



CITROËN CLASSIC OWNERS
CLUB OF AUSTRALIA
Australia's National Citroën Car Club

FRONT DRIVE

*Australia's National Magazine
for Citroën Owners and Enthusiasts*



June/July 2020 Vol 44 No 1

Postal Address

CITROËN CLASSIC OWNERS'
CLUB of AUSTRALIA Inc.

The address of the Club and this magazine is:

PO Box 52, Balwyn, Victoria, 3103.

The Club's website is:

www.citroenclassic.org.au

Citroën Classic Owners Club of Australia Inc. is a member of the Association of Motoring Clubs.

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Life Members

The committee awards life membership to Club members in recognition of their contribution to, and support of, the Club. Life memberships have been awarded to:

Sue Bryant	2017
Brian Wade	2017
Rob Little	2012
Ted Cross	2012
Peter Boyle	2003
Jack Weaver	1991
Nance Clark	1984

Citroëning

Club Permit applications to VicRoads must be accompanied by a RWC [pre 1949 cars can be inspected by a Club Safety Officer], ownership validation and VicRoads forms endorsed by the club including financial validation.

New Permit holders must supply the Club with approved photos, club permit number and expiry date.

Club permit renewals can be sent to PO Box 52 Balwyn, Victoria. 3103 with a stamped return envelope or signed at club meetings/events if the appropriate officers are present.

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Membership

Annual Membership is \$55 and \$5 for additional members [ie partners]. For overseas membership add \$30.

Meetings

Club meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of every month [except December] at 7:30pm. The venue is the Frog Hollow Reserve Rooms, Fordham Ave., Camberwell.

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Cover Image

The cover image Noela Burford's very rare right hand drive SM being driven by Geoff Burford.

Deadline

The deadline for the next edition of 'Front Drive' is Monday, July 20, 2020.

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Contributors

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Phone: [07] 3351 8327 [if your do phone, please do so at a reasonable hour] or spareparts@citroenclassic.org.au

CLUB SHOP

For Citroën models, memorabilia and other items contact Kay Belcourt at clubshop@citroenclassic.org.au

OTHER CLUBS

VIC	citcarclubvic.org.au
NSW	citroencarclub.org.au
QLD	citroenclubqld.org
SA	clubcitroensa.com
WA	citroenwa.org.au
TAS	citroentas.org

Ed Sed

Welcome to volume 44 of Front Drive. Forty-four years ago, as the very first edition of Front Drive was being posted to members [a slim volume, I am told] Citroën was going through the dreadful experience of being swallowed by its arch-rival, the unremittingly conservative Peugeot.

It was in 1976 that Peugeot acquired an 89.95% stake in its smaller, less financially secure competitor.

The 'Oil Crisis' of the early 1970s had devastated the marque's sales: they dropped from 750,000 in 1973 to 690,000 the following year.

Despite this 1975 had seen some good things for Citroën. The CX had won the 'Car of the Year' award: the brand's second in the decade. Some might argue that had Citroën staggered the launch of the GS and the SM, rather than launching both in the



For those of you who are new to the Club and who may not know me, here is a picture of me [wearing the glasses and holding the champagne] with my husband, Philip.

one year, they could have won three such awards in the decade.

The last DS came off the production line in 1975 as well. On April 24 a Delta Blue DS Pallas Injection was the last of 1,330,755 to have been made.

But the decade had got off to an, apparently, more auspicious start. 1970 saw the launch of two important models in Citroën's heritage. One of them was a huge success which opened the marque to a whole new set of motorists while the other must shoulder [through no fault of its own] a share of the responsibility for the brand's falling into the hands of Peugeot. The fact that a derivative of the former also had a hand in the brand's demise we shall leave for a future edition.

The models in question? The GS, presented at the Paris Motor Show in September of that year and the SM, previously presented in Geneva.

The GS won the 'Car of the Year', and the SM came third. Second? The totally forgettable, and forgotten, Volkswagen K70.

With plans for a big event to mark the GS's half century that model will have to wait until closer to the actual anniversary date. But, this issue has a focus around Citroën's grandest Grand Boulevardier; the SM.

Enjoy,
Leigh F Miles [Editor]

Welcome to the next edition of Front Drive.

As you may know, Russell Wade has retired from his role as Editor. On behalf of the committee, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Russell for the great job he has done over the last few years. Russell always told us he had a fixed term as Editor, and he has delayed his departure a little to ensure a smooth hand-over to our next Editor ~ Leigh Miles who has agreed to move back into the role as Editor. There has been a seamless transition over the last month or two. Welcome back Leigh.

Our club magazine has a very important role to play, and keeps all members informed on events and activities. There are some unplanned changes as you already know, and the next magazine will most likely be sent to you electronically. This has caused some difficulty for a few members, and we are working with them to arrange hard copies as necessary.

The AGM has been delayed, and full details of the new event are on page 7 in A-Tractions. Clearly the final details will depend on the easing of restrictions in Victoria.

Generally, change is good for us, and 2020 will prove to be another watershed year. My favourite saying is – 'it is not what happens to you that is important,

Prez Sez

it is what you do about it'. And Australia has coped very well in these trying times.

One hundred years ago, shortly after World War One and the damaging Spanish flu epidemic, Andre Citroën decided to start a new motor car manufacturing business. He made daring and inspired business decisions at a time of magnified uncertainty, and the Citroën Car company was launched.

Fifty years ago, Citroën introduced two new models ~ also at a time of change. General de Gaulle had passed away, and France once again faced an uncertain future. Times were changing ~ the Woodstock pop festival was launched this year, and we listened to the Beatles, Creedence Clear Water Revival et al.

And we were introduced to the new GS and SM models. Two Citroëns that were very different from anything that had been offered before. Both models went



Prez Sez

on to have good sales, and the GS even won Car of the Year award in Europe. Both cars have become collectable today and we have a few of each in our club.

Yes 2020 is a time of change, and your CCOCA committee is

adapting to the changed circumstances and we plan to start re-opening activities as soon as we are permitted.

Stay safe and I hope to see you at an event soon.

Ted

Please note: Events which were planned for June and July have been cancelled. Events are planned for August, but as the impact of Covid-19 later this year is uncertain, please check with the organiser prior to travelling to any event that may be listed later in the year.

A-Tractions

• August

Raid Australia 2020

WHEN: Saturday, 1 to Friday 28

August

WHERE: Across Australia

COST: \$650pp [adults],
\$325 [children under 13]

The proposed route is a west/east crossing of the continent, with some similarities to the first raid, Raid 88.

The proposed starting point is Baldy in Western Austral-

ia, then going to Wave Rock, Kalgoorlie, Laverton and across the Ann Beadell Highway to Coober Pedy.

Then we will travel to William Creek, Marree and up the Birdsville Track to Birdsville.

After that we go to Longreach, and then Gayndah.

LATEST NEWS:

After careful consideration the committee has concluded that there are too many impediments and unresolved issues for us to run the Raid in August 2020. These include:

- Australian Government restrictions on anyone entering Australia, meaning that they will have to self-isolate for 14 days,
- State Governments in South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland closing their borders to any travel other than essential services,
- The issue of permits to indig-

enous communities being suspended

While these restrictions are temporary, no-one can predict how long they will be in place. The Australian Government has suggested they may last for six months. If this is the case, it will be impossible for us to run the Raid this year.

It has been decided to postpone Raid Australia 2020 for one year, starting in mid-August 2021, with a likely start date of Saturday 14 August 2021. The reason for this slightly later start date is to give those Raiders who wish to go to the World 2CV Meeting sufficient time to do so and still be able to come to this raid.

August Club Meeting: Annual General Meeting & Wine and Cheese Night

WHEN: Wednesday,
26 August

TIME: 7:30pm

WHERE: Frog Hollow
Reserve Rooms, Fordham Ave.,
Camberwell.

COST: Free

BOOKING: Essential, by
Monday, 24 August

RSVP: Helen Cross
0419 356 963

crossfam@ozemail.com.au

CONTACT: Tim Cottrell,
0416 009 297

secretary@citroenclassic.org.au

We hope to be able to re-start the Club's activities for 2020 with what is, arguably the most



important meeting of the year: the AGM! While this would usually have happened in March the lock down precluded that and we were not in a position to hold a virtual AGM at short notice. Revised legislation means the deadline for the AGM has been stretched to September 2. We will hold the AGM at the Club's regular monthly meeting in August. Wednesday, 26 August. There are two possibilities: 1] A REAL LIVE MEETING If the level of lock down allows it, this meeting will go ahead as a 'real, live' meeting. There may be matters of social distancing



A-Tractions

to still be borne in mind, but it is the Club's preferred option. Of course, even if it is possible to proceed this way members may still prefer not to attend the meeting in person. Therefore, completing a proxy form is very important to ensure we have the required quorum for the meeting to proceed.

2] A VIRTUAL MEETING

If the level of lock down remains severe then the AGM will become a virtual meeting, using Zoom as the internet vehicle. Trusting to the internet for the meeting of such a large group may be taking a risk and so completing a proxy form is just as important for a virtual AGM as it is for a real one. Remember, even if we have your proxy and you are able to attend the AGM [either in person or via Zoom] you can revoke your proxy on the night. Three things to do:

- 1] Complete and return the proxy and nomination form included with this magazine/email.
- 2] Keep your eye out for updates.
- 3] Come to the meeting on August 26 if you can or log on via Zoom if the AGM is a virtual affair.

• September

Technical Day with CCCV

WHEN: Sunday, 13 September
FURTHER DETAILS: TBC
CONTACT: Lee Dennes,

0438 286 181

activities@citroenclassic.org.au

Further details for this available shortly. Keep your eyes open for updates on this event.

September Club Meeting: Wood-Fired Pizza Night



WHEN: Wednesday,
23 September
TIME: 6:30pm
WHERE: Il Pizzaiolo,
161-163 Darebin Rd., Thornbury
BOOKING: Essential by
Monday, 14 September
CONTACT: Tim Cottrell,
0416 009 297
secretary@citroenclassic.org.au
WEBSITE: ilpiziola.com.au



Exceptional and authentic Italian wood-fired pizza night. More than your 'average' pizza place Il Pizzaiolo boasts an outstanding wine list and is fully licenced. No BYO. Late bookings cannot be accepted, due to the high demand at this wonderful venue.

