CITROËN CLASSIC OWNERS' CLUB OF AUSTRALIA

Australia's National Citroën Car Club

# FRONT DRIVE

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

*October/November 2021 Vol 45 No 3*

## 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.

The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of CCOCA or its Committee. Neither CCOCA nor its Committee can accept any responsibility for any mechanical advice printed in, or adopted from this publication.

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 |

## Committee

President ~ Ted Cross
[03] 9819 2208 [H]
president@citroenclassic.org.au

Secretary ~ Tim Cottrell
0416 009 297 [M]
secretary@citroenclassic.org.au

Treasurer ~ Ian Macdermott
0419 362 375 [M]
treasurer@citroenclassic.org.au

Activity Coordinator ~ Lee Dennes
0438 286 181 [M]
activities@citroenclassic.org.au

Spare Parts Officer ~ Lance Wearne
0424 054 724 [M]
spareparts@citroenclassic.org.au

Publication Editor ~ Leigh Miles
[03] 9888 7506 [H]
editor@citroenclassic.org.au

Committee Persons ~

| | |
|---|---|
| Max Lewis | [03] 9372 0921 [H] |
| Russell Wade | 0401 859 704 [M] |
| Bruce Stringer | 0412 342 706 [M] |
| Marg Towt | 0408 373 181 [M] |

## 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.

## 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.

While Club permit renewals can done via the post CCOCA encourages you to do this via the internet and email. It is faster, simpler and safer than the post. Payment can also be completed via your VicRoads on-line account.

## Support

Web Site Manager ~ Bruce Stringer
0412 342 706 [M]
websitemanager@citroenclassic.org.au

Membership Secretary ~
Ian Macdermott 0419 362 375 [M]
treasurer@citroenclassic.org.au

Asset Custodians ~ Ted Cross
Max Lewis

AOMC Liaison Officers ~

| | |
|---|---|
| Max Lewis | [03] 9372 0921 [H] |
| Russell Wade | [03] 9570 3486 [H] |

Club Permit & Safety Officers ~

| | |
|---|---|
| Russell Wade | [03] 9570 3486 [H] |
| Philip Rogers | [03] 5944 3091 [H] |
| Ted Cross | [03] 9819 2208 [H] |

Librarian ~ Max Lewis
[03] 9372 0921 [H]
librarian@citroenclassic.org.au

Club Shop ~ Vacant
clubshop@citroenclassic.org.au

ICCCR Representative ~
Ted Cross [03] 9819 2208 [H]

## Cover Image

The cover image is from the website www.carmagazine.co.uk/car-reviews/citroen/traction-avant-1934-1957/. The photographer is not attributed on the site.

## Contributors

Contributors to this edition of 'démarreur' include Per Åhlström, Alan Brown, Graeme Dennes, John Freeman, Nick Larkin, Jon Pressnell, John Reynolds and Graham Tulett,

## Contents



## Deadline

The deadline for the next edition of 'Front Drive' is Sunday, 7 November, and for 'démarreur' it is Monday, 18 October.

### 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

Club Shop is presently not operating. For further information please contact the Club's President.

### OTHER CLUBS

| | |
|---|---|
| Vic | www.citcarclubvic.org.au |
| NSW | www.citroencarclub.org.au |
| QLD | www.citroenclubqld.org |
| SA | www.clubcitroensa.com |
| WA | www.citroenwa.org.au |
| Tas | www.citroentas.org |

# Ed Sed

This edition of 'Front Drive' started out as simply an edition with a focus on the ties that bind many of us together ~ the Traction Avant.

At the point of original planning my focus was that broad. Actually, thinking about it 'focus' is not the right word because as we all know the breath of knowledge, the details that are associated with the Traction are so wide and deep that such a topic can never be called a focus.

As it happened this edition's pre-War focus was in large part serendipitous.

The first pointer was that the second part of Per Åhlström's 'Budd & Bankruptcy' feature, which talks to the development and launch of the Traction, was to be a major part of the edition, part one having appeared in the last 'démarreur'.

Then, when dealing with John Freeman [Perth, WA] about his 1926 B12 I discovered that he also owns a 1937 7C/Super Modern 12. Now, we all know that pre-War Tractions are rare enough, but one in Australia? In the Club! Well it had feature.

Ian McDermott, our Treasurer, told me of members in New Zealand [Graham and Margaret Tulett] whose 1935 Traction Cabriolet had been written up in 'Beaded Wheels', a prestigious New Zealand classic car magazine. If a 1937 sedan is rare then how rare is a 1935 Slough Cabriolet? Well, that had to go in.

A recent article in the CCCUK magazine, 'Citroënian', about assembling H-vans in Vietnam [yes, they did] prompted me to re-visit a feature I did some years ago about Citroën in Vietnam for use in the UK magazine. Given I had done the work and it fitted with our pre-War theme… well there's another article!

But it is not all pre-War. I promised in the last 'démarreur' more information about the Traction which was auctioned by Augettes in March, 2019. This car has an especially interesting history: one well worth sharing.

And it's not all Traction! For the 2CV driver [and especially 2CV Raiders or potential Raiders] Graeme Dennes has

Continued on page 6



# Prez Sez

I have been patiently waiting for this important edition of Front Drive.

Afterall it is one of the iconic Citroën models, and the Traction is the model that has drawn many of us to Citroën and to CCOCA in the first place.

In my case I bought my first Traction at the beginning of the Eighties [yes last century] and joined CCOCA shortly after, and I have never left. I have built up great memories of using a Citroën to enjoy friendships and activities around Australia and overseas. I don't plan to stop any time soon.

The Traction is the first Citroën that helped me get interested in all things Citroën. Over the last forty years I have made so many friends with Citroëns around Australia and overseas and it feels like one big happy family. I have enjoyed many close and enduring friendships ever since and I can't imagine a time where I don't have at least one Citroën in my life. [Ted, your friendly would go so far as to suggest he cannot think of a time when you only had one Citroën in your life. But, who am I to talk? Ed.]

I am now prepared to think that the end-game for Covid restrictions is starting to emerge around Australia. Locally here in Melbourne our Premier is talking about how we can reopen and what we can do with or without an approved vaccine record. This may bring us some hard personal decisions to make but I am certain, that we Aussies, will work our way through it, to a logical and sensible outcome. Helen and I have both received both vaccinations and I encourage you to think about doing the same too.

A couple of months ago we asked you to complete a survey for us. It was designed to provide the Committee with a better understanding of what you wanted from CCOCA. To those of you who completed the survey… thank you.Ian McDermott and Bruce Stringer have worked hard on analysing the data and the full report can be found here: https://citroenclassic.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Car-survey-report-Rev1.pdf If you don't want to read the full report highlights will be published in next

Continued on page 6

## Ed Sed

Continued from page 4

shared his instructions and advice for fitting a roof rack and CB radio aerial to your vehicle.

And once again Alan Brown is sharing a little moment of Vendée life, infused with some Citroën history at the Rennes-La-Janais plant. Rennes appeared in our recent Ami edition as that is where the Ami [6, 8 and Super] was built, but today the plant and people who worked there bring the place to life in the way only Alan can.

And suddenly what I had seen as a slim edition is once again 100pages.

That's lots of Covid-reading by anyone's measure.

Enjoy!

Leigh F Miles ~ Editor.

## Prez Sez

Continued from page 5

month's magazine.

After many months of no social activities, I think we will see a return to some sort of new normal. Personally, I can't wait to meet up with my Citroën and club friends again.

And finally, a special welcome to our newest members, and I hope to meet you all personally as soon as possible. I will have already phoned you to say hello. If not, you can expect my call soon.

Ted Cross ~ President

## A-Tractions

*Please note: To book or RSVP for a CCOCA organised event you must now register on line at the club's website. Do not contact the organiser to register your attendance. Given restrictions can impact events at short notice, please check the Club's website for the latest information regarding any listed event.*

### • October

#### All French Car Festival

WHEN: Sunday, 10 October
TIME: TBC
WHERE: TBC
CONTACT: Lee Dennes, 0438 286 181 l.dennes@bigpond.net.au

CANCELLED

On August 17 the Club received the following information from Peugeot Car Club of Victoria who were arranging this year's All French Car Festival: 'PCCV has cancelled the French Car Festival to be held on 10 October. I'm sure you'll appreciate why we've done this. Best wishes, Paul Watson PCCV.'

#### Garage Crawl & BBQ Lunch

WHEN: Sunday, 24 October
TIME: From 10:30am
WHERE: Eric Bishop's 1485 Old Sale Rd., Buln Buln East
COST: Free
BOOKING: Essential by Sunday, 17 October
BRING: BYO everything for a BBQ, including tables and chairs
MORE INFO: Eric Bishop, 0409 452 170

We start at Eric's shed which, besides a Traction, includes a 1930 Wolseley Hornet, Triumph Spitfire, Triumph Vitesse, 1948 Vauxhall Velox and a Vauxhall Caleche. Then it is on for a self-catering BBQ lunch from 12:20 at 44 Mytle Cres., Warragul.

DO NOT CALL ERIC TO REGISTER! You must register/book via the CCOCA website https://citroenclassic.org.au

#### Monthly Meeting: October Quiz Night

WHEN: Wednesday, 27 October
TIME: 7:30pm
WHERE: Zoom
COST: Free
BOOKING: Not required
MORE INFO: Leigh Miles, editor@citroenclassic.org.au


Think you know your widgets from your grommets? Join us on Zoom for a Quiz Night with a motoring bent.

If you think you know how much Fiat's 128 Sport cost in the UK, or the name of André Citroën's friend then this might right up your alley. [Those two are answered on page 56.] So, it's not all serious!

There will be prizes of Dan Murphy gift vouchers to make it worth your while!

### • November

#### Monthly Meeting: November

WHEN: Wednesday, 24 November
TIME: 7:30pm
WHERE: Zoom
COST: Free
BOOKING: Not required
MORE INFO: Lee Dennes, 0438 286 181 l.dennes@bigpond.net.au

### • December

#### A Very CCOCA Christmas BBQ/Picnic

## A-Tractions

WHEN: Sunday, 12 December
TIME: 12:00pm
WHERE: Frog Hollow Reserve, Fordham Ave., Camberwell.

This event is usually a combined get together with CCCV and catered for by both clubs. Due to COVID we are unable to make decisions on allowable numbers and any restrictions on the provision of food. We will be able to make clearer decisions nearer the time and all members will be notified of the arrangements accordingly. But be sure to keep the date free.


### Chit Chat Tuesday

WHEN: 1st Tuesday
2 November
7 December
4 January, '22
TIME: 10:00am
WHERE: Laneway Espresso Café, Dromana
COST: Cheap Eats
BOOKING: Not required
CONTACT: Warwick Spinaze 0407 016 719.

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


## Ad Lib

With the COVID lockdown hampering my sanity, I have been otherwise engaged with work about the place here at 1 York Street.

This too has come to a halt while I mend broken bones from a ladder accident. None the less we soldier on.

I have been assisted in my search for new Citroën titles… not so much for the library but for my benefit as I am going to purchase four books on Citroën camions and autobuses.

From Parmier's website…

- Les Camion de chez nous en couleur,
- Les camions de chez nous,
- Les véhicules du Service Public de chez nous and
- Autobus de chez nous

Plus on the H van there are

- Citroën type H by Nicholas Bonnefoix and
- Citroën H, La camionette star by Antoine Gregiore.

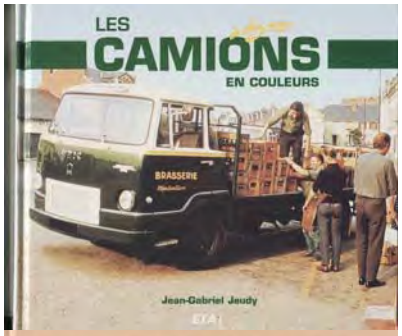
All in French.

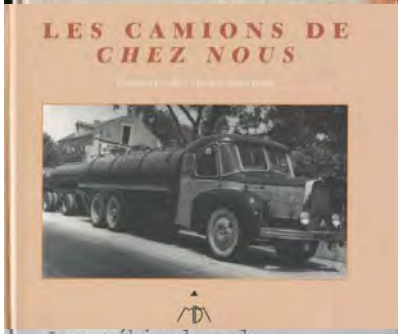
As there is a worldwide unflagging interest in the H van, it might be worthwhile purchasing this book [there are two to choose from] and writing a review which should fill up a few pages in the magazine. Let me know if you are interested in the Club's library acquiring one of these H-van books.

The missing title 'Citroën 80 years of future' is still out there. I have written it off ever being returned.

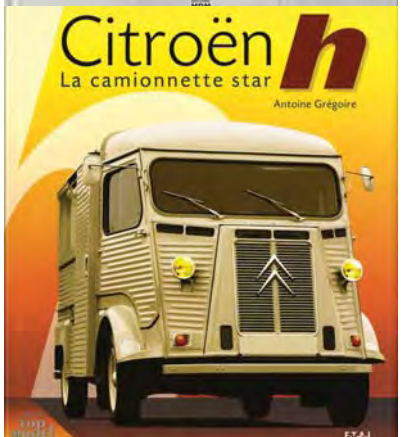
I hope to have more for you in the next Front Drive.

Best regards,
Max Lewis ~ Librarian







# Cit-In 2022: Cowra, NSW


WHEN: Friday, 25 to Monday, 28 March 2022
WHERE: Cowra, NSW
COST: Per person

| | |
|---|---|
| Prior to 10 Nov '21 | $280 |
| 11 Nov to 15 Jan '22 | $295 |
| 16 Jan to 18 Feb | $320 |
| 5 to 12yo | $175 |
| Under 5 | Free |

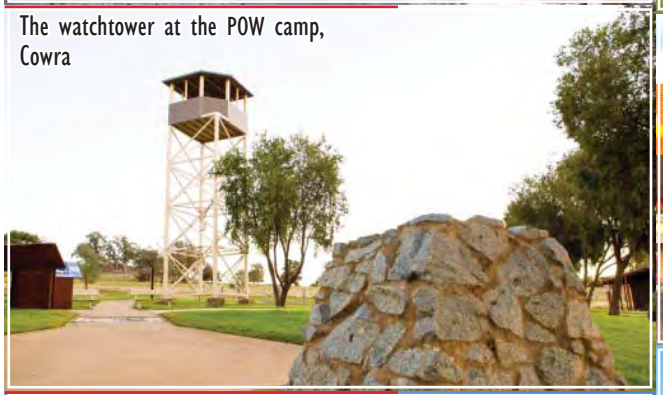
BOOKINGS: Essential
BRING: Everything for a long-weekend away
WEBSITE: http://citroencarclub.org.au/cit-in/cit-in.html

## Information

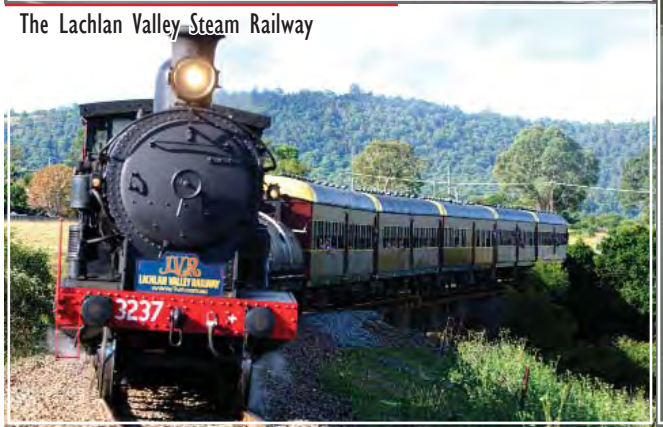
With the Covid-19 pandemic in full swing at the time, the 2020 CIT-IN had to be postponed. After consultation with the various state Presidents, the CIT-IN originally planned for Cowra during Easter 2020 has now been rescheduled for late March 2022.

This will allow time for financial and psychological recovery with a better environment as regards weather and accommodation. It will be held during the last weekend of daylight saving [NOT Easter] from Friday, 25 March 2022 until 28 March 2022.

The entrance to the Japanese War Cemetery, Cowra

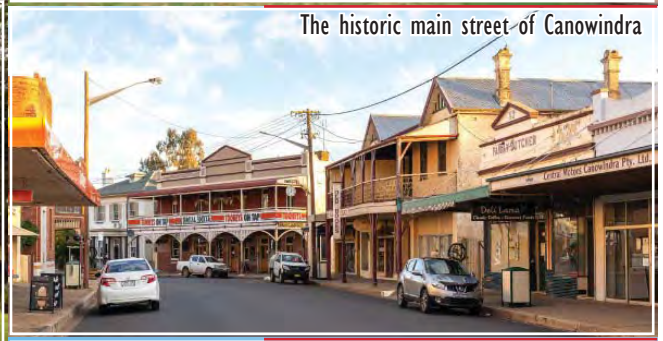

The watchtower at the POW camp, Cowra

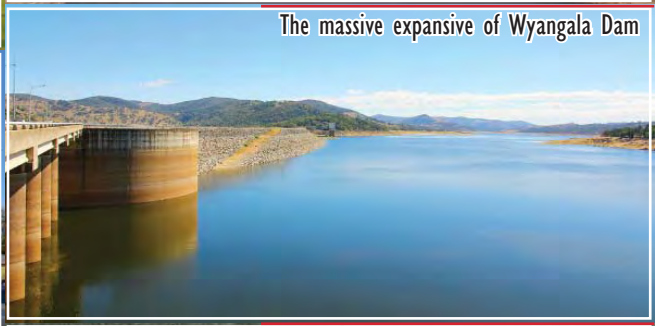
The Gooloogong Hotel

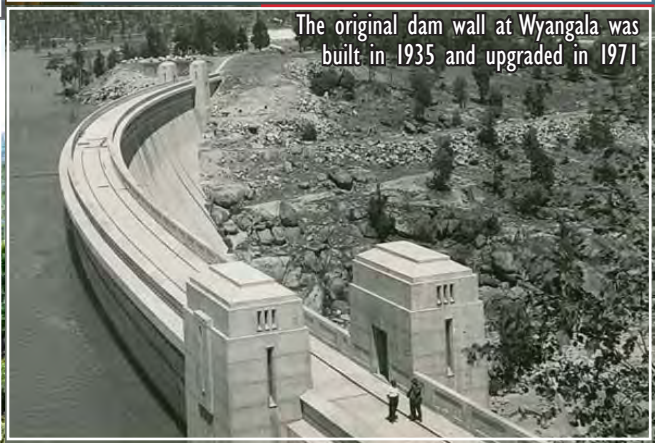


The Lachlan Valley Steam Railway

The Age of Fishes Museum


The historic main street of Canowindra


The massive expansive of Wyangala Dam


The original dam wall at Wyangala was built in 1935 and upgraded in 1971

2022.

As Club President I urge everyone to come to Cowra as planned, only this time it will be an earlier weekend in 2022. I hope to see you at the upcoming bigger and better CIT-IN at Cowra.

Bruce Elsegood.
President ~ Citroën Car Club of New South Wales, Inc.

## Itinerary

- Friday, 25 March 2022
  Afternoon: Check In then proceed to meet and greet.
  Evening: A light supper will be served at the meeting venue.
- Saturday, 26 March 2022
  Morning: Show and Shine at the meeting venue.
  Afternoon: Tourist activities including sightseeing of the town and local region.
  Evening: Informal dinner and social get-together at the venue.
- Sunday, 27 March 2022
  Morning: Observation Run to a place of local interest with included picnic lunch.
  Afternoon: Tourist activities including sightseeing of the town and local region.
  Evening: Formal dinner at the venue with speeches and prize giving.
- Monday, 28 March 2022
  Morning: Farewell Breakfast at the venue then departure.

## Registration

Registration for CIT-IN 2022 is

# Cit-In 2022: Cowra, NSW

now available and the form can be downloaded from the CCC-NSW website.
http://citroencarclub.org.au/cit-in/cit-in.html#register

## General Refund Policy

If you have registered and paid, but are unable to attend CIT-IN due to unforeseen circumstances, the Citroën Car Club of NSW Inc will refund your registration fee in part according to the following scale:

| | |
|---|---|
| Before 1 Dec '21 | 100% |
| Until 1 Feb '22 | 50% |
| Until 10 Mar '22 | 25% |
| After 10 Mar '22 | Nil |

## Covid-19 Refund Policy

In the event that CIT-IN Cowra 2022 is required to be cancelled by any government order due to COVID or other medical emergency, we confirm that 'Should the event have to be cancelled due to formal Government restrictions on medical or other grounds, we will refund the full registration payment made, less any non-recoverable deposits/payments made to venues and suppliers to the event.'

