



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

FRONT DRIVE

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



April/May 2021 Vol 44 No 6

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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The Club cannot accept any responsibility for, or involvement in, any business relationship that may occur between an advertiser and a member of the Club.

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 \$35 and printed editions of 'Front Drive' are posted to Australian addresses for an additional \$45 per year.

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 is taken from the the website <http://storm.oldcarmanualproject.com/> and is taken from a 1972 Autobianch brochure for the A111 BS which was supplied by Olivier Soustelle. Other pictures from the brochure can be found on pages 24 and 25.

Deadline

The deadline for the next edition of 'Front Drive' is Wednesday, 19 May, 2021.

FOR SPARE PARTS & TOOLS

Contact Lance Wearne.
Phone: 0424 054 724 [if you 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 www.citcarclubvic.org.au
NSW www.citroencardclub.org.au
QLD www.citroenclubqld.org
SA www.clubcitroenssa.com
WA www.citroenwa.org.au
Tas www.citroentas.org

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Contributors

Contributors to this edition of 'Front Drive' include Alan Brown, Ronan Glon, Dean Larson and Max Lewis

Ed Sed

Within his excellent website Julian Marsh makes an almost passing reference to Autobianchi. He notes that during the chairmanship of Pierre Bercot 'the company launched the Ami 6, built a new, state of the art factory in Rennes in Brittany and acquired a majority share holding in truck-makers Berliet. The company also entered into agreements with NSU to build Wankel rotary engines and with Peugeot although the latter arrangement fell apart when Peugeot entered into an agreement with arch rivals Renault in 1964. Bercot then entered into an agreement with Fiat whereby Citroën dealers sold the Autobianchi range in France and Belgium and Citroëns were sold via the Fiat network in Italy. In 1968... the company signed an agreement with Maserati...

Between 1968 and 1975 if you wanted to buy an Autobianchi



in France... you hot-footed it to your local Citroën dealer! Brochures on Julian's site show various Autobianchi models were sold through the Citroën network. The Primula 65C, Coupe S and A111 in 1970 and the A111 in 1971. He also shows a 1975 English-language brochure which lists three variants of the A112. Although the Citroën network in the UK never sold the Autobianchi brand.

So, this edition of Front Drive is rather a departure from the norm and Citroën is not 'front and centre'. But, here's a unique opportunity to get to know Citroën's other Italian cousin.

But, do not despair: our favourite marque is not forgotten.

Stephen Gercovitch, who won the Traction Avant Class at the recent All-Citroën Concours, tells the delightful story of his family's devotion to Citroën in general and a Family 9 in particular.

Rob Little has some sound advice for ID/DS owners and we have a brand new article from our correspondent in France, Alan Brown.

This edition also sees the first in a new series of articles from our Librarian, Max Lewis. To those of you who completed our survey about the library, thank you. Your feedback provided the Committee in general

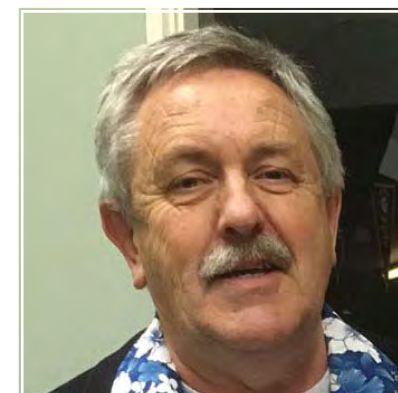
Continued on page 6

Prez Sez

around the world. Please enjoy Stephen's report on his current work.

Also, in this magazine, Leigh has uncovered some more rare marques that Citroën dealt with over the years. Interestingly, I have noticed in the past, that several of them were Italian brands which became part of the Citroën family. History is repeating itself with the latest PSA corporate entity that once again combines the Citroën/Peugeot/DS family, together with, Jeep and Fiat.

Finally, I wonder if there will ever be an electric Citroën being sold one day in Australia? I have read about the new Ami electric mini car in Europe. We live in inner-Melbourne so it would be a good fit for us if it was not too expensive and could get Australian compliance. I think I have more chance of converting a 2CV to electric to be honest. Ted Cross ~ President



Looking at the recent new members who have joined CCOCA, I have noticed there is something of a revival of interest in Traction in the club, with several new restorations being undertaken. This is good news for CCOCA and is one of the major reasons why CCOCA exists. We are bringing all Citroën owners around Australia together, to restore or maintain their favourite model Citroën.

I started my own journey restoring my Big 6 Traction in the early eighties, and I still have that car today tucked away in my shed. Alas, it now needs brakes doing for the second time and replacement of the gear-change mechanism behind the dash. Luckily it is still on a club permit, so I do not have to start again with a fresh RWC. Now the insured value is well below its market value, and I encourage all members to review their insurance on their Citroëns; because old cars have been rising in value across all marques, including Citroën.

Before I started my Traction journey, the Gercovich family were well down the road with their own collection. The entire family were Citroën enthusiasts, and now Stephen Gercovich is the current custodian of their Traction Family Nine. It is a rare beast amongst rare Citroëns

Ed Sed

Continued from page 6

and Max in particular, with enormous insight into what is right and what could be improved in regard to this valuable asset. So, each edition Max will have a section, titled 'Ad Lib' to share updates and news about the library. He will also over coming months bring you regular reviews of books held in the library. Both new ones, but also some the books we have held for years... but of which you may not be aware.

An Appeal

Do you own any AUSTRALIAN or NEW ZEALAND GS material? Brochures? Road Tests? Press or Magazine Advertisements? If so, I would love to hear from you. I am doing some research for Marc Stabèl, whose GS/A book is reviewed in the magazine and we are seeking local material. Contact me at editor@citroenclassic.org.au Enjoy,
Leigh F Miles ~ Editor

A-Tractions

Please note: For all events you will be required to provide names, email addresses and phone numbers of attendees to the Event Contact as per Covid Contact Tracing Regulations. Please check the Club's website for the latest information or contact the organiser prior to travelling to any listed event.

• APRIL

Cit-In 2021, Bendigo

WHEN: Friday, 2 to Monday, 5 April
WHERE: Bendigo
COST: \$290pp
5-18yo: \$145
BOOKINGS: Now closed
CONTACT: www.citcarclub.org.au
www.citroenclassic.org.au

The National CIT-IN April 2021, jointly organised by CCCV and CCOCA, will be held in the beautiful country town of Bendigo. The full event program has been posted on the CCOCA website



www.citroenclassic.org.au.

Post Bendigo Cit-In Run 2021

WHEN: Monday, 5 to Thursday, 15 April
WHERE: Central Victoria and Western District
FROM: Bendigo
TO: Horsham
VIA: Ballarat, Lorne, Warrnambool, Hamilton and Halls Gap
CONTACT: Brian James
[03] 9728 5526
0427 534 014
brianjamesphotography@bigpond.com with 'PostCit-In' as the subject

Entry Fee: There may be a small entry fee to cover some included meals, but no bookings have been made to date given the COVID-19 situation. If there is a small fee, participants will be advised, and this will be collected as cash in Bendigo. Accommodation Expenses: All entrants are responsible for



booking their accommodation and all other expenses.

- Day 1 Monday, 5 April
Bendigo to Ballarat 154km
• Accommodation Eureka Stockade Holiday Park [2 nts] [03] 5331 2281
- Day 2: Tuesday, 6 April
In Ballarat.
- Day 3: Wednesday, 7 April
Ballarat to Lorne 158km
• Lorne Foreshore Caravan Park. [2 nights] [03] 5289 1382
lorne@gorcc.com.au
- Day 4: Thursday, 8 April
Lorne and surrounds.
- Day 5: Friday, 9 April.
Lorne to Warrnambool 207km
• Warrnambool Holiday Park & Motel [2 nights] [03] 5562 5031
info@whpark.com.au
- Day 6: Saturday, 10 April
Warrnambool and surrounds.
- Day 7: Sunday, 11 April
Warr'bool to Hamilton 116km
• Lake Hamilton Motor Village & Caravan Park. [2 nights] info@lakehamilton.com.au
- Day 8: Monday, 12 April
Hamilton and surrounds.
- Day 9: Tuesday, 13 April
Hamilton to Halls Gap 96km
• Halls Gap Gardens Caravan Park. [1 night] [03] 5356 4244
stay@hallsgapgardenscaravanpark.com.au
- Day 10: Wednesday, 14 April
Halls Gap to Horsham 80km

A-Tractions

- Horsham Riverside Caravan Park. [1 night]
[03] 5382 3476
horsham@southerncross-parks.com.au
- Day 11: Thursday, 15 April
We all head home.
- Total distance 811 km

Monthly Meeting: General Chat

WHEN Wednesday, 28 April
TIME: 7:30pm
WHERE: Zoom virtual meeting at a computer near you.
COST: Free
BOOKINGS: Not required
CONTACT: Lee Dennes,
04 3828 6181
l.dennes@bigpond.net.au

Another Zoom meeting this month with a chance for you to catch-up with fellow Citroënists around the country, and maybe around the world. Whatever happens, keep the date free and keep an eye out for Lee Dennes' Activities email and Tim Cottrell's Zoom link on the evening.

• May

Peter Sandow's 'Poke Around the Factory' and a Fresco Lunch

WHEN Saturday, 29 May
TIME: From 11:00am,
lunch from 1:00pm
WHERE: Workshop/Factory,
3 /4 Merino Street, Capel
Sound then lunch at 16 Arunta
Crt., Rye
COST: Free



BOOKINGS: Essential by
Monday, 15 February
BRING: Everything for a
BBQ/picnic
PROVIDED: BBQ facilities,
tea and coffee
RSVP: Essential by Monday,
21 May
CONTACT: Peter Sandow
0419 515 302
p.sandow@fmsa.com.au

As always, numbers are limited, so book early or you may have to join the waiting list. You will need to give Peter the names, contact numbers and email addresses of everyone in your group when you book. Some of the gems to be seen include

- An ID19-P, 1959-1960, ex Javel factory, France. Rumoured to have been imported to Australia by the French Consulate in Canberra.
- Another ID19, also a single light, West Heidelberg assembled, c1962-66. Originally was an 'Ivory', but unfortunately has been painted, as Peter says, with a toothbrush. He is planning a rebirth.
- Peter's beloved Traction Avant, ex Javel factory, 1950-51.
- 'Beachcomber', Not Peter but a 2CV6 Special.
- All hat, no cattle, DRB Cobra, 302 Ford, 5-speed.
- The good night out, Mercedes Benz 450SLC, 1978.

44th Historic Winton

WHEN: Saturday, 22 & Sunday
23, May
TIME: 8:00am to 4:30pm
WHERE: Winton Motor Raceway, 41 Fox St., Winton,
COST: TBC
BOOKINGS: Advisable
BRING: Everything you need for
a great day out
CONTACT: www.historicwinton.org/contact

The Austin 7 Club has announced that Historic Winton 2021 will be a restricted event, under a Tier Three Permit. Attendance will be limited to car and motor bike entrants, their pit crews and required officials. At this stage, no public tickets will be available, and invitations to Car Clubs will not be possible. The Club is saddened their event will not take its usual shape, and have not made this decision lightly. The costs involved in the strict COVID Safe compliance and the continually changing Government requirements, has led them to this decision.

• June

OzTraction 2021

WHEN Queen's Birthday Long
Weekend, Friday, 11 to Monday,
14 June
WHERE: East Gippsland
COST: \$230pp
BOOKINGS: Essential, by
Friday, 21 May
CONTACT: Lee Dennes,

A-Tractions

0438 286181

l.dennes@bigpond.net.au

WHAT IS INCLUDED?

You will be provided with

- luncheon at a brewery
- three evening meals
- entry to a private garden,
- two-and-a-half-hour cruise on the Gippsland Lakes and
- an individually packaged Continental Breakfast.

