



demarreur
Australia's National Internet Magazine
for Citroën Owners and Enthusiasts



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

November 2023 Vol 4 No 3
Xsara Picasso: The First of a Dynasty

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.

Cover Image

The cover image is from a French brochure for the Xsara Picasso from 2006.

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 be 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.

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Deadline

The deadline for the next edition of 'Front Drive' is Sunday, 19 November and for the next 'démarrreur' it is Sunday, 24 December.

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Life Members

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

| | |
|-------------------------|------|
| Arthur and Nance Clarke | 1984 |
| Jack Weaver | 1991 |
| Peter Boyle | 2003 |
| Ted Cross | 2012 |
| Rob Little | 2012 |
| Sue Bryant | 2017 |
| Brian Wade | 2017 |
| Leigh Miles | 2022 |
| Lance Wearne | 2023 |

SPARE PARTS & TOOLS

Contact Max Lewis. Phone: 0458 993 771 [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

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Ed Sed

The first thing I have to do this month is apologize [again] for poor proofing of last month's magazine. Yes, Bruce Stringer proofs the magazine before it goes to the printer or onto the website, but in the final analysis, all the faults are mine. Thank you however to those who responded so generously to my 'mea culpa' email. A fully corrected version of the edition is available on the website which you can download at any time.

THE PICASSO IS DEAD. LONG LIVE THE PICASSO.

Back in 2018 Citroën stopped using the Picasso name in association with their MPVs. The name first saw the light of day with the launch of the Xsara Picasso back 25 years ago. It subsequently appeared on two series of the C4 Picasso and the C3 Picasso.

They sold 1,316,000 of these in Europe, plus sales in South



America and China. A further 891,000 Series I C4 Picassos and another 732,000 of the Series II were sold. Add to that the 658,000 C3 Picassos and that famous name appeared on a lot of cars.

Not all the Picasso family thought the licensing of the name was a good idea. Picasso's granddaughter, Marina, even sued her uncle Claude over the license in 1999.

Actually, as you will read in this edition Citroën was successfully sued by a Greek designer who claimed that PSA had stolen his design when they created the Xsara Picasso.

We have lots of features about the Xsara Picasso including two major articles by the car's real designer and a comparative road test from 2000. No, the Picasso does not come out on top!

OUR PICASSO IS DEAD. LONG LIVE THE C5 X.

While we on the subject of the Picasso, some members may recall that in the UK we own a Series II C4 Picasso diesel. Post-Covid, after the car sat in the garage unused and unloved for a couple of years, this car has cost us a good deal of money with significant amounts being spent on the gearbox, clutch, fuel injectors [for a second time]... Over 2022 and 2023 we spent almost £10,000

Continued on page 6

A special welcome to our new members. Please enjoy reading this edition of 'Front Drive'. Leigh has some more history of a model that was not sold in Australia, but did well in Europe and created a new niche in a crowded market place. It is a bit scary to note that all the Xsara Picasso excitement happened last century! Now read on and enjoy.

Recently CCOCA has been busy upgrading our communications and services to our members. In addition to our already great website, which should be your first point of call for official club news and future events, our Facebook page has been busy interacting with other Citroën enthusiasts.

Rita Robinson has been busy recently promoting the 2023 French Car Festival [FCF] which we ran on October 22 with our sister club, CCCV. I wish to thank the many members from both clubs who gave up their time to help run this important event. I was thrilled to see that our member Richard Homersham won the best Citroën prize with his 1954 Traction Avant II BN. This is a well-deserved award ~ congratulations!

I am pleased to report the event was very successful, even though the weather was not very kind to us. One of the sponsors for the event was

Prez Sez

Shannon's Insurance ~ they are now an advertiser in Front Drive and we encourage you to try them for a quote when your next insurance policy is due.

We also had Melbourne City Peugeot/Citroën dealers supporting us, together with Elena from Ateco Group representing the Renault dealers around Melbourne. Electric models from Europe are in the ascendancy at the moment, and we were treated to several new models at our event. The clubs all work together at these events, and the FCF has become a popular event for all.

This all means that CCOCA has recently broadened its reach and influence in Victoria and beyond. I see the Peugeot/Citroën partnership selling cars in Australia as a unifying arrangement. Let us all hope that Citroën new cars continue to sell. Their electric models are coming soon.

Ted Cross ~ President



Ed Sed

Continued from page 4

keeping it on the road. This year the gearbox went to God for a second time and we baulked at spending another [estimated] £5,000. So when we arrive in the UK next year we hope to be greeted by a new C5 X.

All French Day was just a couple of weeks ago and we have a report on the Club's Quiz Bingo night in September which by all accounts was a huge success.

Over the years many members have written technical articles based on their own experience of working on their cars. I am sure everyone is aware

of Graeme Dennes' excellent work on technical matters for 2CVs. But old editions of 'Front Drive' from the days before the website are full of technical articles. This month I am republishing one of the oldest of these. Written by Gerry Propsting it tells how to re-trim the hood of your Traction. There will be more of these old features in coming issues.

Chris Bailey is here with Traction tales from the UK, of course.

Something for everyone? I hope so.

Enjoy.

Leigh F Miles ~ Editor

ers Club Inc invites you to the 'Gateway to Gippsland Rally'.

Melbourne Cup Weekend!

Join us and enjoy the 2023 event in your Veteran, Vintage, Classic or Post-Classic Vehicle.

• Friday, 3 November

16:00 to 19:00: Registration at Masonic Hall Korumburra Rd. Warragul. Tea/coffee/snack food.

• Saturday, 4 November

08:30: Completion of Registration. Morning tea provided

09:30: Official opening of the Rally and scenic drive to

Noojee. Lunch at the Noojee Pub. The evening will be free for participants to do as they wish.

• Sunday, 5 November

09:00: Morning tea/coffee at the Masonic Hall.

10:00: A briefing prior to the Show and Shine event at the Masonic Hall.

12:30: Short run to visit and have lunch at the Holden Museum in Trafalgar. Alternatives include Old Gipps-town at Moe or Yarragon. 18:30 for 19:00: Pizza/Movie Night at the Masonic Hall.

• Monday, 6 November

09:30: Masonic Hall for morning tea/coffee.

10:00: Drive to the Bryant Park Hill Climb venue often described as the best Hill Climb track in Australia! Participants will be able to drive around the track for a bit of fun, but there will be NO RACING! Tea coffee and lunch will be available. Return to Warragul about 15:00, and you can

make your own way back

having a look around the area possibly including

a stop off in Yarragon.

19:00: Dinner Dance at the Drouin Golf Club [Cash bar]. Tea/coffee provided. Dress

Code: 'Dress for the era of your car'. There will also be an Auction of Motoring Memorabilia. A bus will be

A-Tractions

Please note: To book or RSVP for a CCOCA organised event you must register on line at the club's website. Do not contact the organiser to register your attendance.

The Club strongly recommends wearing a mask in areas where you cannot maintain social distancing.

• November

11th Gateway to Gippsland Rally

WHEN: Friday, 3 to Monday 6, November

TIME: From 16:00

WHERE: Warragul and district

COST: \$80per vehicle, plus

\$142per person [under 12

\$69.50, excl Dinner Dance]

BOOKINGS: Essential

MORE INFO: Eric Bishop,

0409 452 170

events@wgvcinc.com.au

DO NOT CALL ERIC TO REGISTER! You can download the booking form via the CCOCA website <https://citroenclassic.org.au>

[GIPPSLAND GATEWAY BOOKING](#)

West Gippsland Vehicle Restor-



A-Tractions

provided to pick up/drop off participants for this event from Warragul and Drouin ~ please advise whether you wish to take up this offer. Exact time and location will be confirmed at registration.

- Tuesday, 7 November
08:00 to 09:30: BIG BREKKY ~ Say farewell to all your mates.

Yea Open Gardens Weekend

WHEN: Friday, 10 to Sunday, 12

November

WHERE: Yea, Victoria

COST: Weekend pass to all gardens \$40pp

BOOKINGS: Essential

BRING: Everything for a weekend away

MORE INFO: Marg Towt,

marg.towt@bigpond.net.au

DO NOT CALL MARG TO REGISTER! You must register/book via the CCOCA website

<https://citroenclassic.org.au>

YEA WEEKEND BOOKING

The Yea Rotary Open Gardens is an annual event, which has

been happening for the past 11 years. It showcases both town and country gardens found in the Yea and surrounding areas. Eight gardens are available to visit. Visitors to any garden will have the opportunity to speak to the garden owners, experience a wide range of individual and inspiring garden designs and enjoy the environs of Yea and its surrounds. Rotary volunteers man each of the gardens providing assistance and local information to visitors. In addition, the local Yea Garden Club holds its annual plant sale which has gained the reputation of providing many varied and unusual plants at very reasonable prices.

- Accommodation [2night stay] Alexandra Motel & Motor Inn, 76 Downey Street Alexandra 3714.

Friday 10 & Saturday 11 November. [03] 5772 2077 Bade or Cassie. Telephone book only. DO NOT book on line!



This Motel was being held exclusively for our Citroën group until 10 October 2023. There are limited rooms, so book early! It is a 20 minute drive from Yea, and has local pubs and shops within a five minute walk.

Shannons American Motoring Show

WHEN: Sunday, 19 November

TIME: 09:00 to 15:00

WHERE: Caribbean Park,

Ferntree Gully Rd., Scoresby

COST: Display cars: \$15, inc passengers

Spectators: Adult \$8. Children : Free.

BOOKINGS: Not required

BRING: A Picnic lunch

MORE INFO: AOMC,

www.aomc.asn.au

0473 832 277

Food and refreshments will be

available. There will be children's entertainment and trade stalls. Dogs are allowed into the display area, subject to them being on a lead at all times and in the knowledge that it is the dog owner's responsibility to ensure droppings are deposited in the rubbish receptacles provided. Proudly promoted and organised by the Association of Motoring Clubs representing the interests of the classic and historic motoring movement since 1976.

November Monthly Meeting

WHEN: Wednesday, 22 Nov'r

TIME: 19:30

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

COST: Free

BOOKINGS: Essential for catering by Monday, 20 November

A-Tractions

BRING:
MORE INFO: Lee Dennes,
l.dennes@bigpond.net.au

DO NOT CALL LEE TO REGISTER! You must register/book via the CCOCA website <https://citroenclassic.org.au>
NOVEMBER BOOKING

Come along and say 'farewell' to Frog Hollow! With the overdue refurbishment about to begin we do not know when [if ever] we will be back.

• December

*Combined CCOCA & CCCV
Christmas Spit Roast*



WHEN: Sunday, 10 December
TIME: From 12:00
WHERE: Frog Hollow Reserve
Rooms, Fordham Ave.,
Camberwell
COST: \$20 per person
BOOKINGS: Essential by Friday,
1 December
BRING: Tables, chairs, glasses
and refreshments
MORE INFO:

Lee Dennes,

l.dennes@bigpond.net.au

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

CHRISTMAS ROAST BOOKING

This year your Club will be subsidising a spit roast lunch for you to enjoy at our end of year gathering.

There will be a selection of roast meats and salads including those Christmas favourites, honey glazed ham and free-range pork with crispy crackling. For dessert there will be plum pudding with brandy custard along with other decadent festive dishes.

Special Dietary Requirements will be catered for. [See Registration Form].

Please note that the \$20pp price is for Club members and their immediate families. The price for others is \$40pp.