We are unable to estimate how much might be retained, as while we have tried to ensure that we as a club are protected from losses due to cancellation, our arrangements with suppliers have various cut-off dates for termination where there may be some loss [as a result of non-recoverable expenditures already made by suppliers] depending on the time between the ruling to cancel and scheduled start date of the event. As a guide, the retention on the last deferral due to COVID in 2020 was $25 per registrant.

As highlighted on the actual registration form, the CCCNSW [Inc] reserves the right to vary COVID management practices and guidelines to respond to health advice plus government supplier policies leading up to and during CIT-IN. We will continually monitor the requirements leading up to the event, and notify all registrants appropriately and in a timely manner as our policies on this develop.

As previously stated in the original invitation to register for CIT-IN @ Cowra 2022 outlining all of the terms and conditions which was part of the registration package. Please assure all of your members who are considering registering for CIT-IN that we are taking all steps available to us to ensure that members do not lose money as a result of the restriction due to COVID.

## Accommodation

- The recommendation is to book early to avoid missing out due to occupancy rates at the Easter break.
- Please contact your chosen accommodation directly, rather than going through a booking agent.
- You will need to pre-book your accommodation to enable Registration.

## Necessities

- Camp Chairs will be required if you intend sitting whilst having your picnic lunch at the destination of the Observation Run.
- Alcohol will be required to be bought from home or purchased on Saturday shopping in Cowra. Woolworths and Aldi have local bottle shops.
- A First Aid kit in the car would be advisable.

# Pre Cit-In 2022 Tour

HELEN'S HAPPY HOLIDAY OR TEDDIE'S TERRIFIC TOUR OR DAVE'S DIRTY DEEDS DONE DIRT CHEAP

| | |
|---|---|
| WHEN: | Saturday, 19 to Friday, 25 March 2022 |
| FROM: | Melbourne, Vic |
| TO: | Cowra, NSW |
| COST: | Nil |
| BOOKINGS: | Essential |
| BRING: | Everything for a week away |

CONTACT:
Ted Cross 0400 592 208 [M]
president@citroenclassic.org.au
Helen Cross 0419 356 963 [M]
03 9819 2208 [H]
crossfam@ozemail.com.au

We are planning a pre-CIT-IN touring trip to Cowra in New South Wales ~ leading up to CIT-IN 2022.

For those folks who would like to have a bit of fun and enjoyment before CIT-IN 2022, we are inviting you to join us on 'Helen's Happy Holiday/Teddie's Terrific Tour / Dave's Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap', to be held over 7 days and 6 nights.

We are starting out from Melbourne and finishing up at Cowra.

Each day is planned to be doing some interesting things and seeing new places, as well as cementing friendships over shared morning tea and lunch each day, pre-dinner drinks, and dinners each evening.

There is no actual cost involved to be part of the group, but some extra excursions along the way will attract a modest amount of money.

Interstate people from all states [as well as Victoria] are most welcome to join us.

We are suggesting accommodation, but you are welcome to arrange your own accommodation elsewhere ~ your choice.

We are mainly staying in caravan parks with cabins.

You will need to book your

# Pre Cit-In 2022 Tour

own accommodation ~ I have let places know that people may ring to book ~ *please mention* that you are part of the Citroën car group.

At the time of writing, accommodation was available at the suggested venues.

We *strongly* suggest that you book it ASAP.

We are hoping for/planning a BBQ dinner in Canberra, I will need firm numbers for this evening.

For the second evening in Canberra we may be going for a restaurant meal ~ details to come down the track.

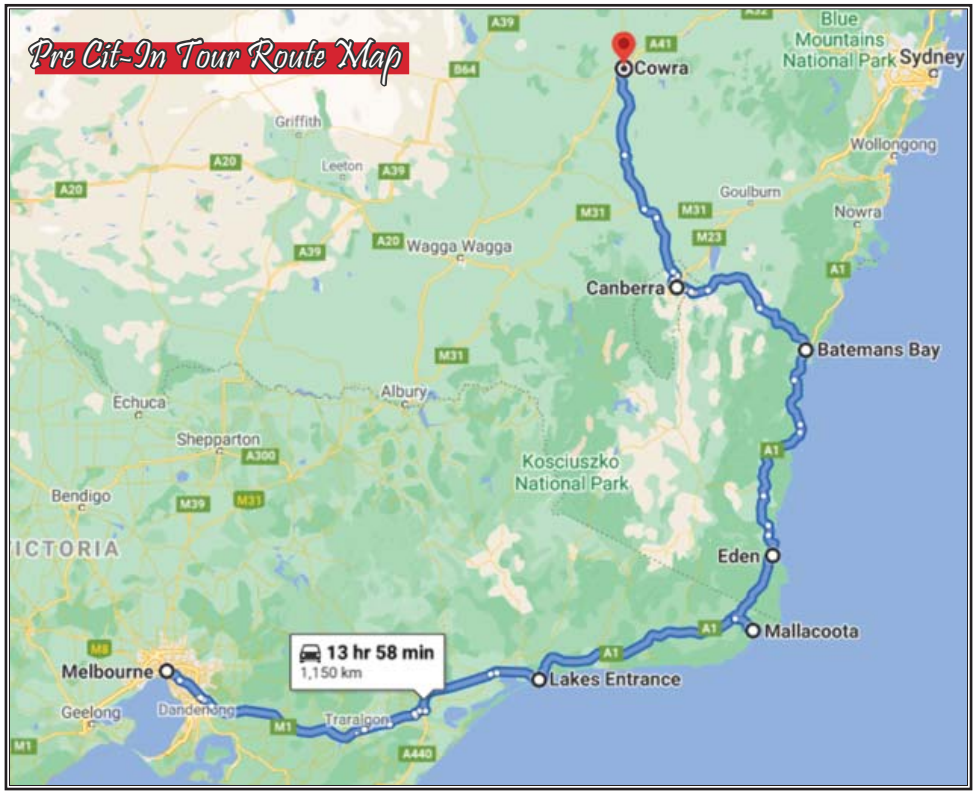
If you are interested in being part of the tour group, please contact the organising crew ASAP!

ITINERARY

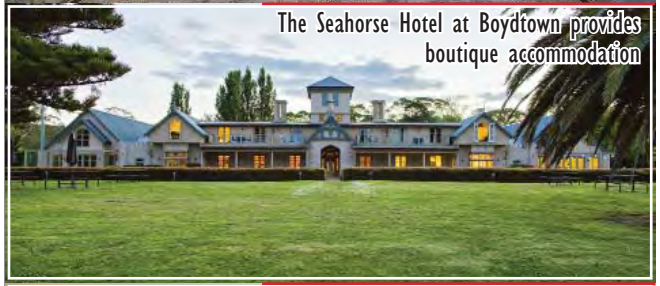
nb: Distances are approximate and may not reflect the actual route of the trip..

- Day 1 Saturday, 19 March Melbourne to Lakes Entrance 320km
  - Accommodation Echo Beach Tourist Park. [03] 5155 2238, www.echobeachpark.com Contact: Cherie or Leigh
- DAY 2 Sunday, 20 March Lakes Entrance to Mallacoota 200km
  - AccommodationShady Gully Caravan Park. [03] 5158 0362, www.mallacootacaravanpark.com/ Contact: Kyle
- Day 3 Monday, 21 March Mallacoota to Eden 85km
  - Accommodation Eden Gateway Holiday Park. [02] 6496 1798, www.edengateway.com.au Contact: Lynne
- Day 4 Tuesday, 22 March Eden to Bateman's Bay 200km
  - Accommodation Clyde View Holiday Park. [02] 4472 4224, www.clydeview.com.au Contact: Jill
- Days 5 Wednesday, 23 March Bateman's Bay to Canberra 150km
  - Accommodation [2nights] Tradies Quality Hotel, Dickson, ACT. [02] 6247 4744, www.qualityhoteldickson.com.au Contact: Savannah or Alivio Tourist Park, 20 Kunzea Street, O'Connor, ACT. [02] 6247 5466, http://aliviogroup.com.au/ Contact: Sam
- Day 6 Thursday, 24 March In Canberra
- Day 7 Friday 25 March Canberra to Cowra 200km We should arrive early after lunch, ready for the start of Citin 2020.

If you are interested in being part of the tour, please contact the organising crew ASAP.






# The Perils of Editorship

In this edition with its Traction focus, and in particular its presentation of some great pre-War cars owned by members I had intended to feature an article about the almost mythic beast: the 22CV V8-powered Traction.

Oh, I opened a can of worms. Not quite a nest of vipers, but certainly a can of worms.

But I am rushing ahead of myself. As Editor I feel I need to find an article that will be of sufficient depth to provide information, knowledge and entertainment. But that is not so detailed that the average reader will have their eyes glaze over in boredom. After all, if you are that interested in the details of the correct thread on that bolt to hold that widget to the body… well you will either already know it, or will [as a result of my sparking your interest] go in search of it. Probably on the web.

As we know, every answer you want is on the 'net. [Think about it for a moment.]

So, in pursuit of something about the 22CV that would provide that balance I headed to Julian Marsh's site [www.citroenet.org.uk/] which is always a good starting point. A bit light on for a magazine article and anyway as much I like Julian's site I am sure everyone with internet access already knows what he is offering. But I found a French website… well illustrated, seemingly knowledgeably written.

After a bit of too-ing and froing I received permission to re-publish the article and got fully into working on the translation. I have spoken elsewhere of the difficulties of doing a translation: despite using multiple translation software tools some things just don't work. Remember those 'rossignols' [nightingales] to describe dashboard rattles? Making a reasonable translation does take a lot longer, and is more complex, than simply putting the original through Google Translate.

As part of making the translation I started to realise that some of the information presented as 'fact' did not align with other information I had seen or read [on the internet].

Now an aside: if a member writes an article for our magazine and tells me the model about which he is writing was only available in red, blue or green, then I am not going to question it. Unless I *know* that they were also available in black, I accept the writer's claim.

Augustin Luca is a talented 3D artist with an interest in things French. He has produced a stunning range of illustrations of the 22CV. In this image the swage line along the bonnet ridge is clear. You can also see the waistline chrome strip which extends beyond the rear door and chromed rain gutter. [Image : https://www.artstation.com/artwork/lGDqV]

# The Perils of Editorship

After all, I am an editor not a fact-checker or researcher. This has, on occasion lead me astray and into the path of criticism, especially when I have published what might be seen as perceived wisdom, rather than checking the facts of what I may have written. I have indeed on previous occasions issued apologies for writing or publishing wrong information. [I still feel badly for casting aspersions in Greg Feinberg's direction years ago.]

Anyway, back to the 22… as I started to mentally query more and more in the article I made contact with Jérome Collignon who is widely acknowledged as

Louis Renault [L] and André Citroen [R].

THE expert on the 22. I contacted him seeking his permission to use information from his site to probe and challenge the feature I was planning to use. He never did give that approval to use his material.

Jérome's blog is not just in-depth, it is in-depth on almost every component of the 22CV that you could imagine. His blog on the unique headlight design of the 22CV comprises 49images and pages of text.

Remember I talked eyes glazing over? You got it. No, it really is fascinating, but not really suitable for our little journal.

From Jérome's response it was clear he had a very low opinion of the article in question. Very generously he offered to point out, and correct, these errors. He worked his way through the first part of the article, noting almost 40 errors. He gave up on attempting the same for the second part. Frankly, I cannot blame him.

If you want to really know about the 22CV I cannot recommend Jérome's blog highly enough, but you won't read it here. [https://jeromecollignon.blog4ever.com/]

Speaking of errors Jérome pointed out that the image described as showing Alfred Sloan and André Citroën on page 33 of the last 'démarreur' is actually Louis Renault and André Citroën. This error has been corrected in the version of the magazine on the Club's website.

As for the 22, you will, for the time being have to make do with these illustrations

But, I am still hunting for a suitable 22CV feature for a future edition!

Leigh F Miles ~ Editor.

## Looking Forward

*Next issue of 'démarreur'... While the only model of the AX which came to Australia was the GT it did spawn a bewildering array of models. Read about this diminutive Citroën next time*

If you own, or owned, a Citroën AX, why not make a contribution and send it to Leigh Miles at editor@citroenclassic.org.au by Monday, October 18. Got a picture that merits sharing? Send it as well.

# Maigret and the Case of...

## ...the Skid-Detecting Citroën

While the Citroën Big Six of Simenon's Chief Inspector Maigret was thrilling BBC TV audiences in the Sixties, a similar car was doing real-life detective work on British roads, recalls John Reynolds

Those TV viewers with long memories among Classic Cars' readers will recall the scene with relish. A match strikes a wall, a trilby-hatted, trench-coated figure lights a pipe: and, to the sound of accordion music, a long, low-slung car with double chevrons on its radiator grille sweeps into shot, its gleaming black paintwork reflecting the pavé pattern of the rainswept Parisian street. Rupert Davies, the BBC TV's Chief Inspector Maigret drives off on another episode of mystery and suspense, in the series based on Simenon's incomparable detective stories!

[Your Editor admits to remembering seeing these television programmes, aired in black and white by the ABC locally. I cannot swear to it, but this is probably my first Citroën memory. Younger members of our readership may recall Rowan Atkinson's interpretation of the role more readily, but for me Rupert Davies is inextricably linked with Inspector Maigret and the Traction Avant. Ed]


Your Editor could only locate two images of Rupert Davies with the Big 6 with which he was inextricably linked via the Maigret TV show. This is perhaps the more famous image and was the version which accompanied the original article in 'Classic & Sports Car'.

Fifty-odd years ago [1960 to 1963 to be precise], Maigret's much admired Citroën 15/6 seemed in Anglo-Saxon eyes to represent all that was most excitingly different about continental car design. A fascinating blend of formal, conservative styling and audaciously original engineering thinking, the merest passing glimpse of its charismatic Gallic silhouette stimulated Francophiles as forcefully as a slug of Calvados or a whiff of Gitanes, sans filtre. Hardly surprising, then, that this above all was the cult car that every avant-garde art student of the period day-dreamed of driving, between listening to Juliette Greco records and watching Jean Gabin films.

A car beloved by cops and robbers alike and the chosen personal transport of countless famous names of the time from Charlie Chaplin to Charles de Gaulle, the Citroën 15/6 well deserved its soubriquet Reine de la Route. Few other prestige saloons at any price could equal its prowess as a get-away car or pursuit vehicle ~ or, indeed, rival its speed and comfort on long, fast, legitimate cross-country journeys along the Routes Nalionales of pre-motorway France. So just as the famous Train Bleu with its exclusive Compagnie Internalionaie des Wagons-Lits coaches epitomised the cosmopolitan elegance of continental rail travel, the classy 15/6 Citroën came to symbolise all that was smart and stylish about First Class express road travel at that time.

Built at Paris, Brussels and Slough from 1938 to 1940 and then again from 1946 to 1956, the 15/6 was, in essence, an upscaled, up-engined version of Citroën's Traction Avant range, with an 80bhp/59.7kW 15CV 2,867cc six-cylinder OHV engine replacing the 11CV 1,911cc four-cylinder unit of the more commonplace Onze Normale. Capable of cruising flat-out all day at near its maximum speed of 84mph/135kph, the 15/6 was just as ruggedly reliable as its juniors in the Traction family, thanks to its strengthened and improved three-speed gearbox and FWD transmission.

# Maigret and the Case of...

To cope with its extra performance, brakes were enlarged, torsion bar suspension arrangements modified and lighting equipment augmented, so that the Six can easily be identified from the Normale by its longer, larger bonnet, bigger wheels and superior standard of interior and external trim. Like the smaller Traction the 15/6 was sold in a choice of body styles; a six-seater saloon or berline and an eight-seater familiale or long wheelbase limousine, this latter version instantly recognisable by its additional rear side windows and folding occasional seats.

Models built up to 1952 all carried their spare wheels in a dish-type cover at the rear; but from 1953 onwards, as with the Onze Normales and Legeres, this was stowed inside an extended trunk type 'big boot' luggage compartment.

As a significant chapter in the Citroën product-evolution story, from 1954-56 a further yet final version was produced [again in both France and the UK], the big-booted 15/6H or Hydropneumatic. In this ~ and on the rear wheels only ~ Citroën's unique gas/oil suspension system was introduced to replace the conventional torsion bar springing, thus paving the way for the launch of the revolutionary all-hydraulically sprung and controlled DS19 in 1955.

Quintessentially French in character, the Citroën 15/6 achieved its apotheosis as a national cultural symbol and cult object during the Fourth Republic when it was accorded special status as the official car of government ministers, top military brass-hats, diplomats and officials of the Élysée Palace.

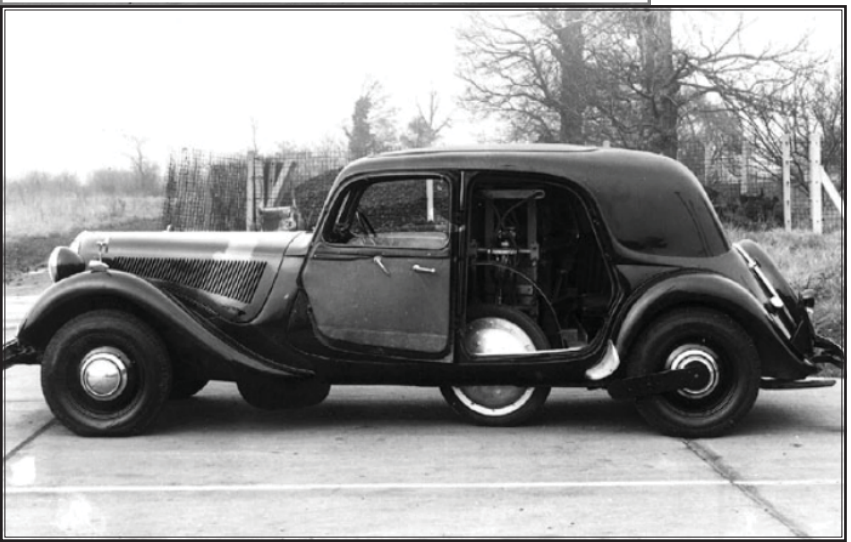
Indeed, various special-bodied versions in the American style were built by the coachbuilders Chapron and Franay to serve as State Limousines for President Coty, and later, for President de Gaulle. One of these distinguished itself by breaking down unceremoniously while transporting Her Majesty the Queen during her state visit to France in 1957!

This diplomatic incident notwithstanding, it was natural that the BBC should pick the Quinze to star alongside Rupert Davies in its long-running TV series based on Simenon's Maigret stories, screened in the early Sixties, so that soon the car became almost as widely recognised and admired in the UK as in its native land. In fact, manufactured and sold here in limited numbers, the right-hand-drive, Slough-built 'Big Sixes' had an enthusiastic following among British amateur rally drivers who found that by virtue of its superior handling and road-holding, the Citroën could more than hold its own against the ostensibly more sporting Jaguars and Alpines then in vogue.

But, ironically, all the while that Maigret's 15/6 was exciting audiences on the nation's TV screens, by day and in complete anonymity, a similar car was hard at work on the British highways, engaged in detective work of a rather different order on behalf of the Ministry of Transport's Road Research Laboratory!


**Michael Gambon played Maigret in the 1990s but the internet is bare of suitable imagery. The most recent interpretation, by Rowan Atkinson, features many images of the detective and his trademark transport.**

# Maigret and the Case of...



In the early '50s, with heavier road freight traffic and fast-rising private car ownership demanding an ever increasing investment in highway construction, the Government instituted a thorough-going programme of research into the widest-ranging aspects of road and motorway building. Higher standards of road engineering and maintenance, it was reasoned, would prove as great a factor in promoting road safety as better vehicle design and construction, and consequently great scientific effort went into evaluating alternative methods and materials.

As part of these experiments to investigate the tyre-contact properties of various road-surfacing techniques, an apparatus was developed by the Surface Characteristics Department of the Road Research Laboratory which measured the inherent surface skid-resistance required to enable vehicles to brake safely in a straight line or negotiate bends and gradients without risk of accident in wet or icy conditions. Initially, this 'breakaway force' or more accurately 'sideways force coefficient' was measured by a technique involving a motorcycle sidecar but this proving inconvenient and, indeed often hazardous in practice, a search was made for a suitably roomy and powerful car with no propshaft to the rear axle, in which the device could be mounted to operate through the measuring floor. There being no British make of front-wheel-drive car on the market in 1953, the job went to the obvious candidate ~ a Slough-built Big Six, which was then equipped and modified for the work of mobile test laboratory and survey vehicle. Incidentally, the car itself was not required to skid, but merely to transport the apparatus from test site to test site around the country and run it over the particular surface under investigation.

Citroën Cars at Slough cooperated in its construction, supplying the Laboratory's Engineering Workshops with an unfinished body, out of which a hole was cut in the nearside rear floorpan. Then with strengthening steel members welded on for extra rigidity, this was returned to the production line for completion, and then finally re-delivered to the Laboratory for the equipment to be installed.