WHAT'S NOT

All other costs, including accommodation, will be at your own expense.

ACCOMMODATION

Preferred accommodation will be

- Bairnsdale International Motel, 355 Main Street, Bairnsdale 8300
www.bairnsdaleinternational.com.au

The Motel has offered participants a Classic Queen Room for \$129 per night [excluding Breakfast].

Mention you are a member of the Citroën Classic Owners' Club to obtain this discount.

There are several other motels in the area if you wish to seek alternate accommodation.

REGISTRATION & PAYMENT

Go to <https://citroenclassic.org.au/wordpress/> and follow the prompts.

REFUNDS

All refunds will be at the discretion of the organisers.

- Further details of the event will be available closer to the date.

Bairnsdale's historic Railway Station



A balmy evening begins at Metung



Pelicans are regularly found in the area



The amazingly peaceful Mitchell River flows into the Gippsland Lakes at Eagle Point



(c) Mark Asenay Photography

The wharf at Metung



The Band Rotunda at Bairnsdale, in the median strip of the Princes Highway



The entrance to the Gippsland Lakes



The magnificent Buchan Caves are an easy drive away



Chit Chat Tuesday



WHEN: 1st Tuesday
6 April
4 May
1 June

TIME: 10:00am

WHERE: Laneway Espresso
Café, Dromana

COST: Cheap Eats

BOOKING: Not required

CONTACT: Warwick Spinaze
04 0701 6719.

Laneway Espresso Café ~ next door to the Dromana Hotel, 167 Nepean H'way, Dromana. Easy to find, plenty of parking, under-cover seating if weather wet. This is a low key 'DIY' event for like minded Citroën owners to meet and chat.



Ad Lib

This is my first column in the magazine since re-taking over the role of Librarian. As most of you know I am a committed print follower and have a good selection of books in my own library and I know, one day, I will read them all.

Now that I have sold my business and more or less retired reading will be high on the agenda of things to do once ensconced in my rural retreat.

Yes folks, once my wife and I have given I York Street a make-over, but not a facelift, and sold we are off to the next chapter of our lives.

I picked up all the books [bar a few that are still out there somewhere... more of that later!] that were in storage along with magazines and have started a 'stock take'.

This is nearly complete and once done, the full list will be available for all to see... So expect an update to the Library



part of the Club's website soon.

I had the library once before back 10 years or so but gave it away as my business was then all encompassing.

New, not so new and older tomes I would bring along to our meetings for those who would like to borrow a book on their favourite Citroën topic.

The library, I must remind you is a LENDING library and not an ARCHIVE.

I see the library as a living, breathing vital part of our club and so now that I am at the wheel and have engaged first gear there are many gears to mesh with overdrive in the distance!

I hope you like the metaphor.

The Survey

A few months ago you were approached by the Club to respond to our library survey. A good number of members responded with their thoughts on the library.

One reason for the survey was that with the COVID shut-down and meetings effectively banned for the unforeseeable future, no books could be taken to meetings or events as there were none!!

Thus the question was raised at Committee why have a library at all as we can rely entirely upon the digital word?

So frankly folks, the future of the library was not all that clear.

The survey was promulgated

to gauge what our members overall knew about our books, manuals, magazines etc.

While it was disappointing to read the lack of awareness of the library, especially amongst those of you not in Melbourne, I am happy to say that the overwhelming feeling was that we should keep the library going, overhaul the website, purchase new and interesting Citroën titles and publicize our 'Post Out, Post It Back' [POPIB] facility.

The committee has endorsed this decision to give the library new life and it is up to me to initially give mouth to mouth resuscitation if you take my drift.

There are a number of brand new books recently purchased with another on the way.

The details of these and all the other books that may be borrowed will be updated on the web as soon as the stock take is concluded

Missing Book

Now getting back to the comment earlier regarding not having the full complement of the club's books, I am missing a number of them.

The one that has been requested by a member is 'Citroën DS ~ The World's Most Beautiful

Car'.

We think that this particular title was taken to OzTraction at Horsham back in 2019 and someone borrowed it.

So folks, if this title is gathering dust at your place or has fallen down the back of your favourite reading chair, I would be most grateful to have it returned.

CCOCA will pay for the return postage [I will send you a post pack to protect it on its journey home!] if the book is not in Melbourne.

Please contact me directly and I will put the return in motion. On another matter book reviews will be an ongoing feature whether it is a

new book or one that has been with us for a while

[and I can see many that would fit into that category] and I call upon any other member who wishes to pen a review... it is an open shop.

So there you have it... a library raised from slumber with new ideas and new direction.

Any comment from you regarding anything to do with the library will be gratefully received. NEXT TIME: ALL ABOUT POPIB

Max Lewis ~ Librarian.

Mobile 0458 993 771

Email: librarian@citroenclassic.org.au



Book Review

La véritable histoire de la Citroën CX

This book is written by Michael Buurma and is published in French with a preface by Henri-Jacques Citroën.

An auspicious beginning to yet another splendid publication from Citrovisie.

Again my skill or lack of it with the language of the Gaul does not assist me much but with words like la belle, la mystique, ce beau livre etc. in the preface leaves me in no doubt that Henri is quite taken with this exposé of what most of us Citronauts would consider as a seamless extension of the car it replaced... the DS.

The book, like that on the GS/GSA is in landscape format and that pleases me very much.

The book starts off with the origin of the CX and what interesting reading that makes [more scrutinising the many and varied pictures rather than translating the words] as the

author explores and relates the goings on at Citroën when this car first came up as, hopefully, a worthy successor to the DS.

This section is as full of illustrations as you would want and mostly in colour.

Presentation of the car to the world gained the European Car of the Year prize award totally outclassing such pedestrian vehicles as the VW Golf and the Audi 50. Additional awards followed praising the style... the CX did very well on its introduction. All this is nicely noted in the book... p79 if you care to remember.

The very model name CX is, as you know, is used to define the aerodynamic slipperiness of an object as it slices its way through the air.

Just one look at the overall design and style of our beauty and you can see that the appellation is as about as correct a description that you could get.

I think the CX still holds a very credible Cx figure against whatever



er opposition could struggle to come up with to equal or better even after nearly 50 years have passed.

The rest of the book is then divided into each year that the car was manufactured.

What I most love and admire with the CX is the sheer simplicity and beauty of the bodywork lines [a characteristic unique to Citroën] especially with that rear wheel valence carried over from the GS.

PERFECTION.

As with its sibling GS the clean lines continued with the model for many years until heavy plastic this, that and the other gave the shape something of a Botox look.

Yes folks, I have washed out my mouth and will take any criticism that you may wish to throw at me!!

Ok, back to the book... each year is a detailed exposure of all that went into each year's changes.

It makes fascinating reading if only I was more proficient in French.

The book is 335pp and has a hard cover in the modern style... ie no dust jacket.

It is in the library as the newest addition and will be available for borrowing shortly.

Anyone who would rather purchase this book rather than borrow; please let me know. I certainly have a personal copy which I shall treasure for years to come.

Adding to all the above, my friend and near neighbour has amongst his collection of Citroëns a CX and one evening we were off in this auto to a restaurant not that far away.

Well were in the back seats and it was like sitting in your most comfortable arm chair.

As well the ride was superb and absorbed all the rough road bits with ease.

The meal that night was superb. Max Lewis ~ Librarian



Citroën's [Other] Italian Cousin

Bianchi's origins date back to 1885. In its early days, this company founded by Edoardo Bianchi [1865-1946] specialized in the production of cycles and motorcycles. Its first four-wheeled car was unveiled in 1899. Bianchi thus goes through the years by marketing cars of daily use, not really sporty, but of a reliability appreciated by customers.

In 1939, Bianchi, requisitioned for the war effort, had to meet government orders for trucks, cycles and motorcycles and generators. Car production was suspended. The years following the global conflict were difficult for the Italian firm, which was af-

fectured by the destruction and shortage of raw materials. Giuseppe Bianchi, Edoardo's son, still managed to keep the company afloat thanks to his cycle and motorcycle department.

Autobianchi as a car company was founded on 11 January, 1955, as a partnership between Bianchi, Pirelli and Fiat. The agreement was that Pirelli would supply the tyres, Fiat would supply the drivetrains and Bianchi would take care of the rest, including production which throughout Autobianchi's life

The Autobianchi Bianchina was launched in 1957, just a few months after the Fiat 500 from which it was derived. Its body, however, is completely different. But, like the Fiat 500, its style is fun and friendly.

took place in Bianchi's factory in Desio, near Milan.

Fiat eventually bought out its partners and became the sole owner of Autobianchi and used the brand as a sort of rolling laboratory to test new ideas before applying them to their own models.

What follows is a look at the car models produced by Autobianchi, leaving out the trucks that are a different story altogether.

Bianchina

The first car to come out of the newly-formed Autobianchi company was the Bianchina, launched in 1957. It was essentially a luxurious version of the Fiat 500: the drivetrain remained the same while the body was

redesigned to look slightly more upscale.

Initially the Bianchina had a retractable roof made of canvas with metal arches on either side [like the Citroën 2CV] and was called the Bianchina Trasformabile. It used the Fiat 500's 479cc [11.2kW] air-cooled flat twin mounted in the rear; power output was pushed to 18.7kW for the Special and Eden Roc

The Autobianchi Eden Roc launched in 1960 is derived from the Bianchina. It is the smallest convertible in the world, barely exceeding three meters. We see a yellow copy of it in Gérard Oury's famous film 'The Corniaud' released in 1964. There is no similar model in the Fiat 500 range.



Citroën's [Other] Italian Cousin

models. When the 500's engine displacement was increased to 499cc that engine was made standard on the Bianchina, too. In 1960 a true convertible [called Cabriolet] and a station wagon [called Panoramica] were added to the Autobianchi catalogue.

The Bianchina sedan replaced the Trasformabile in 1962. This new model was physically closer to the 500 and had a full metal roof which extended longer before sloping back, giving the rear seats much needed headroom. A Furgoncino version of

The Autobianchi Panoramica launched in 1960 is derived from the Bianchina. It is one of the smallest breaks in the world, with the Fiat 500 Giardiniera sharing its platform and engines. This model was also manufactured in Germany by Neckar between 1960 and 1964.



the Bianchina was also available; it was based on the Panoramica but from the B-pillar back had a taller and wider body without windows to allow for maximum cargo room. It only had two seats. Additionally there was a windowless version of the Panoramica available.

Production ended in 1969: the Bianchina sedan was replaced by

The Bianchina Furgoncino was based on the Panoramica, but from the B-pillar back the body was taller, wider and windowless. There was also a windowless version of the Panoramica, without the extended body. These images were supplied by Hans Visser.

The Stellina was designed with a fibreglass body mounted on a steel frame. This image, and the one above is from <http://storm.oldcarmanualproject.com/> It was supplied by Olivier Soustelle.

the All2 and the Bianchina Panoramica by the Giardiniera.

Stellina

The Stellina was introduced at the 1963 Turin Auto Show. Dante Giacosa, the engineer behind numerous Fiats including the 500, 600 and 128, called the Stellina a 'poorly conceived auto' at that time.

Launched in 1964 the Stellina [which means 'little star' in Italian] was based on the Fiat 600D and the two shared a reliable, water-cooled 767cc four-cylinder engine mounted behind the rear wheels that was mated to a four-speed manual transmission. It had drum brakes all around. In an effort to keep weight low and have less rust-related worries the car was designed with a fibreglass body mounted on a steel frame, a novel concept in the 1960s. While this did reduce the weight, it also had the effect of making the Stellina look like a toy car to the eyes of Italian consumers and it was a commercial failure: only 502 examples had been built when production ceased in 1965.