Looking Ahead

• March 2024

*Pre Cit-In & Traction
Avant 90th Birthday
Run, Tasmania*

WHEN: Thursday, 14 to Friday,
22 March 2024

WHERE: Anti-clockwise around
Tasmania, ending in Devon-
port, Tasmania

COST: TBC

BOOKINGS: Essential

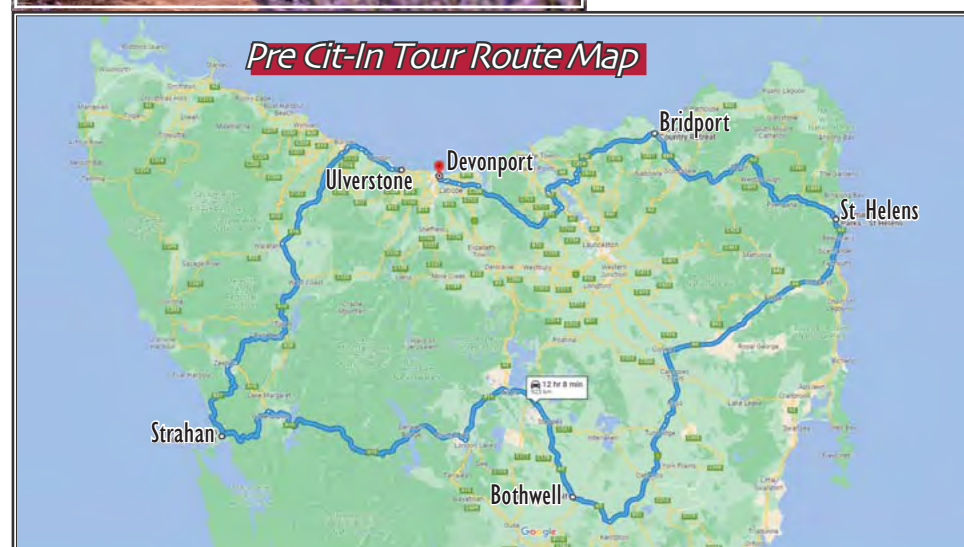
MORE INFO: Grahame Vaughan
0412 593 075

vaughan.grahame@gmail.com

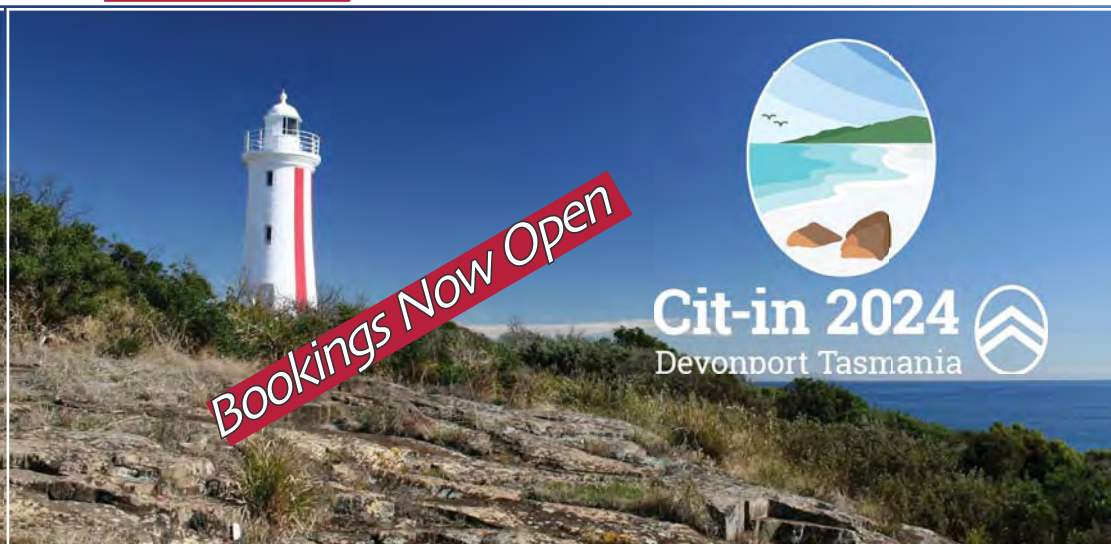
PREAMBLE [Please read carefully]

An anticlockwise trip around interesting parts of Tassie over eight days finishing for the start of CIT-IN 2024 in Devonport.

The Tour is ideally suited to Traction and will celebrate the



A-Tractions



90th Birthday, so please drive yours! Naturally, other models all welcome.

Accommodation is TIGHT and will be first in best dressed, so book ASAP.

So get together with your friends and share IF POSSIBLE as this will less expensive and will help with accommodation tightness.

Telephone or email the venues; if you look on their websites they may appear 'booked out' because space is being held for us.

You will need to Register with me to get updates [see later]

Book and pay yourselves for all accommodation.

Full details of the route, accommodation options etc can be found in recent editions of the Club's magazine.

Cit-In 2024: Devonport, Tasmania

WHEN: Friday, 22 to Monday, 25 March 2024

WHERE: Devonport, Tasmania

COST: \$350pp [adults]
\$125 [children 5-12]
Free [children under 5]

BOOKINGS: Essential by Friday, 9 February 2024

MORE INFO: Michael Barrett,
President CCCT,
0407 360 443

mikesgarage123@outlook.com

WEBSITE: <https://citroentas.org/>



[cit-in-2024/](#)

[CIT-IN 2024 SITE](#)

Bookings Now Open

<https://citroentas.org/files/ccct3553284500530/document-library/registration-document-final-version-printable-2.pdf>

[CIT-IN BOOKING FORM](#)

Welcome to Tasmania, the host state for Cit-In 2024

'Our Little Secret'

Devonport is a city on Tasmania's North West Coast, where the Mersey River meets Bass Strait. By strolling along the coastal trail to The Bluff one can encounter Aboriginal rock carvings. Alternatively, relax on the beaches or install yourself in a charming park and enjoy the natural surroundings.

A ride on the Don River Railway steam train to Coles Beach is a nice way to entertain yourselves and see the sights along the eastern banks of the Don River.

On the waterfront, visit the The Bass Strait Maritime Centre to learn more about the intriguing maritime history of the city. Immerse yourself in Tasmanian art at the Devonport Regional Gallery.

Learn about the traditional lifestyle of Tasmanian Aboriginal people at the Tiagarra Aboriginal Culture Centre and Museum, which displays petroglyphs and designs in rock. Along the

A-Tractions



waterfront you'll also find more galleries and craft shops. Devonport's Historic Tall Ship Julie Burgess is a working wooden boat. A ship of significance to Australia's Maritime Heritage. Enjoy a unique experience and embody the spirit of adventure on board the Julie Burgess as you sail out of the Mersey River and into the Bass Strait and get close to nature and admire the scenic beauty of the North West Coast.

Devonport is a great hub for exploring the North West Coast and there's plenty to discover in the city itself as well. Visitors can enjoy the beautiful views and take advantage of the proximity of some of Tasmania's most popular destinations. Once you visit, you'll understand why, we promise, you'll want to come back. Again. And again.

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

- Friday, 22 March
Novotel Devonport
Registration: From 14:00
Cocktail Function:
16:00 to 18:00

NB: Evening dining is available at Mr Good Guy Asian Restaurant and Bar [on site] or visit the local township for alternate places to dine.

- Saturday, 23 March
Show and Shine by the Mersey River: Lunch provided. Free afternoon, to explore. Buffet Dinner ~ Paranple Centre.
- Sunday, 24 March
Choice of Wine and Food Trail Tours. Observation Competition. Formal Dinner and Presentations ~ Paranple Centre.
- Monday, 25 March
Farewell breakfast.

REGISTRATION

On our website
[BOOKING FORM](#)

CANCELLATION POLICY

The committee will make every endeavour to refund monies to people who submit a request. Each case will be considered individually.

ACCOMMODATION

Novotel Devonport is Devonport's premium 4-star hotel

boasting an unrivalled location in the heart of the city. With city, park and water views, it is perfectly positioned within easy reach of shops, restaurants and the Spirit of Tasmania terminal. Relaxed, family friendly and welcoming. Home to the Spirit of Tasmania and known for its reserves, cycling, walking tracks, recreational facilities, beaches and rivers Devonport makes a great base for your holiday to Tasmania with ease of access to explore the North Coast and neighbouring towns.

- Novotel Devonport Contact details

2 Best St., corner of Rooke and Best Sts., Devonport, Tasmania, Australia 7310.

You can book your accommodation by going to www.idem.events/r/citroen-car-club

NOVOTEL BOOKING

- * Securing accommodation is your responsibility

ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION

A selection of alternative accommodation options, including motels, B and Bs and caravan parks, will be publicised on our

Website www.citroentas.org shortly.

REACH ONE'S DESTINATION. Come on board.

Spirit of Tasmania

www.spiritoftasmania.com.au

- * Securing travel is your responsibility, sailing bookings are limited so don't miss out on this great adventure. Book now !!!!!

Florence Thomson Tour

WHEN: Friday, 26 to Sunday, 28 April

WHERE: Based around Wangaratta

BOOKING: Essential by 24 November

MORE INFO:

florencethomsonstour@gmail.com

In February 1905, Florence Thomson was the sole female entrant in the Dunlop Reliability Motor contest from Sydney to Melbourne. Mrs Thomson was one of the 16 entrants who successfully completed the five-day trial, driving a six horsepower Wolseley, over what was then nothing more than 562 miles of dirt track between the capital cities.



GET A
QUOTE TODAY

WIN A TRIP TO THE MONACO HISTORICS

PLUS WIN AN INDIAN FTR SPORT

Shannons are giving motoring enthusiasts the chance to win a trip for two to the 2024 Monaco Historics, one of the world's most nostalgic motorsport events.

The 11-day trip includes premium economy airfares, luxury accommodation in Paris, Nice and Monaco, first class high speed train tickets to Nice, exclusive Monaco Historic Race hospitality tickets and \$10,000 spending money for eligible Shannons Club Members.¹ Plus, win an all-new Indian Motorcycle FTR Sport in White and Indy Red!² Including up to 12 months Shannons Comprehensive Bike Insurance and Shannons Roadside Assist.² You could win over \$90,000 in prizes!

10

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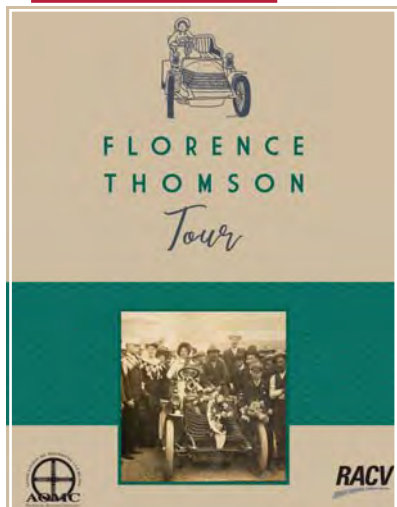


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Ted Cross (Vic.) 0400 592 208 or ted@123ignition.com.au
www.123ignition.com.au

A-Tractions



To celebrate the pioneering spirit and contribution of women to Australian motoring, The Florence Thomson Tour was created as an annual event in April 2017 by the RACV. The Florence Thomson Tour is proudly brought to you by the Association of Motoring Clubs [AOMC] on behalf of the RACV. The Tour celebrates the pioneering spirit and contribution of Women to Australian motoring. So, ladies, please put the date in your diary so you don't miss out.



Chit Chat Tuesday

WHEN: 1st Tuesday
7 November
5 December
2 January '24
TIME: 10:00
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 weather wet. This is a low key 'DIY' event for like minded Citroën owners to meet and chat.



Circuit de Charade
— Puy de Dôme (63) —

9, 10 et 11 mai 2024

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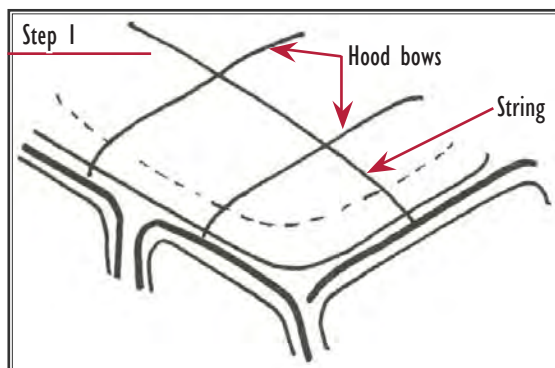
Talking Technical: Hood Lining

Restoring a car should be a hobby. Many people pay for work to be done to their cars. Perhaps this is because they either haven't the time, or maybe they just lack the confidence to tackle the work themselves. It is a far more rewarding experience to have 'done it' oneself, and I hope this article will encourage people to tackle at least one part of their restoration themselves.

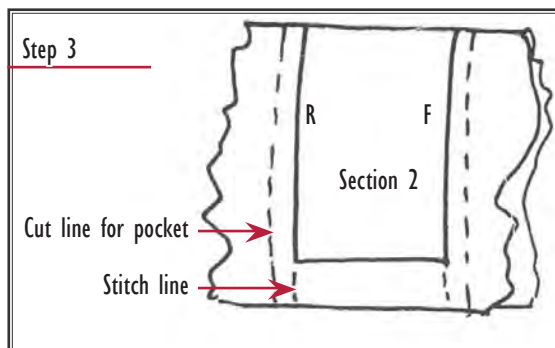
Firstly I must say, I am no motor trimmer. The following information was given to me by Robert Bonner, a member of the VDC. I tried it and it works. Anyone who has any further tips could also help by sending their comments to 'Front Drive'. Or conversely, anyone who disagrees with these methods please write and correct me before everyone louses up their material. In any case, I wish you luck, and go to it!