• October

Motorclassica 2020



WHEN: Friday 9 to Sunday 11
October
TIME: From 9:00am
WHERE: Royal Exhibition
Building, Melbourne
COST: TBA
BOOKING: Not required
CONTACT: info@motorclassica.com.au

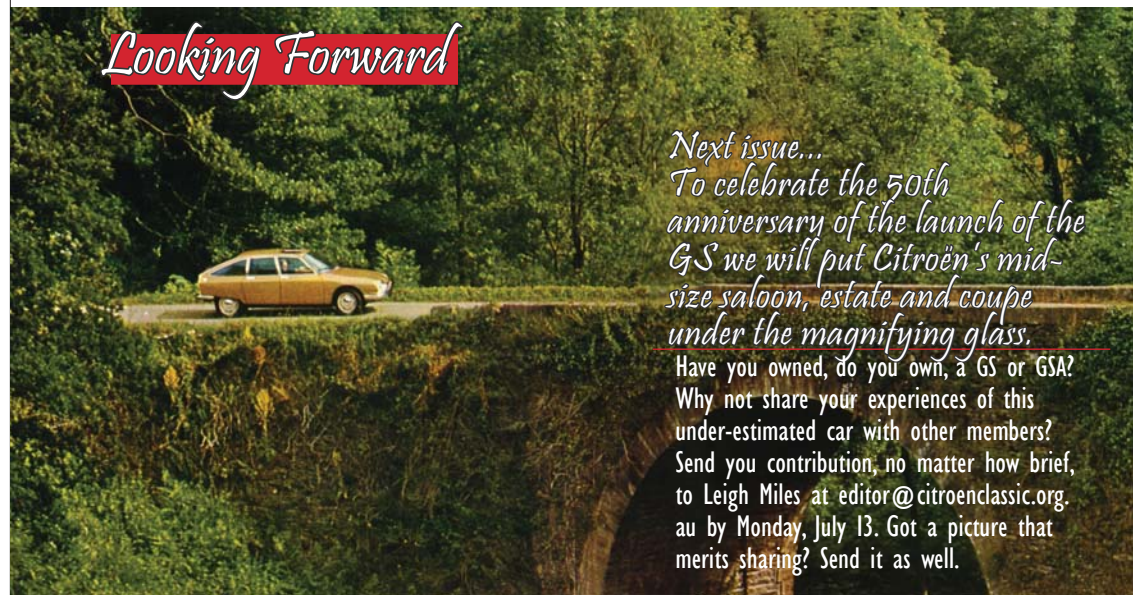
Motorclassica stands on the world's stage as Australasia's largest and most prestigious concours d'elegance and exhibition of classic and new exotic and prestige cars and motorcycles. In its 11th year, Motorclassica draws an affluent and engaged audience from around Australia and abroad for three days in celebration of the motoring lifestyle. Hosted in the world heritage-listed Royal Exhibition Building located in Melbourne, more than 500 vehicles mix with fine food and wine, cinema, educational displays and 100 trade exhibitors. Motorclassica is now searching for unique, rare and beautiful classic cars! Applications for The Australian International Concours d'Elegance are now open.

Looking Forward

Next issue...

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the launch of the GS we will put Citroën's mid-size saloon, estate and coupe under the magnifying glass.

Have you owned, do you own, a GS or GSA? Why not share your experiences of this under-estimated car with other members? Send your contribution, no matter how brief, to Leigh Miles at editor@citroenclassic.org.au by Monday, July 13. Got a picture that merits sharing? Send it as well.



A-Tractions



CITROËN GS/A 1970-2020

• October

Citroën GS/A 50th Anniversary Tour

WHEN: Saturday, 3 to
Saturday, 10 October



FROM: Ararat
TO: Hamilton
COST: \$200pp
BOOKINGS: Now open,
closing 1 September
ELIGIBLE MODELS: GS,
GSA, Birotor
CONTACT: Andrew
Begelhole,
0427 378 423
fdrdcit@yahoo.com.au

TOURING ROUTE:

- Starting in Ararat, overnight stops in Horsham, Ouyen, Renmark, Kingston SE, Mt Gambier, finishing in Hamilton.

ENTRY FEE INCLUDES:

- Welcome Dinner ~ J Ward Tour; entrance fees to The Stick Shed, Nelson Airport Tour; a Pizza Meal and Farewell Dinner.

ACCOMMODATION EXPENSES:

- Entrants are responsible for booking their accommodation and all other expenses.

BOOKINGS/PAYMENTS:

- Available from 1st May via CCOCA website citroenclassic.org.au/wordpress/

FURTHER ENQUIRIES:

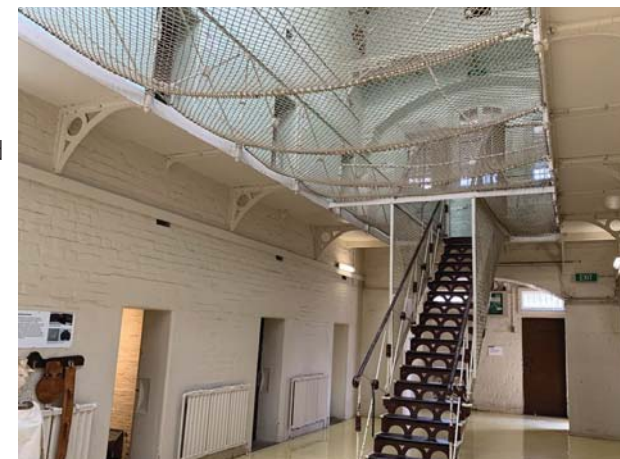
Andrew Begelhole

0427 378 423

fdrdcit@yahoo.com.au

ITINERARY

- DAY 1. Saturday, 3 October
Evening: Welcome Dinner and Tour at J-Ward Ararat
- Accommodation in Ararat
Chalambar Motel
132 Lambert St, Ararat.
[03] 5352 7050
Statesman Motor Inn
79 Lambert St, Ararat
[03] 5352 4111
- DAY 2. Sunday, 4 October
Ararat to Horsham, 120km
Ararat via Halls Gap to Horsham. Time to explore the Grampians
- Accommodation in Horsham
Majestic Motel
56 Stawell Rd, Horsham
[03] 5582 0144
- DAY 3. Monday, 5 October
Horsham to Ouyen 210km
10am The Stick Shed, Murtoa for Group Tour. Then take part in the Silo Art Trail
- Accommodation in Ouyen
Ouyen Motel
9 Farrell St, Ouyen
[03] 5092 1397
Ouyen Caravan Park
10 Calder Hwy, Ouyen
[03] 5092 1426
- DAY 4. Tuesday, 6 October
Ouyen to Renmark 210km
Ouyen, Mildura, Renmark
- Accommodation in Renmark
Renmark Hotel
60 Murray Ave, Renmark
[08] 8586 6755



A-Tractions

- DAY 5. Wednesday, 7 October
Renmark ~ Free Day
- DAY 6. Thursday, 7 October
Renmark to Kingston SE
245km
Renmark, Pinnaroo,
Bordertown, Kingston SE
 - Accommodation in Kingston SE
Lacepede Bay Hotel
1 Marine Parade, Kingston SE
[08] 8767 2444
- DAY 7. Friday, 9 October
Kingston SE to Mt Gambier
170km
Kingston SE, Robe, Beachport,
Millicent, Mt Gambier
 - Accommodation in Mt Gambier
International Motor Inn
200 Jubilee Hwy, Mt Gambier

[08] 8725 4811

- DAY 8. Saturday, 10 October
Mt Gambier to Hamilton
150km
Mt Gambier, Nelson, Dartmoor,
Digby, Hamilton.
10am Nelson Airport Tour:
Farewell Dinner ~ Bandicoot
Motor Inn, Hamilton
 - Accommodation in Hamilton
Bandicoot Motor Inn
152 Ballarat Rd, Hamilton.

[03] 5572 1688

NOTE:

This event will be subject to any restrictions that are in place at the time. Please be aware that any bookings will be at the entrant's own risk and not that of CCOCA. You can register and find further information about this event on the CCOCA website.

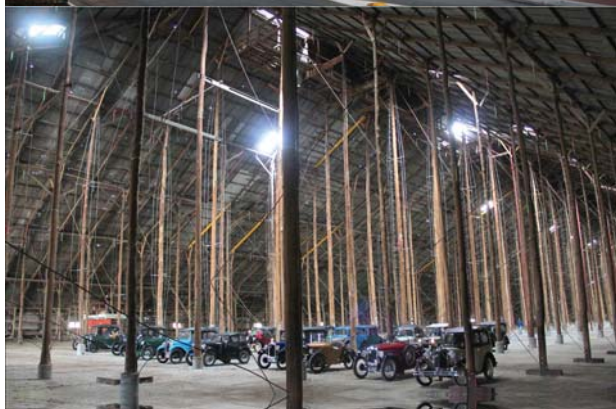
CitIn 2020 Update

CIT-IN 2020 — COWRA, NSW



Following a meeting between the Presidents of all the Citroën car clubs around Australia it has been determined that, due to Covid-19, there will not be a Cit-In in 2020.

The next Cit-In will be hosted jointly by CCOCA and CCCV



over the Easter Weekend in 2021 [2-5 April, 2021]. The location is Bendigo.

CCCNSW will host the combined Citroën Clubs in 2022.

Chit Chat Tuesday

WHEN: 1st Tuesday
1 September
6 October
3 November
TIME: 10:30am
WHERE: Blue Bay Café,
Point Nepean Rd, McCrae.
COST: Cheap Eats
BOOKING: Not required
CONTACT: Warwick
Spinaze
04 0701 6719.

Blue Bay Café is opposite the lighthouse. This is a low key 'DIY' event for like minded Citroën owners to meet and chat.