Primula

The Primula was the first Autobianchi designed with the Austin Mini in mind. It was almost 70centimetres longer than a Mini so it did not compete directly against it but the inspiration was there. Fiat designer Dante Giacosa had pat-



Citroën's [Other] Italian Cousin

The Autobianchi Primula launched in 1964 would last only five years, but was the 'laboratory' car for the future Fiat 128 launched in 1969. The Primula was indeed the Fiat group's first front-wheel drive car. The form was to become the norm to all models of the eponymous brand, starting with the Fiat 128. Again the images are from <http://storm.oldcar-manualproject.com/>

ented a transverse, front wheel drive layout in 1947 as a potential drivetrain for the Fiat 600 he had started to develop. This set-up did not make it to production partly because 'the components of the engine and the gearbox are housed inside the same casing. This means they cannot be assembled and tested separately in different workshops.'

Giacosa goes on to explain that when the engine and the transmission are mounted side by side, 'a series of gear-wheels or else a chain has to be used



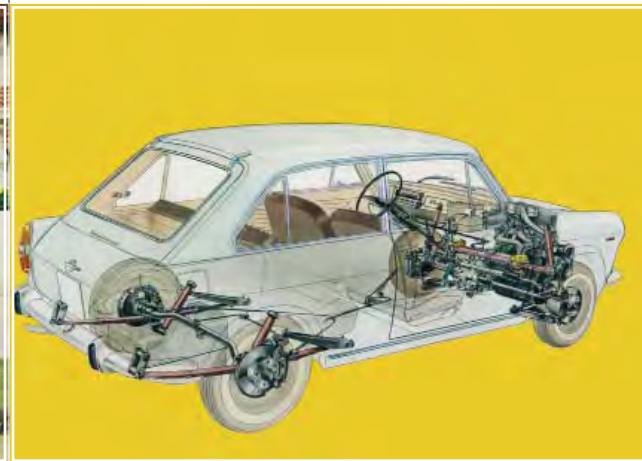
to transmit drives from the motor to the gearbox. This means additional complications, higher noise levels, increased loss of power due to friction, heavier weight and higher costs. The Mini, with the transmission gears in the crankcase, presents these defects.'

Giacosa remedied this situation by placing the transmission behind the engine in a more con-

Perfect ventilation due to swivel ventilation windows at the front.

Particularly beautiful and sporty lined rear with large rear window.

The hood hinges in the safe direction. Large windshield wipers and two windshield washers



ventional transverse layout. With this, the Primula was introduced in 1964 wearing an Autobianchi badge on its grille because Fiat management thought it was too different from the rest of their lineup [and from anything on the Italian car market] and therefore risky to launch, lest it fail completely and give Fiat a bad name. The reasons for the scepticism are primarily that it had a hatch-

back and the aforementioned front-mounted transverse engine driving the front wheels.

It was a fairly modern car for its day, featuring a hydraulic clutch and four disc brakes. The hydraulic clutch was designed for practicality's sake: to fit the drivetrain transversely without the front wheels hitting it when turned at full lock, it was necessary to reduce the space it took up. By fitting a hydraulic clutch the bellhousing could be reduced in size, making the transverse setup feasible.

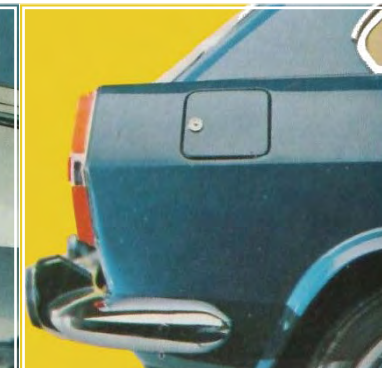
Throughout its production run the Primula was available as a two or four-door sedan and three or a five-door hatch, with either a 1,221cc or an 1,197cc four-cylinder engine.

The top of the line Coupe S version used a 1,438cc four-cylinder [56.0kW] motor borrowed from the Fiat 124 Special and

Harmonious grille, headlights with asymmetrical light beams; rubber buffers on the over-riders.

A reversing lamp belongs to the very complete standard equipment of the Primula.

Beautiful rear lines with lockable cover for the fuel cap; also rubber buffers on the rear over-riders.



Citroën's [Other] Italian Cousin



On either side of the dashboard an adjustable air vent with adjustable supply.

Control handles for warm and cold air supply and a large ashtray [two more ashtrays in the rear!]

A spacious and illuminated glove box with a luggage shelf underneath.



Perfect view of the road and a very complete instrument panel with speedometer/odometer, water temperature gauge, fuel-gauge

and tell-tales for indicators, oil level, petrol reserve. headlights and handbrake. City light toggle switches, windscreen wipers,

fan and dashboard lighting. Button for windscreen washer operation.

was only available as a two-door. The lack of a fifth gear limited the high-end capacity of all Primula models.

Fiat saw the Primula as a potential rival for their sedans, including the 850 that had been launched only a few months prior to it, and frowned upon it.

The Italian market did not receive it particularly well either, though it was fairly successful in France where the market was used to front wheel drive cars with hatchbacks.

It was phased out in 1970. Ironically its transversal engine layout made Fiat sceptical to put their name on it but ten years later most Fiats used that setup.

Giardiniera

In 1967 Fiat purchased all the rights to Autobianchi. The following year the Fiat 500 Giardiniera became known as the

Autobianchi Giardiniera and was launched with a slightly redesigned front end. Mechanically it was identical to the Fiat model: the rear mounted engine was horizontally installed to give the car a flat trunk floor. It was a 499cc [12.7kW] air-cooled two-cylinder unit that powered the little wagon through a four-speed manual gearbox. Interestingly enough, this engine also powered an experimental military vehicle called the I120.

It was longer and wider and a 500 sedan and could seat four adults relatively comfortably, something the sedan could not easily do. The rear seats folded flat to give it more cargo space. Alternatively one could opt for the Commerciale or Furgoncino version which only had two seats and sheet metal instead of rear windows, a precursor to the

Citroën's [Other] Italian Cousin

fourgonettes on today's market.

The Giardiniera line was phased out in 1977, two years after the 500 sedan, and unlike the sedan it retained its suicide doors until the end.

Ami

The Ami was introduced in 1969 to replace the Primula. It used the same mechanical layout as the Primula Coupe S: the 124's 1,438cc four-cylinder powerplant, mounted transversely to spin the front wheels. If the body looks similar to a 124 it is because it was actually originally designed as a prototype for that model which was turned down in favour of a rear wheel drive version.

Italians did not take kindly to the Ami and sales were less than stellar. The Ami found itself wedged between the cheaper and less sophisticated Fiat 124 and Fiat 125, and the much more enviable Lancia Fulvia. The Lancia brand came under the control of the Fiat Group in 1969.

It has a high-end finish inside, with a dashboard incorporating walnut and a cigarette dispenser at a time when smokers were not being singled out for derision. The seats were covered with

velvet.

The style of the Ami, on the other hand, was too similar to the Fiat 124 and Fiat 125. The Ami could reach 155kph, a speed higher than that of French competitors such as the Renault 12 or Peugeot 304. The Autobianchi Ami was renowned for its liveliness and excellent handling. These qualities were not enough to endear the model to the market, the target clientele preferring to focus on the cheaper and less sophisticated Fiat 124 and Fiat 125.

But even in France, where the Primula had previously been adored, the Ami did not find very many buyers.

The Primula was successful there partly because at the time of its launch the French market was hungry for affordable front wheel drive vehicles; the Renault 4 [1961], the Citroën Ami 6 [1961] and 2CV [1948] were the primary ones.

By contrast, when the Ami was launched the French market was nearly flooded with them: the Renault



4 and the Citroën 2CV were still in production and sales were strong; the Renault 6 and 12 were launched in 1968 and 1969 respectively, the Peugeot 204 and 304 in 1965 and 1969 respectively, the Citroën Ami 8 and GS in 1969 and 1970 respectively, the Simca 1100 in 1967, etc.

On top of stiffer competition the Ami did not benefit from a hatchback. By the time the plug was pulled in 1972 only 57,144 of them were made. Nevertheless, the Ami helped convince Fiat management that front-mounted transverse engines could

work effectively and they quickly adopted that on the 127 [1971] and the 128 [1969].

Ami2

The Ami2 is perhaps the best-known Autobianchi model. It was designed by Marcello Gandini at Bertone, who as you no doubt recall also designed the Citroën BX. Launched at the Turin Auto Show in 1969 to replace the 12-year old Bianchina, it was a response to concern about the growing sales of the Mini across Europe. The main competitor coming out of Turin was the 500 with its rear engine/rear wheel



Citroën's [Other] Italian Cousin

drive setup which looked archaic compared to the Mini's front wheel drive setup. So unlike the Primula, which was inspired by the Mini, the A112 was launched as a competitor to the Mini.

It could carry four adults more or less comfortably despite being fairly small [a little under 20centimetres longer than a Mini]. The first models used the 850 Spider and Coupé's 903cc [32.8kW] water-cooled four-cylinder engine, mounted transversely in the front of the car and bolted to a four-speed manual transmission.

The car went through minor redesigns throughout its production run, including larger taillights and interior upgrades. In 1977 a new engine was available, a 965cc [35.8kW] four-cylinder. Production ended in 1986 after

over a million A112s had been produced, making it the most popular Autobianchi to come out of the Desio factory.

The A112 was the first and only Autobianchi to go through the Abarth workshops. In 1971 the A112 Abarth made its appearance; the engine was bored out to 982cc [58hp/43.3kW] and it had a specific grille, a specific interior with a more complete instrumentation and specific rims, amongst other changes. In 1976 a version with a 1,050cc [70hp/52.2kW] engine was available, marking the ultimate evolution of the A112.

With the two Abarth models, the 982cc became known as the A112 Abarth 58 and the 1,050cc became known as the A112 Abarth 70.

Y10

Introduced in 1985, the Y10 was Fiat's answer to the tough question of how to replace the Autobianchi A112. It was not a full Autobianchi model: it was sold as the Lancia Y10 in northern Europe and the Autobianchi Y10 in France and Italy.

The Y10 was based on the first Fiat Panda's front wheel drive platform but it did not use the Panda's much-criticized leaf spring rear suspension. Some versions of it did use the Panda's 999cc [33.6kW] four-cylinder FIRE engine, a unit that is remarkable for its reliability; for example, it is a non-interference engine, meaning the pistons and valves will not be damaged if the timing belt breaks.

Fiat commissioned Pininfarina and Giugiaro to design the car but both submissions were rejected; instead it was designed in-house at Fiat. Despite its boxy shape it was very aerodynamic.

In Italy Autobianchi continued to produce the Y10 at its Desio factory until Fiat closed the brand in 1992 in an effort to merge it with Lancia. The Y10 stayed in production until 1995, badged as a Lancia but built in Alfa Romeo's now-vacant Arese factory near Milan.

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Discretion Assured: A111



Through its satellite firm Autobianchi, the Fiat group produced the 1964 front-wheel drive Primula before adopting this architecture on the Fiat 128 in 1969. Replacing the Primula that same year, the A111 ~ bigger, more opulent and more classic in appearance ~ is almost forgotten today...

Getting to grips with some old cars sometimes requires you to relearn how to drive. Concentrating to the maximum and looking for a not too inconvenient position, you have to [re] find your bearings, acclimatize to the different commands... With other models, on the other hand, you adapt quickly, almost without thinking about it,



like driving a Clio... with a retro atmosphere! The A111 belongs to this second category.

Surprisingly Brilliant

On the Francilienne [Paris' incomplete equivalent of London's M25. Ed.], I fit effortlessly into the traffic. Were it not for the silhouette of the Autobianchi which stands out from the crowd and the interested looks from other drivers, I feel lodged in the same boat as the other users, whom I easily ignore. I could roll around with them indefinitely. The visibility is excellent, the steering is smooth, the

The Autobianchi A111's cockpit is nicely presented, with its complete instrumentation and very credible faux woodwork. The three-spoke wooden steering wheel is a period accessory.

car follows its course without failing, the pick-ups are vigorous and overtaking a simple formality. Here, things are stuck in front of me... Apply some pressure to the brake pedal, which is surprisingly soft, allows you to slow down efficiently and well in line. Decidedly, the A111 does not show its age!