The principal details of this article apply to Citroën Light Fifteens 1946-52, but can be adapted to other models.

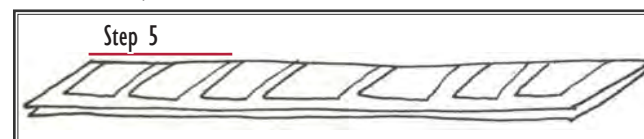
- 1 Divide car front to rear with piece of string looped around the hood bows.



- 2 Use stiff brown paper to trace an exact pattern of each hood bow to string segment on the left [or right] of the car. You only need to make one half of the hood sections as a pattern. To make the pattern, place the paper behind the bows and string, and do each pattern separately.
- 3 When you have cut each pattern segment, number it and chalk the corresponding number to the roof of the car [to keep the pattern in order]. Also mark each piece with FRONT and REAR.

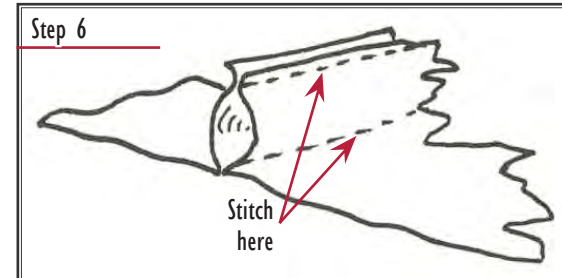


- 4 You now have to decide on your material. English cars to 1954 used cloth, and this is best reproduced in hoodlining felt. This material will stretch under tension, and allowances must be made now by reducing the hood bow edge of your pattern by 1/2 inch either side.
- 5 Lay your material out and double it end to end. Pin each pattern segment to the material so that the centre edge aligns with the fold of the material. Separate each pattern by approximately 3-4". Mark the edge of the patterns corresponding with the hood bows exactly. This will be your stitching line. Now allow 1 1/2" outside the edge of the pattern, mark and cut along this line. This will become the pocket for the hood bow.

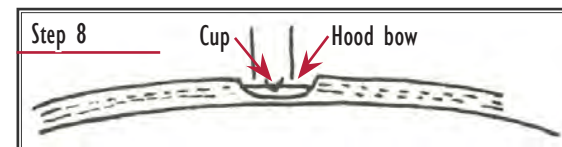


Allow extra material to the edge of the pattern corresponding with the outside of the car. This will be cut off later when the lining is in position.

- 6 Carefully join each section to the next and sew. Your domestic sewing machine will cope if the stitch is set at 1/8" to 3/16", and button thread [available to match the felt] is used. Make the hood bow pocket as in the diagram.



- 7 IMPORTANT. As the roof lining goes into a car after the draught excluder has been fitted to the door, make sure it fits well NOW. You can't adjust it later. Probably the seats are out [it will be easier if they are] so clean the car thoroughly and lay some old sheets to protect the lining from dirt.
- 8 Starting at the back, take down each hood bow in turn, and insert it in the corresponding hood lining pocket. Now put it in position. See where the centre clip for the bow will fit and cut the lining 2" either side of this and lock over the clip with a hammer. See diagram. Now proceed for each bow in turn

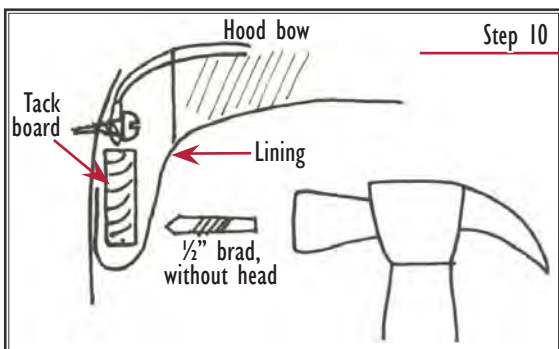


- 9 Attach the hood lining to the centre of the rear nailing strip [staple gun or cut tacks] pulling the lining fairly tight. Do the same at the front nailing strip. Work out from the centre, front and rear, left and

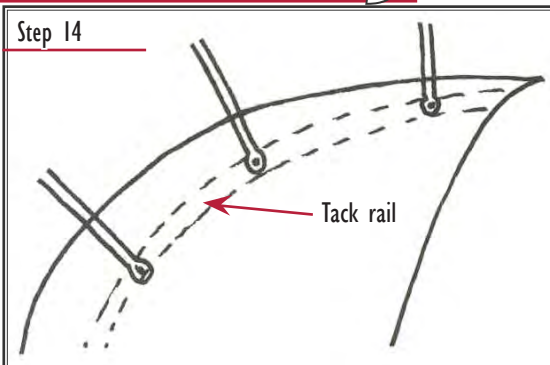
Talking Technical: Hood Lining

right alternately to even the tension. DO NOT CUT THE REAR WINDOW YET!

10 Now, starting at the centre pillar on either side, work both to front and rear, pulling out the slack as you go. You may have to cut back each pocket as you go to prevent a square appearance at the sides of the lining. On some cars the sides are attached using blind tacking. This can be done with 2" brads with the heads cut off. See diagram.



- 11 The corners of the car are done last as this allows wrinkles to be removed.
- 12 Put the rear window frame in, and tighten. Now cut out excess material. You will notice more wrinkles come out.
- 13 Make rear quarter panel boards as below. The board must extend past the tacking rail to put tension on hood lining when it is fixed.
- 14 Cover and attach quarter panel trim boards, and fit into place using blind tacking to the trim rail with 3/4" brads. The hood lining should now



pull tight and have no wrinkles. Cover and attach front trim board.

- 15 Congratulations, you just saved yourself a fortune at the motor trimmers, and you have a job you can be proud of.

This article, by Gerry Propsting, first appeared in 'Front Drive' Volume 2, No 4 and is the first in a planned series where we will reprint technical articles written by members in years past. We hope they may be of interest and of use to newer members of the Club.

Recent Doings: Quiz Bingo

Who would have thought that a Bingo night would be so well patronised?

Not me... bingo means something else to me.

Well, what a turn up.

I didn't count the number of people but must have been close to 20 perhaps a few more.

CCCV was invited and Dave, Peter and Brian rolled up.

When I got there right on the dot of the 19:30 start time [taking my time from Moonee Ponds to Camberwell was fraught with traffic], I saw that a lot of preparation had been done.

All the tables [other than my well-stocked library table] had seats, pens, bingo papers set for the off.

And sure enough, the starting gates were flung open and away we galloped.

Helen and Rita led the call of the questions... which by the way were all Citroën related.

There had been a goodly amount of research here [Ted I think may have been an additional culprit and Helen as well I suspect] and the questions were really good and probing.

As usual with bingo, it isn't what you necessarily know but the fall of the dice so to speak.

There was so much laughter and interjections from the row-



Top to bottom: The tension in the room before Bingo got underway was palpable. Helen Cross was in fine form as the Quiz Master.

Mid-way through the round, pens at the ready, but Peter Maloney looks resigned to not being the winner.

Recent Doings: Quiz Bingo

dy mobs next door to our table [we were well behaved!!] that at times we could not hear the clues.

Rita led the charge and had us in stitches with her ad libbing

with Helen close by as Helen read out the questions and after a suitable pause gave us the answers.

Pandemonium was not too

strong a word as the game was nearing a conclusion.

The advice from Helen and Rita was that when a contestant got to within 3 questions, they were to announce it.

Then two questions.

Then one.

The winner was I think Simon Marshall who had a good bingo card... followed very closely by Mark Robinson and I think Dave Rogers.

You still had to shout BINGO as you would do in a real game!!

Well, folks, more pandemonium followed with the call cards turned into paper aeroplanes. My attempt was pathetic but I think Simon crafted a beauty which flew like a real glider.

Clever lad is this Simon... gotta be clever as he has the epitome of sado-masochism as owner of an SM.

Supper followed with Helen at the kitchen delegating delivery of party pies, cheeses and bickies, a round whatchamacallit, fruit coffee and tea.

And it was a teetotal evening which I reckon is a good thing.

I caught sight of Marg, looking pensive as if to say to herself 'Where have all the party pies gone?'

This evening was perhaps one of the best we have had for a loooooong time... pre-COVID included.

Thanks to all those who got together to make this evening a memorable one Salut.

Max Lewis,

Images from Rita Robinson and Max Lewis.



1 Marg Towt looking pensive. Either that or she is wondering where the party pies have gone.

2 Examples of the Bingo Quiz cards.

3 Max Lewis and Ian Macdermott looking perplexed and bemused.

4 Around one of the 'boys' tables we have at the head of the table Graeme Dennes, then on his right Brian James, Dave Rogers, Peter Maloney, Nick Hutton and Mark Robinson.

5 Helen Cross at her tireless best organising supper.

6 This table of ladies look as though they know what is going on. Closest to the camera, with her back to us is Marg Towt, on her left is Sue Bryant, then, Rosemary Hutton, Lee Dennes, Marita Nyhuis, Kate Maloney and Barb Towt.

7 Max Lewis's Library Table was, as always, well-stocked.

Recent Doings: All French Day

Local members may recall that when the Club hosted the Citroën Concours on behalf of ourselves and CCCV at the Rippon Lea Estate the weather was dire. Cold, wet... and it was not as well-attended as we would have liked.

After all, it was held in May: perhaps tempting the weather Gods.

But for the All French Day, where we are supported by the Renault and Peugeot Club

as well as CCCV the date was more propitious. By late October the weather [even in Melbourne] should be good. The week leading up the event was brilliant. Friday reached 29° and Saturday was similarly warm.

The forecast for Sunday was 13°! And wet. And windy. Despite the maximum being recalculated at 15 the rest of the forecast remained unaltered.

Your Editor arrived about 9am with expectations of finding a damp, empty paddock.

Wrong. Sue Bryant, who was supervising the gate and collecting the money with Stephen Gercovich, said the first of the Renaults had arrived at 8am.

In the end we had over 100 vehicles there and the most common, sorry populous, was Renault, followed by Citroën with Peugeot a very close third.

Of course the event is called 'All French' and so we had representation from Solex, Simca, Delage and two Amilcars. One of the Amilcars belongs to Ted

Cross and the other to Len Jenkins. Both were featured in 'démarreur' Volume 3, No 2. Len's car made it to the podium for the finest cars of the day. Ted called it a Panhard!

Presentations were due about 2pm, but as the threat of rain become stronger the prime organisers, Ted from CCOCA, and Peter Maloney from CCCV wisely decided to bring the judging forward to midday.

The podium comprised the 'best' car of cars of each



The prime movers of the day were Ted Cross [L] and Peter Maloney [R].



Rob Cherry talking about his beautifully presented Peugeot 203, the 'Best Car of Show'. Ferdi Saliba's ID and Richard Homersham's Traction are also in shot.



There was a great line-up of Citroëns, despite the weather.



Richard Homersham receiving his prize from the Shannons Insurance representative.



Ted in full-flight telling us about the Panhard. Sorry, Len Jenkin's Amilcar. And Len was standing there!



It seems there was debate amongst the Alpine owners as to whether Richard Rasmussens' Alpine GTA was 'Best Renault' or 'Best Other Marque'.

Recent Doings: All French Day

marque plus the best of the 'other' marques.

The top Renault was a very lovely bright blue Alpine GTA owned by Peter Rasmussen. The runner-up was a highly specified Renault 8. As is often the case many of the Renaults on show were 'go-fast/go-faster' examples of the 8, 10, Megane and Clio. There was a sole Renault 12 but the non-sporting model with the highest representation was the 16. A particular favourite of mine!

The top Citroën was decreed

to be Richard Homersham's 1954 11 BN Traction. The other car on the podium will probably come as no surprise to long-term members of either Club, was Ferdi Saliba's Melbourne-built D.

The top Peugeot was a Phase 2 605 owned by Mia Pavlov. The 'Other Marque' winner was Andrew Green with his 1929 Delage, bodied by Martin and King.