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One Man's Tale

This photo [below] was taken during the early days; and my grand shelving plans have not yet [still] been realised. On the other side of the long wall is a major train line. This area, being near the town centre, requires that trains slow to 30kph; and it is much nicer to live with the sound of slow trains than any car traffic!

I am at the end of this already quiet alley. People have suggested that I put in a mezzanine, but I won't: it would spoil the beauty of the roof; and I plan to suspend things [like panels/windcreens] from high up anyway. The roof starts at 3.75m height, and is 7m high at the entrance, rising to 12m at the deep end. I have bought an 8m high ladder: fortunately, I like

While you might think this photo has been taken from a corner of Robert's workshop/garage, you would wrong. This 'panographic' image is taken with his back to one of the walls of the brilliant space.

heights.

This is one of those Pano-graphic photos: what appears to be a photo taken from the join of two walls is in fact taken along one single, straight, rear wall of this 29m garage.

The roof is oak with original grey slate tiles [dug up in la Touraine], and the place was built in 1948 as a furniture factory [Menuiserie, operated by Menuisiers]. After an absence, I open the door to a strong perfume of oak; and now I understand why they ferment alcoholic beverages in oak...

Even the old Lav has graffiti on the door frame, the likes of which I haven't seen since a certain school in Queensland ~ same subject/drawings, different

language.

I had my first 'professional' SM client [cars...] last Summer.

A month or two earlier, I got a call from my friends in the Netherlands, asking if I could lend a hand for a French client of his, whose SM was showing some injection trouble.

So I called the guy, a dentist, telling him that an 'SOS D-Jetronic' service was

available from Paris, even that weekend. ☺

I printed off a 'SOS D-Jetronic' sign to stick onto my white SM, looked for a blue beacon to put on top, then flashed down the A6 to Bourgogne to make a house call [merely a pretext for the chance to enjoy a really decent run along the A6, very early morning with beautiful weath-



One Man's Tale

er, strictly observing the speed limit signs as they flashed past...] The dentist's car had done about 10,000km since a total overhaul by a specialist.

As we were sorting out, one by one, the several niggling problems with the injection I noticed a couple of odd rattling noises from the engine. With *certaines de malaises de l'injection*, the engine can be rather rattly at idle; that of itself doesn't bother me [when doing, for example, the initial tuning of a digital injection, a rattly idle is common]. As well, the engine wouldn't develop very much power [although that isn't so obvious to someone who doesn't know the engine well ~ and many of them are 'tired'], nor would it idle particularly smoothly.

As usual, I went about fixing the obvious trouble first, then I would observe again to see what interesting symptoms were revealed.

You might hardly believe it to be the same engine. Before Robert started work [on the left, in case you are in any doubt] and afterwards [right].

After finding and fixing a few obvious problems, I started up the now smoothly idling engine to listen more carefully to its condition...

It rattled, yet the engine was running smoothly. I went a bit white as I began to suspect the condition of the secondary chains, and I strongly urged the owner that we inspect them carefully.

We spent a relaxed while to remove all bits and pieces in order to expose the secondary chains to daylight; and, well, they were loose. **Very nearly** to the point that a camshaft could have jumped a tooth: *à Dieu le moteur; assez vite!*

I suspect that it was thanks only to the gentle driving style of the owner that a camshaft/chain had not yet jumped a tooth.

Only a few weeks earlier, he had taken the car for a post operative service *chez le Specialist*, who looked over the car, then

said, 'yeah, yeah, it'll be fine'.

C'est bien cela, oui...

So I re-tensioned the chains on the spot [by chance, I had the right tools in the boot of my car, having come prepared instead to do electronic work]; and the motor sort of sprang to life afterward. However, there was something still odd; and I suspected that the secondary chains were not good ~ perhaps stretched. In fact, this is the second time that it has happened that I've been on hand to look at an injection problem, only to find that there were loose chains underneath.

With the injection corrected, the owner was already happy to tear off into the sunset: *Stop! Juste une petite seconde...*

With the engine now developing some more power, and

responding more quickly to the throttle, loose chains pose an even greater risk of jumping a camshaft tooth.

So, after I might fix the injection, the driver would then tear off, romping around the fairytale beautiful countryside de Bourgogne [it's just a pity that it all sort of flashes past so quickly], he enjoying the newly lively engine in places where the cameras are few and far between, when suddenly, **'Arrrrrrache!'** the engine destroys itself; and guess who gets the blame? *Merci, mais Non merci.* I insisted that we do both the injection and the chains ~ in order to protect myself...

Back to the original car: well, several months later, the dentist owner being in the south-west, me in Paris, the spares we needed coming from Netherlands, we



One Man's Tale

arranged finally to meet at my garage in Tours for the operation to replace the secondary chains in high summer.

I was quite nervous from the outset 'Christ, I hope he actually notices the difference, after the money he has paid for parts.' I was careful to explain that the object of the operation was to cure the residual engine rattle ~ something which was not that obvious to the unaccustomed ear. I was afraid of finding myself having to explain that we did all of this just for the basic health of the engine, yet without noticing any great difference. It isn't easy to sell that sort of rationale to someone who doesn't hear/feel the symptoms, no matter how important it might be.

In an engine like this, the camshafts must be synchronised with

the crankshaft [timed, just as one does with the ignition], and synchronised with some real precision.

In most engines, there are just timing marks on sprockets

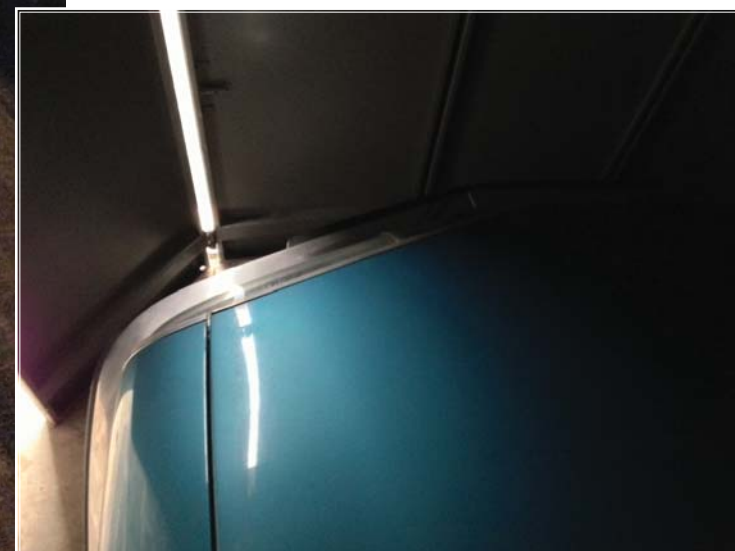
which are all that's necessary to synchronise with each other. Not this engine.

Actually, it does have these timing marks, but they serve just to get the engine into a basic

running condition ~ a bit like the difference between static and dynamic timing of ignition

With the crankshaft set precisely to a certain position, the positions of each of the four camshafts can be set within a precision of $\pm 0.05\text{mm}$ [measured as depression of valve tappets], being the sort of precision one expects to find in a watch movement. In fact, the comparison of this engine with a Swiss watch isn't very far fetched.

Naturally, all mechanics say that they go to the laborious trouble to synchronise the camshafts with correct precision, and charge accordingly. In order to synchronise camshafts for this engine, a special toolkit is necessary [especially when doing the engine in-situ, with very little space around the exhaust cam-



One Man's Tale

shafts]. Just after I bought my first SM, I hunted around and found one of these quite rare toolkits [part of it measures the exact point of Top Dead Centre, and the other part enables measurement of position of all four camshafts, with the engine in the car].

It occurred to me later to wonder, given the rarity of this special toolkit, just how would most mechanics achieve correct synchronisation of the camshafts [which is primordial for peak performance from such an engine]...

Before starting the operation

on this dentist's car, I thought it would be a wise move to not resent spending an extra hour [or more] just to check the existing synchronisation of the camshafts: well, that turned out to be a good idea. All four camshafts were so mal-synchronised as if to have been just dropped into place then bolted down: astonishing!

Hitherto I was nervous about taking some real responsibility for the performance of this engine, but as soon as I realised the state of the camshaft timing, I began laughing: I mean, could I do as

badly? I relaxed into the operation, and really quite enjoyed it

The Dentist helped me. I was happy that he did, not only intrigued by what we were finding, he was thoroughly amused while learning as he went along; and one day I suppose I might come to his clinic to help out with the drilling of a root-canal for one of his patients...

We had to work mostly at night, 'cos the temperatures got over 40° during the day, the roof slates are great thermal conductors, and the garage ventilation is almost zero [in order to keep the place dry during winter].

Because I don't yet have a decent heavy-duty bench with a heavy vice, we had to pull the camshafts out of the engine, then drive some 50km off to a workshop where I am welcome to use their very heavy engineer's vice, just in order to release some lock nuts.

Now, this is another surprising thing which most mechanics must encounter, because the camshaft locknuts require enormous force in order to release, and the [frankly] toy spanner in the special tool-kit just mulches itself on these very special lock-nuts ~ so, ummmm, just how do all those mechanics manage to release them?

The locknuts contain Nylock threads [as well as metal threads]; and Nylock works very well ~

once...

It is common practise to re-use Nylock nuts; and in this case, unavoidable ~ the Maserati lock-nuts have been unavailable for decades. Some decent tightening is necessary in this case, and with some Threadlock adhesive.

One of the techniques of self-destruction by these engines is that any one of the four camshaft locknuts comes loose: the camshaft ceases to rotate, and pistons kiss valves which haven't closed themselves. I have unfortunately known three engines which have so suffered: one of them was salvageable, although one head was irreparably damaged.

So... a few days and some real heat exhaustion later, all was finished, I crossed my heart, looked skyward, repenting like I've never done before [*Monsieur le Seigneur, s'il vous plaît*, the graffiti around the Lav door frame *wasn't* me, honest, I've never even heard some of those expressions...], then we started the engine...

Well, it idled beautifully, and from cold: already a beaming smile on the dentist's face ~ me still nervous 'cos a nice idle isn't yet any sort of real test.