This was achieved by lowering the bulky apparatus into the car through a hole in the roof, so that the closing panel [which had been left unwelded-in for the purpose] was finally fastened shut with

# Maigret and the Case of...


bolts ~ another unique feature of the vehicle.

The Sideway Force Coefficient [SFC] measuring equipment fitted to MYP 575 [the first of two Citroën Big Sixes employed by the Laboratory] consisted of a test wheel which could be raised and lowered through the hole in the floor so as to run along the road carrying its own constant load independently of the weight of the car and consequent movements in suspension travel. This wheel was attached to a specially designed hub itself connected to a frame mounted on the vehicle floor in such a way that, when making a test, the wheel could be swivelled to run at an angle of 20° to the direction of travel. When the car was driven along the road with the test wheel lowered and ·turned obliquely, a sideways force was generated between the test wheel's tyre and the road surface as it attempted to overcome resistance and return to the fore-and-aft position.

This sideway force was measured by an hydraulic pressure capsule located in the hub and recorded by a mechanically driven plotting-pen device controlled by an operator sitting in the Citroën's rear passenger compartment, ready to make on-the-move adjustments as required.

By dividing the sideway force by the load on the test wheel a figure known as the 'sideway force coefficient' was obtained. The higher the SFC, the more 'non-skid' on the road. Thus a reading of 0.20 or less indicat-

# Maigret and the Case of...

ed a very slippery surface while 0.80 or higher meant high friction and therefore greater 'grip'.

Tyre tread and composition testing, however, was not a function of this equipment and the rubber tyres used on the test wheel were specially made with a smooth tread and of a standard rubber compound. Since dry roads do not usually present a skidding problem under normal driving conditions all tests were carried out on wet roads and to facilitate this the Citroën was fitted with a roof top water tank so that water could be sprayed onto the surface immediately in front of the test wheel.

Thus equipped, MYP 575 and its sister vehicle carried out many thousands of experiments all over Britain, visiting 'black-spots' where accidents involving skidding had repeatedly occurred or test sites where new surfaces had been laid, in order to check on how well they stood up to use under varying weather and traffic conditions.

In some cases the same lengths of road were continually inspected at regular intervals for many years. Penzance, Dover, London, Swansea, Colwyn Bay, Kings Lynn, Doncaster, Penrith, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness and Wick were among the many towns that MYP 575 visit-


ed again and again in the course of its work… research that produced tangible and lasting benefits in laying down the design specification for the skid-resistant road surfaces that driv-

# Maigret and the Case of...

ers take for granted today.

The second or 'Mark 2' SFC measuring car was, in fact, a Citroën 15/6H ~ the model fitted with hydropneumatic rear suspension. In this version, the high-pressure hydraulic system was used as a source of power to turn, raise and lower the fifth wheel, via a winch mechanism.

After no fewer than sixteen years' service with the Ministry of Transport, during which it clocked up close on 200,000 miles/320,000 km, Citroën Special Investigator MYP 575 was pensioned off into retirement in 1970. But after almost twenty years of rest and recuperation it is back on the roads again, restored to its original anglicised Slough-built saloon specification, with leather seats and a polished wooden dashboard. Numerous parts on right-hand drive Tractions were sourced in the UK, including electrics [12 volt instead of the continental 6 volt system], lighting, trim, bumpers and other chromework. French and Belgian examples of course, were fitted out with velour upholstery and a steel and chrome interior trim.

One last point of information, lest readers should think that, in the Fifties, cross-channel trade in motor industry research and innovation was all one-way traffic. This ingenious SFC measuring technique devised and developed by the Road Research Laboratory was later adopted by many foreign government agencies including the Belgian Ministry of Transport, which fitted the device to a left-hand-drive Citroën 15/6 in a carbon copy [or rather mirror-image] of MYP 575.

This article by John Reynolds originally appeared in 'Classic and Sports Car' in the 1990s. It is from the Editor's archive.

The notes in the Aguttes catalogue for their March 2019 sales tells some of the car's more recent history.

In 1970 it claimed its pension rights and took its place among collectors. In 1982, it was restored to its original specification, the floor was welded up and the interior refitted; the changes to the roof were forgotten with the installation of a Webasto sunroof, and finally it was repainted. It joined the collectionf of English Citroën enthusiast, Stephen Southgate who sold it to its current owner in XXXX. A new phase of extensive restoration then began, turning it into a virtually new car. The bodywork was taken care of by Hubert Haberbusch, the engine by John Gillard, the gearbox by Aloïs Peter and the transmission by Roger Williams. The interior was entrusted to Andover Upholstery in the uk and the leather bench seats to Marcel Reusser in Switzerland.

This car has an extraordinarily rich history, with numerous photos serving as a reminder of its career. It is now in exceptional condition and this is a unique opportunity to acquire this flagship which is well able to provide perfect service for many years to come.

Additionally, a usually reliable local source has advised me that Steve Southgate actually acquired the car from John Gillard, so whether the engine overhaul was actually done during John's, Steve's or the subsequent owner's possession may be open to conjecture. My contact also tells the the second MoT car is [or maybe was] owned by Ray Andrews.

As for Rupert Davies and Maigret… while there is imagery on the internet of Davies with his Rolls Royce it is also known that when filming of the Maigret television series finished Rupert purchased one of the two 15/6H vehicles that had featured.

Davies used the car for many years before it passed on to his wife. It remained with the Davies family and relocated to Somerset. It was stolen but recovered and returned.

The present owner, Jamie Maisey, bought his first Citroën Traction Avant in 1988. He ended up buying the Maigret car, but due to a lack of time has decided to pass it on. He is open to offers from potential buyers.

The 15H's engine, gearbox and clutch has been overhauled.

Jamie said: 'A lot of people refer to these Citroëns as Maigret cars, but this is the real thing.' Nick Larkin.

Unfortunately I have not been able to determine when the car was sold, nor its present location.

Leigh F Miles ~ Editor

# Member's Model 1: Along Came a...

## 1937 7C Traction

New Zealand to Katanning WA and then up to Perth is a long distance. Add to this the distance from England to New Zealand and you have the distance my 7C Traction has travelled prior to resting in my shed.

When the 7C arrived here in Perth it was in a complete condition, component wise, but was a little sad in the body and interior. However, it had only minor rust and a good straight assembly of body panels.

Many hours were spent just looking at the car and taking in, with joy, all the differences this car possessed against the after-war Tractions.

Firstly the eyes are drawn to the adjustable bonnet inlet and exhaust louvres and then the stance of the car enhanced by the narrow mud guards which makes the 7C unique in the Traction range.

In pre-war times more attention was placed in the style of the bumper and overrider area with finishing touches given to the curly ends, chrome buttons and rubber inserts. The vertical ribbed Lucas headlights add to the period charm along with the French curly door handles and interior handles finished off with wooden knobs.

Inside the cabin the curved wooden dashboard and round dialled instruments stand out from my other Tractions' flat and square style. The pre-war interiors, in my opinion, were given more attention to style using the 'Comet' [I think that was the term] style door trims and the more luxurious narrow and higher pleated seat upholstery. All the interior has been completed in leather of the same original colour.

This car came with a manual factory sunroof which I had to completely rebuild from the original slide mechanisms using marine plywood and padded vinyl cover.

Engine wise I have not started any reconditioning to the smaller power plant and to what I am told is a lower ratio gear box. The car drives okay and uses a side draft carburettor but the lack of performance, although 'adequate' is clearly evident: I doubt the smaller diameter brake drums could handle much more input.

Complementing the car is an original complete tool tray in the boot which I have refurbished using the original wooden inserts and cutouts.

I have repaired the body and painted it in its original black with original black wheels and hubcaps with all the bright work being re-chromed.

When time from other projects permits I will carry out the mechanical side of my 7C restoration.

John Freeman ~ Perth WA member

# Along Came a 7C

# Member's Model 2: The 48 Year Restoraton

## 1935 Citroën 7C Roadster [Super Modern 12] The World's Oldest Known Slough Roadster

I suppose if there was a prize for perseverance I'd probably be in the running for the finals. From buying our Roadster in September 1970 until its completion and compliance in February 2018 took almost 48 years. My father owned a '39 12 Sedan for a number of years and I thought it was an amazing car. When he passed away after a short illness in 1967 I took possession of the car and used it almost daily. That was the beginning of my love affair with Citroëns, or to give it its correct term 'Citroënitis', a non-fatal lifetime affliction.

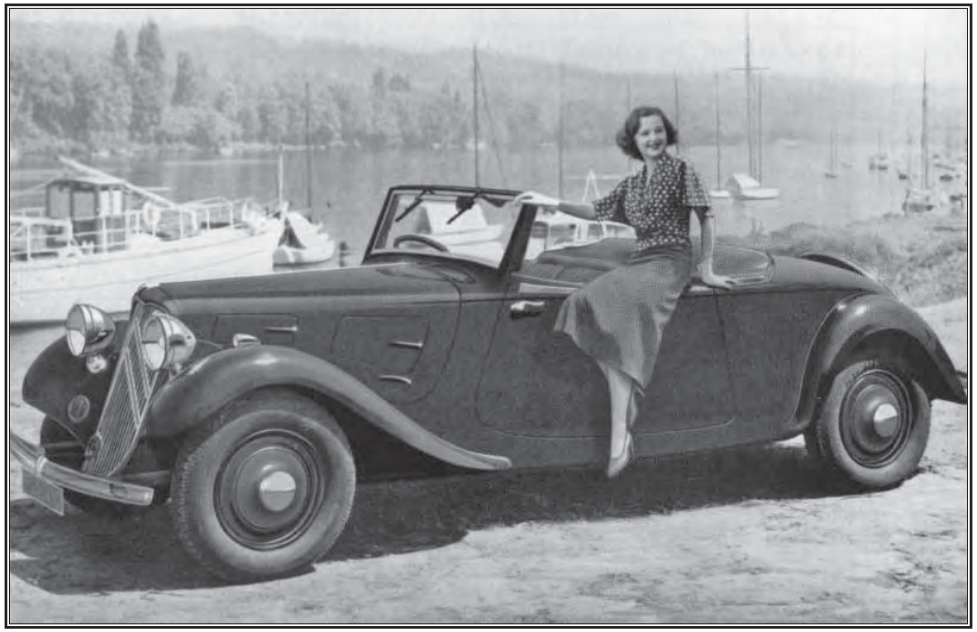
# The 48 Year Restoraton

A good friend, and vintage enthusiast, Don McClelland, phoned me up early in 1970 asking if I had heard of an Essex coupe for sale in Ashburton, the area we were then living. [Ed. That is Ashburton, NZ which is about 90km south-west of Christchurch.] I did know about the car and arranged a meeting for him with the owner. Don bought the car on the spot. He was so pleased to get it he said if ever you need a favour, just ask.

I had seen a photo of a Citroën Roadster in a car magazine some time before so, tongue in cheek, I said 'Could you find me a Citroën Roadster, cobba?' Four months later and Don is on the phone again. He said 'Guess what? I've found you a Citroën Roadster.' I laughed and replied 'Great, now what did you really ring for?' But he had.

The car, already known to some Citroën Car Club members locally, had spent a number of years covered and under a tree on a vacant block beside the engineering shop where Don had taken an axle to have a kingpin removed. At this point the car had been inside the engineering shop for almost three years and stripped of most mechanical parts. After checking with Jack Hunt, the owner, that it was a Citroën Roadster, Don asked how much it would cost to take it off his hands. He said he'd let it go for $500.

So this is 1970 and average






1 & 2: These two pictures from 1968 were taken by Jack Hunt and show the car in the corner of his workshop.
3 Here is car as Graham first saw it and purchased it September 1970.

# The 48 Year Restoraton

weekly wage was under $40. We took off to Christchurch the next day and I checked it out, all 1,000 bits. Well there seemed to be that many. There was an engine and transmission [always a good start] balanced on the cradle but not attached to anything. There were worn old leather seats and the dicky seat for the boot and boxes of parts plus another old engine block with no pistons or sleeves and no crankshaft. It looked like it had done a turn as a boat anchor. I had no idea what was missing as I didn't know what should be there. Jack Hunt said for $500 he'd deliver it to Ashburton as well. Margaret my lovely wife, at that time for less than a year [52years now], didn't offer an opinion on the car so I took that as a positive and said I'd buy it.

Michael Williams, a founding member of our club and NZ Executive member often tells the story, usually when I'm within earshot, how another club founder and renowned Traction expert, let's call him Ian, often lamented how Jack Hunt had promised that if ever he decided to sell the car he would give the late Ian first option

Out of the garage in May 1984 for the Citroën Car Club's New Zealand Executive's visit.

4 The final countdown! Off to the blasters. The eagle-eyed amongst you will notce the registration plate on the Toyota Camry Sportivo.
5 Blasted and two-pack primed. The panel shop is the next port of call. In both images note the non-standard Pilote wheels which were not introduced until mid-1938 for the 1939 model-year.
6 Some of the panels were clearly in need of additional attention and repair.

# The 48 Year Restoraton

7 The fully-painted bodyshell. Unfortunately the well-respected restorer who was originally commissioned to undertake the work died suddenly, throwing Graham's project off-track.

8 And then it was time to commence re-assembly of the mechanical components, in situ.

9 The chrome on the grille and surrounds, Graham tells us, is original. As he says, 'Not bad for 83 years!'

and then sold it to me, much to Ian's disgust. Of course I had no knowledge of this. My guess is that when Don asked the price, the seller put a ridiculous price on it, never expecting anyone would pay that amount.

While 48years is a long time I do have a few excuses, some of which I'll share with you. Probably a year or so after I got the car home the neighbour's son, a panel beater, was looking for a few extra $$$ and said if I didn't rush him he would initially repair the sills, and then we'd see what else needed doing and carry on through the car.

This arrangement suited me fine.

With a business and a baby coming I had other things to take up my time. Every few weeks I'd wander next door to see how Brian was coming along with the car. Sometimes he'd done a bit, occasionally he'd done a lot and often he'd done nothing. I had no time frame in mind but Autumn became Winter then Spring, Summer and Autumn again and Brian was now flat tack working on the Roadster in his parent's two-car garage trying to get it finished. According to Brian, his dad Maurice, a gentleman and Salvation Army member, had bailed him up in the garage and told him there was no way his wife's car would be sitting outside for another BLINKING Winter and to emphasize the point, banged his fist on the left windscreen post, only to have it snap off a couple of inches above the hinge where the windscreen folds forward. The bodywork was now finished but where in Hades was I going to find another one of those?

Over the years I tried a number of things including gluing the old one together and having an aluminium one cast, but it was solid alloy and heavy and didn't look great. The originals were made of crap metal and it wasn't unusual for them to break. I didn't have a proper solution for years until the internet arrived and I was told about a company in France who supplied new ones using the original moulds.

There was a well-respected vintage car restorer in Ashburton with whom I had arranged to do the final body preparation and painting. A nice man with a lovely wife and a heavy workload but I was prepared to wait my turn. He told me my car was ready to paint. I was probably third in the queue. He took ill suddenly and died within a fortnight. It was a big shock to us all. His wife contacted the owners of the cars in his workshop and said his assistant would be taking over the business.

Some four weeks later a Vintage Car Club member called at my business and asked if I'd had

# The 48 Year Restoraton

an account from the new guy. I told him I hadn't. He said well four of us who have cars there have received an identical account, same amount and all the details from the new guy. Nothing's been done to the cars.

As predicted my bill arrived the next day. Same, same. I went straight to the workshop. The car hadn't moved, still in the corner. No New Boss there either. I went and got a trailer and took the car home [as did the other owners] and locked the garage door. I have no idea what the guy was up to.

I visited the widow and explained what I'd done. She had done her husband's books and confirmed we owed nothing to her. Quite a shock at the time. I'd only ever done business with people who were straight up prior to that.

And there the car stayed. I had other things on and a growing family to keep me busy.

I received a phone call in early 1984 from the NZCCC President who advised me that to celebrate 50years since the first Traction Avant was released to the public, the NZ Executive would be visiting all the clubs around the country and would like to call at our home and see our Roadster. They duly arrived, with the local motoring reporter in tow.

They all admired the car and discussed the differences from the later Tractions. Then the discussion got around to the Gemmer steering boxes and the poor state mine was in. These worm and roller steering boxes came in two models. The original diabolically bad model was replaced after about seven months by the upgraded two bearing model that was little better and would remain in use until May 1936, when all Tractions then received the excellent rack and pinion steering.

The member from Wellington, a self-proclaimed Gemmer expert made an offer to take my worn old steering box back to Wellington with him and recondition it and have it back to me before I could say Christmas 'at no charge for such a wonderful car'. An offer I couldn't refuse.

Unfortunately he didn't mention he moved homes frequently, was very hard to track down, and it would be 12 Christmases before my Sherlock Holmes caught up with him and returned my steering box. Oh well better late than never!

And so it wasn't until 2015 that the final restoration began. By now we had moved to Rolleston, on the outskirts of Christchurch. We still owned two properties in Ashburton; one had the Roadster locked away in the garage. I decided to bring the Roadster up to Rolleston and get on with the


10


11


12

10 Sorting the wiring.
11 Everything finally in place.
12 While the upholstery on the dickey seat was not in need of replacement, Graham determined that it was more important for the leather to match the interior then to be 'original'.

# The 48 Year Restoraton

12 & 13 Graham's car clearly displays its early 'type I' dash which was quite quickly replaced on Slough cars. But it remained current on French cars until June 1936.
14 The interior of Graham's car has been beautifully re-carpeted.


13


14


15

restoration. We had travelled frequently for a few years after 12years in a seven-days-a-week business and now it was past time to get the job done.

There was a surprising amount of deterioration in some panels including guards and sills; more obvious after having it all blasted. At about that time my youngest daughter, Lucille, informed us she was getting married in 15months and if the car was finished, she and Hayden would love to have it in their wedding. Unfortunately it wasn't and they didn't, although I did try.

I now had a local panel beater doing the body work while I purchased the parts I needed and had them shipped from France. I bought a pair of windscreen posts, believing if one had broken so easily there was a fair chance the other would as well, and also the brass windscreen frame which was not among the original spares and nothing similar was available in NZ.

At this point I was given details by a friend in England of Dominique Peter, a Frenchman with expert knowledge on pre-World War II Tractions.

At that time all the early Citroëns started their life in France, with 50% of the car completed there and subsequently shipped to Slough in England, to be completed. The Slough cars were more luxurious than the French cars, with leather seats and trim, plush carpets, walnut dash and trim and additional chrome; however most of the parts were similar.

Dominique was amazingly helpful with everything I had no knowledge of. I sent photos of some parts and he told me what was missing. He explained how the lights dipped from the centre of the steering wheel and the two centre rings that operated the horns separately, definitely unlike anything I'd seen on a Citroën before, and he put me in contact with people who could supply the parts that weren't with the car. He sent me photos of how the original spare wheel cover was made in three parts, so I made one.

I don't think I could have completed the car without his help.

While the car was at the panel shop I was having the chrome plating done as well as having the upholsterer recover the seats in stressed leather, the colour as close to the original as possible. The effect is amazing.

The stressed leather has a new-but-old look. I could have left the original leather on the dickey seat as it was in quite good order, but it needed to match the two front seat covers which were beyond repair. Having the seats done at this point

# The 48 Year Restoraton

in time was to speed up the process for when it was time to finish the upholstery after everything else was done. The panel beater had finished preparing the body for the painter and he'd made a good job, but they're never as quick as you'd like, are they?

It was a special day when I picked up the rolling body, resplendent in its red and black paint.

When I originally stripped the paint off the body parts I was really lucky in that the glove box doors only had one coat of paint over the original; a coat I could easily remove, leaving the original deep red colour. The red now on the car was about as close as they could get to replicate the original shade. The perfect colour I think.

The original agreement with the painter was I take the body home once the painting was completed and each week he'd have some finished parts, guards, doors etc. for me to carry on with the assembly. It didn't happen like that at all but hey, it's a beautiful paint job.

I had the engine to the Ashburton Citroën Agency, having new pistons and sleeves fitted and whatever else was required while the original panel man had the body, and I'd had it in the car and running, before putting it under covers in the corner of the garage until it was required.

It was then that I realised that the engine I had was from a '37 or '38 Twelve.

It was about the same time the penny dropped that the other block, the one stripped of everything and looking as if it had been a boat anchor and that I'd dumped as rubbish when I'd shifted house, was most probably the original block.

The assembly was never straight forward but I had regular communication with Stuart Craig from Manaia in the North Island, who had previously restored a later model Roadster for a client and was an excellent help with advice during the reassembly.

Finally it was time to take the car to the upholsterer, so he could work his magic on the hood, carpets etc. I couldn't be happier with his workmanship.