The overall best car of the day is owned by the President of the Peugeot Car Club of

Victoria, Rob Cherry, with his beautifully presented 203. I say 'beautifully presented' rather than 'lovely' as not everyone will regard its interesting shade of brown as 'lovely'.

After it all finished I had a thought. In France Alpine is a separate brand from Renault. It's owned by Renault, but is not Renault.

So should the winning Alpine GTA have been judged with the Renaults or with the 'Other Marques'? Was the fiercely brand loyal Alpine owner happy

with the outcome?

Would the owner of a DS 5 be happy to win as 'Best Citroën'? Would the owner of Lexus be happy to win the prize for the 'Best Toyota'? Or the Bentley owner getting awarded with 'Best VW'?

So, was the best 'Other Marque' an Alpine or a Delage? An interesting conundrum for next year when the event is hosted by Renault.

Leigh F Miles ~ Editor



Ted Cross showing visitors over his Amilcar.



The day brought out a fine showing of D and G series cars.



Three generations of Citroën family cars: GS, the latest C4 of Mark and Rita Robinson and Sue Bryant's Jean-Claude Ploué-designed C4.



Ian Sharrock was clearly taken by this lovely 1927 Renault Monasix. It is for sale!



Two 2CVs and an SM. Was it a meeting of SNAC?



Your Editor's favourite Renault; the well represented 16.



A rare Peugeot 404 Coupé caught the Editor's eye as well.



David Gries was there in his well-patinaed 2CV, another Ploué C4, this time the coupé and a Traction.

Traction 90: France

WHEN: Thursday, 9 to Saturday
11 May 2024

WHERE: Puy de Dome, France

COST: See below

BOOKINGS: Essential

BRING: Your passport!

MORE INFO:

contact@90ansdelattraction.fr

If you have not been keeping up to date, you might not be aware that registrations for the celebrations associated with the 90th Anniversary of the Traction Avant, in France, are now open.

You can register here:

<https://www.payasso.fr/la-traction-universelle/inscriptions>

[TRACTION 90 REGISTRATION](#)

Cost of the Event

✦ For Australians who will not be in a Traction the special price is €30 per person. The Gala Dinner is extra.

✦ Gala Dinner: €67. Limited to 1,200 guests.

✦ Children under 14 years old: FREE

What is Included?

Registration includes unlimited access to the Charade site

and circuit, as well as entertainment during the three days of the event. A cocktail reception for the evening of Thursday, May 9, 2024 is also included in the registration fee. Only Traction Avant cars from 1934 to 1957 will be allowed access to the Charade site.

The Saturday Gala dinner is an additional cost of €67pp. This must be booked separately.

What to Expect

✦ A major festive event, open to the general public on Saturday

✦ 1,000 Traction Avants expected

✦ Exhibitions, games, presentations...

✦ A temporary museum dedicated to the Traction Avant

✦ A Concours d'élégance

✦ Conferences on the Traction and Citroën

✦ Magnificent walks in the lush Auvergne countryside

✦ Stands for tasting/selling regional products

✦ An aperitif dinner on Thursday evening and a gala dinner



on Saturday evening

✦ ... and plenty of surprises in store!

The Programme

✦ Thursday, 9 May

• Reception and registration

• Laps of the circuit, lots of beautiful things in the day!

In the evening... Cocktail reception on site

✦ Friday, 10 May

• Games, meetings, conferences and of course always laps of the circuit!

✦ Saturday, 11 May

• It will be 'THE day' of the 90th anniversary! This day will be open to the public free of charge.

• A parade, games, baptisms

in Traction

But also, competitions, a raffle

- And of course, in the evening, a Gala dinner open to those already registered. There is a limit of 1,200 guests for this dinner.



The gala dinner is at Zenith in Clermont-Ferrand. Imagine dining here, gazing at 1,000 Tractions parked in front of these bay windows!



While Australian attendees are not likely to have their Tractions with them, imagine being driven around the circuit in a Traction.

Voisins Vendéens!

I thought 'Neighbours' as a title for this little pictorial mélange had a nice ring to it, but Shirley told me it had already been used Downunder for a number of years...

As promised via last month's Visa tale, I'm sending you a series of pictures of René and his bicylindre LNA.

His widow Alberte drove down the lane yesterday, under the golden ash trees for an autumnal late Sunday afternoon fireside chat.

She is remarkably spry for an 88 year-old who spent much of her life building up a farm with her husband and raising three kids.

Over our customary glass of rosé, we recalled René's send-off at Sainte-Cécile church in February 2019, when 'distanciation sociale' and 'confinement' were unknown concepts.

Alberte also reminded us that the LNA still slumbers in René's garage, just next to the wine cellar; no doubt an echo of his presence for her.

I hope that our fellow members enjoy the pictures.

Alan Brown ~ October, 2023.



All Seeing Eye

Vélizy's 1994 monospace concept, while no masterpiece, was perhaps the best of an uninspired bunch.

It's relatively difficult to imagine now, but in the early

1990s, the future was looking decidedly MPV-shaped. Particularly amongst European manufacturers, who were falling over themselves to get something vaguely monospace to market, following the creative and commercial success of the innovative Renault Espace.

The MPV concept appeared to particularly chime with the French motorist, who was generally characterised by preferring pragmatism over pretension. In 1991, Renault again set the pace with the Scenic concept, but three years

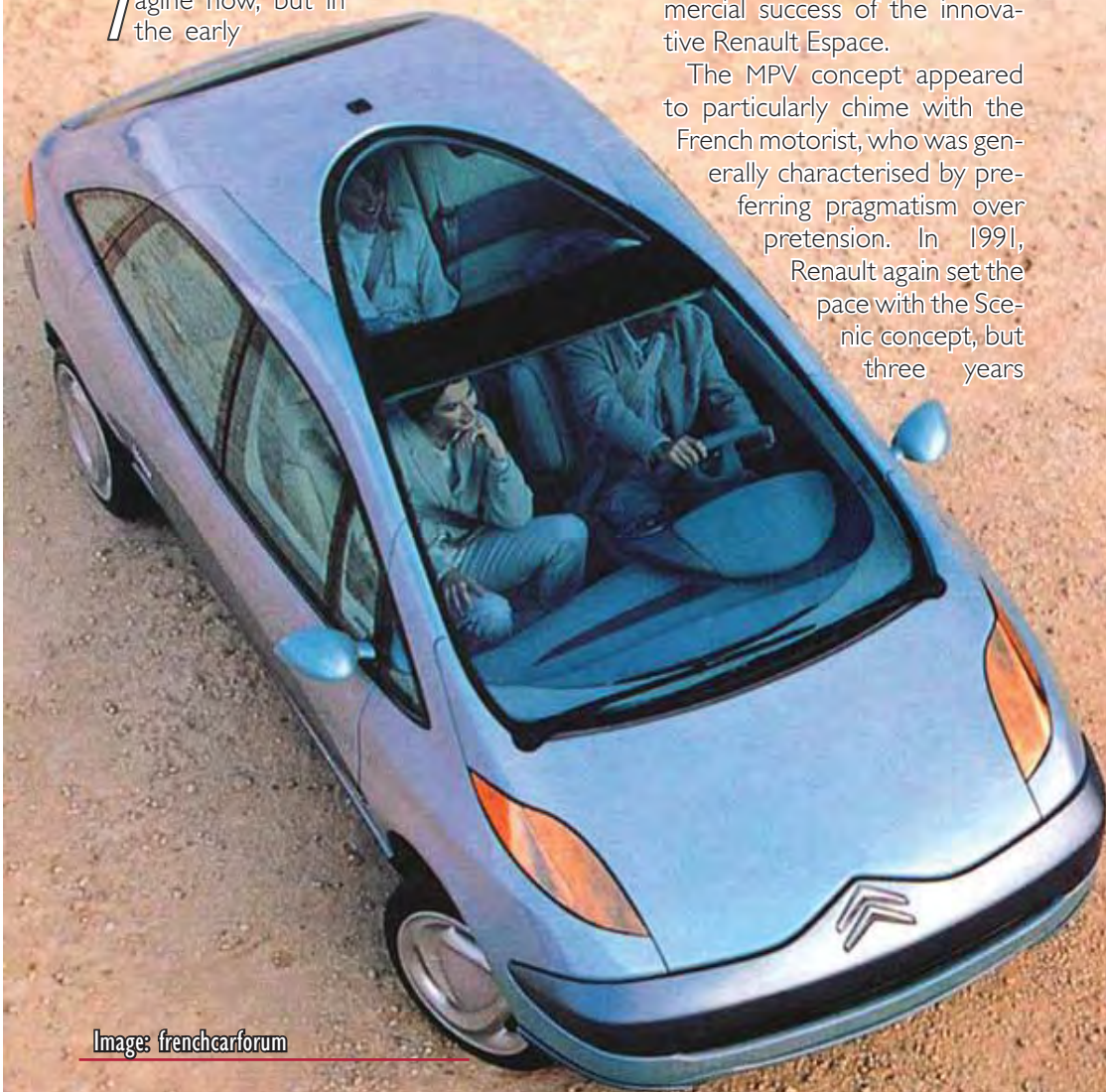


Image: frenchcarforum



Image: lignesauto.fr

elapsed before Art Blakeslee's Citroën studios presented Xanae.

Star of that year's Paris motor show, Xanae offered a vision for a new type of Citroën, aimed very much at this burgeoning sector. Sized between C and D-segments with a clear stylistic reference to the Xantia model, Xanae appeared to many observers as a distinct and distinctive hint to what customers could expect from the chevron within a comparatively short space of time ~ a Citroën spokesperson telling reporters, 'we wanted to create

something that was totally new: a cross between a saloon and a people carrier.'

Styling was the work of Dan Abramson, who was recruited in 1984, remaining at Citroën's Vélizy studios for another twenty-one years, penning a staggering amount of chevron-badged models over that period, including the C6. The narrative behind Xanae, as recounted by Blakeslee at the time, was that of an eye.

The Xanae, he said, was really a giant eye, looking out for and protecting its occupants in an increasingly hostile and dan-

All Seeing Eye

gerous driving environment. Hence the shape of the headlights, daylight openings, even the side rubbing strips. Which was a fine line in design-speak, and illustrates how little is new in the World.

With any creative endeavour, the end-result is usually predicated on the brief that initiates it. In this case, Abramson appears to have been hamstrung by an edict of, 'make sure it vaguely resembles a Xantia'. Hemmed-in to by the leadership of a man Citroën's Claude Santinet later damned in the following terms; '...inside Citroën, I don't think we had the man with the ability to lead the design team.'

In his defence, Blakeslee had not only Xavier Karcher to contend with, but a hidebound PSA

board, led by ultra-conservative Jacques Calvet, so there was plenty of responsibility to go around.

There were some nice touches to the Xanae concept, but what appeared vaguely progressive then, now looks slightly timid, not merely due to the passage of time, nor indeed the watered-down production cars which were inspired by it, but because it embodied a rather thin vision from which to draw an entire generation of production cars. Certainly, it seems counter-intuitive to base a concept on styling cues of a model already two years on the market, if the idea was to prefigure the future.

Xanae [which does suggest some kind of domestic cleaning product], was the direct in-



Image: caranddriver.com



Image: lignesauto.fr

Image: autoencyclopedia.com



All Seeing Eye

spiration for the underwhelming 1999 Xsara Picasso and the lumpen 2000 C5 models, neither of which will be remembered with much affection for their stylistic execution. Because frankly, from 1996's woeful Saxo until the 2004 C4, there really isn't a production Citroën design worth mentioning in anything but derogatory terms.

On balance, the Blakeslee era at Citroën was not a creative high-point. A cogent argument could be made to suggest it was in fact, its nadir. The production designs created under his leadership probably did more to banish the idea of Citroën as design leader, ceding one of the marque's pillars to its rivals. That Patrick le Quément was overseeing concepts and production cars of superior quality and visual appeal at Billancourt should really be all the illustration required.

Ploué and his successors may have laboured to recalibrate the

direction of travel in Blakeslee's wake but Citroën's visual identity had probably drifted too far. Today, management appear content to see the marque fragment still further; satisfied with Citroën's USP to consist of the twin pillars of Airbumps and Fun ~ [Funbumps?]. It's not much of a foundation for a marque ~ especially one with such a rich history.