We warmed it up, listened carefully for a while just to be sure of zero rattle [nor any other irregularity], then went for a spin during morning peak traffic in Tours ~ I was glad to be stuck



One Man's Tale

in traffic for a while, because this would prove that the cooling system was coping.

Because this engine was in a bit of a sub-optimal state, this car always had the character somewhat of a Ladies' highway cruising car, without being any more exciting than that. Well, now, It goes like a rocket, and roars like a lion; this compact, light engine feels/responds just as one would expect of a Maserati.

At first, the dentist was a bit startled ~ the engine/car seemed rather different from what he was used to [and while I was busily concentrating, listening/feeling the engine, saying nothing ~ he wasn't sure what to think].

After about 10minutes however, I relaxed: everything was obviously quite alright; and I began to enjoy running around town. In fact, we spent a good hour being rather childish, doing antics which could get us locked

up, then at the lights, almost not smirking toward the young BMW driver who, naturally, expected to find us shortly in his day/night mirror.

Well [sigh] we became Adult again [or, as best we could manage], then went back to the garage to pack up, before having a well deserved lunch, and before the owner set off into the sunset for the south-west [about 3hours on autoroute].

Whereas the frequent frustrations with that engine just ruined any joy of driving the car ; it is once again the swift effortless GT, and the hundreds of kilometres between destinations become a pleasure, every time ☺ Robert le Tourangeau[Paris]

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The 'Right' Story

Motors had been given approval by Citroën to undertake the conversion of the SM to RHD. In the end only three such cars were built, although rumours of a fourth continued to swirl around the internet.

Citroën SM Right-Hand Drive Vehicles: The Right Story

Soon after the release of the SM there was an obvious call for

The last time 'Front Drive' placed a focus on the SM was back in 2014, when Volume 37, #6 put the right-hand drive [RHD] version of the model on show. Since then there has been certain amount of additional digging and certain amount of change of ownership of the cars that were the subject of that feature.

First, some background.

The Citroën dealership at Potters Bar in the UK, Middleton



The car referred to as Car N° 3 in this article. These images are from Julian Marsh's Citroënët website.



The 'Right' Story

RHD version production and the UK factory of Citroën, a vehicle building division in its own right, was commissioned to investigate and report to Citroën France on the feasibility of producing ten [the estimated worldwide RHD market] vehicles per week. Whilst there is every probability that Citroën UK [Slough] would have carried out any RHD building project it was pre-empted when the Managing Director of local Citroën Dealer, Middleton Motors Ltd., Ray Middleton, suggested that he could manufacture the required components and produce RHD vehicles.

Citroën agreed, and in consultation with Ray, working drawings for all right hand drive parts were prepared in France, with the proviso that engineers from Slough

be allowed to progressively inspect conversion work on three prototype factory vehicles supplied by Citroën France. These were to be supplied to Middletons and after conversion, returned to France for final inspection by Citroën engineers.

The factory cars, two carburettor and one fuel injected version, [possibly factory demonstrators] were sent to the UK and converted by Middleton Motors in Potters Bar in liaison with Slough engineers. When the first car was completed it was taken to a hotel in Burnham Beeches and locked in a garage until unveiled for the Managing Director and Chief Engineer of Citroën at Slough to inspect.

It took about three months to complete and conversion was

Geoff and Noela Burford's car at Heka & Co. The second SM would appear to painted Bleu de Brégançon, assuming it is an original colour. Its registration appears to be CSM 7.



originally undertaken by turning the LHD steering rack upside down. A special relay box and gears was subsequently built to convert the steering rack to RHD and this was fitted to the latter two cars and retrofitted to the first. An opposite handed quill shaft was also manufactured to operate the variable power steering. All three cars were returned to the Bureau d'Etude in France for inspection before finally being approved by Citroën and returned to Middletons.

A fourth vehicle, less the parts not required for RHD versions, was sent to Citroën in Slough to be the first production RHD car. This vehicle was never collected from Slough by Middletons, however, as the fuel crisis of the early '70s caused a severe slump in the

sales of the SM which, along with changes to the ownership and control of the Citroën organisation resulted in cancellation of further SM production.

Ray Middleton meanwhile, having been assured verbally of the go ahead of the RHD SM, had set up a factory specifically for the project in Hedley Rd, St Albans, Hertfordshire, UK. [It is possible that some of the final work on the three initial vehicles was completed at St Albans although most was handled at Potters Bar]. Citroën paid for some of the preliminary work such as foam shaping and covering of about a dozen dashboards and all other RHD components which had been commenced by Middletons prior to cancellation.

They were unable to assist

Left to right: John Moyle, the previous owner of Geoff and Noela Burford's car [N° 2], Derek Corpe [the final owner of Car N° 1] and Ray Middleton: the genius behind the project, and owner of Car N° 3.



The 'Right' Story

Middletons in their outlay for, and set up of, the factory however, by arrangement with Citroën, Ray Middleton retained the three RHD vehicles. He later sold the two carburettor versions and kept the fuel injected car for his own use.

Ray Middleton was also responsible for design improvements to many other SMs, among them being fitting of electronic ignition and timing chain modifications, two particular areas where problems were experienced.

After preparing this information John Moyle [who at the time owned car N°2] contacted Ray Middleton who confirmed the accuracy of the information provided by John. John expressed his thanks in particular to the late Ray Middleton, who confirmed and added to information gleaned from other Citroën addicts and his own research, thus enabling him to present this article regard-

On this, and the previous page are images of Geoff and Noela's SM 220 taken while undergoing work at Heka & Co. Again these images are from Citroënët.



ing the three factory approved RHD Citroën SM conversions. Unfortunately, Ray died in August 1994 just after John and his wife June visited him. But subsequent discussion with Ray's wife, Tanya, revealed that he read this information just prior to his death and that he concurred with it.

Barry Lowdell, of BL Motors in the UK and who worked for Middleton Motors at the time of the original work being undertaken, provided some information about the cars. It would appear that all three cars were re-painted when they were with Middleton Motors undergoing conversion.

Car Number One

Citroën SM	Carburettor
Original colour	
Vert des Tropiques	
AC 525	
Final colour	Silver
Registered No	XPP 878
Engine No	302218
Chassis No	00sb0215
Owners	

- i] Citroën Factory, France
- ii] Middleton Motors
- iii] John Zimble
- iv] Derek Corpe

Back in 2014 I was not able to find anything out about Derek Corpe, or his vehicle. CCOCA member Geoff Burford, who was the owner of Car N°2 was able to provide the Club with a photograph of Derek along with the then-owners of the other two Middleton cars: John Moyle and

Ray Middleton. Other than that, Derek remained invisible.

More recently, David Yeo, the current owner of Car N°3 has made contact with him. So, we now know the situation with Car N°1.

Apparently, Derek's car was involved in accident and despite it being repaired he felt it never ran and drove as it did previous to the smash. As a result it sat unloved and undriven for some time. Finally, and reluctantly he decided to scrap the car.

Derek did sell the RHD steering rack and a collection of papers

relating to the car. But, David has not been able to trace the new owner of these items. The only thing Derek kept was a RHD dash top. Unfortunately David deemed the price too high and declined the opportunity to purchase this.

Car Number Two

Citroën SM	Carburettor
Original colour	
Vert Argent AC 527	
Current colour	Dark blue
Registered No	SM 220
Engine No	105127
Chassis No	0059004438
Owners	
i] Citroën Factory, France	



The 'Right' Story

- ii] Middleton Motors
- iii] Jack Aptaker
- iv] AO Dutton & Sons Pty Ltd
- v] Jeffrey Dutton Pty Ltd
- vi] John & June Mole [1990-2010]
- vii] Geoff & Noela Burford [2010 to current]

This, of course, being a CCOCA car, is the one about which we know the most.

This vehicle was bought, having travelled a mere 1,000km, by a Jack Aptaker. After driving it around England for a few months he hired a container and brought the car with him to Australia where it was driven until showing 24,000km sometime in 1984[?]. He then sold it to AO Dutton Pty Ltd.

Duttons completely rebuilt the vehicle using all new parts where

they were still available. The car was dismantled and completely stripped of all original paintwork. It was then repainted deep blue in two pack by Heka and Co Interior components, seats etc were all recovered in mid-dark grey leather by Blackman and Sons. The engine was removed and reassembled using all new parts and incorporating all the timing chain modifications, by John Nicholls. The car was rebuilt with no regard to cost and Jeff Dutton estimated that in excess of \$50,000 was spent on parts and labour during its rebuild in 1988! The car was to be the flagship of AO Dutton & Sons Pty Ltd, but business closedown caused subsequent sale of the SM through a separate sales outlet

operated by Jeff Dutton.

Purchased by John Mole of Melbourne from Jeffrey Dutton Pty Ltd in 1990, he owned and maintained the car for the next 20 years until it was sold to CCOCA club member Geoff Burford in late 2010.

Here John explains how he first became involved in SMs.

In May 1990, my wife and I realised a long term ambition when circumstances allowed us to purchase a Citroën SM from Jeffrey Dutton Pty Ltd, Church Street, Richmond, Victoria. The car was purchased by AO Dutton & Sons Pty Ltd from Mr Jack Aptaker and is one of only three vehicles originally owned by the Citroën Factory and officially built as RHD

versions by Middleton Motors in the UK.

At this time John was told that only one other vehicle was still in existence as the third had been damaged beyond repair. He was to discover, however, the whereabouts of both other cars and more!

During a visit to the UK in June 1994 when he was reading 'Classic and Sportscar' magazine, he noticed the write up of an International Meeting of Citroën SM clubs, to be held in the New Forest area, culminating with a Concours on Sunday June 5 at Beaulieu. John and his wife attended the Concours where about 50 SMs from the Continent and UK were magnificent-

The 'Malaysian' car [N° 3], now painted in period orange.



The 'Right' Story

ly presented, including one of the apparently three remaining Chapron bodied four door models. All were left hand drive.

At the Concours, they were extremely fortunate to meet Derek Corpe, a fellow Citroën enthusiast and owner of Middleton's first RHD SM Conversion [among other SMs]. Derek was able to confirm that our vehicle was the second converted and that the third vehicle was still owned and driven by Mr Ray Middleton. After a telephone call to Ray, a meeting was organized at his home, and Derek kindly arranged to drive John there.