The eagle eyed will have noticed the 'Pilote' wheels in the early photos taken after the restoration. There was a school of thought that the Michelin 165×400 tyres [the only size available] were too wide for the original 140×40 'Stop' wheels but after further consideration I re-fitted the originals.

With the Roadster having won the Canterbury Vintage Car Club's restoration of the year in 2018, as it was usual for the winners to feature in a magazine article, I was contacted by Greg Price who produced an article about the car for the 'Beaded Wheels', the club's National Magazine and also took the photos. Many of the photos that appear here were taken by Greg.

In that article Greg recalled how as a youngster in the '50s he walked to his grandparent's home after school in Mt Eden and whenever he could, he would walk a couple of houses


# The 48 Year Restoraton

further on and marvel at the three Citroëns parked in an often open garage: a Coupé, a Roadster, and a Sedan.

The following year, the Centennial year of Citroën production, we took the Roadster to the NZ Citroën Car Club's National Rally in Cambridge. A very elderly gentleman struck up a conversation with me and told me he once had owned a Roadster, along with a Coupé and a Sedan. After a few questions I realised these were the same cars Greg had seen as a boy and I was delighted to pass on the gentleman's contact details to Greg.

I have to say the thrill of the Roadster winning Car of the Rally at that Centennial Rally was something we aren't likely to forget in a hurry and helped me realise those trials and tribulations were just part of the journey.

Graham & Margaret Tulett,
Rolleston, New Zealand

| SPECIFICATIONS [Inc differences from later pre-War models] | |
|---|---|
| UK New Price 1935 | £270 |
| [7C Saloon Price 1935 | £250] |
| Number of Slough Roadsters | 623 |
| Approx number of survivors | 26 |
| Engine | 1,628cc, 36bhp, overhead valve, wet sleeve |
| Carburretor | Solex side draught |
| Brakes | Hydraulic drums |
| Body | Unitised construction |
| Suspension | Torsion bar |
| Steering | Gemmer Type 2 worm & roller |
| Electrics | Lucas 12volt |
| Twin air vents below the windscreen | |
| Exhaust passes through the Jambonneau | |
| The original generator has been replaced by a look-alike alternator | |

# A Question of Price

Your Editor was surprised to read that in the UK in 1935 the Roadster was just £20 dearer than the equivalent '12' Saloon. The price of the Roadster was supplied by Graham and the Saloon price is from Jon Pressnell's book. Both impeccable sources, to my mind.

Jon makes the point in his book that in 1935 a 7C or an Onze Légère Coupé cost F1,000 more than the equivalent Saloon, while the Normale was F1,500 dearer. For each model the Roadster was a further F500.

In 1935, £1 was worth about F74 [according to www.new-worldeconomic.com] so F1,000 would convert to just £13/10s, so a £20 difference is not unreasonable.

In 1936 the difference between Saloon and Roadster rose to F2,500 for all these models and for 1937 there was a F4,000 premium.

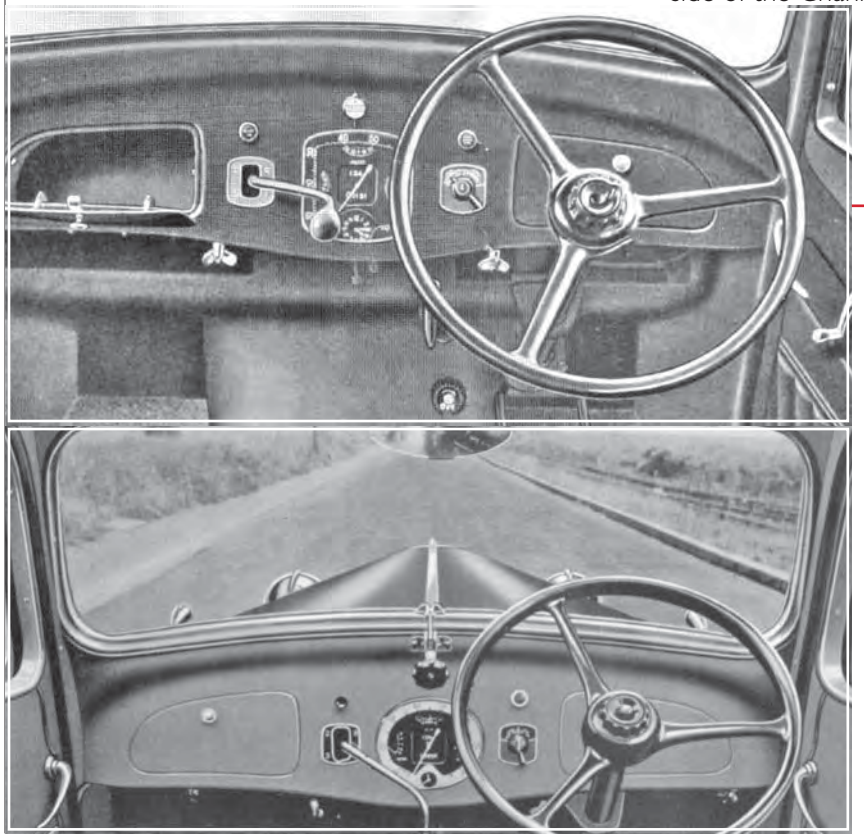
Leigh F Miles

# Tracking Change in Slough

When I started to put the edition into place, back in August… yes, COVID lock-down in Victoria has a lot to answer for… I thought that, of course, John's car cannot actually be a 7C. While Citroën in France did build right-hand drive cars for Australia [post-War] and for the UK pre-War both excursions to the wrong side of the tracks… I mean road… were to build 'poverty' models to underpin sales of the more expensive Slough-built cars in both markets.

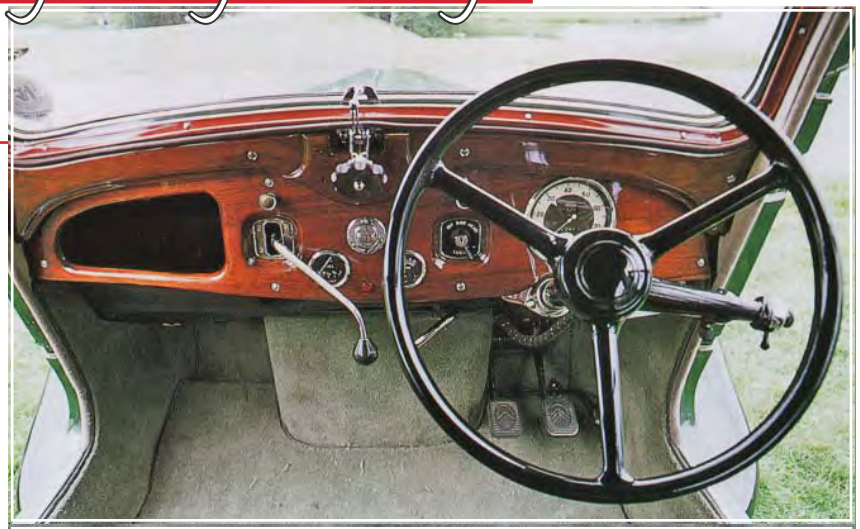
I will return to matter of pre-War right-hand drive French Tractions shortly, but lets look at Slough's output first and how it pin-points John's car.

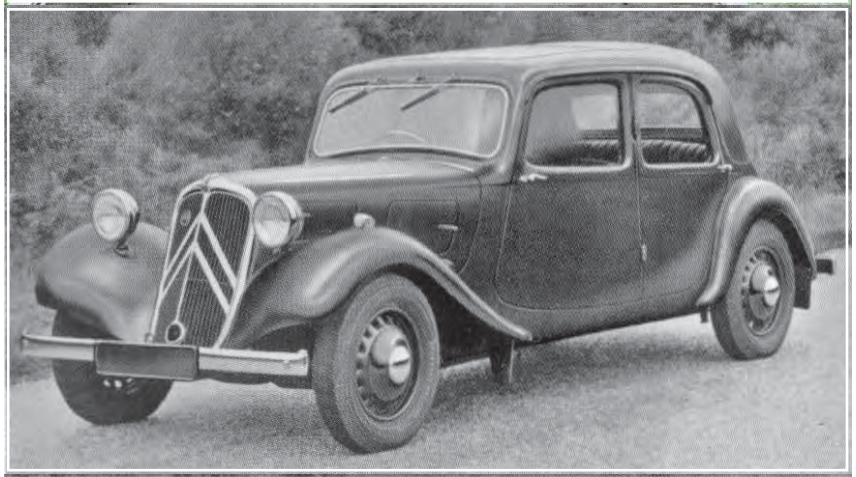
While the first the British motorist would have read about the Traction Avant would have been in 'The Autocar' and 'The Motor' at the start of May 1934 it was made clear that there was no chance 'for the time being' of it being available on that side of the Channel.

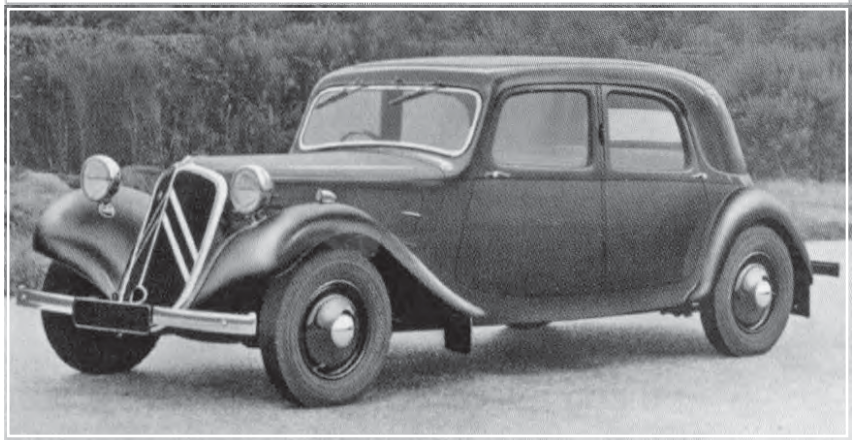


Top: Here is the original style of Slough dash ~ complete with woodgrain finish. Visible below the dash are the butterfly nuts controlling the scuttle vents: the very first French cars had knurled knobs instead.
Below it is the second dashboard design used a slightly oval instrument dial.
[Both images: Citroën Cars Ltd.]

# Tracking Change in Slough







Top: A timber dash came in for the 1937 model year and, for this season only, used a circular speedometer in front of the driver with individual fuel and ammeter gauges in the centre of the dashboard. [Image: Mark Dixon]
Centre: A catalogue image of a 1938 model-year 12 with perforated Easiclean wheels and the 1938-only grille with painted slats, polished chevrons and circular 'Citroën' badge.
Bottom: In comparison, the Fifteen [shown] and Light 15 kept plain wheels until the introduction of Pilote wheels on all models for the 1939 season. The Light 15 could claim to be the lightest 2-litre car on the UK market. [Both images: Citroën Cars Ltd.]

Slough-built [or more correctly Slough-finished] Tractions became available in September, 1934 and the model was called the Super Modern Twelve. I say 'Slough-finished' because, as Graham Tulett points out in his feature 'at that time all the early Citroëns started their life in France, with 50% of the car completed there and then shipped to Slough in England, to be completed.' Jon Pressnell in his book 'Citroën Traction Avant' makes the point as well that it seems likely that of the 200 or so cars said to have been produced in 1934 perhaps as many as half may have been built from complete body-in-white shells. John Freeman in one of his emails to me [there were a number which went backwards and forwards over the development of his article] made the point that 'the data plate states the car is a 7C, Slough built.'

That suggests to your Editor [with no guaranteed basis in fact] that the Super Modern Twelve nomenclature was 'just' a marketing decision rather than it being supported by Citroën's official naming regime.

The 'Super Modern' part of the UK name was to distinguish them from the rear-wheel-drive Light Twelve and Big Twelve which continued to be assembled at Slough. These cars were originally fitted with 1,303cc motor of the French 7A, even though this had been replaced in France by the 1,529cc 7B engine in July and then by the 1,628cc of the 7C at the start of September.

The number of 1,300 motored cars produced at Slough is not known, but we do know that the 1,500 motor was never used in Slough. By the time 'The Autocar' and 'The Motor' were doing their initial road tests on UK cars in February/March 1935 the cars were fitted with the 1,600, 9CV [French fiscal rating] motor.

The '12' was joined by the 'Super Modern Sports Twelve' [the equivalent of the French Onze Légère] and 'Super Modern Fifteen' [aka Onze] in February, 1935.

For the cars produced in 1935 and 1936 it seems it is difficult to be definitive as to when the various updates introduced in France were reflected in UK production. Clearly, stocks of 'old' cars awaiting completion had to be exhausted before the 'new' models entered production.

John Pressnell makes the point that 'certain modifications detailed in descriptions of the 1936 model-year cars may well have been introduced earlier: this may have been the case with changes brought in on French-built cars in the first half of 1935, such as the cruciform rear axle, the use of telescopic front and rear dampers, and the revised steering.'

# Tracking Change in Slough

## 1937 Model Year

For the 1937 model-year [changes introduced in September 1936] the Slough cars received rack-and-pinion steering which had been introduced in Paris in May. There were also considerable changes made to the car's appearance.

Externally the 12, but not the Sports 12 or the 15, acquired perforated Easy-clean wheels and all models were given a chromed grille surround ~ the slats remained body-coloured until, it would seem, the 1940 model-year.

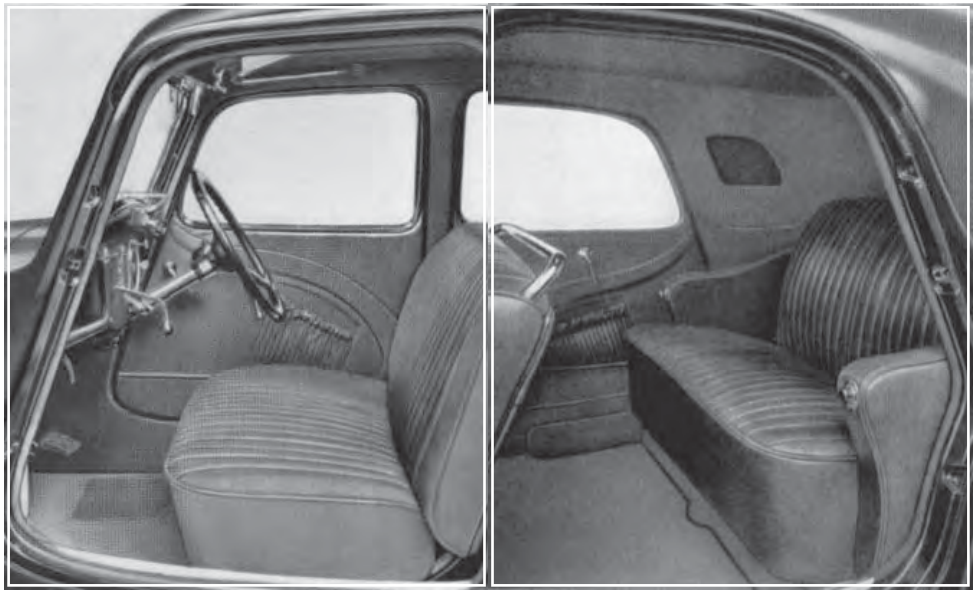
The bumpers changed from being V-shaped to flat and incorporating a guide for the starter handle and the front numberplate plaque. Previously the numberplate had simply hung below the bumper.

At the same time the rear numberplate moved from below the bumper to a position on the bootlid. This meant a hinge arrangement was needed for it to remain legal when the boot was left open. The same legal need was reflected in the bootlid-mounted numberplate of the Mini.

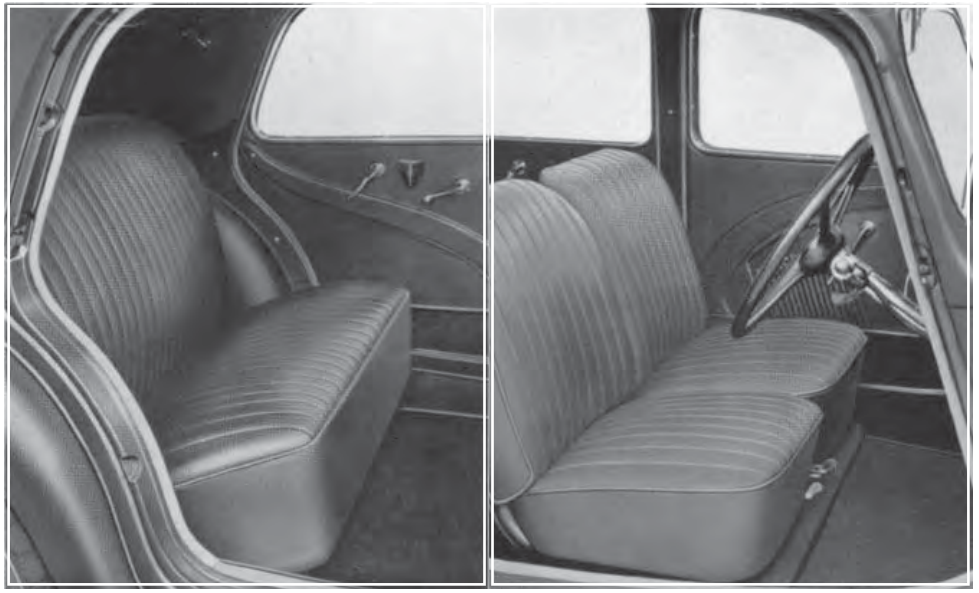
The interior was re-jigged with the arrival of Slough's first wooden dashboard. The design was only used for one year. Along with this change new stylish door trims were introduced. The same design was also introduced on the Slough-made rear-wheel drive cars that were still being produced.

A new upholstery style was also made available as an option: a combination of cloth and leather, called 'Twin-Trim'. As with the particular wooden dash style, this upholstery was only available for a single year.

**Below The interior of a 1938 model-year 15, showing the bench front seat and the sweeping motif moulded into the door trim; introduced for 1937, this trim pattern was also found on Slough's rear-wheel-drive models. At the rear the leather trim makes the 15 have something of the air of a London club. In this image for the 1939 catalogue, the pockets in the rear quarters are clearly visible as are the ruched map pockets in the rear doors. [Images: Citroën Cars Ltd.]**



**Below: The 12 and Light 15 in contrast have separate front seats, no rear door pockets and [as with the French cars] no rear side armrests. [Images: Citroën Cars Ltd.]**



**The open boot of an original Mini showing the hinged numberplate.**


The 12 and Sports 12 seem to have lost their rear seat centre armrest in this update.

## 1938 Model Year: Cosmetic Changes

For 1938 the changes, introduced in August 1937, were more modest than those of the previous year.

The most notable was the introduction of a new dashboard style. This is the one that John's car displays. Two matching dials coloured 'coffee and cream' and

# Tracking Change in Slough

supplied by Smiths were now placed in front of the driver.

In addition to the radiator surround being polished, the chevrons were also similarly finished; leaving just the vertical slats painted. A circular badge, set on the left [as you face the car] was also added. This badge is just visible in the picture of John's car.

At the same time the horn grilles in the wings disappeared as the horns themselves had been shifted to behind the radiator grille.

The rear numberplate became a square unit on the right-hand rear wing, topped by a Lucas 'pork pie' lamp.

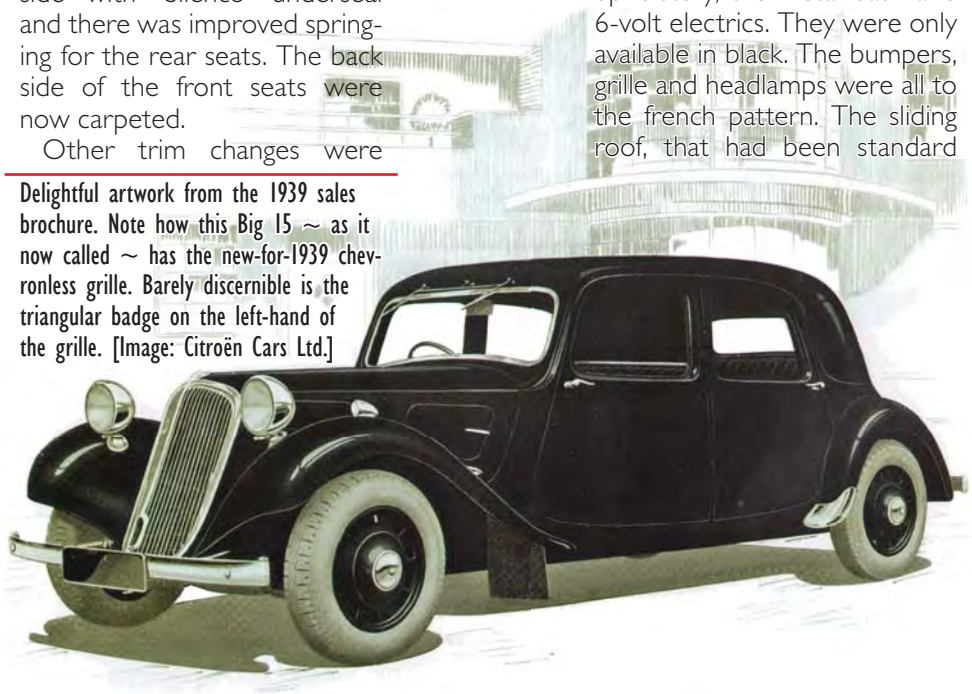
Sound-proofing was improved by spraying the underside with 'Silenco' underseal and there was improved springing for the rear seats. The back side of the front seats were now carpeted.