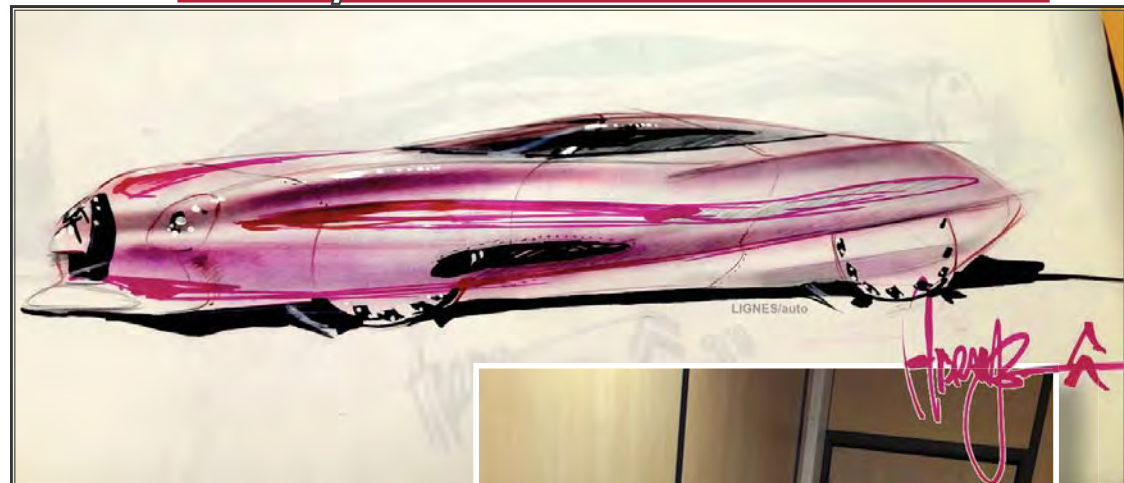
Of course it's hardly fair to heap opprobrium on the Xanae's shoulders ~ by the standards of the time, it's quite good. Its sin, [if any] is one of omission, but frankly, a term which could usefully sum up the entire Blakeslee era.

This article, written by Eóin Doyle, first appeared on the website driventowrite.com in April 2017. It is reproduced here with the author's permission and may not be reproduced elsewhere without the author's specific permission.



Art Blakeslee and his 'children': the ECO2000, Xanae, Berlingo Bulle, Activa and Activa 2.

In Depth with Dan Abramson



Dan Abramson is one of the great designers of the Citroën era from 1983 [advanced design] to 2007. He is known for his work on the two concept cars Activa and Activa 2 ~ from 1988 and 1990. But he has worked on many other works as we will discover. At the time of writing this article he was design director of RCD Except, he takes a look back at his work for the French manufacturer.

LIGNES/auto: You arrived at PSA through the advanced style office located in Carrières-sous-Poissy?

Dan Abramson: 'Yes, I came there in 1984, after PSA acquired Chrysler Europe. The French group set up this advanced styling studio and Arthur Blakeslee took over. [Ed: If some of these names



In Depth with Dan Abramson

mean nothing to you, faces and titles are put to most of them at the end of this article, with assistance from CCCUK and their Editor Anna Burmaster.] He had just followed the genesis of the Talbot Tagora at Withley in England.'

Prior to this programme, Blakeslee is said to have worked on the project for a Chrysler compact van that would have inspired the designers of the Renault Espace? DA: 'Yes, I seem to remember the project was called Super Van, and there were Curtis Gwin and Geoff Matthews on that program which was managed by Arthur Blakeslee. He showed me a lot of pictures of the vehicle that was an early Espace.'

At PSA, what is the relationship



between your Carrières-sous-Poissy studio and the two Citroën and Peugeot styling centres?

DA: 'There was none with Gérard Welter... Arthur Blakeslee's intention was to form an advanced design

centre. So we competed on current projects. At the time, we worked on the Peugeot 405, in competition with Peugeot and Pininfarina, and on the 309.'

'The only time we met ~ in the elevator! ~ was when we present our models on the terrace of La Garenne. Arthur Blakeslee doesn't speak French very well and it seemed to me that he was not treated with the respect that we owed him. I've always found that damaging, because he's a brilliant designer, but it took him a long time to impose his ideas. At the same time, I understand that Carl Olsen [head of Citroën styling from 1982 to 1987, below in the middle between Geoff Matthews and Jean Giret]

was fired precisely because as head of styling, he imposed his ideas, which didn't please Luc Epron, marketing manager. Citroën's marketing at the time was very strong.'

When did you get to Citroën design?

DA: 'In 1987, at the same time as Arthur Blakeslee took over as head of the Citroën style. There was already Donato Coco, Michel Albertus, Jean-Claude Quinet and even Jean Giret!'

What was your relationship with Jean Giret, a man of the Robert Opron era?

DA: 'Jean Giret was then an expert in plaster modelling. He was working on the Axel when I arrived at Citroën. He seemed like an old man hanging around the studio. He



In Depth with Dan Abramson

didn't have many projects on the go. I remember showing him a foam model of the early days of my work on Activa because I had a good relationship with him. Jean Giret's last work was his model for the XM program.'

So you knew about plaster at Citroën ?

DA: 'Yes, but Arthur Blakeslee felt that this material was old, admittedly rather noble, and he wanted to impose the clay that is part of American culture..'

In 1987 when you arrived, you discovered the competition with Bertone's studio in Turin?

DA: 'Philippe Couvreur managed relations with outside suppliers. PSA had signed a sort of annual contract with Bertone which required the Italian to do work for Citroën programmes. I didn't see any problem with that. But I think that, in front of Bertone, we were trapped by our clay models...'

Trapped ? In what way ?

DA: 'Jacques Calvet and some decision-makers didn't find the clay precise enough. One hot day, Calvet stuck his thumb into a clay model of one of our proposals for the XM, with a grin. He preferred plaster models! Bertone made his own with a rather exceptional finish, made in chrome-plated brass and the joints



were superbly engraved. We could touch the model without fear, our decision-makers found it 'solid'! Ours were just as expressive, but we worked on them all the time, and sometimes they were full of tape, we made them evolve every day !'

For this XM project, there were an unbelievable number of PSA models!'

DA: 'Yes, we did too many ! We didn't manage to concentrate



on a single design, unlike Marc Deschamps at Bertone who stayed focused on a single proposal. Blakeslee's idea was always to make many proposals, sometimes up to eight models. It's a very Anglo-Saxon method!'

Before this work on the XM, you designed the Activa for the 1988 Paris Motor Show

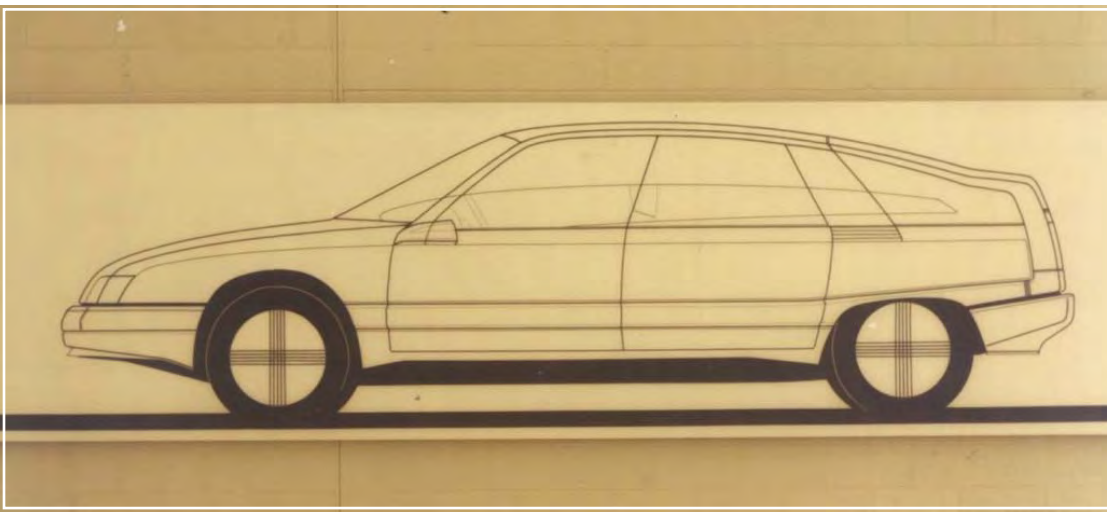
DA: 'Citroën had the idea of doing something very top-end on the platform of the XM

in gestation. I was leading the team dedicated to the top of the range and Blakeslee came to see me to tell me that there was a proposal for a show car on the 'Y' platform.

That's how it started.'

'Almost everyone was working on it at first, even Donato Coco, but I drew a lot of sketches, one of which was chosen by Blakeslee. After the small 1/5 scale model I made in foam, at home I was lucky enough to have Ray Downes, the 'feasibility' manager for phase advances, by my side.'

'This guy was amazing, he was tracing sections of the pillars or the rocker panels by hand,

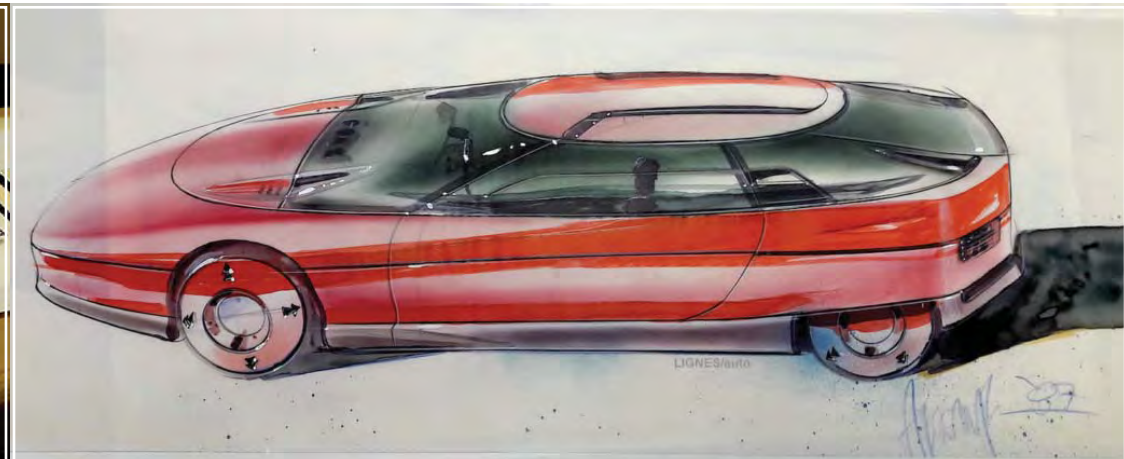
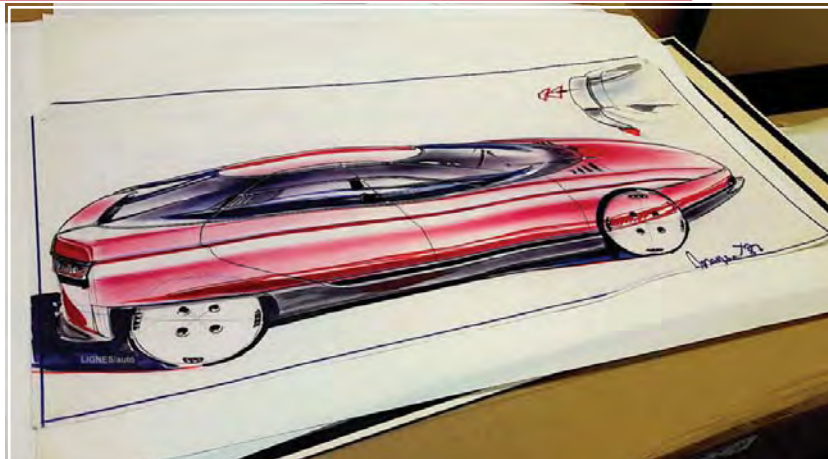


In Depth with Dan Abramson

it was fabulous. With him, I made the 1:1 scale model that was milled at Bernard Pene in MBPM, in the old Solex factory building, right next to Delage!

It is the time of the 1988 Paris Motor Show where it is exhibited with the Peugeot Oxia and Renault Mégane. There was a lot of technology on board these concept cars!