The original colours of the three cars would not seem clear. No 1 was Vert des Tropiques AC 525, which was one of the original launch colours. No 2 was Vert Argent AC 527, a colour first produced in the SM in 1971. But it is claimed that No 3 was originally Bleu Delta AC 640. But this colour was not manufactured until 1974. But the car's first registration in the UK was in October, 1972. The latest update suggests this car was Bleu de Brégançon AC 637.



They spent a couple of enjoyable hours discussing the history of the original three RHD SMs as well as being treated to a tour of inspection of some of Ray's other rare and desirable motor cars.

John, via Geoff, was the source of the photo showing John, Derek and Ray. It was taken on Friday, 10 June 1994.

Car Number Three

Citroën SM Fuel Injection
Original colour Bleu de Brégançon AC 637.
Current colour Orange
Initial Registered No NBH 94L
Current Registered No WBK 8008
Engine N° 300325
Chassis N° 0065000351
Owners

- i] Citroën Factory, France
- ii] Middleton Motors
- iii] Ray Middleton
- iv] Tanya Middleton [1994-96]
- v] Christopher McCarthy [1996-?]
- iv] Andy Drinkwater [to 2017]
- v] David Yeo [from 2017].

I first came across Car N°3 when it was in the hands of Andy Drinkwater. Andy, an Englishman based in Malaysia who had bought the car. Here's what I discovered:

Following Ray Middleton's death in August 1994 the car was transferred into the name of his widow, Tatania [Tanya]. That transfer was made in November 1994.

As an aside, Barry Lowdell also worked at Middleton Mo-

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The 'Right' Story

tors and was involved in the work on the SMs. Today, Barry is the owner of BL Autos in Welwyn Garden City, Herts. Barry and his son, Robert, probably work today on more SMs than any other workshop. They have some 30 cars on their list. If they don't know SMs, no-one does.

Barry remembers this car being quite rusty back in the 1990s.

No more is heard until 1996 when it changed hands. It was sold to Christopher McCarthy of Montana Rd., London and was subsequently shipped to Malaysia.

The car was sold to Andrew

Two images of
No 3 from Andy
Drinkwater.



Drinkwater and the previous owner passed into Andy's hands a fine collection of material relating to the car. At the time of my previous exposé of RHD SMs Andy was travelling and did not have access to his file of paperwork. While he did promise to pass on copies of this, unfortunately it never happened. Today Andy is stranded in the UK, unable to return to Malaysia while that country remains in Covid-19 'lock down'.

Andy's ownership surfaced because he had contacted the UK Citroën Car Club seeking background information on the car. Information has been sourced from both my friend Shaun Lilley [who works for Citroën UK] and Barry Lowdell.

Andrew told me then that he had 'an original letter from the UK Patent Office to Ray Middleton to confirm his patenting of the right hand drive conversion, which is pretty amazing... there are several photos of the car in the UK in 1996 before it came to Malaysia, but I will have to scan these to send to you'. As I say, these never arrived and I am hoping that when he sold the car he passed over this historic material to the new owner. Otherwise, we will have to wait until the re-opening of Malaysia's borders before we can see these.

While the car was still black and white when it was shipped

from the UK, at some stage the car was re-painted orange. At least it is a 'period' [albeit not original] colour, I guess.



L: A photo from David Yeo showing a small area of original paint on Car No 3.

The car was last on the road in about 2000. So it probably has not run for over two decades.

In 2017 Andy realised that the work required to get this car back up to scratch was beyond him and he made the reluctant decision to sell it. David Yeo, is the new owner. David had tried to buy the car at the time Andy

The interior of No 3 when it was delivered to its new owner, David Yeo. Some might suggest that time has been rather the enemy of this car.



The 'Right' Story

bought it. So it is perhaps fitting that it has ended up in his hands.

David purchased Andy Drinkwater's SM in 2017. He is particularly interested in this vehicle as it is the last of the official right hand drive conversions and was Ray Middleton's personal car.

It arrived in the UK in a container and delivered to David on a transporter in May 2017. He had the pleasure of meeting Andy as he came to David's home to ex-

plain the work he had completed before selling it.

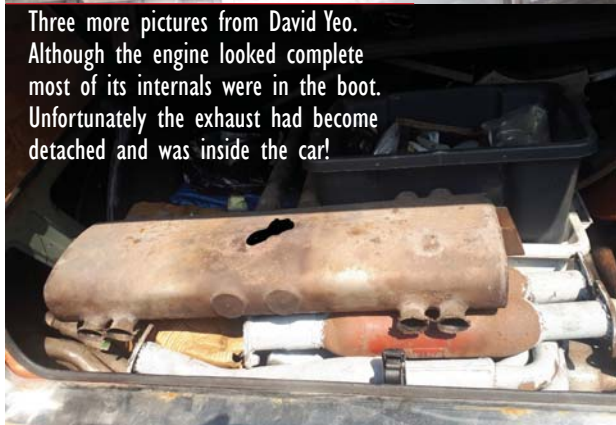
Although the engine looked complete, most of the internals, pistons etc were in the boot! Unfortunately, the exhaust had become detached and was in the car.

David has also passed to us a number of photos of the car in its present condition. But, David is currently renovating his other [regular] SM. Progress has been slow due to surgery on his shoulder and a delay from the body shop. However, once this project is finished, he intends to restore Andy's car to the nearest he can get to the original condition.

As a step on that path he has managed to retrieve the original registration number so, hopefully, it will look like it did in 1973 when Ray owned it. There is of course the question of the hideous orange paint... about which the less said, the better.



Three more pictures from David Yeo. Although the engine looked complete most of its internals were in the boot. Unfortunately the exhaust had become detached and was inside the car!



Car Number Four?

David has also been on the trail of the 'Stondon Car'. When I was working on the original version of this feature, back in 2014, I kept coming across references to a RHD SM that was in the motor museum at Stondon in Bedfordshire. I had previously been to this museum and did not recall having seen a RHD SM on display. Nor could I find reference to any such car on their website.

But, David has been more successful. He wrote to say: 'An SM in a Stondon motoring museum was advertised on an auction site. Having spoken with the owner's son, he said it was a registered RHD car. When I looked at the car, it was incomplete. A very poor attempt to convert it had been made. The dash and centre gauges were crudely constructed, the steering rack had

been turned over, but was not connected, the clutch master cylinder had been changed over but the brake pedal didn't appear to be connected to anything'. David has kindly supplied a few photographs of this car. Unfortunately they are not in the best condition, but we have nothing else!

Whether this car was originally registered as RHD remains a mystery, but from David's words and the pictures it would seem unlikely.

Leigh F Miles with information from Geoff Burford, Andy Drinkwater, John Moyle, David Yeo and sundry others.

David Yeo located, and photographed the 'mythical' fourth RHD SM from the Stondon Motor Museum.



Conquering Space

Citroën celebrated its centenary just last year. Let us now rediscover the fabulous SM. But not just any SM, because the one tested here is unique in the world...



The Citroën SM, a superb swan song of a certain style of French prestige, is a reflection of its time. During the years of its gestation, the era was full of great ideas. Man walked on the moon, he flew for the first time in Concorde while the formidable wind of freedom drove half a million people to Woodstock.

Conquering Space

This faith in technical progress and this libertarian typhoon, where everything seems to be allowed, has pushed the house of Citroën to shake up its habits. Far from the laborious 2CVs of the 1950s, uniformly gray, the Quai de Javel firm indulges in the luxury of buying Maserati in 1967. Nothing less! The first child of this unexpected marriage is the SM. The Italians were responsible for designing a beautiful engine. To the French fell the heavy mission of uniting revolutionary technological content and striking style. It was a perfectly successful bet: she was the star of the 1970 Geneva Motor Show.

'Neither a sports car, nor a

Just lift your eyes to admire the work done by Heuliez: there is little buffeting when the roof is open and the sound of Italian V6 is amplified

luxury limousine, nor a prototype for tomorrow's road safety, the Citroën SM combines these three concepts into a homogeneous whole', asserts the press release. An indefinable rolling saucer, the SM moved Citroën into unknown territory. Contrary to firmly entrenched legend, the car is regarded as an immediate success. 4,988 examples were produced in 1971; that is as many as the beautiful Fiat 130 Coupé [one of its rivals] sold in six years! With this success came ideas for derivatives. Why not make a 'decouvrable'?

Targa and Miura...

There were persistent rumours that the United States

would ban convertibles and the only solution to 'open motor-ing' was to follow the path of the Porsche 911 Targa with its arch to protect the occupants.

Anticipating the future and riding the wave of enthusiasm generated by the beautiful Citroën, the French coachbuilder Heuliez presented at the Paris Salon in October 1971 a skilfully 'cut' SM named Espace.

The Poitevin designer, taking advantage of the dividends from his juicy 'Robust Steel' patent [used by 600,000 school offices...], really took care of the finances for this new achievement. Lurid purple paint, Lamborghini Miura-style shutters, chrome bezels, rectangular tailpipes and two-tone upholstery were deemed sure to impress.

But it is especially the roof that attracts attention. Seven strips on each side which retract

electrically into a central beam invisible from the outside but providing much needed stiffening for the whole body. This rather brilliant solution has neither the defects of a soft top, nor those of a rigid roof which is difficult to manoeuvre and can totally fill the boot.

A button activates all the windows at the same time as the two roofs. The height of refinement; a glass panel ~ as later fitted to the XM ~ between the rear passengers and the boot ensure those in the rear avoid wind swirls. Finally, the roof closes automatically at high speed. With all these clever details, its minimal visual impact and its practical aspects, the system seems to have

Below It takes a careful look to realise the differences from a standard SM. So the brown leather interior is similar to that of the 'factory' coupe. Right: The two large openings allow the most to be made of the cabin, with a refined design furnished with leather upholstery. Both are taken from the production coupe.



Conquering Space

a bright future.