Other trim changes were made to the '15' and the 'Super Modern Sports 12' was renamed the 'Light 15'.

## 1939 Model Year

Changes for 1939 were arguably even more modest. The most noticeable the introduction of Pilote wheels and the wider wings to cover them and being the deletion of the chevrons from the radiator grille along with the substitution of a triangular grille badge in place of the previous year's circular badge.

The big news was the introduction of the low-priced 'Popular' versions of both the '12' and 'Light 15'. These were French-built '7C' and '11BL' models imported fully assembled and finished. Fitted with cloth upholstery, the metal dash and 6-volt electrics. They were only available in black. The bumpers, grille and headlamps were all to the french pattern. The sliding roof, that had been standard on UK delivery [but not export] cars also disappeared.



Delightful artwork from the 1939 sales brochure. Note how this Big 15 ~ as it now called ~ has the new-for-1939 chevronless grille. Barely discernible is the triangular badge on the left-hand of the grille. [Image: Citroën Cars Ltd.]

These models were £40 less than their UK-assembled, more luxurious, sisters. For the '12' this represented a saving of almost 17%.

In May 1939 Slough began assembling an equivalent model, renamed 'Standard'. Leather-cloth upholstery, no sunroof, a painted radiator shell, French metal dash and 6-volt electrics: a hybrid indeed.

This article is based largely on 'Citroën Traction Avant' by John Pressnell, with additional research by the Editor.

### SLOUGH CARS: CHANGES 1934 TO 1940

**September 1934**
- Slough production announced: 1,303cc engine

**February 1935**
- Sport Twelve and Fifteen saloon and seven-seater announced

**October 1935**
- Opening boot
- Painted radiator shell with more pronounced chevrons
- Deeper front wings
- One-piece 'V' front bumper
- Square instruments

**September 1936**
- Rack-and-pinion steering
- Revised exhaust
- New carburettor
- Wood dashboard
- 'Twin Trim' seating option [1937 model only]
- New door trims with sweeping mouldings
- Flat bumper blades, recessed front numberplate, starter handle guide
- Rear numberplate hinged from spare wheel cover
- Pocket in bootlid
- Perforated Easyclean wheels on 12
- Positive-earth electrics
- Revised pedals
- Detail improvements to front axle

**August 1937**
- Horns behind grille, wing grilles deleted
- Hinge-down platform in boot
- Square numberplate on off-side rear wing
- Grille has polished chevrons and enamel nameplate
- Twin round dials [1938 and 1939 models only]
- Rear seat springing improved
- Back of front seats carpet trimmed
- Tubular rail on front seat of 15
- Underside sprayed with 'Silenco'
- Rear axle re-cambered
- Sports Twelve renamed Light Fifteen

**August 1938**
- Radiator grille chevrons replaced by small badge
- Pilote wheels and wider wings
- Popular 12 and 15 introduced
- Clutch interlock
- Improved dampers
- 'Camembert' air filter/silencer
- Oil pressure gauge replaced by warning light
- Coupé deleted

**May 1939**
- Standard models replace Popular

**August 1939**
- Big 15 roadster introduced
- Six introduced
- Grand Luxe option available
- Improved 'Perfo' engine on 15
- New 3-piece wooden dashboard
- Improved door trims: wooden capping
- New bumpers
- Improved hood and fixed screen on roadster

# Budd & Bankruptcy 2

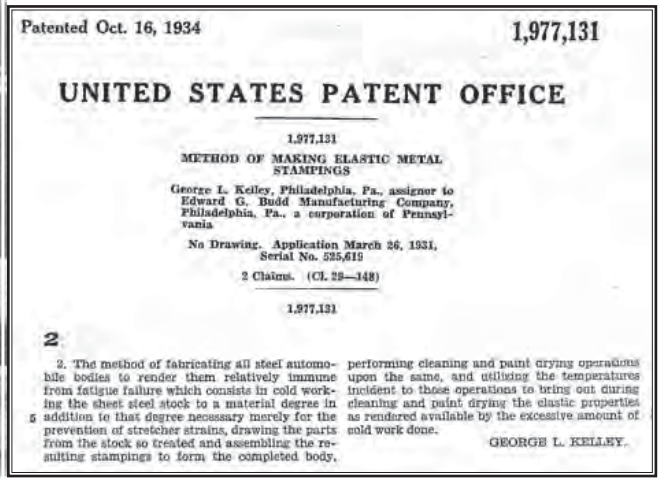
## The Traction Avant was an Unavoidable Gamble

When the stock market crashed in the US in 1929, igniting a global economic crisis, France was not strongly affected in the beginning. But Citroën was. The measures taken by the French government in its attempts to stave off an economic recession were a direct blow to Citroën's business model, which depended on licenses and imported parts and materials from America. Citroën had to make radical changes to save his business. What until now had been a competitive advantage ~ his reliance on American technology and subcontractors ~ had turned into a serious competitive disadvantage.

The French government raised the import levies on imports to 30% in order to protect the French industry from the global depression they saw coming. This protected Renault and Peugeot, but it was a hard blow to Citroën who was totally dependent on imports of steel and components from the US.

Citroën tried to counter the higher costs for imports by making the cars lighter, thus using less raw materials, and by negotiating prices with his American suppliers.

Citroën immediately sent his second-in-command, Georges-Marie Haardt, to the US to renegotiate contracts and to find all possibilities of lowering the costs for materials and parts. Haardt's tour to Citroën's American suppliers, of which



Patented Oct. 16, 1934 1,977,131

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE

1,977,131

METHOD OF MAKING ELASTIC METAL STAMPINGS

George L. Kelley, Philadelphia, Pa., assignor to Edward G. Budd Manufacturing Company, Philadelphia, Pa., a corporation of Pennsylvania

No Drawing. Application March 26, 1931, Serial No. 525,619

2 Claims. (Cl. 29—148)

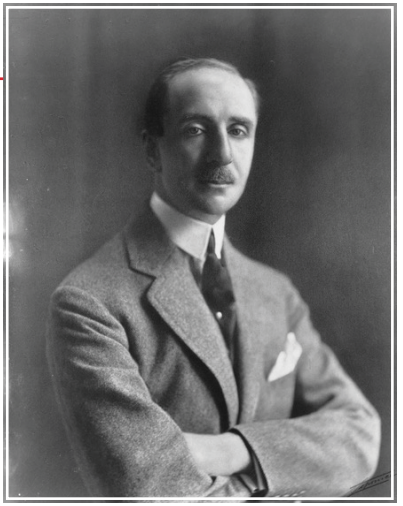
1,977,131

2

2. The method of fabricating all steel automobile bodies to render them relatively immune from fatigue failure which consists in cold working the sheet steel stock to a material degree in addition to that degree necessary merely for the prevention of stretcher strains, drawing the parts from the stock so treated and assembling the resulting stampings to form the completed body, performing cleaning and paint drying operations upon the same, and utilizing the temperatures incident to those operations to bring out during cleaning and paint drying the elastic properties as rendered available by the excessive amount of cold work done.

GEORGE L. KELLEY.

**Georges-Marie Haardt**



Budd was the most important, no doubt was very important to the future developments at Citroën.

He was somewhat successful, but as the sales went down from 100,000 cars in 1929 to

**The undramatic headline of this Budd patent, filed in March 1931, is hiding a technological revolution that transformed the use of sheet metal and transformed the structure of the global automobile industry. The technology described made it possible to press sheet metal to shapes that previously were unthinkable, and the patent that made all makers of mass produced cars dependent on licenses from Budd. The low volume producers who could not afford a license could not keep up with the design trends introduced by the Budd licensees. The voluptuous shapes and intricate grilles pressed with the new Budd technology could not be replicated by the tradesmen building bodies for coachbuilding firms and low volume car industries.**

# Budd & Bankruptcy 2

70,000 cars in 1930, there was very little Citroën could do to cut costs in a way that could even come close to compensating for the double whammy of increased costs by 30% and decreased sales by 30%. The company was on the verge of bankruptcy.

This is when André Citroën made his big gamble.

The French government's objective in raising import duties was to favour domestic products over imported materials. But this was not a viable alternative for Citroën. The French steel industry still could not produce the cold-rolled steel required to produce car bodies with the American equipment in the Citroën factories. Nor could the French industry produce sheet metal wide enough for Citroën's needs. The only possible alternative seemed to be to find every way possible to reduce the weight of the vehicles, and thus the use of imported steel and imported parts.

## Top Priority: Weight Reduction

André Citroën told Haardt to concentrate on finding ways to reduce the weight and the use of material in the Citroën model lineup.

Budd had several new weight-saving developments to show Haardt in 1930.

One, for which a patent application was filed in 1929, was the 'Monopiece' technology that made it possible to press the whole side of the car in one piece, eliminating a number of small pressings, simplifying production, reducing the number of presses necessary, and not least ~ made for a considerable reduction of the weight of the body.

This is a unit body, front wheel drive car developed by Joseph Ledwinka, which could be the car that provided Citroën with the concept for the Traction Avant. This car was finished in 1931 and most likely shown to André Citroën when he visited Budd. It is conceivable that Ledwinka discussed this design with Georges-Marie Haardt when Haardt came to the US in 1930 to find ways to minimize the weight and the use of expensive materials in existing and future Citroën models, and that Haardt brought back the unit-body, front-wheel-drive concept to André Citroën as a possible solution to the problems Citroën had run into when the French government raised its import duties.

### How Flash Welding Works

This process involves joining two sheets [in this case] together without the use of any filler or other metal. The sheets are then charged with electricity. The arc or flash, which results from the nearness of the two sheets of metal, gives this process its name. When the edges of the two sheets are hot enough they are joined together without an alloy being formed. Heat produced in the flash welding process is by the flashing action resistance at the interface surface, rather than contact resistance as in the butt weld process. Both oxy-acetylene and MIG welding produce a bump along the seam where a second metal is used as a sort of 'glue'. In flash welding, once the area has become molten and reached the proper temperature, the second stage of the operation begins ~ the upset or forging action. The two ends of the workpieces are then brought together with a very high force sufficient enough to force most of the molten metal, along with most of the impurities, out of the joint. Smooth, clean material surfaces are not as critical with this process as they are for butt welding, because the flashing action burns away irregularities at the weld surfaces. This allows joining of a wide variety of materials, such as wide, thin sheets of material; tubing; forgings; and ferrous and nonferrous materials to successfully be welded.

As the steel industry at this time could not produce sheet metal wide enough for these monopiece pressings, Budd had devised a way to weld two sheets together, using flash welding to create a weld slightly thicker than the gauge of the sheets, removing the flash and then hammering the weld down to the gauge of the sheets and cleaning the surface of the welded sheet to avoid imperfections in the final pressings.

At the time Haardt visited Budd, the Ruxton was finished and seen as a very successful design. The weight savings of front wheel drive was obvious, with the elimination of the drive axle to the rear. The car was also very low slung, thus demonstrating further possibilities of saving weight on the body work. Furthermore, in 1930 Joseph Ledwinka was working on another front wheel drive prototype, a car with a unit body, making full use of the unit body patents of Henniger and Ledwinka, and of the new 'monopiece' technology. The whole purpose of building the prototype was to find car manufacturers who were interested in implementing the Budd-developed technologies the car was built on. Certainly Budd had no reason to withhold the work on this car from Citroën.

## All the Pieces in Place

It is also likely that Haardt in 1930 learned about the new deep-draw technology that Ledwinka and his team had de-

# Budd & Bankruptcy 2

veloped. The patent for the new technology was filed in March 1931, and created completely new possibilities for designers of sheet metal products. This patent, with the bleak title 'Method of Making Elastic Metal Stampings,' was not only to change the shape of cars but the structure of the car industry itself. The deep-draw sheet metal stamping technology had dramatic consequences for a wide range of industries.

The patent describes how the sheet metal is cold rolled beyond what is necessary to avoid stretcher strain, then cold rolled without changing the gauge of the metal to eliminate imperfections where cracks can start, pressed into body parts, which are welded together to form the body, after which the body is cleaned off and painted, and finally the whole painted body is heated in an oven, combining the heat treating of the metal and the drying of the paint. Which is exactly how car bodies still are being built.

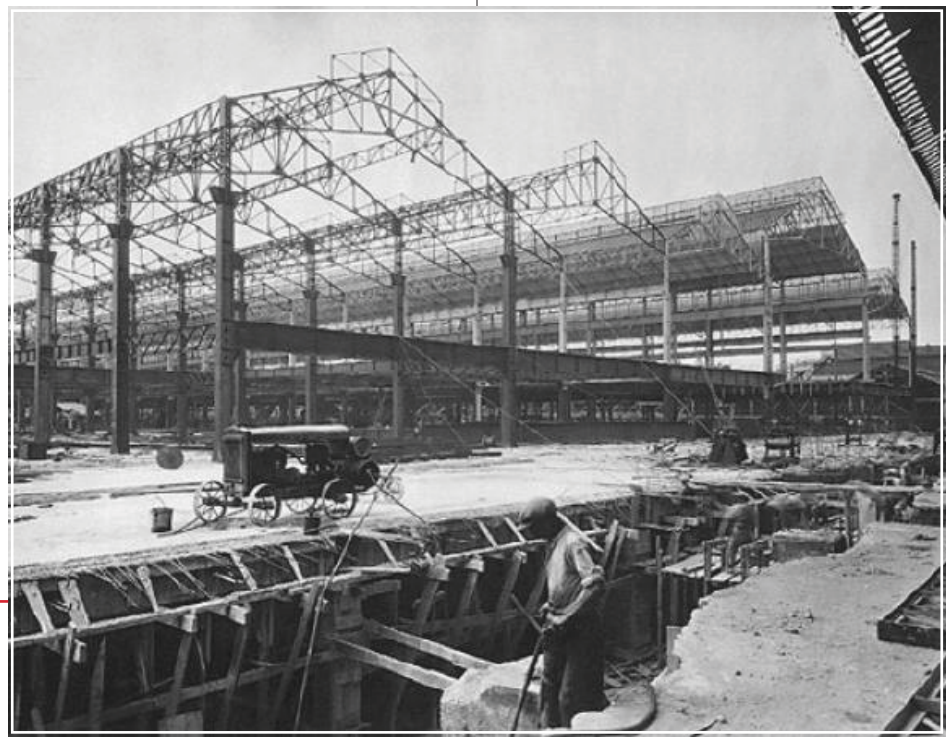
And the beautiful shape of the Traction could not have been pressed into metal without the invention of the deep-draw stamping technology

When Haardt came back to Paris the Bureau d'Études was ordered to reduce the weight of the present production models by at least 100kg within the next 12-18 months. They were to make maximum use of Budd's 'Monopiece' technology and then go on to find new ways to reduce weight even further on future Citroën models.

This order must also have been given to the design studio in Detroit, and can be a possible explanation for a mysterious picture from 1934 of a car that according to the text on the archive envelope is a Citroën, but which bears no resemblance to any known Citroën production car.

As both the Budd and Citroën archives have big gaps ~ the Budd archives were largely destroyed when the company was acquired by Thyssen in 1976, and the Citroën archives suffered bombings during World War II ~ it has as yet been impossible to document the precise chain of events and when decisions regarding the development of the Traction Avant were made, but it seems reasonable that the decision to develop the radically new model was taken when Georges-Marie Haardt came back from the US in 1930.

At this time he had knowledge of all the design elements that were to be incorporated in the Traction Avant, and the company was forced to come up with a way to radically reduce its consumption of materials. The logical solution, under these circumstances, was to develop a unit-body car with front wheel drive, precisely the kind of car Joseph Ledwinka was building in the Budd development department in Philadelphia at this time.



Construction of the Citroën factory at Quai de Javel in Paris.

**In 1931 André Citroën went to the US on what has been described as a social visit. It is much more likely that the purpose of his visit was to sign the contract for the licenses, machinery and assistance needed from Budd to design the Traction Avant and to prepare the Citroën production lines for the radically new model that came into production only 2½years later.**

# Budd & Bankruptcy 2

## No Time for Social Visits

It is reasonable to believe that negotiations regarding the new vehicle and the machinery needed for its production were going on in the year that passed between the Georges-Marie Haardt's return from the Philadelphia in 1930 and André Citroën's visit to Philadelphia a year later. It is probably no coincidence that a big delegation with Budd's leading engineers visited the Citroën factory in 1930. It seems likely that they were there to inform their French partners in detail about the new technologies developed by Budd, providing Citroën with the knowledge needed to implement the new technologies in the design of a new car, and describing what equipment was necessary to build a unit body front wheel drive car.

It is to be noted that André Citroën only made two visits to his important partner in Philadelphia, Edward Gowan Budd. Following both visits, changes in production at Citroën were made. In 1923/24, Citroën decided to implement Budd's all-steel body technology. On his arrival back in Paris he feverishly undertook to develop the new car and to re-tool his production line.

On his second visit, the so-called social visit, Citroën arrived home and began an initiative to radically reduce the weight of a proposed new vehicle. To achieve this goal, he rebuilt the Quai de Javel factory and bought and installed new machinery to facilitate mass production. This was certainly the greatest gamble during the worst financial collapse the world had known. And really ~ with a company in a financial crisis, fighting for its life, André Citroën could not have had time to waste on social visits.

## An Unavoidable Gamble

He was stuck with high capital costs, high material costs and a production facility that was far from optimal. He had a choice between declaring bankruptcy or bet on a new car [the Traction Avant], that was cheaper to produce. It had to be much lighter than conventional cars and it had to be produced in a more rational way than could be achieved in the old former munitions factory.

Citroën decided to try to save his company by developing this new car and build a new factory for its production. This was a decision he could not make by himself. He needed to convince his investors, his creditors and his suppliers that this daring venture was their best bet to recover the money they had invested in his company.

He got support from La Banque de l'Union Parisienne, Credit Lyonnais, the two machine manufacturers Stokvis and Fenwick, the steel industry, represented among others by Châtillon-Commentry and le Comptoir Sidérurgique de France, subcontractors like Chausson, Budd, Jaeger and Mobil Oil, which offered a loan of up to F25million. In December 1934 at the time of the bankruptcy Citroën owed F425million to the creditors.

The creditors were of course aware that they were taking a big risk. When the creditors offered their support nobody knew how long and deep the depression would be, but the creditors obviously thought they would be able to wait for Citroën to turn stable profits again. They were wrong.

To rebuild the whole factory, and at the same time develop and build a radically different car was by many considered to be taking an excessive risk. But to rebuild and retool the factory without knowing, at least in principle, what the design parameters of the new car would be, would have been downright foolish. And André Citroën was no fool.

He was taking a very well calculated risk, and a very necessary risk. He knew that it was not financially viable to continue building the models he had in production. He knew that a new conventional model would not provide the reduction in weight and materials necessary

# Budd & Bankruptcy 2

for the cars to be profitable. He knew that the domestic industry did not have the ability to produce the quality materials he needed.

It was very clear to André Citroën that venturing to build the new car, with all the investments necessary for its development and production, was taking an enormous risk. But at least it gave his company a possibility to survive. To not take this risk would lead inevitably to bankruptcy. His choice was not between taking a big risk and a smaller risk. His choice was between total disaster and a possibility of survival.

I am convinced that André Citroën knew the overall dimensions of the new car, what presses would be needed, what material handling equipment would be needed, what the production flow would look like, etc, when he, at the end of 1931, started the transformation of his company. But of course he did not know the details of the design.

## An Historic Contract

I am also convinced that his visit to Budd was no social visit. It was an important and historic event, where Budd and Citroën in this personal meeting hammered out the final details of the contract for the Budd technologies and the Budd machinery that made the Traction Avant possible.

Due to the damage done to the Citroën archives during World War II and, the Thyssen takeover of Budd, and destroying the company's [Budd's] archives in 1976, this important document will probably never be found. Thus my conclusions are, at least as yet, impossible to fully prove. But it is hard to find acceptable alternative explanations for the actions of André Citroën at this time.