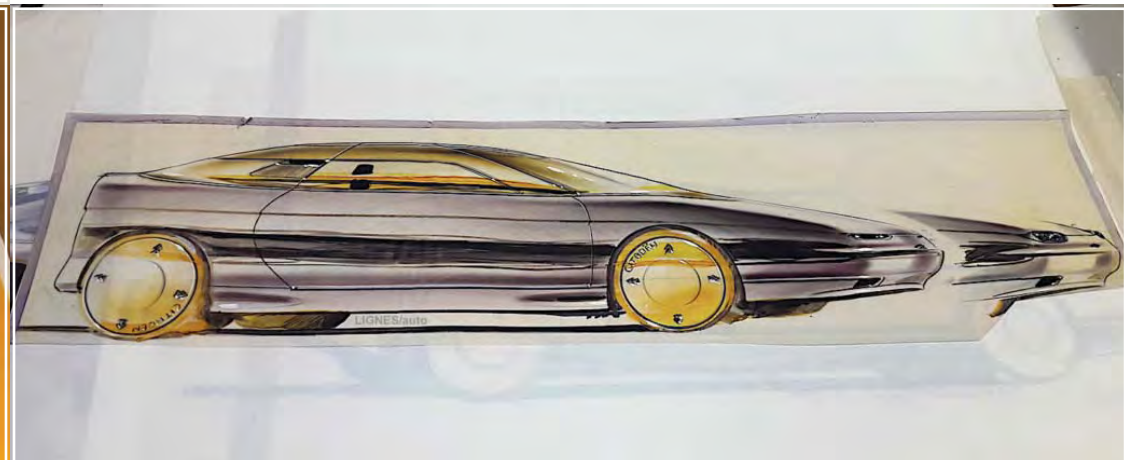
DA: 'All the technical part of the Activa was mastered at La Garenne with Vincent Soullignac's team. Everyone there did an incredible job! The suspension worked, as did the by-wire controls.



We worked with a company in Vélizy who developed this technology for Airbus. There must have been about a hundred people working on the project. They even cast a specific block to be able to install the engine lower down in the chassis. The group put a lot of money into this concept.'

Two years later, you designed the Activa 2. Was it Citroën's intention to eventually produce a top-of-the-range coupé?

DA: 'No, that was never mentioned. The Activa 2 was born during my holidays in the Cévennes. I sculpted a 1/8th scale model of a coupé in my corner. For fun! And with Mark Lloyd who was on my team, we worked it with two different flanks before presenting it to Blakeslee and then to Luc Epron. The idea was to come up with a pretty high-tech study. Then we made the 1:1 scale model, the only one Calvet had seen...'



In Depth with Dan Abramson

Jacques Calvet gave the go-ahead then?

DA: 'We showed the model to Jacques Calvet. It was Bernard Pene who had milled it out of resin and it was painted grey. We knew he wanted to present a show car in Paris in 1990. He was surprised! We said to ourselves that he wouldn't choose a project like that because we obviously thought it was prettier than the XM in gestation! But he validated it. He preferred the soft lines of the Activa 2 to the slightly choppy lines of the XM. So he gave the go-ahead, but for a concept, not for a production coupe. We had to soften the lines that were a little far away from the future XM, especially the belt line, which had a more pronounced upward bend in the rear, like on the XM.'

It seems to me that Xavier Karcher, when in charge of the product, had envisaged the production in small series of the Activa 2?

DA: 'Karcher started the rumor that Bertone would produce



it. It's true that the Activa 2 is one of the most beautiful cars we've ever made. But the only reason Bertone was actually mentioned was to make the concept car run. Bertone molded the car and hit the whole body in sheet metal on an XM chassis. That's when I became friends with Marc Deschamps. He stayed in his role, never changing anything in style and guaranteeing Bertone quality on the rolling prototype.'

In 1995, you managed the Xanae concept car, the MPV sedan...

DA: 'Citroën knew that Renault was preparing the launch of its Scénic compact MPV and the management wanted to show that the brand was alive! As the chassis was with hydraulic suspension, the project fell in my team. Mark Lloyd was working on the ex-

terior styling, Marc Pinson on the interior. We made a lot of drawings, a 1/3 scale model and then a 1:1 scale model. All the work was almost finished when, at the presentation of our concept car, we learnt that Luc Epron's team has asked Antoine Volanis [ex-Matra designer] to make his own proposal. We are extremely surprised because for a concept car, we didn't usually consult outside...'

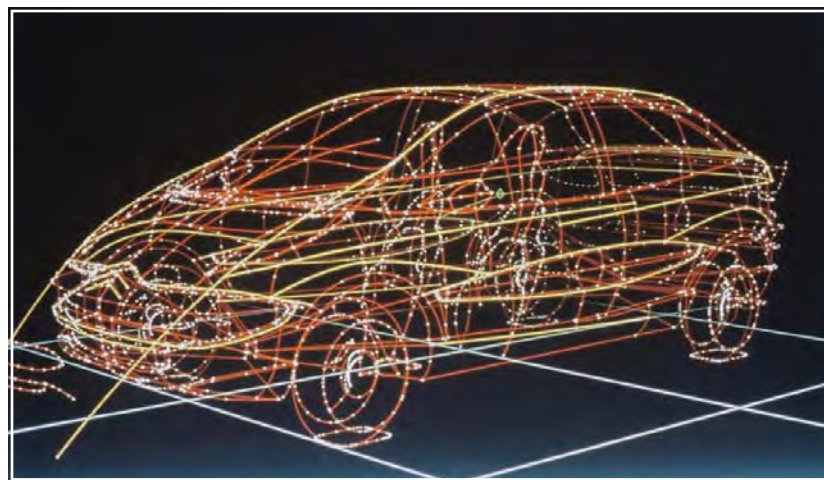
That's what's going to bring Citroën to trial...

DA: 'In fact, Antoine Volanis had presented a project to La Garenne for a compact-MPV. Each of his designs was numbered and protected, but we never saw them! The worst thing was that the person in Luc Epron's team in charge of liaising with Volanis informed him of the progress of our own work! The problem at

the time was that we didn't protect our drawings. Philippe Couvreur, who managed the external collaborations, was trapped by Volanis who considered that his project had been plagiarized by Citroën! What's incredible is that we only saw Volanis' model during the final presentation, and it was ours that was chosen. Furthermore, it should be noted that when a consultant presented a model at the time, it became the property of the group... but with Volanis, PSA had obviously not protected the deal. So the group put together a file with us, with all our sketches, and thus demonstrated that Citroën's drawings and models had all been created six months or even a year before Volanis' proposals. But since our drawings had not been registered, Volanis won his case.'

You were in charge of the project that gave birth to the first generation of C5. A disappointment, you say?!

DA: 'For the project of the first C5, Luc Epron wanted the largest possible interior



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volume on the platform. We made a very aesthetic model, without a distinct boot. A hatchback made by Mark Lloyd, almost a four-door coupé with a window in front of the front door and a very forward C-pillar. It was dynamic. But everything went wrong...

'First Luc Epron asked for a boot to be added, then the aerodynamics guys moved the rear higher, Epron wanted even more space at the rear, then they removed the front window, for cost reasons. So the windscreen pillar was moved back... All the chrome decoration disappeared, and at the time of the pre-production runs, they raised the ride height by 25mm and I think there were even versions with 14-inch wheels. In short, a thousand modifi-



cations that upset the balance of the car. What's more, the project director didn't defend it! But it still sold better than the current C5...

In 1999, when Jean-Pierre Ploué took over from Arthur Blakeslee, what was your state of mind?

DA: 'Blakeslee gave my name for his replacement, but we knew that PSA wasn't going to choose another Anglo-Saxon!



Three years earlier, the group had contacted Victor Nacif. But three years before, it was much too long ago and Victor was finally not chosen, to his great disappointment. Claude Sabinet, Citroën's boss at the time, said he didn't believe that someone from inside the company could take the job. But then again, it's normal that the group chose someone from the outside. And it was also at that time that Robert Peugeot became head of the design offices. He liked Gerard Welter, minus Arthur Blakeslee...

You leave Citroën in 2007, after managing the C6 program...

DA: 'When Blakeslee left, I

knew I wasn't going to stay... I was a very good friend of Arthur's, and his wife often looked after my children. The C6 was almost finished before Ploué arrived, because before I left, I was still monitoring pre-production at the Rennes plant, and working on the renewal of the Berlingo. Jean-Pierre let me present the C6 and Berlingo B9 projects. He was even satisfied with the work my team had done on the restyling of the C5. But it was only natural that he wanted to invest in a project of his own, with his new team: that was the new C5, which he entrusted to Alexandre Malval. So I'm leaving Citroën just as the C6 is being launched, after 24 years.'

This interview was conducted by Christophe Bonnaud in 2000 and it was first published on his website <https://lignesauto.fr>

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The Xanae Story

In this special feature, exclusive to 'The Citroënian', designer Dan Abramson gives this very candid account of the development of one of the most influential of Citroën's pre-millennial concepts: the amazing Xanae.



This story starts with Jean Yve Helmer, who was head of engineering and quite high up in PSA. A nice guy, but we saw very little of him; he seemed 'out of it', or, at least, didn't seem that interested in our work at Citroën Vélizy. His 'office' was at La Garenne and he was involved with the DRIA, or the advanced concept department. It was here, in this old converted Peugeot assembly plant [built from German WWI reparation money], that all work was done on new chassis, suspension, packaging, crash testing [with real dead people] and so on, for Peugeot and Cit-

roën.

Helmer was approached by the designer Antonis Volanis with a proposal called the 'Blue Car' ~ a sort of minivan concept. The idea was shown to the advanced group at La Garenne and under Helmer, some studies were done with an exchange of drawings, ideas, etc.

Of course, no contracts were signed ~ it was just a sort of 'lets look at it together' deal. [This was typical of PSA, as they were very poor with regard to any type of industrial property protection at this time ~ something that would later come back to bite them]. Any-

way, sometime later, our 'brilliant' Citroën marketing group suddenly discovered what we already knew: Renault was going to use the next Paris Motor Show to present a concept car called the Scenic.

Project Placement

All of a sudden it was catch-up time and we got an urgent request to do a 'show car' for Paris based on a minivan type of package that one day [in the form of a folded up print] just appeared in the hands of Ray Downs. The 1/5 scale reference drawing obviously came from La Garenne ~ as they all did ~ and the brilliant Ray, who was head of Design engineering at Citroën Vélizy, laughed as he recalled the 'Supervan' they had done at Chrysler UK [which later became the Renault Espace after the Talbot/Simca/Matra/Renault industrial messing-about].

The projected size of this Paris Citroën concept vehicle placed it into my department and onto

the hydraulic Xantia platform. I was in charge of Citroën's high-line and middle-line cars at that point, so my designers set to work on concept sketches.

I'd already done the two Activa show cars and so, since it was to be on my platform, I got the job. Designer Donato Coco, who ran the other half of the studio for small and medium size cars, was very unhappy about this, as the car was supposed to be 'small' and he wanted to do a show car. [Donato went on to oversee the design of the Xsara Picasso, C2, C3 and C4 before moving to Ferrari]. Bob Mathews was at that point in charge of interiors and with this little group we did everything at Citroën.

Taking Shape

Computer modelling for design was just starting and we had bought one of the first systems called Evans and Sutherland CDRS. [I even did a promotional video with them during the Activa days]. Head of Cit-

Below left: The mockup for the Chrysler 'Supervan' project. Below right: E&S CDRS station.



The Xanae Story

roën design, Arthur Blakeslee, was great, under-estimated and very interested in advanced methods. He authorised the purchase of several CDRS licenses. A designer in my group, Mark Lloyd, got heavily involved in the system and produced the general Xanae shape.

Mark Pinson did the interior, which I recall was a wonderful, full-size model done by hand.

A Rival Camp

We were hastily getting on with the project, when suddenly we discovered that our Citroën marketing group was pitching us in competition with an 'outside' design agency for this show car project. I was very upset. Blakeslee too, was not happy and argued that show cars

represent the [Citroën] studio and not ideas from some outside company. Nobody would tell us who this mysterious design entity was, only that it was not Bertone.

We still felt confident that we would win and started a milled-out, full-size ep/wood model [epoxy wood resin]. My favourite outside 'helper' was MBPM run by Bernard Penn. This outfit was installed in part of the old Solex factory in Bois de Colombes. This entire area just outside of Paris was the old heart of the French automobile industry with huge abandoned, dead or dying factories everywhere, including the 'just next door' and still active Hispano Suiza factory making aero parts.