However, the gearbox sins by the vagueness of its control and the lack of 5th gear. The A111 pulls short: in 4th at 110kph, the engine is already running at 4,000rpm. For long motorway journeys, this is not ideal. In addition, the driving position could

Discretion Assured: A111

be improved as the pedals are shifted to the right. The intrusion of the wheel arch forces this to be so. The driving position, set for long arms and short legs means taller drivers must spread their legs.

Fortunately, the comfort provided by the seats is honourable, although closer to Germanic standards than a Citroën DS. In this regard, remember that following the agreements concluded at the end of 1968 with Fiat, which had recently become the exclusive owner of Autobianchi, Citroën was the Autobianchi sales and distribution agent in France from 1969 to 1975.

André 'Doudou' Chardonnet took care of the delivery and preparation of the cars and then shared distribution with

Citroën. [André Chardonnet, born on October 8, 1923 in Paris and died on August 20, 2005 in Bourges, was a French businessman. He was notably the importer of the car brands Lancia and Autobianchi in France. He also imported the brands Veritas, AC, Bristol, Neckar, Siata, Fiat-Polski/FSO, Zastava, ARO, Maruti, Bertone and Maserati. These brands were distributed via the Chardonnet Network, which had at the peak of its activity in 1986/1987, 710 dealers and agents throughout France. Together with its direct competitor Jacques Poch, it was one of the two largest private importers of foreign cars in France. He is the grandfather of the French rally driver, Sébastien Chardonnet who at one time drove for Citroën. Ed, via Wikipedia]

In town, the main flaw of the A111 is the firmness of the clutch, made more inconvenient by its very high location and long travel which makes starting laborious, especially on hills. To make matters worse, reverse gear is not always easy to find. Despite



The original stickers always add charm to the old ones. In Italy, Autobianchi dealerships also sold Citroëns.



these downsides, the A111's compact dimensions and direct steering means this is, nonetheless, an engaging vehicle.

The engine is surprisingly flexible while being adept at revving up speeds which are accompanied by a very engaging sound. It's hard to believe that there is only 70hp [52.2kW] under the bonnet. We would swear to it having 100!

In 1971, L'Automobile had organized a match between ten sedans. Despite its displacement handicap, the A111 had the best acceleration, notably capping the 100hp [74.6kW] Fiat 125 Special at the post! Beneath her appearance of a demure young girl, the Autobianchi hides a real temperament, distilling at leisure a pleasure that encourages the

The Autobianchi is particularly advantageous when viewed from the rear three-quarters. Angular as it is, the line is no less elegant and well balanced. The double tail-lights are specific to the second series of A111.

driver to push her again and again. Safe but alive, she seems cut out for endless trips with family or friends [the boot and the passenger compartment allow it] on 'le belle Route Nationale de France'.

Plush and Elegant

But let's take advantage of a stop to examine the car. The interior benefits from a very neat presentation. Originality on our A111 which displays only 62,000km, is remarkably well preserved. Nothing yawns, sags or is torn. Like the cowl that frames the dashboard, the materials are flattering, with the exception of the hard plastic in the centre console. The dashboard veneer, which extends to door capping, is in faux wood [the

Discretion Assured: A111

TECHNICAL CHARACTERISTICS AUTOBIANCHI A111 BS 1971

- 4-cylinder in-line engine in front transverse position. 1,438cc [80×71.5mm], 70hp [52.2kW] @ 5,500rpm, 11.2Nm @ 3,000rpm. Compression ratio 9.3:1, aluminium cylinder head, single lateral camshaft [chain], 5-bearing crankshaft, single Weber 32 DFB inverted double-body carburettor.
- Transmission to front wheels, 4-speed gearbox, 3.846 axle.
- Rack and pinion steering, without assistance.
- Dual circuit hydraulic brakes, front/rear discs, with assistance.
- Front suspension with independent wheels by lower oscillating arms, upper transverse leaf spring and telescopic shock absorbers;
- Rear tubular rigid axle with longitudinal leaf springs and telescopic shock absorbers.
- Structure/Body self-supporting steel hull, 4-door saloon, 5 seats.
- Dimensions [L×W×H, in m] 3.96×1.61×1.43m, wheelbase 2.36m, front/rear track 1.36/1.30m, boot 500L
- Wheels with 4.5 J steel rims, 150 SR 13 or 155 SR 13 tyres [Cromodora 5 J aluminium rims and Summerstar point S 155/80 T 13 tyres on the model tested].
- Weight [unladen] 930 kg.
- Performance [factory] maximum speed: 155kph, 0 to 100kph: 13sec., Standing km: 36sec.



The red lamps in the edges of the doors were a rarity at the time, especially on a model of this category, even if they were also found on the Lancia Fulvia.

In France, a 'Christmas decor operation' was organised by the Chardonnet network to sell a stock of 300 red A111s and won by the Cholet dealer Marcel Leau.



BORIS SOLESMES

It was by chance that Boris Solesmes came across this A111. 'While looking for a Fiat 124 Sport coupé on an Italian site, I noticed this magnificent Autobianchi A111. I had never heard of this model, even if, like everyone else, I knew the A112.'

Boris therefore left for Italy and it was love at first sight. 'I immediately fell in love with its elegant line, almost feline in its blue livery, with its beige interior, classy and comfortable, its varnished wooden steering wheel, its sparkling chrome and, above all, its Cromodora rims with, in the middle, the little Autobianchi badge that makes all the difference!'

The test drive did not disappoint him. 'I liked its handling, at the same time soft and sporty, and loved the crackling sound of its exhaust, worthy of a Maserati Indy!' It should be noted that the A111 in Boris' hands is in exceptional, original condition. 'It had always been in the same family, in the hands of three sisters. Only the paint has been redone.' By acquiring an original 'new' car, Boris has thus made the dream of all lovers of old cars come true!



first A111s had real wood] but it is of high quality, thick and credible. We are far removed from the faux timber Laminex of the first Fiat 124 Sport coupés!

The instrumentation is rather complete [tachometer, water temperature...] and nicely presented with the suggestive arrow-shaped needles. The three-spoke wooden steering wheel with drilled holes [a period accessory] is superb. The carpet is omnipresent, including at the bottom of the

boot, fully lined, and the mixed skai and fabric upholstery is of good quality. [Jaguar had Ambla, Mercedes Benz MB-TEX, Lancaï used Alcantara... but it seems the generic name in France for these imitation leather fabrics is skai. Ed.]

Finally, the doors close with a dull sound and were fitted with red security lights, a rare luxury at the time. The bodywork is very sober. The resemblance to the Fiat 124 and 125 and above all 128 sedans is striking, even if the A111 is equipped, for the first time within the Fiat group, with rectangular headlights. Admittedly, the straight line reigns supreme, while the transverse position of the engine has made it possible to shorten the bon-

Discretion Assured: A111



The efficient ventilation-heating system has two outlets at the ends of the dashboard. Note, in addition to the faux wood, the thick lower roll which contributes to passive safety.

The interior of the A111 is both beautifully presented and spacious enough for family travel. The very 'square' design of the body made it possible to reconcile compactness and roominess.



net, which results in an almost symmetrical profile.

However, and it is a real *tour de force*, the A111 nonetheless displays an undeniable elegance, especially when viewed from three-quarters front and rear. It's clean, crisp, balanced, while three side creases extend onto the front and rear of the car. Located respectively in the lower third of the body, at the level of the door handles and the belt line, they energize the silhouette. It is not entirely accidental that the term '*maestria*' is Italian. So compare the A111 to an angular Glas I204 and you will be forced to admit that the aesthetic sense is not distributed equally in all countries!



prototype Fiat 123E4



The A111 is set off nicely with its blue 419 livery: a deep hue and wonderfully dated, while the beautiful vintage Cromodora alloy wheels add an extra touch of elegance.

Unusual Genesis

If the Autobianchi A112 is famous, it is only the rare enthusiasts who know of the A111. Its genesis was however unusual, marked by the resurrection of



These are four pictures of the G 123 E4 prototype. That in the top left is a version from 1963 which was the start-point for the A111.

an old Fiat prototype that had fallen into oblivion: the G 123 E4. [The 'G' was for Giacosa, 123 was simply the next number in the sequence. There was E1 through to E4 and the range covered traditional sedans as well as hatchbacks. Ed.]

Let's go back in time.

In 1964, the Autobianchi Primula was the first model of the Fiat group with front-wheel



Discretion Assured: A111



Identical to that of a Fiat 124 Special, the 1.4litre 4-cylinder is here arranged transversely.

The boot is spacious and fully lined [carpet at the bottom, plastic coating on the sides.]. The general condition of this example is incredibly exceptional.



drive, fitted with a transverse engine, with a gearbox and a clutch in line with the engine. The body had a rear hatch and four-disc braking, but the suspension was leaf spring and the rear axle rigid. The Primula was available in many versions with two, three, four and five doors, booted or hatchback. In 1968 it received the 5-bearing engine from the Fiat 124: 1.2litre in sedans and hatches and 1.4litre in the Coupé. However, as its style quickly aged, Autobianchi management decided to replace it with a classic notchback sedan.

The Centra Stile Fiat being overwhelmed, they went to the archives and discovered, under a dusty sheet, an interesting full-scale model dating from the beginning of the 1960s. Taken from oblivion and slightly retouched, this ex-prototype of a front-wheel drive, transverse-engined Fiat gave birth to the Autobianchi A111.

Bigger than the Primula and equipped with an extended wheelbase, the A111 was mechanically identical except that it was powered by the Coupé's 1.4litre engine and had dual circuit assisted braking. The A111 was thus unveiled in the spring of 1969.

In the autumn of 1970 an A111 BS [Berline Sportive] version was presented which stood out only on account of details [front and rear bumpers lost their

Discretion Assured: A111

over-riders, double-dimension taillights, slightly modified interior presentation etc.]. Production of the A111 continued unchanged until December 1972.

While sales might seem modest, given the short career of the A111, the annual average was nevertheless significantly higher than that of the Primula... even though the A111 was only available in one version instead of five! But on the crucial French market, its fiscal position [8CV] did not help its sales, while the owners of Primula turned away from it because of the absence of a fifth door.

[It should be noted as well that when it was launched the A111 was priced at L1.316million; 25% more expensive than the

four-door Primula it replaced! 10% dearer than a Fiat 124 Special. Even the Alfa Romeo 1300 Giulia was cheaper. Ed.]

Michel Piccoli however drove an A111 in 'Max et les ferrailleurs'! ['Max et les ferrailleurs' ('Max and the Junkmen') is a 1971 Franco-Italian crime drama film directed by Claude Sautet and starring Michel Piccoli. The film is based on the novel of the same name by Claude Néron. Ed.] As for André Chardonnet, having recovered 300 fire engine red A111s deemed unsaleable, he managed to sell them quickly by organizing a Christmas window competition, even if it was not necessary to believe in Santa Claus to appreciate the eminent virtues from the A111!



Buying an Autobianchi A111

WHAT THERE IS TO KNOW

The engine is solid and with an oil change every 7,500km or once a year and regular checking of the timing chain tension, you should be able to go to the end of the world. The gearbox seems to pose more problems [risk of faulty linkage] and the clutch sometimes has a limited life. The body is prone to corrosion but less so than contempo-

rary Fiats due to better quality sheet metal. Rust can attack the front suspension wells, the lower fenders, the driver's side floors, the side members, the boot lid, the boot floor and the spare tyre well.