The decision to build the Traction Avant put enormous pressure on the engineers in Citroën's Bureau d'Études. In my mind there is no doubt that the development departments in Paris and Detroit got the same directives from the company president: 'Design a car that makes the most of the lightweight build technologies developed by Budd!' Probably adding limits to dimensions and costs, but obviously not prescribing that the new car must be front wheel drive, as the discussion about the pros and cons of front wheel drive where still going on when André Lefebvre, 'the father of the Traction Avant', entered the Bureau d'Études in Paris in March 1933.

At the Hagley Museum in Wilmington, Delaware, where the remains of the Budd archives are kept, there is an envelope labelled 'Citroën', that contains pictures of a very strange prototype car. The pictures are dated March 29, 1934, the very date the Traction Avant was introduced to Citroën dealers. The car bears no resemblance to any known Citroën production model. It is obviously built to meet strict weight limitations and to sell at a low price. It has a small engine and rear wheel drive. It looks as if it was built with the conventional thinking for light weight economy cars in the 1930s, except for two distinct features: it is close to the shape of the Chrysler Airflow, which was released at this time, and it obviously has a unit body.


This mysterious car is labelled 'Citroën' and dated March 29 1934. It could be a car proposed by the Citroën design studio in Detroit as the answer to Citroën's order to his designers to develop a car that was radically lighter than his conventional models. This is a unit body car with rear wheel drive and a very simple interior, obviously designed to sell at a rock bottom price.

The only reasonable explanation I can find for this car, aside from a mislabelled envelope, is that this was the car designed by the Citroën designers in Detroit, documented by Budd in 1934 for the purpose of the archives [there are also a number of pictures of clay models dated with the same date]. The likeness to the Airflow is an indication that the Citroën design studio in Detroit was responsible for this car, as it did have close ties to the Chrysler organization.

If this was an alternative to the model developed in the French design bureau, Citroën lovers and the automobile industry as a whole should be very happy that Citroën chose to go for the car developed un-

# Budd & Bankruptcy 2

der the auspices of André Lefebvre: the Traction Avant.

The article in Special Interest Autos, Jan-Mar 1972, focuses on the visual resemblances between the Citroën Traction Avant and the contemporary Ford models. It should not come as a surprise, as Citroën used the same American subcontractors as Ford. It is conceivable that the bonnet handles on the Ford and the Citroën come from the same suppliers, and that the Citroën and Budd engineers who talked to and visited each other regularly also brought information about what kind of tooling other automobile companies were interested in or ordering, much the same way that new ideas are spread today in various industries.

## Everybody Needed a Budd License

Budd Mfg Co was, from the mid-1920s and up to the outbreak of World War II, a key provider of licenses, patents and parts to every major car manufacturer in the world. A 1930s car could not be produced without a license for machinery from Budd. The world's automobile industry had become dependent on Budd technology, which is proven by the company's long list of licensees: All the big American car companies, Citroën, Renault, Peugeot, Fiat, Volvo, Toyota… It is a complete list of all the companies in the 1930s who had ambitions to build automobiles en masse.

Thus Budd had good knowledge of what the future releases from the major automobile manufacturers would look like, and channels to discreetly convey this information to the designers at Citroën. And the shapes that lead many people to believe that the Traction was somehow copied from the 1934 Ford may in a way be right, as the 1934 Ford is an upscaled version of the English Fords that were first shown in 1932. Flaminio Bertoni only had to look in the motor magazines of the day to be up to date on the auto design fashion of the day, and to be inspired to make his personal ~ and very successful ~ interpretation of the automobile design trends of the mid-1930s.

Even if Budd did supply the concept, the necessary technologies and machinery, there is no doubt that the design of the Traction Avant is the work of the engineers in the Citroën Bureau d'Études under the leadership of André Lefebvre. He probably came with some kind of design of a small front wheel drive car ready on paper or in his head, but it is not likely that he had full knowledge of the possibilities and limitations that the latest developments by Budd provided for the new car. There must have been close cooperation between the designers in Paris and the body engineers at Budd in Philadelphia throughout the design process, or it would have been very difficult to finalize the design as quickly as is described in the book 'André Lefebvre' by Gijsbert-Paul Berk. But not impossible.

In the 1972 article in Special Interest Autos, Russel Leidy, production manager for Budd in Philadelphia at the time [and married to Joseph Ledwinka's daughter], was asked who was responsible for the design of the Traction Avant. His answer was very clear: 'The French did the styling and the interior.'

As the foremost expert on tooling for a new car model, he was also asked how long it would take to develop and fabricate the tooling needed to produce the Traction Avant.

Mr Leidy estimated that it would take 5-6 months from the first engineering drawings till the production of acceptable stampings. Tools alone could be developed in 3-4 months, but it would take another couple of months to work out all the kinks in the kind of large stampings required for the Traction Avant.

## Record Time to Production

This adds credibility to the description of how the final details of the design and the tooling were worked out late in the autumn of 1933, in cooperation between the Citroën body engineers Raul Cuinet and his assistant Pierre Franchiset, and the Budd organization. Cuinet and Franchiset went to Philadelphia in the beginning of November 1933 with the drawings they had made based on Bertoni's designs, to finalize the body engineering and get the production of the tooling started.

First all drawings had to be transferred from measurements in millimetres to measurements in inches to make them readable for the American engineers. The Budd technicians made a great number of modifications to the Citroën drawings, reducing the number of body parts and working out ways to reduce the amount of scrap, eg by using the cutouts for doors and windows to produce smaller parts. It was an enormous undertaking, that was finished in a very short time.

The so called 'Kellering' models, three-dimensional wood mock-ups that served as masters for the fabrication of the steel tooling, were ready to be inspected only three weeks after the arrival of Cuinet and Franchiset in Philadelphia. The work schedule had been very intense. Cuinet and Franchiset worked 12hour days. Every night they sent a telegram to Paris, describing the modifica-

# Budd & Bankruptcy 2

tions deemed necessary. The six hour time difference allowed the engineers in Paris to evaluate the suggestions and come up with alternative solutions that they sent to Cuinet and Franchiset so they could start working with the responses from France as soon as they went to work in Philadelphia.

Cuinet went back to France after three weeks, while Franchiset stayed to oversee the fabrication of the press tools.

According to Franchiset the first set of parts for a complete Traction Avant was finished in February 1934. Parts for 100 Tractions were pressed in Philadelphia and sent to France to build 100 pre-series cars during the spring of 1934. These 100 prototypes were used for final test runs and as demonstrator cars for the Citroën dealers. Budd delivered the tooling that was sent to Paris on time, and was installed in the new factory at Quai de Javel before Citroën had finished the testing of the prototype cars, after the big launch, after the distribution of demonstrators to the dealerships, and after sales had begun. It is not surprising that the product Citroën delivered to his customers was far from perfected. The imminent financial crises of his company forced André Citroën to a premature launch of his new car.

The final word on how the Traction Avant was conceived and developed has yet to be written, but it is very likely that the development process started much earlier than hitherto has been believed, and that the end product is a result of both teamwork and individual talent at both Edward G Budd Mfg Co in Philadelphia and at the Citroën Bureau d'Etudes in Paris, with Edward G Budd and Joseph Ledwinka at Budd, and André Lefebvre at Citroën as the individual geniuses who made the Traction Avant possible, and who created a car that decades later became the norm for modern car design.

The house of cards started to crumble when one of the major creditors, La Banque de l'Union Parisienne, ran into financial problems of its own. Citroën pressed on with the development of the Traction Avant, but as we now know, he lost the race against time. In the fall of 1934 it was clear that some major creditors could no longer afford to wait. They needed to recoup as much as possible of their investments as soon as possible and Citroën was forced to declare bankruptcy.

It is noteworthy that Michelin, the biggest private creditor, who took ownership of Citroën after the bankruptcy, still had trust in André Citroën. On January 10, 1935 the bankruptcy court demanded that André

# Budd & Bankruptcy 2

Citroën resign as CEO of the company, which he did on January 31. But on demand from Michelin he stayed on as Chairman of the Board, a post he soon had to abandon due to his poor health. He suffered from cancer and was worn out by the stress brought on by the financial difficulties and the radical transformation of his business. He died on July 3 1935 and was succeeded as Chairman of the Board by his long-time friend Félix Schwab.

Michelin made some radical changes to the Citroën business in order to make it profitable. Michelin realized that productivity had to be improved. To be profitable Citroën had to build at least 600cars per day, but in the beginning of 1935 only produced 300 per day. The engineering of the car had to be improved, not only to make customers more satisfied, but also to cut down on the costs for recalls and adjustments. The production of the car had to be streamlined, which was not surprising considering how pressed Citroën was for time when the new factory began producing the new car.

André Citroën & Félix Schwab.

Michelin also made considerable cuts in the business activities of Citroën that were considered to be secondary. Advertising was cut back, the number of sumptuous showrooms was reduced, the dealerships and manufacturing facilities both in France and abroad were reorganized and were run on a more modest scale. Non-profitable facilities were permanently shut down. The side businesses, the taxi company, the insurance company and transportation company were sold off. The dealership contracts were re-negotiated and Michelin managed to negotiate a reduction of the credits the dealers had extended to Citroën, by 75%. Michelin's negotiations with the creditors resulted in an agreement that cut down the short term debt by F660million.

Michelin also attacked the running costs, reducing the workforce from 25,000 employees in late 1934 to 11,500 in June 1936 ~ a more than 50% reduction. Activities like the architectural service and installation services were minimized. Wages and salaries were reduced by between 5% and 30%, and overtime was not paid.

Michelin's calculations showed that they needed to reduce the monthly payments by 47% while only cutting back the manufacturing capacity by no more than 23% to make Citroën profitable. This reduction in production capacity was not random. It was merely an adaption to the market conditions. Just the temporary reduction of vehicles in stock, 7,300 at the outbreak of the bankruptcy, freed up F110million.

At the same time as Michelin undertook these financial measures, American methods for reducing waste and increasing productivity were introduced. The stocks of materials and cars were rigorously controlled and minimized. The main focus was on increased productivity, and between June 1934 and June 1936 the number of man-hours to build a Traction Avant body was reduced from 955 to less than 500. The high efficiency of the American machinery worked wonders, but Michelin was not satisfied with just getting things to run smoothly. They wanted to pass on the cost reductions to the customers, in order to stimulate sales. Thus Citroën lowered the prices in October 1935 by between 3 and 14%, or F500 to F3,500 per car. This helped production increase from 40,000 in 1935 to 61,000 in 1937.


In 1937 the shareholders got a dividend for the first time since 1933. Citroën was once again the biggest car company in France. The company had been saved.

Thus the soundness of the Citroën business was proven. We will never know if André Citroën had been able to make the drastic cost reductions, sell offs and rationalizations without the help of Michelin. And we will never know if it had been timely or even possible to make some or all of these changes before the bankruptcy was a fact. But no matter what, the company he built was saved and profitable and once again had a bright future.

To conclude: The 1934 Citroën bankruptcy was not

# Budd & Bankruptcy 2

caused by André Citroën's gambling at the casino in Deauville. It was not due to an irresponsible decision by André Citroën to invest in a new car and a new factory. The bankruptcy was the end result of the unexpected double whammy that hit Citroën in 1929/30, with import tariffs raising the cost of materials by 30% and the depression cutting sales down by 30%.

That the bankruptcy didn't happen in 1930 was because banks and suppliers supported Citroën's decision to try to save the company with a radical new car built in a radical new factory. The alternatives were either a sudden death in 1931 or a slow death that would be long and painful, but inevitable. The end result was that Citroën brought his company to a stage that made it possible to save after the bankruptcy and that his life's creation lived on as an independent company for another 40 years.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# 2CV Roof Rack [Version 2]

## Background

The writer, Graeme Dennes, had been searching for a roof rack for his Raid 2CV so the spare [sixth] wheel could be carried on the roof rack instead of inside the vehicle, taking up wine space! A very strong two-bar roof rack designed specifically for the 2CV was located and purchased. True!! It's made in Sweden [this is also true!] by Thule [Too lay!] and sold by ARB 4×4 Accessories. [It may be sold elsewhere.] The rack was in stock. [Can you believe that…??!!] It was collected four days after the order was placed.

The rack consists of two packages. One package, Thule code 391000, has two ProBar Evo 135 extruded aluminium bars, while the other package, Thule code 951200, has four Gutter Foot steel mounts. The components are beautifully engineered and manufactured. The materials are exceptionally strong yet light in weight. We may not be able to lift the 2CV off the ground by the rack, but we'd go close!

IMAGE 1 [right] shows the general style of the Thule two-bar rack. [This is not a 2cv rack. This is not a 2cv either!!]

IMAGE 2 [right] shows the 2CV rack components supplied with the kit, which has two of the bars and four of the feet. Each steel foot has a protective rubber sleeve [not shown] which fits over the foot to protect the paintwork.

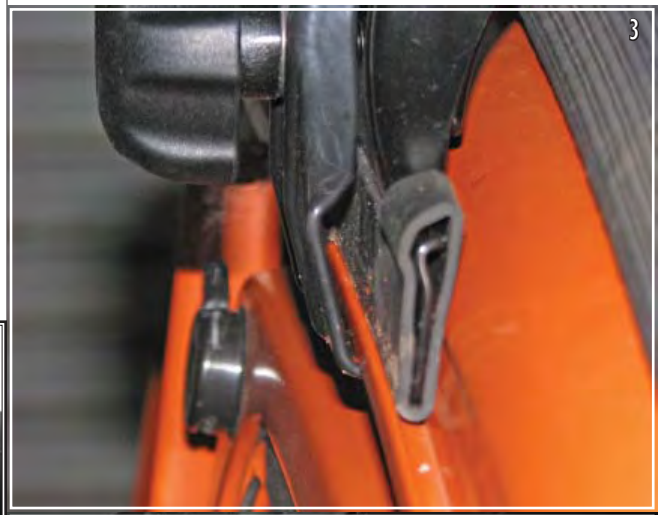
Here's the link to the 2CV roof rack on the manufacturer's website: https://www.thule.com/en-au/roof-rack/car-roof-racks/thule-probar-evo-_-39xx?car=citro%c3%abn-2+cv%2fdyane-4dr-sedan-_-2YHUiFEHGa

IMAGE 3 [facing] shows one end of a rubber-sleeved steel foot sitting in the rain gutter, hard against the bottom of the gutter where it normally travels. The feet can't move sideways once locked in place and the rubber sleeves ensure the steel feet do not damage the vehicle's paintwork.

IMAGE 4 below shows the adjustable outer clamp of the foot solidly wrapped underneath the gutter. This locks the gutter solidly between the upper foot and the lower clamp, holding the steel foot 'welded' in place on the vehicle. The very clever design of the outer clamp locking mechanism ensures the outer clamp cannot move once the large nut [shown] is tightened by hand [only by hand!]. Once secured in place, the four feet cannot move unless the steel gutters are ripped away from the vehicle! It is indeed rock-solid.


1

2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## Roof Rack Positioning

The writer positioned the roof rack bars at 400mm between centres. This allows the 600mm diameter spare wheel to sit on the two bars with around 100mm overlap on the front bar and back bar to ensure good support and stability ~ most important for a vehicle which can travel at such breath-taking speeds! Position the feet of the roof rack so that the spare wheel is sitting dead horizontal to minimise drag and minimise paint damage to the rim from dust, dirt and stones. Yes, the writer used a spirit level to ensure the spare wheel was sitting level.

## Spare Wheel Security

The writer purchased two 2metre long, 25mm wide webbing tie-down straps of 250kg load securing capacity and quick-release fittings. Perfect! Run one strap from front left to rear right and the other strap from front right to rear left, with

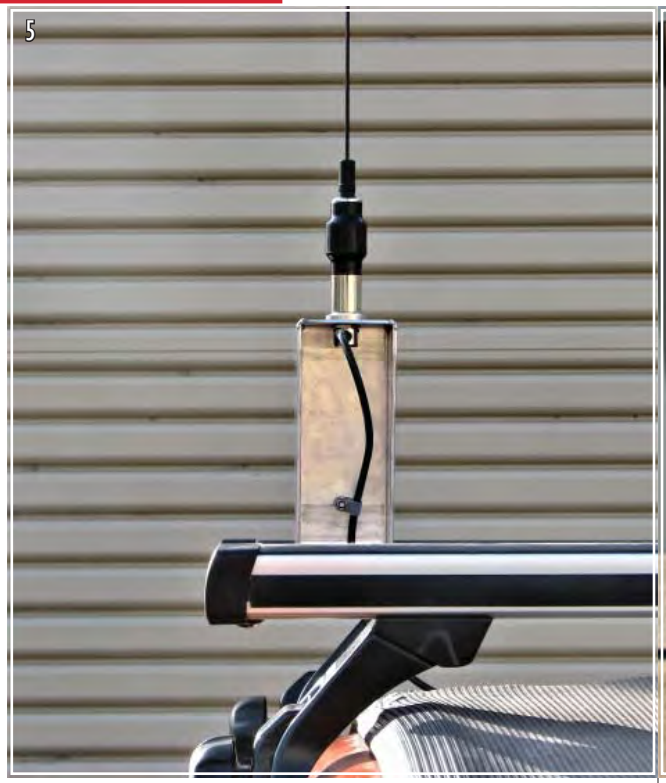
# 2CV Roof Rack [Version 2]

both runs of each strap laying across the top of the wheel. Position the straps so their quick-release fittings are sitting on top of the wheel for easy access and for maximum integrity of the strap locks. You'll find the wheel cannot move yet is instantly accessible.

## UHF CB Radio Antenna Mount

Prior to fitting the roof rack, the vehicle's UHF CB radio antenna was mounted to a fitting at the rain gutter level, the highest point of the vehicle. As a consequence of fitting the roof rack with the spare wheel in position, the steel rim of the spare wheel [and any steel belting in the tyres] would interfere with the rearward signal transmission and reception from the antenna because of radio frequency shielding by the steel materials.

To combat this issue, the writer built a small 200mm high five-sided angled aluminium housing which locks sideways into an extruded channel in the front bar of the roof rack to raise the height of the antenna's mounting base to above the highest point of the spare wheel. This provides the antenna with unobstructed 360° radio coverage with the spare wheel mounted in position on the roof rack. Dead simple. Also, as the antenna is mounted higher than normal, ie higher off the ground,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the UHF communications range [slant range to the horizon] is extended further as a bonus.

IMAGE 5 [above] shows the location of the aluminium antenna mount, fitted to the front bar on the left side of the vehicle. The antenna rod screws onto the MBC fitting fitted into the top of the metal mount so the antenna base is raised above the highest point of the spare wheel [not shown]. The MBC fitting is 'inside' the mount, on the end of the coaxial cable, and the threaded section of the MBC fitting extends above the mount, The antenna screws onto the threaded section. Fit a small cable clamp [shown] to prevent movement of the cable and subsequent damage. You don't want the cable moving in the wind or it will eventually be damaged and will need to be replaced. Viewed from rear of vehicle.

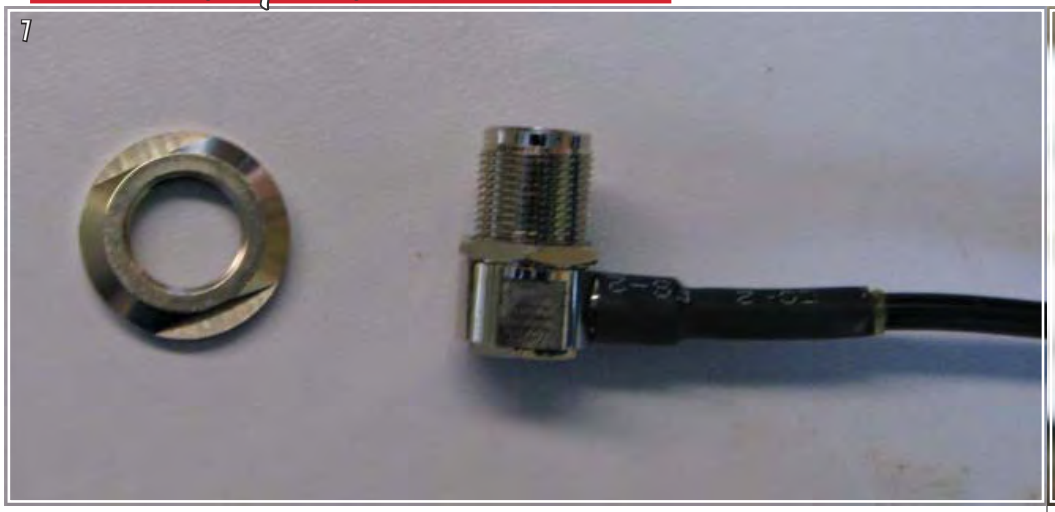
IMAGE 6 [above] shows the antenna mount secured to the rear edge of the front bar of the roof rack, held by the two bolts shown and two hidden 'nuts'. Shows the form of the aluminium 'box' mount and the cable clamp. Do not make the bend radius of the cable too tight where it exits the MBC fitting or else cable damage will occur ~ at some stage!