Our colleagues from L'Automobile concluded in November 1971 that 'the forecasts relate to 150 models per year'. But the era is no longer about conquering space for Citroën, because the accounts are all red. There will only be one, that of the 1971 Salon which is before you now.

Twenty Years Ahead

It has long been whispered that two copies had been built. It would seem that the blue car is, in reality, that of the Salon [which we thought destroyed], fairly modified in 1972. Some details

Opposite: There are very few documents left relating to this exuberant SM. But this is the same car, with modifications, that was presented at the Paris Salon in 1971.

were forgotten and the passenger compartment is lined with 'natural leather' according to terminology dear to Citroën. [It was already the name of the DS Pallas' brown leather in 1964].

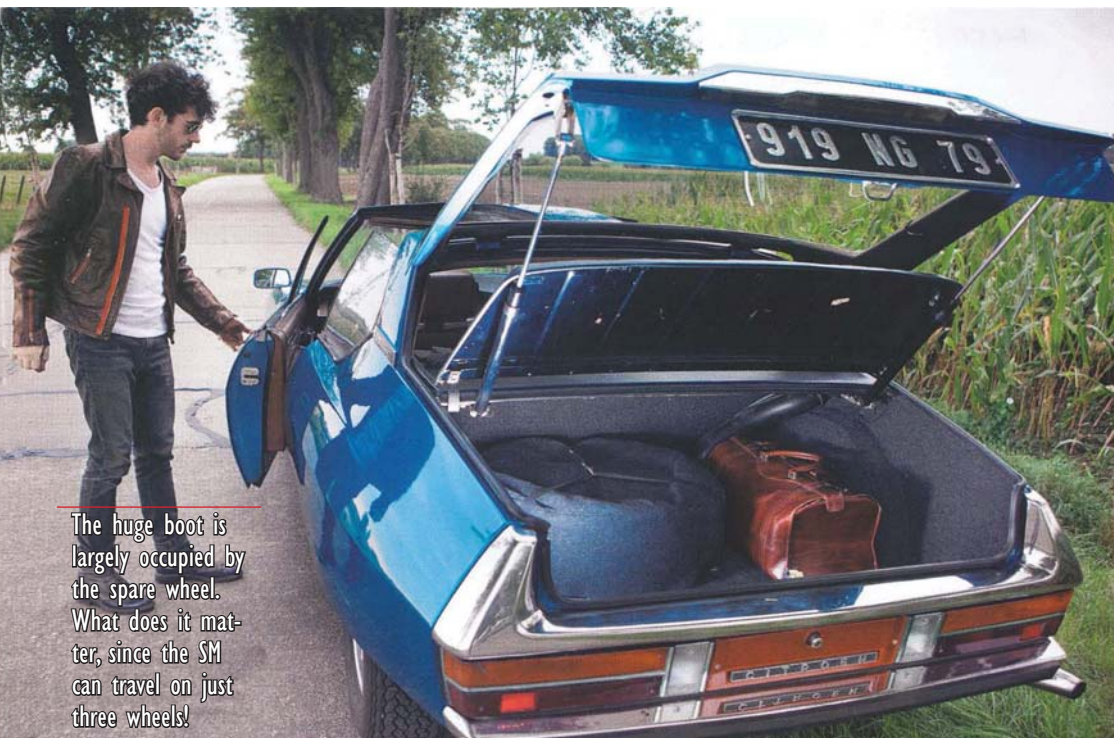
It was little used before being stored in the warehouse of the bodybuilder Heuliez. It was not until July 7, 2012 that this unique SM changed hands. Heuliez had gone out of the convertible rooftop-making business in 2010 and its electric vehicle elements were acquired by Franco-German group Baelen Gaillard Industrie-ConEnergy-Kohl and were re-named Mia electric which itself

ceased business in 2014.

It is therefore in an exceptional state of freshness that the beautiful blue SM is offered to me.

The SM has fascinated me for over twenty, and yet its line still raises a nagging question: is it beautiful? The visual impact is striking from the front. A mouth of shark marked by six eyes under glass, 17cm wider than the Alfa Romeo Montreal and BMW CS which do not box in the light weight category.

One of the secrets of stylist Robert Opron to refine the silhouette comes from the DS: the rear tracks are narrower by twenty centimetres than the front tracks. The result is a tear-drop shape, tapered, sculpted by the wind. 'No free style exercise, no copy of Farina or Bertone. Neither a hybrid, nor an experimental machine, nor a false sport: it is a Grand Touring which, on paper at least, is certainly twenty years in advance', affirm our colleagues from L'Automobile. This presumed advance is certainly stylistic, but above all technical.



The huge boot is largely occupied by the spare wheel. What does it matter, since the SM can travel on just three wheels!



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Conquering Space

The best way to find out is to get behind the wheel.

Devilish Reputation

The SM carries a sulphurous reputation. Sub-motorized for some. Too disconcerting for others. Because if its line can intrigue fifty years after its release, it is nothing compared with the driving sensations that, frankly, astound.

As soon as the seemingly endlessly long door is closed, you do

Disconcerting, the Citroën might be, but the SM claims a certain addiction. And once you taste it, its unparalleled stability and its 'diabolical' direction hit the bull's eye.

sit in a very curved seat, adjustable in an infinite number of positions, including the headrest. The steering wheel, also adjustable in height and reach, is downright oval and quite soft. We are already scared when trying to take in this mushroom-shaped brake, the stroke of which must not exceed one centimetre. Despite all these details, the SM knows how to charm you. The driving position is more rational and natural than on a DS, while the quality of

the leathers, the highly sought-after design of the dashboard and this superb gear lever grille are enough to move you.

Contact. The three carburetors open, the V6 snores contentedly with a surprising sound. Under 3,000rpm, and especially when it is cold, its hammering [almost a knock] is really pronounced, probably because of the 90° V6. That is an angle rather more suited to a V8. As a good Italian, it has four overhead cam-

shafts and a short stroke, suggesting an appetite for high speeds. But before all that, it is necessary to domesticate the beast. Wait for the accumulator. Then the brakes, which require a feather light touch.

But the real oddity remains this diabolical steering with variable assistance named Diravi. One turn is enough to turn the steering wheel fully. Let go of it, and it returns to the midpoint on its own, even when stopped. It is

In addition to the buttons controlling the opening from the roof, this plaque signed Heuliez reminds us this is a very special SM.



Conquering Space



Conquering Space

therefore necessary to take control of the steering, understand its habits, and never let the steering wheel return



quietly to the centre by letting it slide in the palm of your hand. Steering is therefore 'imperial', even at high speed.

'The SM is piloted like an aeroplane. Those in charge of its management were able to wrest from the sky and nail down the smoothness and liveliness inherent in aeronauts', wrote André Costa in L'Auto-Journal.

Now that the contours of

the beast are outlined, let's finally open this intriguing roof.

Eternal Regrets

The central beam is not as imposing as I imagined, and the compactness of this complex roof, however, commands admiration. The ceiling controls irresistibly evoke aviation. Without a centre [B] pillar, the SM Espace really gives you the impression of being in a convertible. The V6, now warming up, just waiting to take turns. The excellent gear-lever gate gives the driver a 'clack-clack' Ferrari style with each gear change. Exhilarating; all the more so as the supple damping specific to hydropneumatics always has the ability to surprise.

When accelerating, the nose rises like a Concorde on take-off... less thrust, because the engine sings more than it slaps you into the back of the seat. The sound is transformed, becoming hoarse, cavernous, and frankly quite bewitching. Of course,

After the Matra 530, the Citroën SM also gave a boost to the fashion for oval dials.



Conquering Space

the sunroofs allow you to enjoy it more. Balanced, perfectly stable, the SM could support a few more horses, although interest seems limited to me these days. On a highway, the closed roof does not generate any extraneous noise. A real success. In the end, this vessel exhales perfumes with amazing sweet/savoury mixtures.

It may be seen by some as a mere caricature of Citroën starting with its suspension, braking and steering, it is also a real Italian GT, stylish, melodious, precise. Thus modified by Heuliez, the SM is even more pleasing: keeping the advantages of the coupé, it has the advantages of a decouvrable one. No doubt it would have seduced the public; It remains a spellbinding museum



piece leaving, like the Concorde,
the feeling that History is some-
times cruel...

A huge thank you to Cady Cars [www.cadycars.be] and in particular to Thierry Dehaeck for the loan of this priceless jewel.

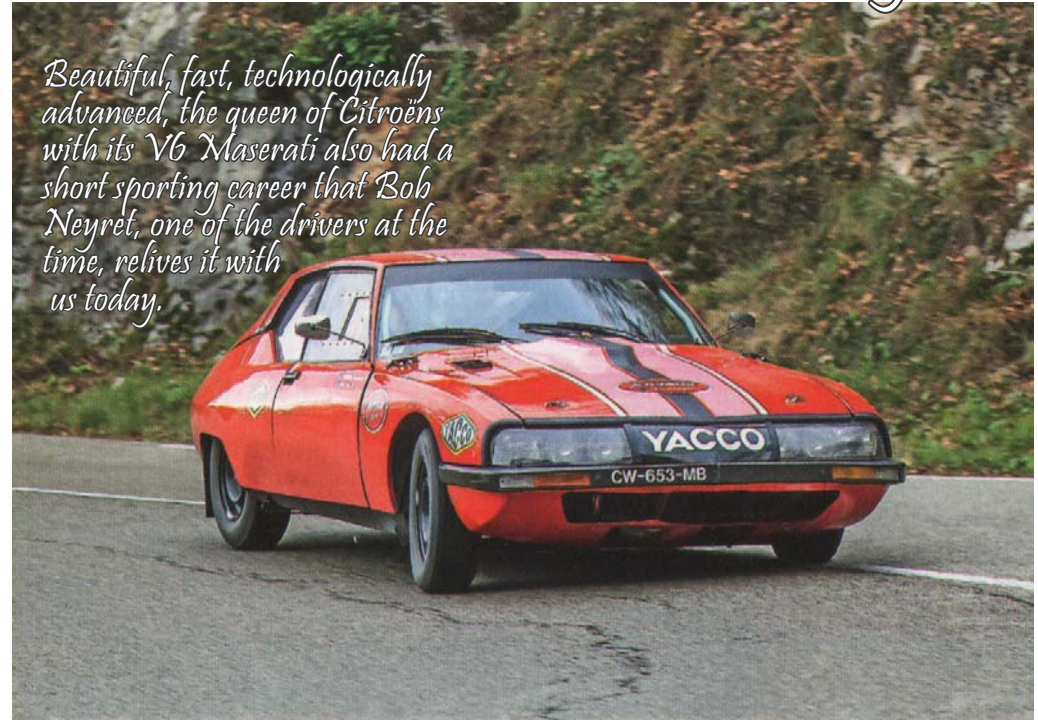
© This article first appeared in the French motoring magazine *Rétroviseur*, and is from the Editor's collection.