The availability of parts is not really a problem for the engine, as it was also fitted to the Fiat 124 Specials, which are much more widely distributed and were also fitted on the Seat 124s, etc. But beware, a number of mechanical

Strong Points

- Pleasant line
- Brilliant engine
- Good road holding
- Interior presentation flattering
- Proven mechanics

Weak Points

- Hard to find
- Fuzzy gearbox control
- Clutch inconvenient
- Very rare specific pieces

Big Dates

1969
On May 6, presentation to the press of the Autobianchi A111 in Monza. Bumpers with buffers, single taillights, real wood dashboard.

1970

In October, presentation at the Turin Motor Show of the A111 2nd series, alias A111 BS. Bumpers coated with a rubber



insert [the car's overall length goes from 4.02m to 3.96m], double taillights, new steering wheel, dashboard and upper part of the doors capped in imitation wood.

1972

In December, production stops, in particular to make way for the highly demanded A112. Total production: 56,984 copies.

Discretion Assured: A111

parts [suspension arms, engine supports, heating...] are specific and are not remanufactured!

The same goes for the bodywork [sheet metal and accessories, such as lights are very rare] and for part of the interior and trim, even if a certain number of accessories [control stalks, switches, Fiat 125 series steering wheel on the A111 BS...] are found on contemporary Fiats.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

We can hope to find a nice Autobianchi A111 between €6,000 and €9,000 approximately. Of course, the Italian route is a must, even if the A111 remains rare on the other side of the Alps. Due to the difficulties of importing from Italy, the easiest way is to call in a professional who will take care of everything, which does not pre-

vent you from going to see the car on site. Boris Solesmes, for example, contacted the company Parfait Etat [www.parfaitetat.fr] specialising in Italian cars, and was very satisfied with the experience.

A big thank you to Boris Solesmes for his availability, as well as to Thierry F, secretary of ABC-Fiat, Vincent de Fresquet, president of the Autobianchi Club de France, and Marcel Leau and Laurent Bunnik for their invaluable help. Boris Solesme seeking to list the A111, if you are the owner of one of them, do not hesitate to contact him: bsolmes@hotmail.fr

This article first appeared in AutoRetro magazine in February, 2020. It was translated by the Editor who craves your indulgence if that leaves something to be desired. The article has been supplemented by additional research by the Editor.

Further Insights

You may remember that on previous occasions I have had cause to comment on my belief that French motoring journalists can be described as being, at best, unlikely to be critical and, at worst, unstintingly generous in the acclaim they bestow on cars.

This is tempered [if that is the right word] by a level of xenophobia only exceeded by Brit-

ish motoring journalists in the late-'70s and early-'80s as they watched the demise of the British motoring industry whilst continuing to praise the output of BMC/BLMC/British Leyland... or whatever title the company was using in the year in question.

Of course, the French are no strangers to xenophobia and in a comparative test the French

model is almost universally better than the model from, say, Germany. Although, in many cases they may well be correct.

But, what has interested me in researching the A111 is the generosity shown the car in this review.

Another review I found on line [<https://forum.retro-rides.org/>] is more measured in its comments. Having said that, I should point out the review in question is from the French magazine 'Gazoline' and dates from [I believe] 2008. The date on the on-line images is very blurred.

So, what did 'Gazoline' have to say? The extract below is written by a Retro+Rides contributor.

Disappointing Roadholding

If the look of the A111 is encouraging, the feel of it is less so. In period, many people criticised the A111, subsequently finding themselves being labelled as 'front drive haters'. With the passage of time, its easier to be frank about the car, and to be frank, it disappoints.

Its not dangerous by any means, its just not very engaging. Probably the fault of a too-short development cycle which retained the old Primula platform without optimising it for the new larger, heavier and more powerful car. The tyres are too tall [155/13], suspension too soft and very unsporting, and the resulting understeer is marked. It is difficult to position the car well for cor-

nering, at least until you have got the hang of countering the inertia of the front suspension. Don't try to place it carefully in the hope of following the perfect cornering line. As the Italian magazine Quattroruote said in its October 1969 issue, 'you have to drive as if the corner starts 100m beforehand!'

Edoardo [the owner of the car in the review] is less harsh, recognising that, compared to the Primula coupe, the A111 requires a much more tranquil driving approach. Its not a sports car. He comments that the gear ratios are exceptionally well chosen for the torque curve of the engine, but the selector mechanism is vague and somewhat obstructive, and the steering very dull indeed during acceleration.

Happily, the brakes are excellent and the motor sounds good; good enough to convince you there is some sporty DNA in this car somewhere. Evidently the A111 never had the career, or more particularly the development it deserved. Born from an aborted project and rushed into production, it served above all as a test-bed for front wheel drive technology that Fiat had not yet fully committed to.

That it was ultimately sacrificed for reasons more political than commercial, is ultimately not very surprising. Sadly it is the destiny that often awaits such 'prototypes'. Shame....

1957 Seidlitz Citroën Race Car



CITROËN SEIDLITZ SPECIAL



BUILDER/DRIVERS: Carl Seidlitz, Pete Wood.
MOTOR: 425cc Citroën 2CV, CHASSIS: Tubular, BODY: Aluminium, WHEELS: Citroën/Michelin, Instruments: Stewart Warner
COMPETITION HISTORY: Pomona Raceway 1957-1958, Riverside International Raceway opening day September 21, 22 1957.

If you told me you had an old Citroën race car in your garage, this probably isn't the first thing I'd picture. I think my brain would default to some sort of rally car, maybe a DS or 2CV, with huge fog lamps and mud flaps. The low and wide SCCA racer seen here on Los Angeles Craigslist is something different entirely though. In fact, it's so different that I'm willing to bet it's the most interesting race car you'll see all week. Boasting 500cc of air-cooled flat-twin power, front-wheel drive and pancake-flat bodywork, the Seidlitz Citroën Special is a super-intriguing and innovative 1950s road racer that remains in original, unrestored condition today.

Unfortunately, there isn't any information out there on this spectacular race car, other than what the seller has provided. According to him, the car was built by Carl Seidlitz in the late 1950s, and was campaigned in small-displacement classes in 1957 with moderate success. Searching the car in the [racingsportscars.com](https://www.racingsportscars.com/database) database [<https://www.racingsportscars.com/type/archive/Citro%C3%ABn/Special.html>], we can see that the Seidlitz Citroën was entered in various events at Pomona and Riverside in 1957, with Seidlitz and Pete Woods listed as drivers. It would have competed against other small-displacement sports specials, likely 750cc Crosleys, Panhards and the like.



1957 Seidlitz Citroën Race Car

For the most part, it's easy to appreciate the line of thinking that led to the Seidlitz Citroën Special. The air-cooled Citroën 2CV flat-twin engine was probably pretty lightweight when compared to water-cooled alternatives. The fan was also mounted forward of the engine, unlike most air-cooled VWs, permitting a seriously low hood height as well. Then there's the transmission, which was a four-speed unit that sent power to the front wheels, and was equipped with inboard front drum brakes. With independent suspension and lightweight road wheels, this seems like it would make for a fun and flickable combination. The only problem I can see however, is that the Citroën engine was probably significantly

underpowered when compared to cars like the 750cc Crosley.

While the seller lists the engine as a 500cc Citroën, the only engines that would have been available at that time were 375cc and 425cc versions, which produced 9 and 12.5hp respectively. A bored and stroked version of the engine could surely approach 500cc, but I'm still assuming it would fall below the Crosley's 26.5 and 32.5hp engines. But of course there's no way to be sure today, and we have to take into account the Citroën's probable weight advantage.

Regardless of performance, the Seidlitz Citroën is just plain cool, especially considering its pancake-flat bodywork, listed as alloy in composition with an



aluminium underbelly. Without seeing the car in person, it's tough to determine any more information as to what sort of alloy the body is constructed from. It does however remain in excellent condition today, other than a few dents here and there. The steel tubular chassis however, will require a pretty substantial overhaul to get it up to snuff. The seller also states that the engine's dual carburettor setup and intake are currently missing.

All in all, there are a lot of unknowns with this car, but it doesn't detract at all from how intriguing it is. It has a totally unique look and would surely draw a huge crowd at any con-



cours event you attended. Furthermore, I bet it's an absolute blast to drive.

The seller says the car is available for purchase to the highest offer over \$35,000. Find it on Los Angeles Craigslist. [<https://losangeles.craigslist.org/wst/cto/d/oxnard-1957-citroen-seidlitz-special/7284903610.html>]

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A Family Affair: GKN 991



This is story of an open and secret love affair that my parents, Margaret and Rex Gercovich, had for Traction Avant Citroëns and how the affair has continued to this day, some 40+

Some of Ricky's other cars: 1918 Sunbeam, 1925 Lancia Lambda, 1930 Aston Martin

years later as a family legacy Mum's crush on the marque was love at first site when one of her cousins [Ricky Furlong] turned up at the family home in a slightly used Traction, in the 1960s. I suspect Ricky's love of



the car was initially through it being a cheap car to purchase at the time but he also had a passion for Tractions [including a Family 9], despite owning some very exotic vehicles dating from the early-20th century such as Lancia Lambda, Sunbeam, Aston Martin, Daimler and numerous other classics.

In part I think the love of the brand in the 1960-'70s was because old Citroëns were a cheap car to purchase/own but it also became a symbol of the 'alternative' scene and a pretty cool car to own during the time of the rise in Aussie 'muscle cars'.

It also probably had something to do with the practice of just transferring the windscreen and registration plates from one worn out vehicle to another without having to do road worthies or pay stamp duties as the police had no idea of chassis or body numbers for these exotic foreign vehicles.

Some of the Citroëns Ricky owned in the 1960-'70s including a Family 9 registration GHC 725. In the two pictures on page 48 you can see some of the damage to the French Traction as a result of an off-road excursion. This required the rear door to be permanently welded shut.

Images of some of the Citroëns Ricky owned in 1960s and '70s, including [2 & 3] a Family 9, registered GHC 725. The bottom picture was taken in Castlemaine.

A Family Affair: GKN 991

Ricky was also the proud owner of this Traction, registration GLE 977.



The damage to the rear door and the sill can be seen if you look between Rex's legs.



You can also see the damage to the front left wing in this picture.



and a quick touch up paint so the car could be traded in with a car dealer who had not identified that the door had been permanently welded shut. I am told there was a very quick exit from the showroom with a brand new vehicle before they did find out about the door.

As a child I can recall Mum would regularly speak of her love for the Traction but ownership of one was far off, as my father did not openly share the love. In fact, Dad, who had worked in the motor panel repair trade, was quite scathing of them and would recall stories of his apprenticeship in the 1950s having to repair and repaint Tractions that arrived brand new from overseas showing obvious signs of rust from the journey.

He also had a bit of a laugh saying that there were more than one or two brand new Tractions that were repainted with pretty standard Holden colours at times when paint sup-

plies were a little scarce.

Eventually Mum won out and in the mid/late 1970s, through a connection with Bryan Grant [the father of one of my sister's friends who, at the time, was a member of the newly formed CCOCA], she upgraded from the Hillman Minx and became the proud owner of an English IICV, TW 682 in its original livery of silver with white artillery wheels.

This became her daily drive with the first task being that it had to have a respray which was done by Dad in the small single car garage with a dirt floor at home in Mitcham.

It was a shocker to drive, heavy, old and not very cool for myself and my sister [I6 and I4 respectively] to be seen in. My sister would hide under the dash if we were passing any of her friends and it was always a worry if Mum took a corner too fast as the rear door would pop open. This resulted in my great grand-

TW 682 was last seen by Stephen in 2012 at the CCOCA Concours.



A Family Affair: GKN991

mother holding on for dear life in one particular excursion.

Dad would regularly buy damaged cars and do them up at home after which Mum would then drive them for a few months to 'dirty' them up before being sold. At the time I much preferred the likes of the Blue HG Monaro with the double stripes down the centre, although it was not exactly the best family car for use on a daily basis.