## Use a Second Coaxial Cable and Fittings

The writer bought a separate coaxial cable with the MBC fitting attached, then cut the cable to the correct length for the longer run to the CB radio in the vehicle, then fitted a crimped PL259 plug to the other end of the cable to attach to the radio's antenna socket. See photo 7 following. The writer will use the shorter coaxial cable and fittings when the roof rack is not fitted, or use the longer cable and fittings when it is. Don't attempt to use joiner cables and connectors to extend coaxial cables. You can't weather-proof them adequately against water and dirt ingress and so corrosion and signal loss become the norm and the bane of your installation. You definitely don't want this if you wish to ensure maximum reliability and range of your vehicle's UHF CB radio system for your safety.

IMAGE 7 [over leaf] shows the MBC antenna connection fitting on the outer end of the coaxial cable which is secured into the top face of the metal mount with the locking ring shown. The locking ring keeps the waterproof MBC fitting in place. The base of the antenna

# 2CV Roof Rack [Version 2]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rod screws onto the threaded section. Only ever hand-tighten the antenna rod to the above fitting! The MBC fitting with 5metres of 50-ohm RG-58 coaxial cable may be purchased from a UHF CB radio supplier. Don't forget to purchase the crimped PL259 plug for the other end after the cable is cut to length. For maximum reliability, don't use the soldered type of PL259 plug. Use the crimped type.

## True Vertical Antenna

With the roof rack bars fitted at 400mm centres and the spare wheel sitting dead horizontal on the bars, then when the antenna rod is screwed onto the MBC fitting on the metal mount, we need the antenna rod to be at true vertical ~ front/back and left/right when the vehicle is sitting on level ground. In other words, we need the top mounting face of the antenna mount, where the antenna sits, to be dead horizontal to maximise transmission range. You'll have a small angle of perhaps 10° to include in the mount design because the rear face of the front bar may not be at true vertical.


8


9

You can get a sense of the small angle needed from Image 8 following. The metal mount needed to be angled slightly rearward to achieve a true vertical positioning of the antenna. Alternatively, the mounting face which holds the MBC fitting could be angled downwards by that angle. However you choose to accommodate the angle, ensure the antenna rod is at true vertical. The importance of this cannot be overstated.

The metal antenna mount, being of an odd-shaped five-sided box, acts as a protector for the coaxial cable and the antenna MBC mounting base against damage from dust, dirt and stones. The antenna MBC mounting fixture fits into a hole drilled into the top face of the mount.

IMAGE 8 [left] is a close-up of one of the two antenna mount securing bolts and 'nuts'. The visible 'nut' is partially inserted into the extrusion channel in the rear edge of the front roof rack bar. ARB was able to supply the two bolts and the two 'nuts' of the correct size for the extruded channel. You need the 'nuts' to be as large as possible but still able to freely slide into the channel with the bolts loosened. Apologies for the over-exposure of the side of the aluminium mount. The goal was to provide clarity of the securing bolt and 'nut' and the extrusion channel.

## Correct Bar Orientation

Per the roof rack mounting instructions, mount the two bars with the curved metal section of each bar, shown at the left in Image 8, facing forward, with the antenna mount secured to the flat rear face of the bar as shown.

IMAGE 9 [above] of the bar with the black plastic end protective cover removed, showing the slot in the extrusion channel and the end of one of the two 'nuts' in the channel. Ensure the two mounting bolts are not too long to where they bind against the inner face of the channel when tightened.

The roof rack can be fitted or removed from the vehicle in just a couple of minutes.

Finally, for further information on the antenna and its mounting to the vehicle, the reader is

# 2CV Roof Rack [Version 2]

referred to the writer's article titled Better UHF CB Car Radio Performance for everything you need to know to maximise the success of your vehicle radio installation and operation.

### Safety Warning 1

As always with roof racks, observe the manufacturer's mounting instructions and observe the load limits.

### Safety Warning 2

In the interest of personal safety, the writer shortened each bar by 200mm to ensure the ends of the bars did not project outward past the rain gutters. Refer to Image 5.

DISCLAIMER:

This article is not intended as a sales promotion for a commercial product. It is about providing advice on the availability of a roof rack which has been specifically designed for our 30+ year old 2CVs. There may be similar products available but the writer could not locate them.

This document may be updated in the future and assigned a new revision number.

The writer would appreciate your advice of errors or suggestions for improvements.

Please forward to: gdennes@gmail.com




The roof rack, spare wheel and the UHF CB antenna in position on the 2CV. Job done! [Now, I have to remember ~ don't forget the tie-down straps!!!]



# Citroën Indochine

Image: Eoin Barnett

Image: Eoin Barnett

It all started with a Club photo competition in June, 2012. The first prize went to Eoin Barnett for his heart-warming picture of Michael Mohr and his son Daniel on Raid Australia 2008. Eoin thinks it was taken during a lunch break near Lake Carey which is just south of Laverton, Western Australia on August 12, 2008.

Eoin also brought with him some pictures he took in Ha Noi in 1995.

Now a non-Citroënist seeing this building, being used to park cars and motorcycles might comment on the 'pretty stained glass window', but we know better.

To us it is clear that at some stage this must have been an assembly plant, a showroom, a head office… at the very least a garage… with Citroën connections that pre-date the 1960s.

Eoin's photographs from Hanoi lead me to undertake some internet searching to discover more about the building he photographed. Unfortunately, at that time I could find nothing on line to indicate the purpose of the building. It would certainly seem that Citroën's 'head office', to the extent that one existed in French Indochina, was in Saigon rather than any of the other Colonial centres.

Probably the best source of information, both then and

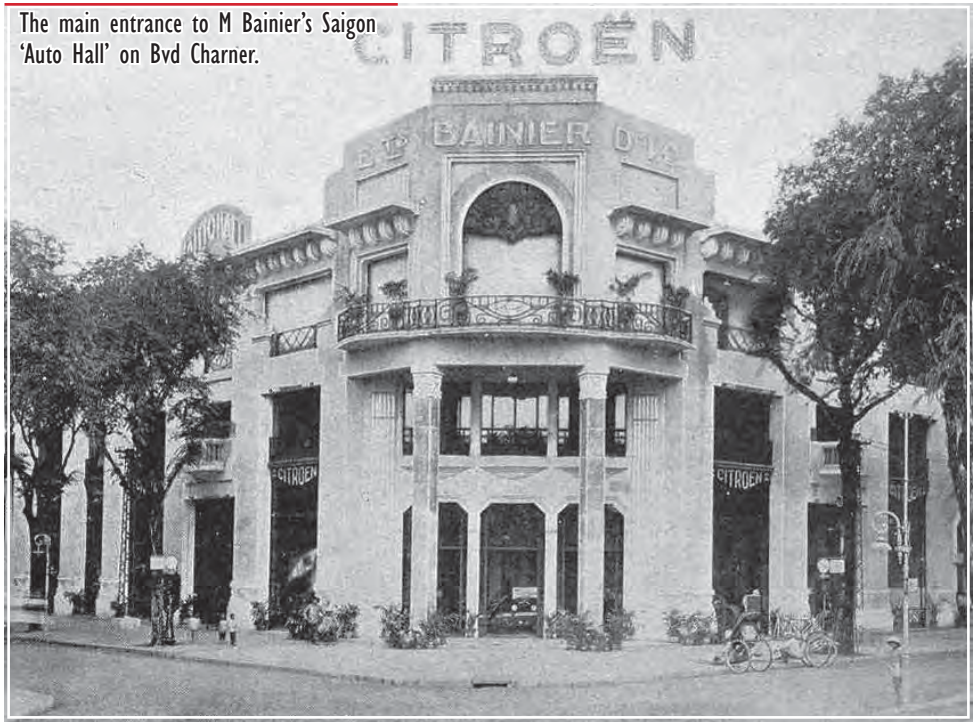
# Citroën Indochine

now, on Citroën in Asia is Pierre Jammes' website http://www.dsinasia.com/ [and subsequently his book, a copy of which is availabel in the CCO-CA Library, 'Citroën DS Stories in Asia']. But back then even his site made no reference to the building, and little reference to Ha Noi. I forwarded Eoin's pictures, to Pierre, and one of them is now on the site.

Clearly, Pierre has undertaken additional research and the Hanoi arm of the business now has improved coverage. But, to go back to my research in 2012…

Société Automobile d'Extrême-Orient had its head office on Bvd Charner from 1936. However the building's motoring associations pre-date that year. In 1912 a French business man named M Bainier built an automotive showroom and garage on the corner of Boulevard Bonnard and Boulevard Charner, in Saigon. In 1927: he became an import dealer for Citroën automobiles. The showroom was one of a number of Bainier 'Auto Halls' through out Indochina at the time.

There were also Bainier 'Auto Halls' in Hue, Ha Noi, Phom Penh and Tourane [today's Danang]. The showrooms were used to house and exhibit the latest Citroën and other automobiles. While Eoin's photo could be of Bainier's Ha Noi 'Auto Hall', I had not at that time been able to locate any pictures of this branch of his automotive empire.




The main entrance to M Bainier's Saigon 'Auto Hall' on Bvd Charner.




In 1959 the building was purchased by a Vietnamese couple named Mr. and Ms. Ung Thi, who were relatives of the last Vietnamese king, King Bao Dai.

They started renovating the whole building, between 1959 and 1975 turned what had been a two story auto showroom into a six story hotel, complete with one hundred guest rooms, three cinemas, a cafeteria, a dance hall and library, and renamed the building the Rex Trading centre.

When war broke out between the Americans and the North Vietnamese, the hotel was leased by the Americans and used as a billet for US military personal and the Joint United States Public Affairs Of-

The two post cards [top and centre] depict Bvd Charner looking towards the Hotel de Ville [Town Hall]. The upper card shows the Bainier 'Auto Hall' and is undated. The centre card shows the facing side of the Boulevard and dates from 1948. A Traction can be seen ~ second closest to the camera.
The lowest card shows a line up no less than eight D-Series cars outside the Colombo Plan Conference held in Saigon in 1960.[Image: www.dsinasia.com]

# Citroën Indochine

fice [JUSPAO] personal.

Part of the job of JUSPAO staff was to provide reporters with 'clear, concise summaries of widely scattered action.'

As such, nightly briefings were held at 5pm at the Rex hotel that covered the day's events.

These briefings though, ended up not satisfying anyone involved.

The military always tended to provide less information rather than more, and often the information they did give was incomplete or inaccurate [as war data often is].

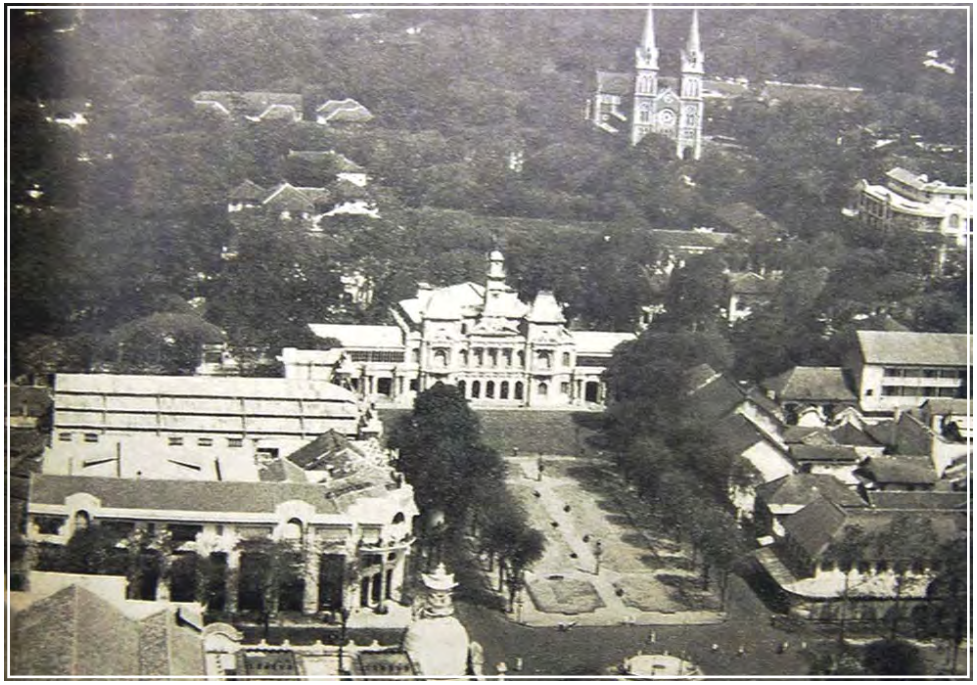
Overtime the briefers also began giving body counts and other such statistics to satisfy reporters' demands for precision.

But because the briefings seldom bore any resemblance to the facts in the field, as reality became temporarily replaced by dazzling displays of numerical progress, the briefings became mockingly known as the 'Five o'Clock Follies.'

Later in the war the 'Five o'Clock Follies' were shunted across the street to the building on the corner of Lam Son Square and Dong Khoi, but most people still associate the 'Five o'Clock Follies' with the Rex Hotel.

The other reason the Rex Hotel is so often associated with the Vietnam War is because of its rooftop bar.


Top: This postcard also dates from 1948 and shows Bvd Saint-Graal. Two Citroëns are parked on the right of the street. Below: An image of the Rex Hotel from the 1960s.



This picture is an aerial view of Bvd Charner. At the top of the street is the Hotel de Ville and in the lower left the 'Auto Hall'.

The rooftop bar and restaurant was a favourite watering hole with the GIs and war correspondents, and was a place where they could feel at ease without having to watch their backs.

From here they could watch the flashes and explosions on the horizon in relative safety, glad that it was not them being shot at.

When South Vietnam was liberated in 1975, the Rex Trading Centre became the property of the city's tourist bureau.

They in turn upgraded the Rex into an international hotel and renamed it Ben Thanh Hotel.

With a touch of irony given its use by JUSPAO, Ben Thanh Hotel was used as the location for the press conference announcing the reunification of Vietnam in 1976.

Ten years later, in 1986, the hotel was sold once again, the new owners changing its name back to the Rex Hotel.

Since then the hotel has expanded to incorporate surrounding buildings on Pasteur Street, and has converted its old cinema to guest rooms to increase the size of the hotel.

# Citroën Indochine

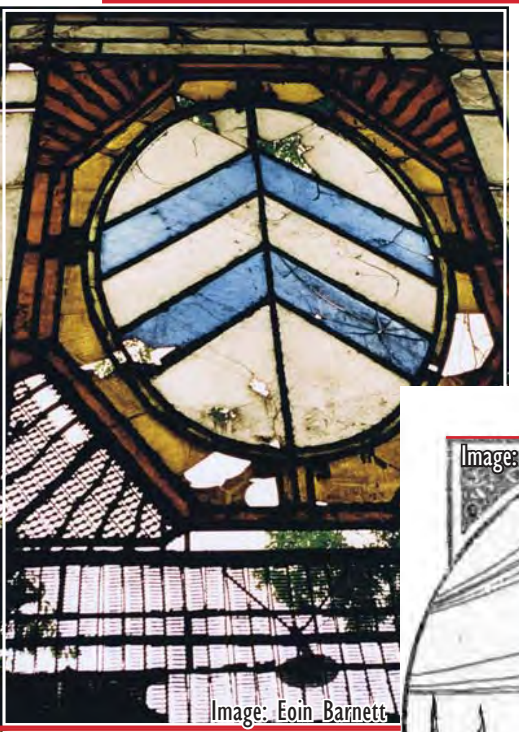


Image: Eoin Barnett

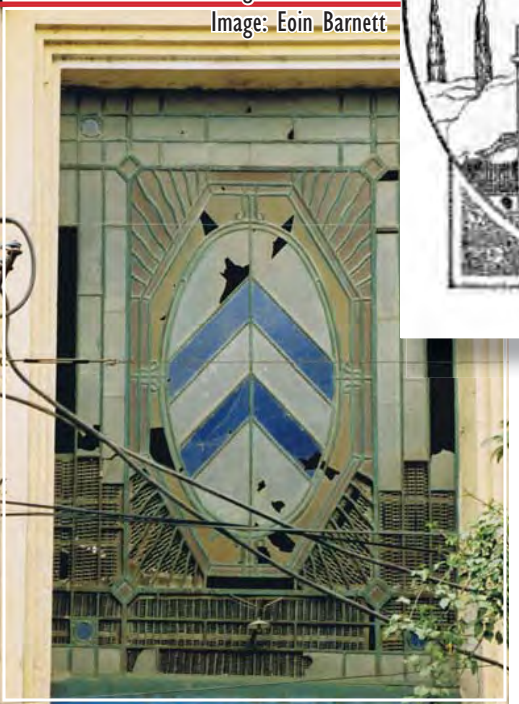


Image: Eoin Barnett

Today the Rex Hotel is a 5-star 289room hotel complete with two ballrooms, spa, gym, two swimming pools, six restaurants and bars, and numerous fashion shops.

The Rex Hotel has certainly come a long way since its beginning, metamorphosing from car showroom to a 5 star luxury hotel.

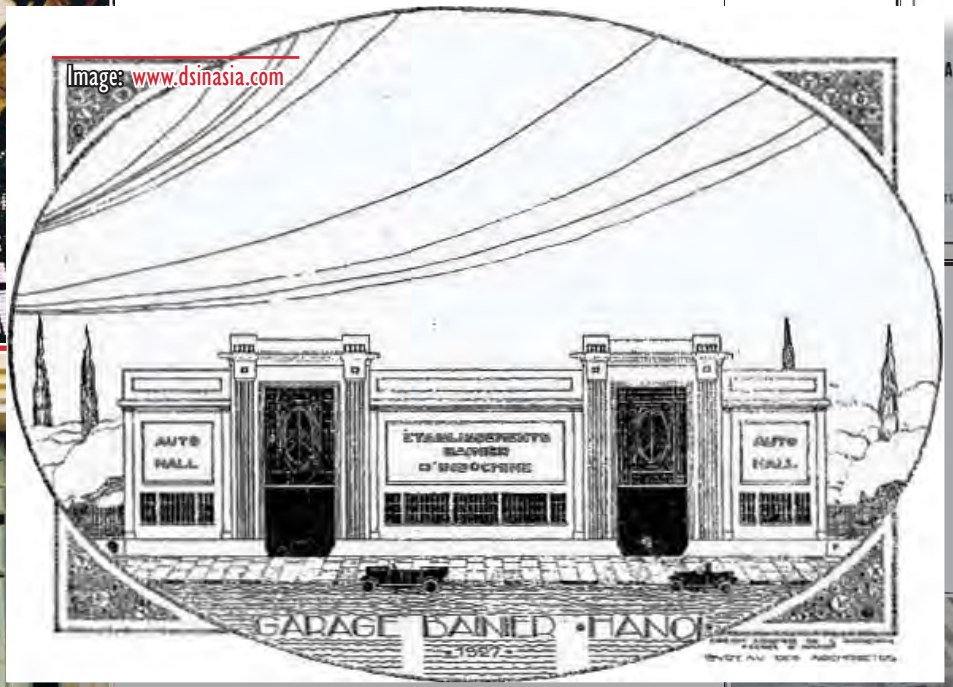



Image: www.dsinasia.com

But, back to where this all began…

In addition to the image at the start of this article Eoin also supplied the two images opposite. Pierre Jammes' website also now includes the line drawing above which is taken from


Above: the Citroën network in what was still, although not for much longer, French Indochina ['Sud-Est Asiatique', late 1952 or early 1953]. [Image courtesy of Andrew Cox, CCCUK]

Below: The Citroën exhibition hall of the 'Garage Aviat' in Ha Noi [undated photo, in 'Revue Francaise de l'Elite Europeenne', 1952].

Both images: www.dsinasia.com


'L'Eveil Economique de l'Indochine' of 17 July 1927. It gives the address as 10 rue Borgnis Debordes [Trang Thi]. It is fairly clear that these three images are of the same building.

Pierre tells us that by 1933 the impact of the depression was being felt and the 'Etablissements Bainier' lost the Citroën rights. Citroën sent Henri Hospital to launch its own representation: the 'Garage Citroën' on 37 rue d'Espagne in Saigon [became Le Loi in 1939, then Le Than Ton since 1955].

Outside Saigon, agents were recruited to develop the market and maintain the cars.