During Restoration

After much research the owner of the car tested here has the proof that only an SM Espace was manufactured, and not two as a tenacious legend asserted. Shortly after our test, the decision was taken to return this car to its original state. 'We're going now continue this restoration in order to put the car in the original configuration, as it was presented at the Salon Auto 1971 on the Heuliez stand', says its owner Thierry Dehaeck.

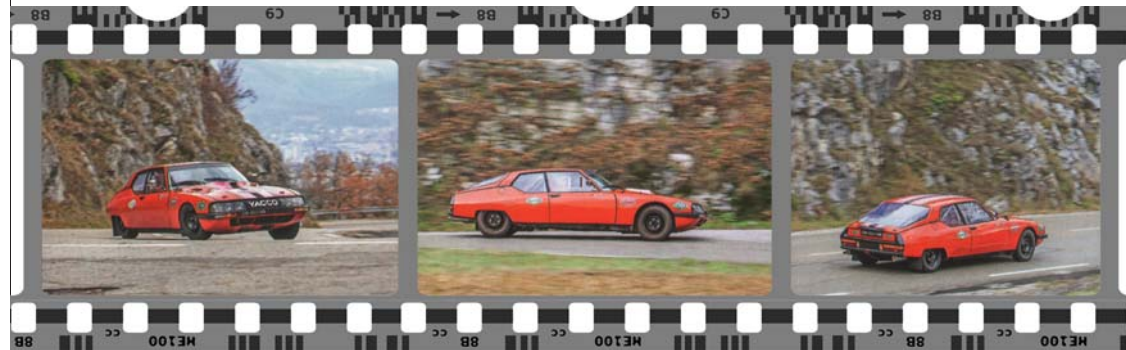
Sa Majestié

Beautiful, fast, technologically advanced, the queen of Citroëns with its V6 Maserati also had a short sporting career that Bob Neyret, one of the drivers at the time, relives it with us today.



Working on the last Epoqu'auto show in Lyon I crossed paths with my friend Robert Neyret ~ Bob for friends and his countless fans. 'Say then', he said, 'you who are always looking for cars for your maga-

zine, why not came and visit me in Grenoble and try out a racing SM before the Monte-Carlo. You won't be disappointed'. He is a man who does not make empty promises I grabbed my phone immediately to get 'authorisation from our editor' to head to Gre-



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noble and get the session with Robert on the road!

A Dream Citroën

A few days later, I was strapped into this cabin, enmeshed in a tangle of tubes worthy of one of the last WRCs. In front of me, it is only the astonishing oval steering wheel which reminds me that I am well on board what France has perhaps done best in terms of Grand Touring during the 'Thirty Glorious Years'.

It must be said that the Citroën SM occupies a special place in our collective memory, halfway between the Concorde super-sonic and the sports car. This long

coupe with a breath-taking line drawn by the pencils of the styling team of the Citroën design office then headed by Robert Opron. Its resolutely futuristic interior will have made young and old dream!

Personally, I have fond memories of it, since sometimes our neighbour would take me on her SM to take me to primary school. I remember these seats, whose leather-wrapped saddlery evoked a design closer to a NASA vessel than that of the simple cars that clogged our roads. Even at a standstill, 'Sa Majesté' spoke of speed with that tapered bow, its six head-

lights coiled behind their display case glass and its plump hips. A real diva!

Later, with 'permission' in my pocket, and long before I became a tester, I had the chance to get behind the wheel of an SM thanks to a friend who had, against all odds, bought himself one. Although inexperienced at the time, I remember being amazed by the agility of this long car; the easier it was to drive as the speed increased. An incomparable, unclassifiable car.

From the Left Lane to the Track

I keep experiencing a curious feeling. Imagine yourself on a flying carpet. Again, that's exactly the impression that those first few kilometres left with me after being aboard my friend Bob's SM. Except that today, I am strapped into the bucket of a racing car! If, in 1970, the SM was to be the mobile expression of French Grand Touring, the car would also have to be engaged on all fronts in competition. In rallying, of course, where it succeed-

Left to right:

1 Weight reduction: The side windows in polycarbonate, as well as that of the quarter panel, participate in the hunt for weight loss. Only the windshield remains in glass.

2 Instrumentation: Easy to read from the co-pilot's place, the pressure and fluid temperature instruments make it possible to monitor the mechanics.

3 Hydropneumatics: As a good and genuine Citroën, the ride height of the SM Group 5 is always adjustable thanks to this control lever!

4 Handbrake: Attention, the handbrake control acts on the front and not rear wheels: do not pull on it inadvertently, otherwise you will be surprised!

5 Fuel Tank: The filler with a non-return valve supplies a tank repositioned in the middle of the car in order to centre the suspended masses.

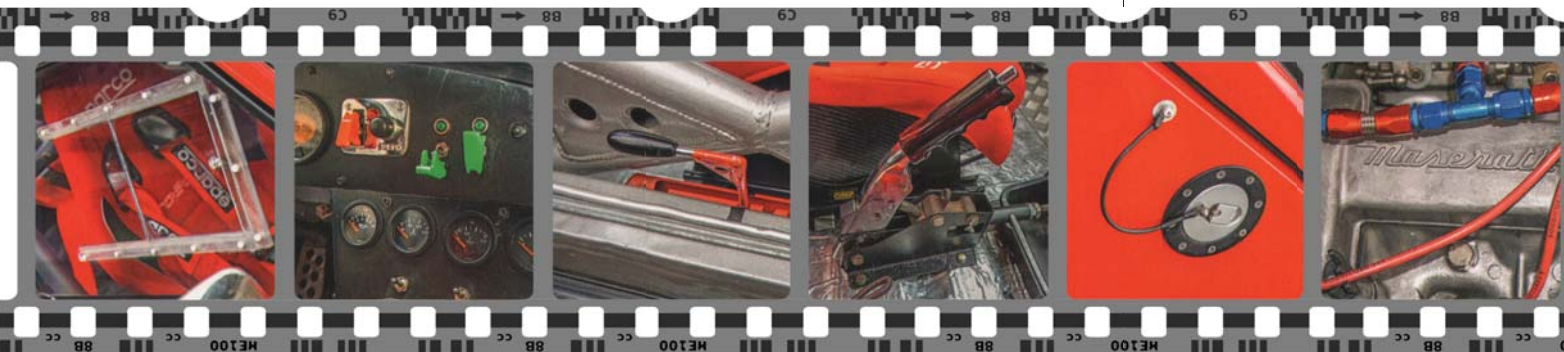
6 Engine: The Maserati V6 participates in the magic of the SM. Here it's the 3litre Maserati Merak SS and SM with automatic transmission. It delivers 250hp!



**'I returned to service.
The SM did too!'**

Bob Neyret

With more than 150 rallies contested, nearly 500 starts in motor racing ~ all disciplines combined ~ and the chevrons tattooed on the heart, we would happily spend hours listening to the story of the adventures of driver Bob Neyret. 'The SM coupés had left me with great memories. The one I had at Bandama was over 300hp and, at the wheel I swallowed connections at 203kph on average! Compliant with Group 5 of the era and inspired by the super light version that Chasseuill and Migault used at Spa in 1974, it was a very efficient car that I had built by Michel Boutais at Atelier 524. With the advent of historic racing, I returned to service and created Team Bob Neyret which rents DS to run events like the Acropolis, Portugal and the Monte-Carlo Historique where the SM that you tried will be at the start in a few days. We are going to engage him at Tour Auto where his versatility should make him a hell of a customer! We can't wait to see that.



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ed the robust DS which, lacking power, struggled to win against Group 4 from Alpine, Ford or Porsche. But also, and this is less known, on the circuit, with three participations in the Spa 24 Hours in 1971, 1972 and 1974, a victory at the Dakar 6 Hours in 1973, a non-qualification at the Le Mans 24 Hours 1972 and two participations in the Automobile Tour de France in 1972 and 1974.

Far from the prototypes that

participated in the 1972 Portugal rally and in the Bandama 1973, the car that Bob lends us today is inspired by the versatile SMs that engaged in the Tour Auto. Lightened to the maximum with a weight that slightly exceeds a tonne, it incorporates the weight loss solutions already seen on SM prepared by Automobiles Ligier Maserati to be used at Spa and Tour Auto and whose bodywork used elements... plastic!

Bob's Weight Loss

To lose 400kg required the use of polycarbonate side windows, bumpers, doors, wings and plastic headlight covers while only the roof remains in steel for reasons of rigidity. Under the bonnet, we find the Maserati 'Af-fleri' 3litre V6 common to Maserati Merak and mated in the SM to an automatic transmission. [Both the 2.7 and 3litre standard series SM were available with ei-

ther manual or automatic transmission. While the manual 2.7litre car outsold the automatic by 16:1, the 3litre automatic outsold the manual version 2:1. Ed.] Delivering 250hp [186kW], it thus



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offers a weight/power ratio of 4.2kg/hp which promises great velocity.

Our mission for the day was to go and check this enticing promise in the Vercors Massif. Leaving the Grenoble suburbs, susceptible to traffic jams, is done without problems although the incessant slowdowns allow me to take this beast in hand and appreciate its 4.9m length.

No joke, with a width of more than 1.8m at the front bumper, you have to mentally integrate your size because the roads that meander towards the heights of the Massif are very narrow in places. My co-pilot does not fail to point out to me that I shave the rock walls a little too much!