Nevertheless, TW 682 endured. I became a convert and realised that while you saw many of the modern cars on the road, the Traction was unique with a wooden dash and quirky gear change, the very cool sunroof and a classic shape.

Secretly I think Dad's opinion of the Traction was also changing as he began chasing up hidden wrecks for 'spare' parts and became involved in the Club as one of the very early/founding members at the time. He was

also still quite vocal about how much of a 'S*&! box' they were but this was just to save face after so many years of offering his opinion to all and sundry.

It is a time I particularly loved as quests to find derelict Traction become exciting, especially when 'extracting' some that had lain dormant in people's back yards for 20-30 years. I still do not know why so many people were so obliging at allowing fences, sheds, parts of houses and gardens to be temporarily moved to recover derelict vehicles. I like to think it was the nostalgia and love for these vehicles, But I suspect it was more a case of 'thank god that pile of rust has gone'.

I have lost count of how many Traction appeared, and subsequently disappeared, as I think members of the club either wanted to restore cars or were after much needed spares that were very rare to find at the time and he could possibly turn

A couple of the many other cars that found their way home.



a \$ from it. I still have the doors and bonnet for a black French Traction we discovered just around the corner in Mitcham in 1981, including the receipt for \$100 paid for the car.

In the late '70s Dad became more enlightened in the different Traction models, and in particular the rarity of the Family 9 which was one of the Traction's Ricky Furlong had owned [and had subsequently been sold and sent across to Western Australia].

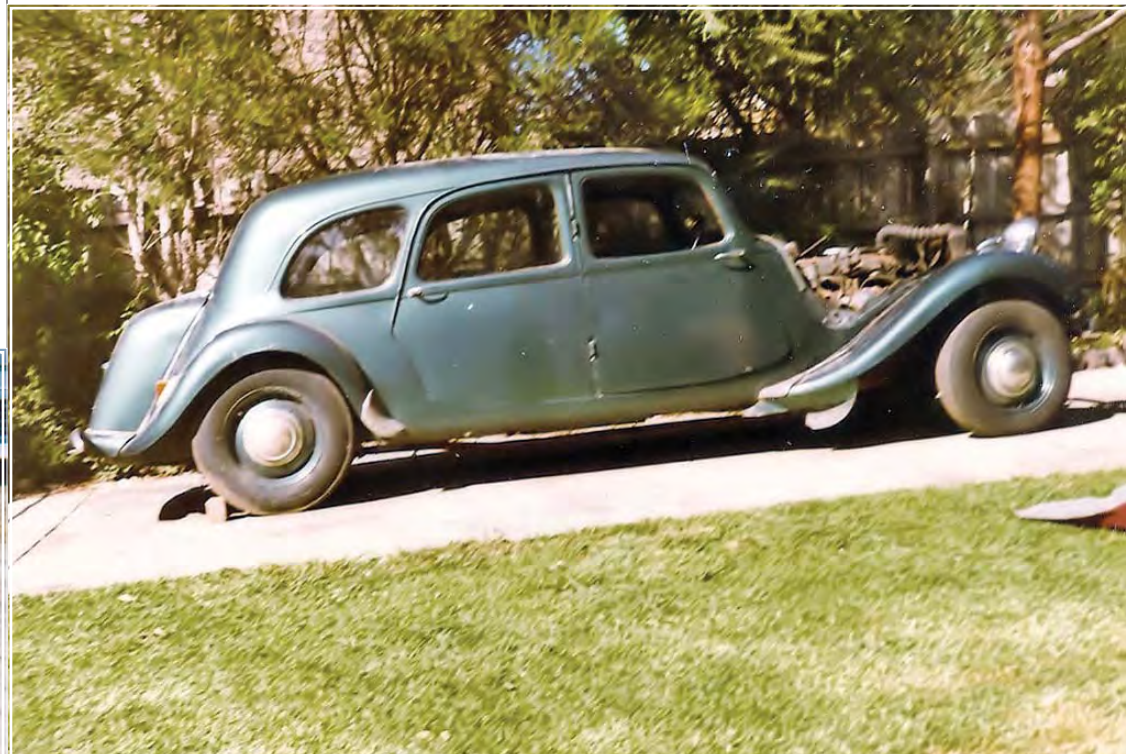
Dad could recall that in about 1970 he had repainted a Peacock Blue Family 9 [distinct with

its extra row of fold out seats] through work and could recall that it had belonged to a relative of one of the insurance assessors that still worked in the trade.

In about 1979 and after a bit of sleuth work, Dad had made contact with Kevin Keogh to see what had happened to the Family 9 and if he knew of its whereabouts. Much to Dad's surprise Kevin knew exactly where the car was: in his backyard being used as a cubby house. But he was not ready to part with the vehicle.

After a short period Kevin contacted Dad to see if he

The Family 9 on first arriving at Mitcham with the bonnet, grille and front bumper inside the car.



A Family Affair: GKN 991

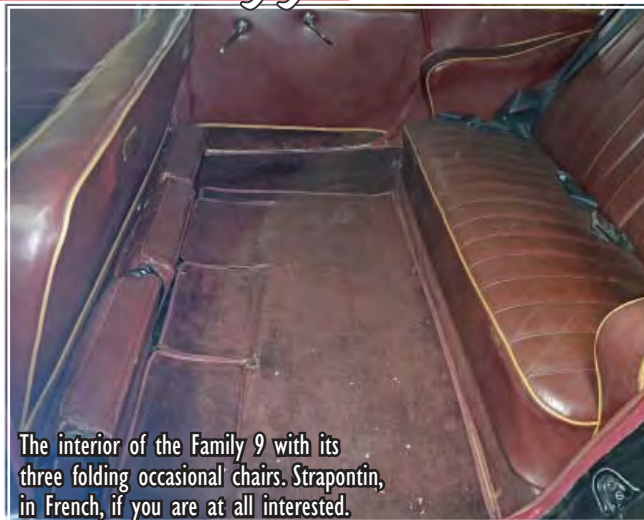
would like to buy it as they were looking at putting an extension on the house and it was in the way.

On visiting the car for the first time it was mostly complete apart from the gearbox as it had suffered a catastrophic failure of the crown wheel and pinion after second-gear had lost some teeth [now that is a surprise!]. The gearbox had been sent to get repaired and had accidentally been thrown out during a Christmas cleanup and a replacement one could not be found.

The paintwork was very tired but the interior was still in reasonable condition. The car had belonged to Kevin's father Brian who was the second owner and after the gearbox had been lost it had just sat in the backyard all that time.

After a bit of negotiation the car was purchased for \$600, a shed and fence removed and it was proudly sitting in the driveway in Mitcham, albeit missing the gearbox.

At the time spare parts, in particular Traction crown wheels and pinions were very hard to come by and the challenge for the next six months was to find one. Eventually a badly rusted Traction parked out in a paddock near Sale was found. After a day trip there the owner wanted \$2,000 for the car and Dad finally settled on \$200 for the



The interior of the Family 9 with its three folding occasional chairs. Strapontin, in French, if you are at all interested.



Showing one of the three seats that fold up out of the floor in the Family 9.



The Family 9 in primer just prior to catching fire.

gearbox and left the rest of the car there. This gearbox was not used at the time and as things happen, in the same week two other gearboxes turned up in slightly better condition and Dad ended up using one of them.

Originally, due to the heavier weight of the Family 9, they had the 'Alpine' lower ratio crown wheel and pinion [8:31] but at the time only a standard ratio [9:31] was available and this went into the car. It only became a bit of a problem when chasing other 11s up hills.

So over the next few years the car was slowly worked on by Dad and myself to get it to a drivable state ~ it was far from a concours restoration that you see done on cars these days

but it was to be a daily user. It was then that the colour was changed from the Peacock blue to black, and Dad sourced some nitrocellulose black to do the job which presented a few challenges when spraying it in the back shed ~ in particular to preventing the paint from self igniting!

Mind you the car nearly caught fire regardless, as when repairing a section of the floor that had rusted through with a welding torch, it back fired and ignited the proof coating. Although a 'fire watch' was on hand with an extinguisher, they had taken a quick break and the water hose had to save the day.

The pressure to accelerate the restoration was on when I

The wedding cortege of Traction



A Family Affair: GKN 991

wanted to use the car for my wedding which later became a ritual for all my siblings. The car was 'completed' and a roadworthy obtained in the week running up to the wedding but a last minute hitch meant that the original registration could not be used on the car until a sign-off from the previous owner. A minor crisis was averted with a new registration paid for and a 'temporary' plate of BDS 555 issued to get the car to the church

on time.

At the time Dad was quite concerned about who could drive the car and John Couche volunteered his services to drive the 9 with Kenn Gilbert providing his 1943 Big 15 as well. Mind you as this was the first real run of the 9, the wedding cortege of three Tractions was closely followed by Dad in his Ford LTD.

Dad's concern over who was 'allowed' to drive the 9 continued for many years after, and it



was rare for even Mum to get a look in. After a few years I was actually allowed to drive the car to bring our first born child home from hospital with his bassinet placed on the spacious back floor. The nurses at the time thought this would be pretty safe: I don't think they would be taking the same view today!

Over the following years the car became part of the family ritual with babies coming home from hospital in it [bassinet on the spacious rear floor], family and friend's weddings and any special occasion. However there was still fear amongst my sisters in being able to drive the car although they did sneak drives in it when Dad did not know.

I recall not long after being 'allowed' to drive the 9 by myself, using it for a school mate's wedding. As the family were Scottish the whole bridal party were in the 9, including the groom and best man in kilts.

All was going well until the time to travel from the church in Mitcham to the reception in the Western suburbs. In a long traffic jam to get to the intersection of Flemington Rd and Elliot Ave, the 9 decided to die half way across Flemington Rd. after the coil overheated. The bridal party all hitched up skirts/kilts and pushed it across the intersection and it did make a great photo to add to the wedding album.

Clearly Dad, at my own wed-

ding, was well ahead of the game following in the LTD and it became common practice for someone to follow in another car in subsequent weddings ~ in addition to carrying a spare coil in the boot.

Generally the car was reliable except for one Grape Grazing weekend in the mid '90s when the car died on the side of the road in the Yarra Valley. The problem was diagnosed as the pin for the fuel pump lever coming loose and could be easily fixed on the side of the road. As I opened the boot to get the tools out, a Police car pulled up behind us and the fear of a breathalyzer and what my reading may be got the heart pumping. Fortunately for me it was the local Police Sergeant who stopped to give me a hand as his father also owned a Traction and he knew something about them.

At the time I was restoring a 1947 Mark IV Jaguar and created a controversy when I borrowed the 9 and joined the Jaguar/SS Pushrod Car Club on a run with the leaping jaguar of the Mark IV mounted to the grill of the Citroën!

Many a Jaguar expert was stumped, and despite quite clear Citroën badging on the boot and the chevrons on the grill, thought the car was a special 'one off' Jaguar build. Another very respected SS Jaguar authority and I had a laugh saying it was

A Family Affair: GKN991

a trial British/French collaboration version of a 'Jagoen'. After they requested to have a closer look I could not help but quote Monty Python: 'Of course not, You are English types-a'. Needless to say it was completely lost on them.

Down the track Dad continued with his not vocal 'love' for Citroëns and was always on the lookout for them.

I recall spotting some Tractions at a property in Ringwood in the mid 1980s [Derrick and Effie Moore] and telling Dad about this and he was there the next day trying to see if they would sell any of them. Apart from the Tractions [4s and a 6] there was a 1929 Buick Master sedan and some Tri-

umph Mayflowers also sitting in the back yard. I learnt many, many years later that there was also apparently another Family 9 in the shed which Bruce and Peter Stringer are doing up now for Chris Moore.

