João Azevedo, the great-grandfather of the current owners. At the time, the agency was still using manual dollies and horse cars. The new demands poured out the agency limits. Looking for a solution, they talked to the British leaders. The solution was to bring an appropriated vehicle. That was a novelty in the island and it was even necessary to teach one of the agency employees how to drive.

The chosen vehicle was a Willys Overland Whippet Six, a model that went on under production at USA between 1926 / 1931, being its name a reference to the famous racing dogs. It was a commercial success because it was good looking, spacious, fast and affordable.

At Terceira Island, the speed of the Whippet Six was not a relevant factor;

the vehicle was locally adapted as a hearse and all its wooden structure, still in place, was then added. Being used for the deceased "last voyage", a fast trip to the cemetery was not something to be taken in account. When the British left, in 1946, they left the car behind. Later, the Azevedo agency would acquire other vehicles but they didn't survive. What matters is that the Whippet escaped and it was kept in the agency under exhibition until its recent close down. The engine still works and the car can be seen running, in a 1992 video clip from the local rock band RIP, performing the song "Sex (Loveless)". The car will remain now at Angra do Heroísmo Museum, as a deposit and through a partnership with the current owners, the Azevedo siblings, it will go under a careful restoration process, retaking its primitive black colour.