Albert Aviat in particular played an important role: he started to represent Citroën in Ha Noi from 1936. Aviat had started a garage in 1920 at 45 rue de la Chaux in Ha Noi; it moved to the corner of boulevards Gambetta [Tran Hurng Dao] and Rialan [Phan Chu Trinh] in 1926, and changed its name to SNC 'Aviat et Dassier' in 1929, then 'Etablissements Aviat et Cie' in 1940. Albert Aviat's son-in-law Andreani took over in 1947 and continued the Citroën business until at least 1952. This address is now home to the headquarters of the SeABank.

Leigh F Miles, with additional source material from Pierre Jammes' website, www.dsinasia.com

# A Day with Edna May the GSA...

## Two Meetings in Mouchamps

PART ONE : LOÏC LE BRETON

Bonjour amis Citroënistes antipodéens.

Isn't it strange how innocent Citroën excursions so often lead to delightful places and encounters not imagined at the outset?

That was certainly the case recently when I went to Mouchamps, just the other side of La Route Nationale from us, to take some photos to accompany the final part of the Hôtel du Tigre trilogy in 'démarreur', Volume 2, No3 last month.

The Route Nationale 137, barely two kilometres from our house, separates our hamlet from the neighbouring commune of Mouchamps; the stream which winds along the wide valley at the end of our driveway, Le Ruisseau du Parc, connects us…

Le Ruisseau also represents a division; on our bank, the underlying rock is limestone; a memory of an ancient seabed, then, complete with ammonite fossils. On the Mouchamps side, there is granite. More ancient still. This is reflected in the buildings; honey-coloured stone dominates Sainte-Cécile: granite becomes more common just up the road. Terracotta pantiles, reminiscent of the South, are far more common than slate roofs in both communes. The granite is the first sign of the proximity of the Armorican peninsula, of Brittany.

I did not know, as I crossed La Nationale, that this June morning would result in two conversations. The first one being Une Excursion Bretonne…

I parked Edna May, The GSA, in front of La Boulangerie.

There are two boulangeries in Mouchamps. This is partly due to the commune's history as a Protestant enclave within Catholic Vendée. We shall revisit this theme in a future GSAdventure.

I rarely bother to lock our vehicles in the villages here. For one thing any would-be thief is only ever an incision away from the interior of a Deuche or a Dyane; for another anyone desperate enough to be in need of loose Euro-change from the door-pocket of a DS/GSA or Xantia is welcome have a baguette or un express on the house.

It was an unseasonally overcast morning, but the gentle light was just right for the snaps I needed.

Outside La Boulangerie I entered into easy conversation with Loïc, who was sitting next to a paper bagful of croissants. He had leaned his bike, with its four paniers against the newly-appointed pilgrim bench, point-

Top: Loïc was seven years old when he and his family watched De Gaulle arrive in front of the factory at Rennes-La-Janais. He was in a Simca decapotable.
Centre: The factory was just a shell, a framework. The official cars were mostly black DS 19s…
Bottom: The first product of the Rennes-La-Jannais site was the Ami 6.

# A Day with Edna May the GSA…

ing the way to Santiago de Compostella, 1,300kms down the track.

Loïc, tanned, check-shirted and in his late sixties, had watched me park Edna May.

I sat down on the other end of the bench, distanciation sociale oblige.

« Quelle belle GSA! Une Pallas en plus! Et une des premières! Vert Tamaris!

…Bonjour; Loïc… »

« Salut Loïc ; Alan. Enchanté »

Fist-bumps.

As those who have walked the Compostella trails will know, this is often how Camino conversations begin…

« Loïc, c'est Breton, ça! » I offer, stating the obvious…

« Alan aussi! Like the singer, Alan Stivell… I am from Rennes; I am making a one-week circular tour in preparation for my big trip to Compostella when conditions allow. I intended to go last year, then the frontiers were all closed down. Better times will come; for now I keep fit and ready… »

He points to the GSA

« I worked in the Citroën factory at Rennes La Janais from 1969, when I started as an apprenti, until my retirement in 2012. That is how I know your GSA is an early model; we made that silver strip on the hayon, the fifth door, for just a few months… I suppose it has also the green ciel de toit, the headlining? »

I laugh and nod. Loïc reaches across and proffers the paper bag.

« Tu veux un croissant, Alan? »

The easy informality of the « Tu » form of address is also common amongst Caminantes, the pilgrims or hikers, randonneurs, of Le Chemin. We flaunt the distanciation rules, and I pull out a croissant pur beurre.

« When I started, we were mostly building the Ami 8, and some Dyanes. I was, like most of my fellow-workers, a country boy. My father was a paysan, with a small farm near to the town of Bruz. He started working at La Janais with the first group of 3,000 workers in 1961. De Gaulle had inaugurated the building-site I believe in 1959; all part of the décentralisation project, you know. »

Loïc sees I am fascinated. The taste of butter adds to the ambiance bretonne.

« And a clever plot to keep La Bretagne separatist movement in check, peut-être… I was seven years old when we watched De Gaulle arrive in front of the factory, which was just a shell, a framework. He was in a Simca décapotable if my memory is correct. But the official cars were mostly black DS 19s… Afterwards, my father took me in our 1950 model bashed and bruised Deux-Chevaux to the city centre. It looked like that

# A Day with Edna May the GSA...

little model car you are holding !

I hand Mogette Miniature to him; another breach of protocole sanitaire. He places it next to the croissant bag with a smile.

On that day in 1959 it was raining. Typical Breton météo! Afterwards, we drove into the centre ville and ate galettes, jambon, œuf, saucisse… in a brasserie…Just Papa and me. I felt like a grand homme… »

« Not so Grand as De Gaulle, Loïc… » I ventured.

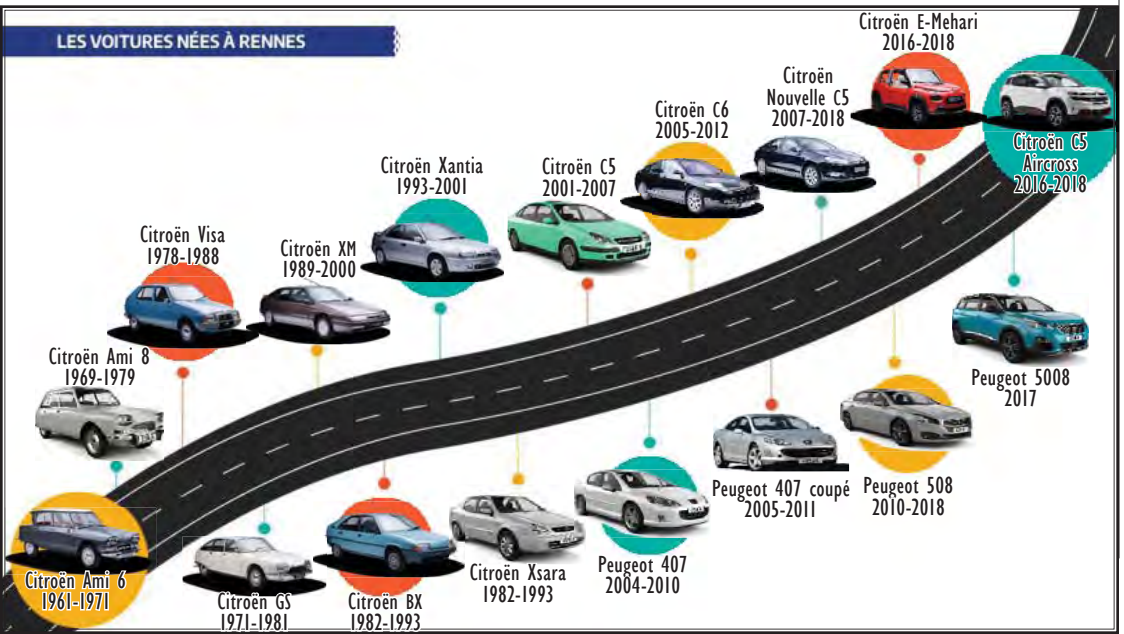
« Ha ! Le Général ! You know he owed his life to La DS, of course… a couple of years after the factory inauguration, there was that assassination attempt at Le Petit Clamart. His driver was able to speed away on the wheel rims after the tyres had been shot out… Fourteen bullet holes! One passed just a centimetre from the nose of Le Général. He had a big nose, but, all the same. Saved by the skill of his driver, and by La Suspension Hydraulique, or oléo-pneumatique, to be accurate… »

I realise that I am in conversation with a spécialiste.

We pause, enjoying our shared croissants and the shared moment.

« Talk about a Grand Projet! The idea was to create 12,000 jobs! Like the building of the world's first tidal power station near to St Malo, the factory at La Janais was indicative of De Gaulle's Grandeur de La France reasoning. Remember it would become the époque of nuclear power and Force de Frappe nuclear weapons… »

A pause. A family of barn swallows disappears over a pantile roof.




« Yes, my father was a Gaullist. Many paysans were. I was of the Giscard generation; remember when our youthful président was photographed at the wheel of his own DS during the 1974 election?... but the regalian Louis Seize style he fell into during his seven-year presidency became tiresome. I was happy when Mitterrand defeated him in '81. Fourteen years of Mitterrand; the only Président of the Fifth République to complete two septennat seven-year terms… »

I nod and take another bite of croissant pur beurre…

Loïc returns to the subject of the Rennes factory.

« My Papa was typical of those early Citroën employees. It was said in the early days that the Breton workers were less inclined to take strike action than their Parisian counterparts… He would work early shifts, 6am to 3pm. When he came home, he still had time to help my mother with the running of our poultry shed, and with the few pigs, the geese and the two dairy cows we kept. »

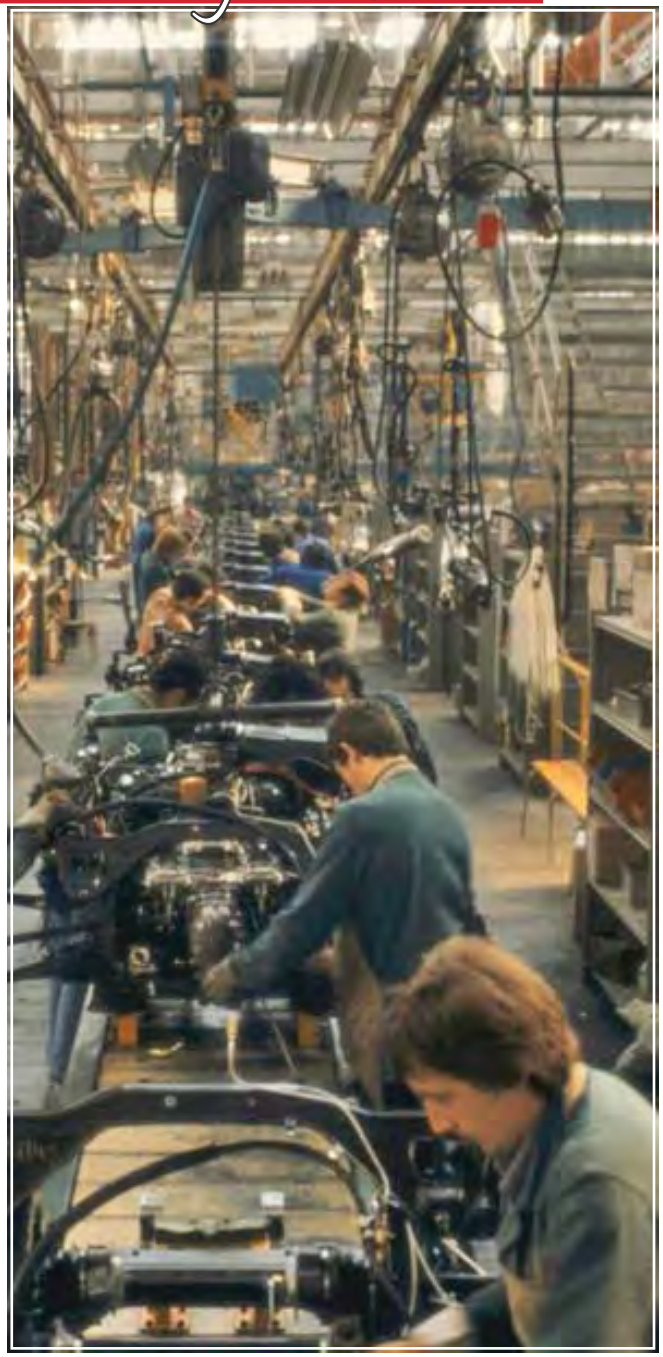
I say that a similar arrangement works locally here, in Vendée where the workforce is also reckoned to be relatively disinclined to strike… with the Jeanneau boat factory in Les Herbiers, or the Louis Vuiton twin-manufacturies in at the autoroute junction near Les Essarts. Although, these days, there are few surviving smallholdings, compared with when we'd first moved here from Australia in the Eighties.

« Yes; Citroën had a fleet of buses at La Janais which ferried workers from villages to the factory. Gradually, most of the workers became owners of new cars. Papa traded our Deuche for an Ami 6 break the year I turned 14. We were so proud to own a new car ; there were special discounts and payment facilities. It was gris Liban with red seats. Four children on the soft rear seat was not a problem! No longer the squabbling or that unpadded metal bar in the middle of the seat! Quel confort! »

Half-way through the Mouchamps croissant, I ask him which models he'd worked on.

« First the Ami 8; you know that virtually all of that car, and its components, were built in Brittany? We made more than a million of them, up to, I think 1978. Alongside the GS, which was also made from Breton parts ! The G-models were truly… exceptionnels. Such comfort and safety in a mid-market model had never been imagined before. The cost of development almost ruined the firm, you know. We made over two million. And now you never see one in daily use. That is why I am so pleased to see yours. Can

# A Day with Edna May the GSA…



you imagine the variety of parts we produced? All of the specialist engineering for the hydraulic parts, with those fine tolerances ? Even Rolls-Royce admired our Breton engineering…

I joke that Bretons were well-known for their love of butter; I hadn't thought about a love affair with Liquide Hydraulique Minérale… I mention that a friend in Bunbury WA had used Automatic Transmission Fluid in his venerable DS for the past thirty-odd years, which causes Loïc to raise a Breton eyebrow, without comment…

« I thought the GSA was a wonderful development when we started to produce them in 1979. That fifth door and fifth gear. Le moteur a bit more powerful and also more economical if you did not forget the choke! One of the first modifications we did was to put a warning light on the dash; only the very early GSA's like yours did not have that feature. You know we had a section of the factory which produced all of the rubber tubing for the système hydraulique? We used only the finest materials… »

And other models ? I asked…

« La Visa. Half a million. Another excellent design. Lots of headroom. I owned a two-cylinder one for three years. Then the BX, which was the car which saved the factory. Nearly two million we made. The fusion of Citroën design, and Peugeot engines was a winner. Same with the AX. We made more than half a million during ten years at La Janais. And even more in China !

The eyebrow is raised again, then Loïc continues…

« I also worked on the XM. I bought one of the last cars, a silver 2.5 HDi. I still own it. I prefer it to the C5, which was the last model I helped to produce. »

We finish our viennoiseries, and look across to the GSA. The sun comes from behind a cloud between Crédit Agricole and, fittingly, La Crêperie du Soleil.

« Révolutionnaire » says Loïc, looking again over to Edna May. « In some ways La GS was almost as revolutionary as the DS, or La Traction, we thought at the factory. But of course, we were not… neutral… in our opinions! Nonetheless, a car to be proud of. My mother worked part-time in the upholstery workshops after I left school. »

We pull on our Covid masks, and walk from the bench to the boulangerie side of the square. Marie-Anne, who owns La Maison de la Presse is waiting to enter; only two clients at a time are allowed inside the shop during the current restrictions. Surgical masks and gel hydro-alcoolique compulsory, too. Marie-Anne has noticed Edna, and calls a masked-but-cheerful « Bonjour Alan! »

I open the driver's door, and Loïc reaches down. He runs a hand over the shoulder of the seat…

« Le tissus Jersey, cloth with the subtle chevron motif in the weave » he says.

I realise he is thinking of his mother.

He looks down the road to the romanesque village church.

The barn swallows re-appear above the church tower.

When he starts to speak again, there is a tear dissolving into his mask.

« My parents had a hard life when they were young. The La Janais factory brought them financial security, even… prosperity. Theirs was the story of France after the war, and before the oil crisis: Les Trente Glorieuses »

We stand quietly for a few seconds, then I ask how he is enjoying retirement…

« When I was offered a full pension at age 60, in 2012, I did not hesitate to retire. To leave a place for the younger generation. Even though I knew it was not so simple; it's OK for us early baby-boomers. But now, the numbers no longer add up, do they? I had worked in the same factory for forty-two years. How many of the younger generation will do that? »

As the question hangs there, a young mum in a new Citroën

# A Day with Edna May the GSA…

C-Crosser parks next to Edna, and smiles towards us before putting on her face-mask.

« And now, mon ami, I must continue my journey for today. I will head to the coast, then join the coastal Vélodyssée cycle track. You know that fabulous route which follows the Atlantique from northern Spain, around La Bretagne? You can take Le Ferry from Roscoff I think, where the onions come from, and cross to La Grande Bretagne… Of course, it is all a little… compliqué… at the moment. But, as I said, better times will return; I am sure of it…

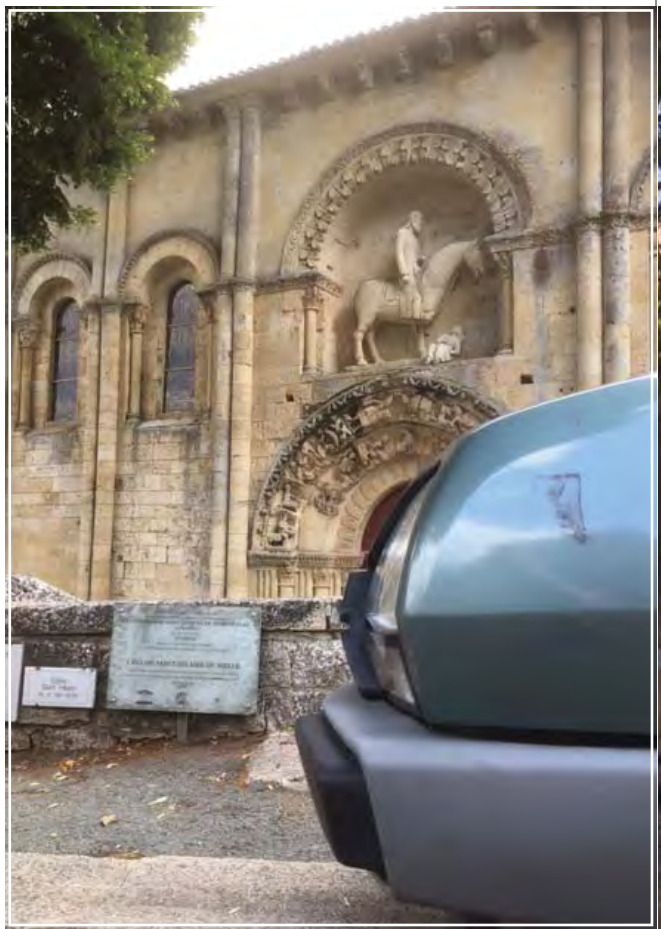
I give Loïc my business card, and tell him to give me a call if he has any travel problems between Mouchamps and home.

« Merci, Alan. In three days I will complete my circular tour, and will be home in Bruz. I will send you some photographs from my collection; I think you will like them. Look after your GSA, and, especially, enjoy driving her. I think that in many ways, as a small family car, she has never been equalled for comfort…

Loïc waves as he cycles westwards towards Le Petit Château des Cèdres, [which has Chanel No 5 connections ; more in an upcoming story] past La Poste and La Mairie. He passes the canvas poster of De Gaulle, next to Le Monument aux Morts war memorial. Le Général frozen in time, was photographed in 1946 during a visit to Clemenceau's burial site. Le cycliste breton disappears around the bend…

Two weeks later, I will receive an envelope from Bretagne containing a dozen photographs and a handwritten note in elegant script on the back of a visiting card.

« Merci pour la conversation. J'espère qu'on se reverra un jour à Rennes, à Mouchamps ou ailleurs. Amicalement. Loïc. »



Before folding the empty croissant bag, I notice that it is illustrated with a pair of croissants. One is crescent-shaped, the other is straight, showing the difference between « beurre » and « ordinaire »… The logo above them says :

« Pour les petits moments de plaisir ».

Small moments of pleasure, then.

I place the empty folded bag into Edna May's door pocket, then walk across La Place du Marché towards Le Canotier, Jill Brochard's photography studio and La Boucherie.

…and it is while I am taking photographs featuring Mogette Miniature 2CV for a Front Drive or démarreur article that serendipity strikes for the second time that morning; I meet, quite by chance and for the first, but not the last time, a youthful 86-year-old Mouchampais called Philippe Gauducheau…

TO BE CONTINUED…

Alan Brown, August 2021.


CITROËN CLASSIC OWNERS' CLUB OF AUSTRALIA
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