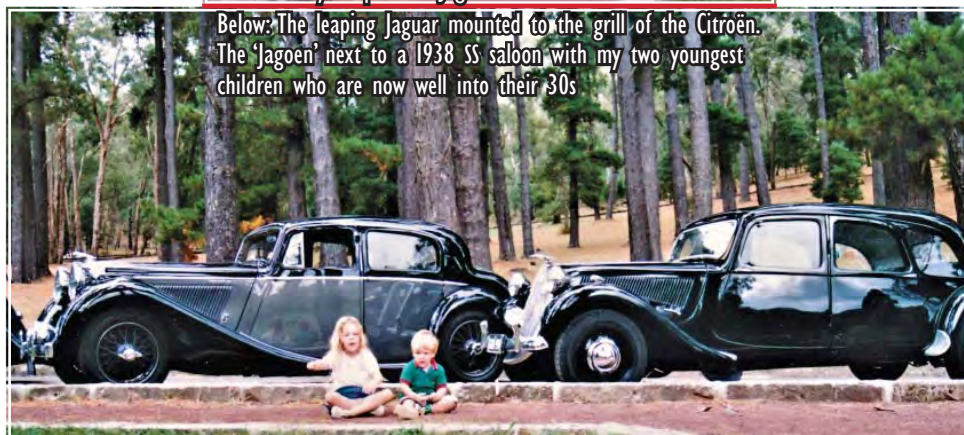
In the mid 1990s Dad purchased a 1927 B14 sedan to be followed up by a similar tourer. The sedan was in its total original condition and had a registration sticker on it still that, I think, was numbered something like 8278. It was literally owned by some

elderly sisters who kept in a garage after it broke down some seven years earlier.

After a little work on the brakes, a bit of a tweek/clean of the fuel system and replacing the magneto we were driv-



Above: Can you spot the 'Jagoen'?



Below: The leaping Jaguar mounted to the grill of the Citroën. The 'Jagoen' next to a 1938 SS saloon with my two youngest children who are now well into their 30s



In the mid 1990s Dad purchased a 1927 B14 sedan to be followed up by a similar tourer.



ing it up and down along the street. The car sat at Dad's factory for about five years with him regularly saying he needed to get working on it. I worked around the corner from the factory and would regularly call in and have a tinker but it did not get very far.

At the time you could re-register the car if you paid the back-registration fee and Dad tried to do this with the B14. Unfortunately, this

was not able to be done and so a conspiracy theory was hatched. When the Victorian Road Traffic Authority held the first of their heritage plate auctions, registrations numbers in the 8000s went for \$3,500. Far more profitable than re-issuing an old plate for the price of the unpaid reg-

istrations. Dad took great delight in making up a No.1 registration plate and posed in a shot with the car for an article written about Dad's 'love' for Citroëns by Peter Janson.

Mum eventually sold TW 682 as it was getting too difficult for her as a daily drive and I think at



Dad took great delight in making up a No.1 registration plate and posed in a shot with the car for an article written about Dad's 'love' for Citroëns by Peter Janson.

A Family Affair: GKN991



Right: An extract from the original registration document.

Below: Current engine ID plate which Stephen thinks may be from a French car

the time it went up to Queensland. I caught up with it again at a CCOCA Concours in 2012 when it had come back to Melbourne and looked much the same [apart from a set of driving lights added] with the original two-pack paint work Dad did looking pretty good.

In the late 1990s Dad developed cancer and without saying anything to us he sold off the two B14s which I was always saddened by as I had a love for the sedan. I keep a look out for it to see what has become of it and if its back on the road or for sale but it does not appear to have surfaced yet.

Dad did not survive the cancer and passed not long after but fortunately the Family 9 was not sold. At his funeral service it acted as the mourning car for the family: a not so pleasant family ritual.

After Dad's passing there was

ROADS CORPORATION	
Certificate of original registration details in Victoria	
This is to certify that, on 26 November 2013, Roads Corporation records were checked and show the following original Victorian details for the vehicle with VIN number 9 557012	
Vehicle Condition:	NEW
First Registered in Victoria:	04/11/1955
First Vehicle Registration Number in Victoria:	GKN991
Office where vehicle was registered:	ILLEGIBLE
Year / Make / Type:	1955 CITROËN SEDAN
Model:	N/A
Vin/Chassis Number:	9 557012
Original Engine Number:	AW15677 W
Original Serial Number:	N/A
Axes:	2
GCM, GVM, Tare mass (values in kg):	N/A, N/A, N/A
Original Colour:	BLUE
Engine Type:	PETROL
No. of Cylinders/Rotors:	4
CC's:	N/A
Fuel Type:	PETROL
Transmission:	N/A
 Signature of authorised officer	
Reference : CRSWAS	WENDY SYMONDS
Dated Issued : 26/11/2013	Name of authorised officer

This certificate sets out the results of a search of VicRoads' historical records under regulation 104 of the Road Safety (Vehicles) Regulations 2009

still a whole Traction and parts being stored at my sister's house and this was donated to the club. Mum continued to drive the 9 occasionally and it appeared in John Reynolds book 'Eighty Years of Citroën in the United Kingdom' as it probably was the only English 9 accessible and registered at the time.

In the end looking after the 9 became too much of a task and Mum made the decision to sell it. Fortunately, the family were offered the first chance to buy it. At the time I was doing up the Mark IV Jaguar which had all the

The four Graham children in front of the brand new GKN 991 in November 1955



mechanics and paint work completed but the choice was simple ~ the Jag was sold in no time and the 9 remains in the family.

It was being regularly used by myself and my daughter and we had a very pleasant surprise at the CCOCA concours in 2011 when a guy came up to me and said, 'That's my father's car'. He also added that he recognised the registration number [the car still has the original registration], it used to be blue and had a tow bar on it. Now many know that the car was Peacock blue originally but hardly anyone knew it had been mounted with a tow bar [the mounting holes are still in the body].

His name was Chris Graham and his father, Dr Bernard Graham, was the original owner of the car when it was purchased in 1955. Chris had learnt to drive in the vehicle and his parents and siblings used to go on holidays in it with suitcases on a roof rack and towing a caravan.

His father had purchased the car as with four kids they could all fit in the back with the row of dickie seats folding out of the floor. As the Family 9's had a lower geared crown wheel and pinion it could chug along with all on board, albeit at a rather slow pace with its 4-cylinder engine.

Chris contacted his siblings and they were able to find a pic-

A Family Affair: GKN 991

ture of them all standing in front of the car the day it arrived brand new.

They also recalled that one day on a trip either to, or back from Geelong, there was an almighty bang in the engine bay with smoke pouring from it. The cause was described as being the 'big end' with 'the piston going through the side of the cylinder' in the early 1960s.

Jeremy Graham believes that a 'new' engine had to be sourced. The engine number of the engine in the car now does not match the original registration details but all the other details [carburettor, air filter, water pump etc] look correct for the 1955 model. I suspect a replacement block was sourced and everything transferred over from the original engine.

Jeremy thinks the car was sold off in about 1964-1965 and this ties in with the time Brian Keogh purchased the car making the Gercovich family the third owners in the car's 65 year history.

An interesting link to the original owner was that when Jeremy's twin sisters were bought home from hospital in 1958 their bassinets were also just placed on the floor in the back as I had done with my children in the 1980s.

Jeremy himself owned two Citroëns in the 1980s and thinks the registration of one of them was PR 007 or PR 008 so any news of this vehicle would be much appreciated.

In the last couple of years, the ravages of time have started to take a toll on the 9 with much bare wiring which was replaced with a new loom by David Gries. David also upgraded the regulator to modern electronics in addition to wiring-in indicators.

The body work has rust and bubbles both starting to appear but overall the original paint job by dad does not look too bad [if you don't look too closely].

More recently second gear decided to give up the ghost: not too bad considering it was a sec-



More recently second gear decided to give up the ghost, not too bad considering it was a second hand gearbox when we put it in the car in 1979.

ond hand gearbox when we put it in the car in 1979.

The gearbox was rebuilt by club-member Rini Zysvelt using a lot of parts from that 'spare' gearbox purchased off the car in Sale way back in 1981. An original brand new low ratio crown wheel and pinion was sourced



and has been put back into the gearbox just to help with the extra weight of the car despite there being nothing wrong with the standard ratio one that was taken out of the car.

While the car was off the road I also took the opportunity to lighten the flywheel, change

I could not believe the amount of rubbish that came out of the fuel tank and that the car was able to run at all quite surprised me.



A Family Affair: GKN 991

to a 123 Ignition, changed the clutch system to a diaphragm type, rebuilt the steering, replaced bearings/ball joints etc, Installed CV-type drive shafts, replaced shockers, cleaned up the fuel tank, installed an electric fuel pump and replaced the fuel lines. I could not believe the amount of rubbish that came out of the fuel tank and that the car was able to run at all quite surprised me.

After finally getting everything back together I took the car for a very tentative first run which only lasted about one kilometre, as I noted a stream of steam coming from under the bonnet. The radiator core had a sprung a leak and after pulling the front bodywork off again it was diag-

nosed as irreparable and a new one was ordered from overseas. This is now in the car and I also took the opportunity to install an electric fan for it as we all know how much Tractions love our warm summer days.

First drive after the radiator work was again a bit nerve racking and I ended up being quite disappointed with its effort of climbing hills, especially with the crown wheel and pinion change. After a ring-around Ted Cross suggested that I just check that the rear handbrake was releasing properly. Well the handbrake was releasing properly but the shoes were actually stuck in the 'on' position. A quick clean and freeing up of these and off again for the latest test drive.



The car certainly handles hills a bit better now with the 'Alpine' ratio crown wheel and pinion in place although I have noticed it has a very short first gear. Top speed on the freeway now is about 85kph but that's not a big problem as the joy of driving the car is about the overall feel and it was never going to be about how fast a Traction can be.

In the future the engine head is next but again I cannot yet bring myself around to getting the body work done as it is something that was done by both Dad and myself and has the look of use and most of all the memory of Family. It will get to a stage when it will need to be done but I think that is going to be a decision for whoever is the next owner.

In a club register from 1986/87 it lists six Family 9s being in the Club with only the one regis-

tered at the time being GKN 991. Its great to see that the fleet of 9s on the road is close to expanding with the possibility of three being grouped together in a future Club meeting.

The help from Ted Cross, Ian Macdermot, Micheal Hose, Bruce Stringer, Peter Stringer, Rob Little, Lance Wearne and David Gries have been invaluable and highlights the benefits of being a member of the Club.

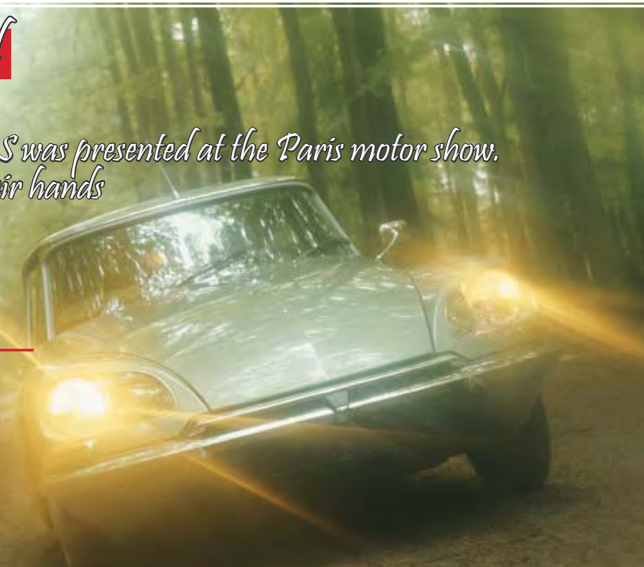
I have started to put together notes of bits I have done along the way and hopefully they are useful for someone else as the biggest joy I have had is actually again working on bits and pieces that I shared with my father 40 years ago.