They even had a wind tunnel on their site!

PSA owned the Sogam works in Stains north of Paris, and here they installed one of ~ if not the first ~ the milling machines capable of doing full-size vehicles, without having to do lots of separate parts, with the associated pain in the a*** of moving about supports to mill and re-mill. PSA Sogam was really a very advanced group ~ it occupied a big old factory with a mystery basement, full of prototypes and who knows what. [They also babysat my just born little girl at the time].

Things Hot Up

Sogam were, however, not prepared to take on the milling of the full-size Xanae model

for us [even though they were part of PSA!], so MBPM took on the job in a dark corner of their installation in the old Solex factory, where they had a vertical table and miller that could do half cars at a time ~ split down the centre line. Then the two halves were glued together to produce a full-size car model.

This was kind of neat, and, with confidence, we left the half-car milling machine running over the weekend ~ and of course it caught fire... If it were not for the bullet proof construction of the old Solex factory, the place would have burnt to the ground. Immediate panic over; they found another company outside of Paris who could quickly mill out the halves, and,



The Xanae Story

once this was done, we set up the full-size half cars in the studio and decided on the width before gluing.

[Incidentally, MBPM spent a long time following the fire cleaning up the black soot, which had got everywhere in the old Solex building. But it gave them an excuse to clean

up the place, which was always very dirty. This old building had two levels of basements, and the very lowest one had no lights, and nobody ever went there. The first level basement had the moulding and fibreglass shop and a horrible paint cabin.]

A Bolt From The 'Blue Car'

Prior to assembly we decided to add material and so make the car a bit wider. The model was then refined with Vélizy's modellers, followed by Mark Lloyd. The 'epoxy wood' resin was very hard, and it was actually a good thing, since ma-

jor modifications were hard to do and the 'thing' was just cleaned up and painted solid silver. [There was a 1/5 scale done at some time, although I cannot remember, if it was before or after the full-size milling.]

Anyway, we found out about a presentation date and that the other 'outside' design person/team would be presenting too. And we heard it was Volanis. From what I understood, since they had done this 'Blue Car' concept for Helmer at La Garenne, they were asked/invited to be in competition with us.

What we didn't know is that head of Citroën marketing Luc Epron's second-in-command, Constant Violini was following the Volanis proposal and had either showed photos of what we were doing or at least told him about several workout areas like the chevrons and front bumper treatment. Violini really was awful, had no sense of humour, hated Blakeslee and

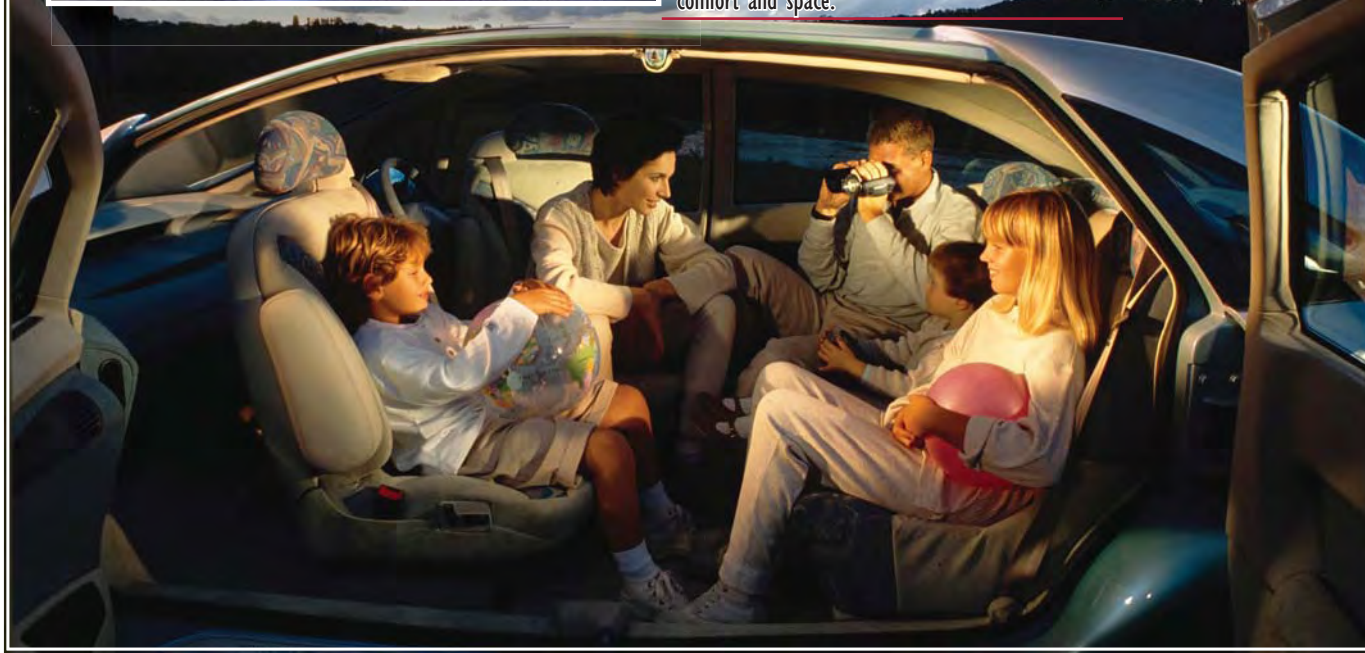
never had anything good to say about anything. Luc Epron was not easy either, but at least he did smile and had a funny side. In fact, he did at least respect us and liked Blakeslee [well, sort of].

So, we put our full-size model in the showroom [maybe sketches of the interior too? ~ the interior was not done yet] for presenting to the management team. We noticed that Volanis had set up presentation drawings off to the side ~ and all these drawings were numbered.

The presentation took place separately, with each showing their respective stuff, and, when it was all done, we were declared the winner. Later in the day we finally saw 'their' model and I remember Blakeslee saying some thing like 'what a ****ing pig... They wasted their money on that dog', or words to that effect. Of course, we were surprised to see that the rival design had our front bumper and chevron solution, and some light details were also very similar, but the remainder of the car was a bread box with no character and surprisingly very boring. This was the first time we saw anything from Volanis ~ and it was the last. We then knew that Violini had been directing or telling Volanis what to do and was trying to get him to do what we had been doing



'The Xanae is ideally sized. With a length of 4.20m, the Xanae is mid-way between the ZX and the Xantia, while in terms of height [1.55m], it is between the Xantia and the Evasion. In terms of length, it is equivalent to the XM. The Citroën designers used these parameters to create an interior with a single aim: to give occupants optimum comfort and space.'



The Xanae Story

on our model and the development work. This was typical of the guy; Violini did the same with Marc Deschamps. He hated working with us and wanted control of a rival winning design, knowing that, if ours was chosen, we would ignore him completely.

Work Steps Up a Gear

It was decided the Xanae was to be a fully-running prototype, but PSA would not take on the build, so it was outsourced to our friend Marc Deschamps, who had left Bertone and set up a design studio, Heuliez Torino. So everything was shipped to Italy, moulds taken of the solid full-size to make formers to make the metal work, the interior was duplicated, etc. Marc did his usual great job. The headlights were actually made by Valeo to our design and incorporated some sort of LED wizardry and gold film. We flew down every now and then to check it all out and added our cast wheels [I cannot remember who cast them, but they had a funky plastic centre that was suppose to glow]. Eric Ball [who had designed the lettering for Xantia, XM, Activa and others] did the logo ~ and that was it.

It's Show Time

The finished vehicle was presented at the Paris Motor Show 1994, and immediately PSA

were sued by Volanis. He said we had stolen his design features [front chevrons/bumper and lights].

Of course this was impossible, since we had not seen his work before the day it was presented, his proposition eliminated, and our winning car was already milled, done and ready to be built. However, Volanis had meticulously numbered and registered all of his drawings with the French INPI and, as usual then, we never did that; so PSA lost.

They should have fired two people at that time: Constant Violini, who had been freely showing Volanis our work, and Philippe Couvreur, who was responsible for contracts to outside suppliers' design work for PSA. What made it worse was that Philippe was a real nice guy, considered a La Garenne 'icon' and was also in charge of all design presentations to the DG/CEO. So he put together all the presentations that had been put to Jacques Calvet [boss of PSA, 1984-1997] for everything from Peugeot, Carrierres sous Poissy from Kurt Gwin, and from us at Citroën. Phillipe, who spoke perfect English, was a great ally to non-French speaking Art Blakeslee, who, in turn, exerted considerable influence upon him. I remember Philippe came by one day in a total panic saying that he was going to be fired

and that was his fault, etc. etc. and could we help him put together a 'dossier' of drawings, screen shots, whatever we had of the Xanae to show all of it was done by us and well before the 'dumb' numbered drawings from Volanis? Well, at the time, computer data and dates taken off print outs was not considered as admissible proof ~ unlike it is today ~ the sketches were all dated months and maybe a year before any of the Volanis work, but since PSA and Citroën did not register their drawings as industrial property, our design work was not even considered, and PSA lost the case. I remember seeing the dossier ~ it was about 1/4inch thick, and once again Philippe Couvreur was stressed out, saying that Calvet will fire him, etc.

Try Again

The second time round, the dossier was much bigger and, even though it proved that we had never seen any of the Volanis work, it did not matter because of the technical detail of not registering our work with the INPI: PSA lost the appeal. Philippe did not lose his job, but Blakeslee had his daughter come over from the US to lecture and help PSA set up the correct methods of intellectual property protection [she was an industrial property lawyer].

Of course the real problem went back to the lack of

any contract or agreement between Helmer and Volanis for the 'Blue Car', and that Volanis knew how to take advantage of PSA's sloppiness.

The Price of Success

In the end, the Xanae concept car was considered a success and served as the basis of the later Xsara Picasso.

However, again, when the Picasso was officially presented to the press, Volanis sued PSA saying that this 'type of car' was his idea dating from his [still dumb] 'Blue car' project. He got his lawyers to insist that PSA would have to pay thousands of francs per car in royalties [I think the amount was F10,000 ~ or it could've been 100,000 but whatever ~ it was a ridiculous sum].

Later, I asked Philippe Couvreur how much Volanis settled for and he said 'about the price of a nice Chateau'.

This very frank article was written by Phil Chidlow and first appeared in 'The Citroënian', the magazine of the Citroën Car Club UK in June, 2021. Neither The Citroënian Magazine nor 'démarrreur' assumes any responsibility or liability for any errors or inaccuracies that may appear in the content of this feature. Opinions herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Citroën Car Club, the Citroën Classic Owners' Club of Australia or either Magazine.

The Xanae Story

Dramatis Personă



ART BLAKESLEE

Head of Citroën Design Centre, 1987-1999. During Blakeslee's tenure, Citroën produced several creditable concepts, but there seemed no enthusiasm, either from Citroën MD, Xavier Karcher, or PSA's somewhat conservative board for much in the way of flair or experimentation and the models produced reflected this. Art retired in 1999, and Jean-Pierre Ploué took his place soon after.

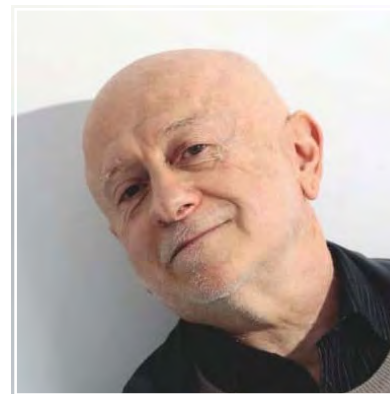
JACQUES CALVERT



Jacques Calvet, initially a banker at the BNP, was called upon by Peugeot to clear the waters when the socialists dismissed him in 1982. At that time the car manufacturer was doing badly. In a short time, the man managed to balance the books and boost sales. These two factors over time led him to become the true patron of the car. In 1997, he left Peugeot to retire. He has always admitted that he did this reluctantly because he felt deprived of the 'decision drug' when he left work. He made the opposition of importing from Japan his main credo. He died, aged 88, in 2020.

DONATO COCO

Citroën-sponsored RCA student Donato joined American Carl Olsen and his styling team at Citroën's Vélizy studio in 1984. He went on to work on the ZX, Xsara [including the Picasso] and the subsequent C-series models.