Competition SM

The price we pay for the slow pace necessary for the static photos that we have just taken

is that the V6 is running on five cylinders. Fortunately, the more altitude we gain on the road to Saint-Nizier, the scarcer the traffic becomes.

The sixth cylinder having returned to life, I can finally open the throttle butterflies wide. The V6 goes from the hum almost concealed by the 'pschitt!' emitted by the circuit breaker of the hydropneumatic circuit, to a raucous rumble that climbs in the treble at the start of 5,000rpm in the greatest tradition of Italian mechanics. Magic...

The view is panoramic; nothing disturbs my gaze which is dominated by the huge bonnet which is surmounted by the bulge necessary for fitting the three voracious Weber twin throat carburettors. Lively? The SM is very reactive because of its very responsive steering which seems incredibly direct and whose absence of feedback requires adap-

tation time and prohibits sudden wheel swings.

The suspension is far firmer than the original and seems capable of swallowing anything you throw at it. Hardened with a higher nitrogen pressure in the spheres, it offers the car an almost constant attitude and only the hair-pins approached at high speed show a roll. Nevertheless, the hydropneumatic works wonders, whether pressing on or in driving comfort, which is quite rare aboard a racing car of this era!

The stability is such that I decide to let go of the steering wheel at a good pace to discover that the SM does not drift, not even by a centimetre. Extremely well balanced with an optimised weight distribution thanks to the repositioning of the fuel tank and the almost central position of the V6, the SM has an front/rear mass balance of 55/45% on its axles. A

Long but agile. This SM surprises with its ability to pass through curves. A real flying carpet.

Characteristics Techniques

Citroën SM GROUPE 5, 1971

V6 engine open at 90° in longitudinal AV position, all aluminum, 2,695cc, [91.6 x 75mm], 250 hp at 6,500rpm, 30 mkg at 4,500rpm, displacement ratio nc., 2 overhead camshafts per row of cylinders [chain], forged crankshaft 4 bearings, 3 Weber 44 DCNF double-barrel carburettors.

Transmission to front wheels. 5-speed ZF gearbox.

Rack-and-pinion steering, turning diameter 11.5m.

Dual circuit brakes with load distribution and assistance, front / rear discs. Suspension with 4 independent wheels. AV with parallelogram, AR with trailing arms. AV/AR hydropneumatic suspension with spheres, height adjustment and stabiliser bar.

Structure/Bodywork: plastic bodywork mounted on a steel platform with side rails reinforced with a bolted tubular arch, 2door coupé, 2 seats.

Dimensions: length 4.913m, width 1,836m, height 1.324m, wheelbase 2.95 m, tracks AV/AR 1,526/1,326m.

Wheels, steel rims 6J, tyres Michelin XWX 205/70 x 15.

Weight approx. 1,050kg. Maximum speed 250kph.



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great piece of dynamic balance which, combined with the reduction of suspended masses, gives this long and wide flagship an amazing agility.

On the gearbox side, it is still the excellent ZF series with its direct control, although the synchro of second gear sometimes growls. Just a little.

Space Time

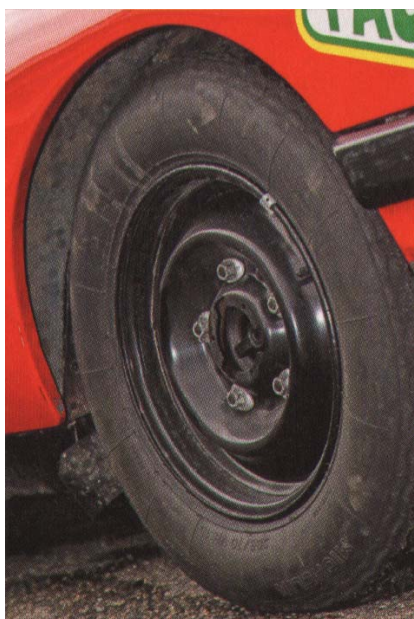
The scattered snow flakes are now giving way to the start of a snowstorm. As our Michelin XWX tyres are not really made to handle these conditions, it is time to turn around and make for the descent. While Bob reminds me that he does not like being in the passenger's seat in a racing car, paradoxically, he begins to announce the notes to me as



The V6 is almost in the centre front position as it is moved back from the wheel centre.

if to encourage me to press the rubber! That's all very well, but I'm trying not to make a mistake and send several years of free-lancing into the ravine. Second, third, I allow myself 5,000rpm when we are already far beyond the highway limits when I attack the central pedal which, fortunately, replaces the small mushroom on/off button of the series SM. With a very short stroke, the control nevertheless requires a certain touch of the pedal and a little training because it literally immobilizes the car with the impression of changing space-time! I restart the machine, pick up speed and brake while the car is already in support. I immediately feel the rear drop slowly as I try to maintain traction at the end of the corner. Once the front has passed, it seems to me that nothing can happen as long as we contain the torque to the driving wheels which, in the absence of

Steel wheels were preferred to resin ones.



self-locking, sometimes find it difficult to pass all the horsepower to the road.

Even in the competition version, the Citroën SM remains a unique driving experience. And unforgettable. Confusing at first contact, the car literally captivated me and I am very curious to see what it will give in the next tests it will be engaged in.

A huge thank you to Bob Neyret for the loan of his SM a few days before his departure

While the steering wheel and the speedometer, graduated with the braking distances relative to speed, were preserved the rest is lightened like the plastic dashboard and which is removable in order to work on the electrical harness.



A Run in a Citroën SM Group 5:

With a track record linked to the major road races of the 1970s, the SM has its place on the starting grid of the major retrospectives that are the Monte-Carlo Historique and the Tour Auto. If it turns out to be a bit bulky for the great winter classic, its versatility and power should allow it to stand out well in a competition like the Tour Auto where circuit events alternate with rally specials. As to whether it would receive a favourable response to a commitment to the Le Mans Classic and thus wash away the affront of the non-qualification of Guy Verrier in 1972, the question remains to be asked.

How Much Does it Cost?

The period when SMs were being sold at low prices is over and the market is feeling it. Not really that much of a surprise given its rarity: a production run of just 12,920. SMs in good condition are now changing hands well above €30,000. But you will still to spend substantially more to achieve the result you have before you. Since the rules for Group 5 are fairly relaxed, as long as you keep the exterior appearance, mechanical layout and anchorages of trains to conform to the original, you can hope to build an SM like this one for a budget of around €100,000. Not including the purchase price of the car! Note that the 3litre V6 entrusted to Italtecnica comes from a Maserati Merak SS and that hunting for weight reduction has been the main line of work with, for example, the creation of a roll bar that weighs only 59kg.

Sa Majestie

for the Monte-Carlo Historique as well as to his preparer Michel Boutias for having opened the doors of his workshop in Grenoble.

© This article first appeared in the French motoring magazine 'Autoretro' in February, 2018 and is from the Editor's collection. Text: Philippe Berthonnet. Photos: Gilles Labrousche

Editor's Note: Trent Glorieuses

The 'Thirty Glorious Years' sounds better in French... Trente Glorieuses. It was a term coined in 1979 by a French demographer to describe the years between 1945 and 1975 when the French economy grew dramatically. As early as 1944, Charles de Gaulle introduced a dirigiste economic policy, [dirigisme is the opposite

of laissez-faire], which included substantial state-directed control over a capitalist economy, which was followed by 30 years of unprecedented growth, known as the Trente Glorieuses. Over this period, France's economy grew rapidly like economies of other developed countries within the framework of the Marshall Plan. These decades of economic prosperity combined high productivity with high average wages and high consumption, and were also characterised by a highly developed system of social benefits. According to various studies, the real purchasing power of the average French worker's salary went up by 170% between 1950 and 1975, while overall private consumption increased by 174% in the period 1950-74. The French standard of living, which had been damaged by both World Wars, became one of the world's highest. The population also became far more urbanised; many rural départements experienced a population decline while the larger metropolitan areas grew considerably, especially that of Paris. Ownership of various household goods and amenities increased considerably, while the wages of the French working class rose significantly as the economy became more prosperous. Following the 1973 oil crisis, France's economy, while still faring well, slowed down its explosive growth. Thus, the mid-1970s marked the end of the period.

The spare tyre is in the middle, behind the roll bar from the Jacques Point workshops. The interior floors were modified to lower the car's seats and centre of gravity.



For Sale



1971 Citroën DS 21

Very extensive restoration carried out. New paint, upholstery, carpets, roof lining, exhaust system, electrics, dashboard, and all mechanicals. Drives superbly, and is close to a new vehicle. More photos and refurbishment invoices over the last 4 years available on request. WA Reg: IGNY 024, \$43,000 Stuart Pekin ~ Perth 04 0423 1712 [44/01]



Citroën 2CV

1986, 60K kms. Recent import from UK ~ fleeing Brexit!! Was to be used as a Company Rep's car, but things have changed. Car is in very good overall condition, but needs some minor tidying up and cleaning to be really Great! Full set of new Michelin tyres. I put the car through Licensing some 6 months ago for my client, with no issues. WA Reg: IGUG 262, \$22,000. Stuart Pekin ~ Perth 04 0423 1712 [44/01]



1984 2CV Charleston 602cc

\$33,500. Warning. When motoring in this cute and quirky Charleston 2CV, be prepared for admiring waves and smiles from fellow motorists and pedestrians! Featuring maroon and black paint, the 1984 French built/UK import Deux Chevaux achieved Australian compliance in April 1998. With an odometer reading of 58,257 miles [supporting UK paperwork indicating original mileage], it presents in excellent body and trim condition and good mechanical order. A comprehensive service history since arriving in Australia is available. Ready for leisurely roof-back summer cruising and with nothing to spend, the 2CV is currently registered with nontransferable Victorian club plates. A roadworthy certificate can be supplied if sold in Victoria. Reg. I3955-H This 2CV Charleston is located in Melbourne and is regrettably being offered for sale due to a deceased estate. Contact Paul Beranger Mb: 04 1831 8756 [44/01]





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