Stephen Gercovich
Stephen's notes about the work that has been 'done along the way' will appear in the next edition of 'Front Drive' in June 2021.

Looking Forward

Next issue of 'Front Drive...
The world gasped when the DS was presented at the Paris motor show.
But early owners threw up their hands
in horror at reliability issues.
Today it holds motorists
enthralled, while still seen by
many as a 'brave choice'.

Why not share your DS experiences and dreams with other members? Send your contribution, no matter how brief, to Leigh Miles at editor@citroenclassic.org.au by Monday, May 10. Got a picture that merits sharing? Send it as well.



Sound Advice

Late last year I noticed on Facebook a fellow in Italy had developed a new sound system for D Series Citroëns. It looked rather attractive, fitted into the dash perfectly and featured FM radio, USB and SD card slots and Bluetooth. This had apparently been a lockdown project of Neri Ceccarelli in Turin, who is also an artist and sculptor.

I asked Neri to send me specs on the radio which I took to a local automotive radio shop here in Shepparton and asked his opinion, which was favourable. I then decided to purchase one for my car as it was still fitted with an original AM radio and tape player. Neri sent me the radio by DHL so I had tracking details for security. When I received it I



took it to the radio shop again and we bench tested it prior to installation, it certainly picked up FM stations easily, so I thought the rest would surely work.

The radio slips into the tray above the ashtray but you need to remove the tray and open up the top of it to allow the radio wiring to pass through it but I already had the pre-existing radio to remove from that position. After a lot of messing around I managed to remove it without removing the entire dashboard and as I already had a spare tray, fitted the radio fairly easily and along with a new pair of speakers.

The radio is now working beautifully; playing radio, music from my phone and memory stick, so once again we can enjoy our D with the



music of our choice. A handy remote control is also supplied with a magnet backing so it can sit on the dash within easy reach.

When I purchased my radio the colour in the radio's 'window' was blue. It may have been pointed out to Neri, or he may have realised, that the instrument lights on a D are green, so he sent out green lenses to be fitted to all of his customers' radios.

Neri has now further developed his radio, you no longer need to use the tray. Instead the

Once in position Neri Ceccarelli's multi-function radio looks quite the part in Rob and Libbie Little's DS. One could be gracing your ID/DS sometime soon as well.

radio is now secured with bolts using the original tray mounting which I feel is a better system but the radio otherwise is exactly the same.

My landed price was around \$450, which I felt was a very good price to pay for a modern radio with the above features but above all was a perfect fit to compliment my car.

Neri's email is neri.ceccarelli@gmail.com if you require further information.

Rob Little

Victorian Club Permits...

Covid-induced Changes

As a result of Covid-19 and issues around getting your Club Permit [Red Plate] renewal forms signed by the Club, both due to lock-downs and the tardy workings of Australia Post, VicRoads have introduced some ways to smooth and speed the process.

1 You must have a VicRoads account and you can sign-up for one at <https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/online-services/sign-up-for-a-vicroads-online-account>

When these accounts were first established by VicRoads they did not include any Club Permit cars. Their system has been updated and it now includes both full registration and Club Permit cars. So, if you set up your account some time ago, it might be worth re-visiting it and checking.

2 Download a Club Permit endorsement form. While the authorised officer of the Club should fill in the vehicle details based on the information held by the Club and must confirm the permit holder is a financial member of the Club. You can make life easier for the Secretary if you either send the car

details or download the form and fill in the Vehicle Details and email the form to the Secretary. Once the Secretary has filled out and signed the form he will email it back to you. Here is a link to the VicRoads site where you can download this form: <https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/registration/limited-use-permits/club-permit-scheme/renew-or-extend-a-club-permit>

3 Sign your Club Permit renewal notice which you will have received in the post. You must be the permit holder.

4 Submit your renewal and signed Club Permit endorsement form and pay the renewal fee. You can check the permit renewal fees at: <https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/registration/limited-use-permits/club-rally-and-unregistered-vehicle-permit-fees>

There are three ways to submit forms and pay:

- a Online via your myVicRoads account, although credit card fees apply
- b Visiting any VicRoads Customer Service Centre or
- c Mailing the renewal with a cheque or money order to VicRoads
GPO Box 1644
Melbourne, 3001.



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Recent Recreations...

All Citroën Concours

The joint CCOCA/CCCV Concours d'Elegance was held at Trey Reserve in Sandringham on Saturday, March 6 ~ the Labour Day Long Weekend. Unfortunately, due to a commitment made a year ago, your Editor was not able to be present, but he has been assured that the Reserve was graced by the finest selection of Citroëns ever assembled in Sandringham.

The weather was kind to everyone and the judges were kind



to CCOCA members, with five of the six classes being won by members of our Club. Although to be fair, Rob and Kay Belcourt, who won the DS/GS Class are members of both Clubs.

The winners were:

- A-Series: Ian Sharrock ~ 2CV6, CCOCA
- Traction: Stephen Gercovich ~ Big I5 Family 9, CCOCA
- D and G Series: Rob and Kay Belcourt ~ DS 21 BVH, CCCV & CCOCA
- SM: Tony Stewart ~ 1973 SM, CCCV



Recent Recreations...

- C-Series: Max and Roz Lewis ~ 2006 C6 Exclusive, CCOCA
 - X-Series: Erol and Alison Harvey ~ 1989 XM 2.0 Si, CCOCA
- Prizes were not awarded for Traction Arrière or DS Brand.

Of course, CCOCA members will not be surprised by Stephen

and Erol's wins, as both these cars have featured in 'Front Drive'.

PS: Unfortunately, Ian Sharrock had to leave before the awards were given out. So, we do not have a picture of Ted Cross congratulating him.



Erol Harvey receiving his award for the best X-Series car.



Max Lewis receiving his award for the best C-Series car.



Tony Stewart receiving his award for the best SM.



Rob Belcourt receiving his award for the best D/G-Series car.



Stephen Gercovich receiving his award for the best Traction.

L'Hôtel du Tigre: Part 2

La Deux-Chevaux and Le Convoi Nucléaire

« Il n'y a pas de temps qui dure » [Proverbe Vendéen]

or;

« Time stands still for no man »

Almost 20 years after Leigh's visit to Vendée, Western France...

...Fast-Forward/Avance Rapide: 2018...

L'Auberge de St Vincent, formerly-[Clemenceau homage oblige], L'Hotel du Tigre, was, by now an English-tribute « pub » run by an amiable couple of anglophile Parisians. A diminishing band of Brexpat diasporans gathered on Wednesday evenings for Le Fish and Chips,

L'Hôtel du Tigre in 2021. A far cry from its appearance in 1999 as shown in the last edition of 'démarrreur'.

served from a trailer towed behind a French re-registered- but-RHD '90s Land Rover Discovery owned by a retired Welsh policeman.

On a summer morning in 2018, I'd parked the Deux-Chevaux near Le Stop, in front of Le Pub; a photo-opportunity for a 2CV blogpost about Le Fish and Le Chips. [<http://mogettela2cvcoquette.blogspot.com/2021/01/clemenceau-typo.html>]

Smartiephone in hand, I framed up the shot: Le téléphone box rouge. The oil-stain where Le Rusty Taxi Londonien stood before more terrasse space was needed after le smoking-ban; La Vendée Chippy banner; en anglais of course. Le picture of le dartboard, le cricket bat, le raquette de tennis, and la publicité for La draught Guinness...

Then I heard the sirens.

Gendarmerie motard outrider sirens, coming from the south, outside town, next to le speed camera and the now-closed restaurant gastronomique...

It could be only one thing: Un Convoi Nucléaire! Expended plutonium being shipped from Bordeaux to the Cotentin peninsula for re-processing! Perhaps, even, containing traces of Good Old Aussie Uranium from the old days! Vive L'Entente Cordiale!

Quelle belle opportunité! Un clip vidéo... avec, in the fore-



L'Hôtel du Tigre: Part 2



A collage created from two postcards from the 1920s depicting what is now Place de la Mairie but at the time was La Place principale. A box has been inserted to show the location of l'Hôtel du Tigre

ground, au premier plan, up-front au milieu... La Deux-Chevaux !

Quelle excellente idée pour le blog! Rare! Un scoop...

Oh dear. Quel caméraman stupide, quel imbécile...

Oh yes, I got the clip: les motards. Quatre. Le premier auto-bus crammed with CRS National Guardsmen, full combat gear and machine-guns velcro'd to chests. Then, the blue Gen-

darmerie minibuses, also full of armed occupants. Then the red low-loaders, three of them, each with a concrete sarcophagus the size of two Parisian public toilets. Then more gendarmes, and two



fire-engines. I filmed the lot for our grandsons. Not so much to show how creatively the State was investing our fiscal contributions via two Ministères [Intérieur/CRS, Défence/Gendarmes], more to make them jealous that I had just recorded the most wicked, life-size, Légo-City collection they were likely to see this side of Noel.

Oh dear.

The last vehicle turned out to be the tail-end radio car/Citroën Jumper minibus.

I was busy filming Les Pompiers disappearing around the bend where the Couscous take-away used to be before the autoroute took away the passing trade, and the hygiene inspectors did the rest... Too busy film-

ing to hear le radio-car pull up at my right shoulder on L'Hôtel du Tigre car-park... Right next to Le Garage des Pompiers which used to house the H-W H-Van Hydro-pneumatique...

Stay tuned, dear Antipodean readers, for the concluding chapter of this unlikely-but-true tale, where we shall discover why, in France, it is always a good idea to carry your...[sneaky Citroën reference] ID...

...and to find out how, starting later in 2021, a white 1973-model DS will lead the tribute to George Clemenceau's Vendée summer sojourns of 100 years ago in

« D [S] TOURS 2021, Clemenceau Histoires Secrètes »
Alan Brown February 2021

Caption Competition

Can you think of a witty caption for this image supplied by Warwick and Petra Spinaze? The wittiest caption, as judged by Warwick, will receive from CCOCA a \$25 gift voucher from Dan Murphy.

The rules are simple:

- Entries must be in English.
- Entries must be received by the Editor [editor@citroenclassic.org.au] no later than 15 April.
- The judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- The result will be published in the next edition of 'démarréur' on 3 May.



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1933 Citroën C4G

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1986 2CV Ute

For health reasons I am selling my 2CV Ute for the price of \$20,000. The 2CV Ute was built for the English Navy, to fight the rebels in the Malaysian jungle. It had to be robust and reliable to cope with the jungle tracks and it had to be light enough to be taken ashore by helicopter from the aircraft carriers, it was for that reason the 2CV's were chosen. The first batch of 35 pick-ups was delivered late 1959 and 1960, when the ship reached Singapore. A second batch of 30 pick-ups was delivered in 1961. When the mission was over: all Utes were thrown overboard into the ocean. My Ute is a reproduction of the originals. The person who had it built died before it was finished. The Ute was completed and was advertised, and I bought it and had it shipped to Fremantle. I have driven it as my usual transport since 2017. VIN: VF7AZKA00KA184323, Eng No. 0905042793. Registered until 14.2.2021 will be extending by another 3 months. Contact: Herman Berkeringh, winkbul45@bigpond.com or 08 9844 4245 CCOCA takes no responsibility for the provenance of this car and the buyer needs to conduct their own due diligence. [D01/04]



1964 DS19 BVH Motor & Gearbox

Still mounted in a rolling front section of the original car that was wrecked many years ago because of rust. All hydraulic components, gear change, pump, brain, drive shafts, wheels, radiator etc still in position. The front was cut at the A-pillar and includes the fire wall forward and has been stored in a dry shed. Can easily be loaded for transport as it is a rolling unit. This is a rare opportunity to purchase a complete assembly not dismantled. Price \$2,000. For more details please contact Peter Huth anytime on 0419 649 499 or Email: lamaisondecitroen@bigpond.com [D01/03]



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