MARC DESCHAMPS

One of the most influential car designers of the period, Marc was responsible for the original Xantia and xm, as well as many iconic Carrozzeria Bertone creations, including the Zabrus Ramarro, Lamborghini Athon, Mazda mx-81 Aria etc. He initially worked with Marcello Gandini ~ he then succeeded him. Deschamps left to establish the Heuliez Torino design studio in 1992. When Heuliez closed its Turin operations in 2000, he opened his own design studio.

LUC EPRON

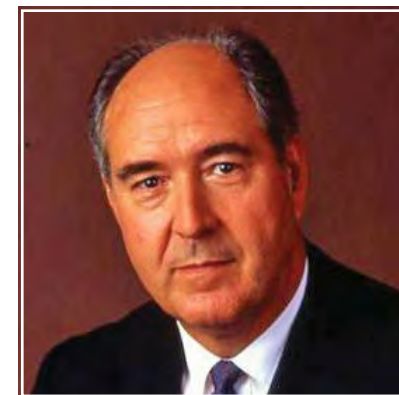
In 1992 Luc Epron, Head of the Market Product Department at Citroën's Marketing, Plan and Programs Department, was appointed Director of Marketing, Plan and Programs. He is an engineer who worked for twenty years at the Peugeot La Garenne design centre as a test engineer in assembly, aerodynamics and the



structure department. In 1976 he became responsible for the assembly workshops and the testing activity. In 1982 he was appointed Head of the Body Shop Sector and in 1984 of the Equipment Department. In 1987, he joined the Marketing Planning department of Automobiles Citroën. [Ed: Engineering... it does not resonate as a sound background before going into Marketing.]

XAVIER KARCHER

Another engineer! Karcher joined Peugeot in 1956 as an engineer in the plant at Sochaux



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and retired from the positions of Vice-Chairman [since 1988] and Chief Executive Officer [since 1979] of Citroën in 1997. He had held the post since 1988. He died in 2009.



MARK LLOYD

Mark joined Citroën in 1989 and successfully worked on many projects at this time, becoming lead designer of Concept Cars in 1999. As programme director of Citroën's Centre de Creation in Paris, his credits include both the DS3 and C4 Cactus. His most recent position has been Head of Design Strategy at Citroën.

GEOFFREY MATTHEWS

Matthews worked in succession for Chrysler, Talbot and Citroën.

He worked on the exterior design of numerous vehicles, including: the Chrysler Alpine, Chrysler Sunbeam, Talbot Tagora, Matra Rancho and the car that would become the Renault Espace.



During the 1980s Matthews moved to France where he was promoted to Chief Exterior Designer at Citroën, where he oversaw the development of the exterior designs for production cars, refreshes and concepts. This involved working on the AX, BX, Series 2 CX and the XM.

During his time at Citroën, Matthews also spearheaded the EOLE project, which was displayed at the 1986 Geneva Motor Show, and pioneered developments in aerodynamics and design.

Matthews died in 2015.

MARC PINSON

From 1992 Marc worked on interiors before exteriors: his

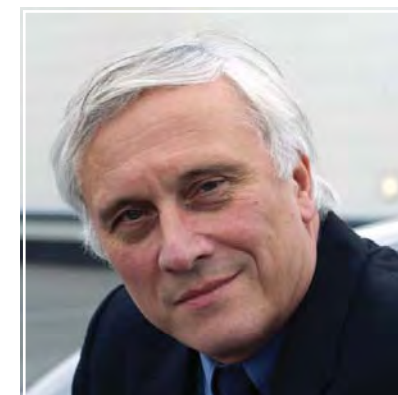


contributions to the Xsara Picasso and C6 being notable milestones. As VP Program Style Citroën, he has been heavily involved in the new C4 range. He is now Design Project Manager at Citroën.



ANTONIS VOLANIS

Thessaloniki-born Volanis, is credited with the Bagheera, Rancho and Murena, as well as being heavily involved in the Espace. Following the events covered in this edition, he moved away from the automotive sector and went into sports goods, developing the KG196 racing bicycle.



GÉRARD WELTER

Gérard joined Peugeot at the age of 18, and achieved an exemplary career within the brand. He created the Peugeot 205 and its sporty versions, the legendary Peugeot 205 T16 and Peugeot 205 GTi, he became Director of the Peugeot Design Centre from 1998 to 2007.

He was the instigator of many concept cars designed to promote the brand image Proxima, Oxia, Asphalte, Touareg, RC Pique and RC Carreau, Féline, 907... He was also the architect of a line of quirky specials that raced at Le Mans 24 Hours through five decades.

He died in 2018 aged 75.

Two from de Gaulle

Treat yourself to one of Charles de Gaulle's Citroën DS... or his wife Yvonne's GS

As usual, the next l'Aventure Peugeot Citroën DS auction will include a few nuggets. These include one of the Citroën DS used by General de Gaulle dur-

Two from de Gaulle

ing his presidency, as well as a GS that belonged to his wife Yvonne until the end of her life.

A veritable icon of the French motor car, the Citroën DS made its mark not only with its avant-garde styling and its various technical originalities. Its status as a 'presidential car' has also helped it to remain firmly rooted in people's memories. Particularly since it is said to have enabled General de Gaulle to escape an assassination attempt at Petit-Clamart, by maintaining controllable roadholding despite two punctured tyres. But the founding father of the Fifth Republic also used other Citroën DS cars. One of them was even offered at auction on 15 October 2023, as part of the Aventure Peugeot Citroën DS sale, organised by Aguttes. Its price is estimated at between €45,000 and €55,000, which may seem rather reasonable at first glance.

This relatively low estimate is

due to the car's poor state of preservation. Purchased by Mr B, manager of the Colombey-les-deux-Églises dairy cooperative and a close friend of the de Gaulle family, the road car with the chevrons has not been driven for many years. Its mechanics therefore need to be overhauled. A 'cosmetic restoration' was carried out some time ago, but the auction house specifies that the quality is not optimal. The value of this DS 21, which was registered on 2 October 1965 in the name of the President of the Republic, lies above all in its status as the former car of General de Gaulle.

A number of special features are typical of the automotive requirements of 'le Grand Charles': side sun visors for the rear seats, front banner holders hidden in the bumper, briefcase holder on the dashboard and document holder. But discretion was the watchword for this black car, which was used by the

This Citroën DS was used by Charles de Gaulle when he was President of the French Republic. It was one of the stars of the Aventure Peugeot Citroën DS sale organised by Aguttes.



The sun visor at the rear was one of General de Gaulle's favourite features. This historically significant Citroën has just over 30,000km on the clock. Banner holders on the front bumper confirm the presidential status of this DS.

Two from de Gaulle

President to travel between the Élysée Palace and his residence at Colombey-les-deux-Églises, according to Mr B's son. This use lasted just over two years, since the DS 21 was sold to Mr B. on 7 November 1967. It remained in the same family until 2021.

This friend of the de Gaulle couple also acquired, at a later date, another presidential Citroën... or almost. It was a more humble GS, which this time belonged to Yvonne de Gaulle, the General's wife. After the death of her husband in April 1969, she didn't want to keep her DS 21, which she considered too big and too expensive to run. With the help of her personal chauffeur, she set out to find another vehicle, but one that would remain a Citroën. The choice fell on the compact GS saloon, launched in 1970. But the GS had an unfortunate defect in the eyes of its future owner: the absence of black in the catalogue. Madame de Gaulle was adamant that this colour was

synonymous with discretion. So she placed a special order for her car to be repainted as soon as it left the factory.

The GS remained in her possession until her death in November 1979, when it was immobilised for many years. It was Mr B's purchase that saved it from breaking down. But the mechanics hadn't been started for forty years, and perforating corrosion was visible on the rocker panels and platform. Only the interior seems to have been rebuilt, but it's not clear exactly when. Expensive restoration work is therefore required to restore the lustre of this very special GS, which will also be offered at the Adventure Peugeot Citroën DS sale. With no registration document, it is estimated at between €15,000 and €25,000. For this distant ancestor of the Citroën C4, that's a rather high price: unlike the DS, its value hasn't really taken off yet.

Aguttes

This Citroën GS was bought by Yvonne de Gaulle, the General's wife, after the death of her husband. It is part of the same auction. Neglected for a long time, this compact Citroën is attacked by rust in many places.



The GS still belongs to that period when Citroën had developed the habit of doing nothing like the others, particularly on board. The four-cylinder flat engine hasn't had a chance to start for nearly forty years. So it's going to need some attention. Yvonne de Gaulle's GS has not given up on rear sun visors.

3,749 Cubby Lockers

Practicality takes precedence over desirability when you've got kids, so which MPV gets the thumbs up from Tom's brood: the Fiat Multipla, Citroën's Xsara Picasso, the

Renault New Scenic Alize or the Vauxhall Zafira?

This test is a little different from the norm because it involves my family. My trusty Ibiza 1.4 isn't big enough to fulfil the needs of my expanded family, so I'm going to have to buy, that's right, buy a car which can comfortably transport two adults, three children [aged 2, 3 and 9], a dog, plus attendant paraphernalia and the occasional guest.

With a high seating position, a nice big 4x4 would do the job, but I'm not wasting money on a superfluous

drive-train or bull bars. And it's probably going to be diesel because [and I never thought I'd say this] a modern diesel makes sense. As a rule they're quieter than ever before, their power characteristics are better suited to load carrying, the forecourts are less messy and they generally offer superior fuel economy.

Fiat's Multipla was proclaimed both Top Gear's Best Family Car and Car of the Year and now I'm considering buying one. But it didn't seem prudent to lob dosh in Fiat's direction without first checking out some of its £16K rivals.

The Renault Megane Scenic invented the midi-MPV and it is an obvious player. The company has sold over 750,000 of them since its launch back in 1997. Since then it's been improved and relaunched as the New Scenic and is now available with the very latest 1.9dCi common rail diesel engine.



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Vauxhall's Zafira's worth a look too, not least because with clever fold-flat third-row seats it can seat up to seven ~ a unique feature for a car of this size.

Also on the shortlist is Citroën's ultra-new Xsara Picasso. Renault might have got there first with the Scenic but the Picasso now follows a similar path with what Citroën claims is better still.

But it didn't seem right for me alone to choose, so I brought the family along, plus a few friends and rellies... so thanks to Andy, Carol, Fiona, Hayley and Jim, plus juniors Gus, India, Lily, Mimi, Ned and Rory and Monty, our faithful four-legged friend.

Citroën Xsara Picasso

One of Citroën's major claims for the Picasso is that it has the most spacious interior and the largest boot 'some 25% bigger than its key rivals'. It also has the longest wheelbase in the class and, if you check-out the spec panel, you'll see the Picasso's load-space literage is greater than the others.

But without those figures to hand, you'd never know it because in the passenger area it seems about equal to the Scenic and Zafira and considerably less spacious than the Multipla. Which isn't to say this is a shortcoming, far from it. Inside the Picasso, it's light and airy, especial-

ly with its glorious but optional full-length 2CV-style sunroof open. Plus there's comfortable seating and plenty of head, elbow and legroom.

In the rear loadspace, with all the seats in situ it certainly appears larger than the Multipla, on a par with the Scenic and smaller than the Zafira. How else could I lie Rory's roller hockey stick flat on the floor in the Zafira and close the rear door, but wasn't able to do likewise in the Picasso?

According to Citroën, the three equal-size foldable rear seats are also removable. But we didn't take them out during the group test or even for



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the photos because, unlike the Scenic and Multipla, there was no obvious method of removal. And believe me, we looked. I'm sure the secrets of this procedure are detailed in the owner's handbook, but then I'm from the school which says that if you can't work it out for yourself then it either isn't good enough or it isn't worth the effort in the first place.

Also according to Citroën, there are 18 different types of storage area creating a total of 30 [that's right, three zero] compartments, pockets or holders. There are document clips, curry hooks, aircraft-style fold-down trays, pen-, coin-, ticket-, sun-glasses- and cupholders, door bins which hold 1.5-litre bottles, a collapsible shopping trolley on wheels [called a Modubox], rear

underfloor compartments and more besides. This is all impressive, but Lord help you should you lose something...

As for the Picasso driving experience, well, we're ambivalent. Frankly neither I nor Carol [my intended] either need or expect an exciting drive from this purchase, so a Picasso would be fine. It has ample torque [a little more than the others according to the spec] plus quite adequate steering, braking and handling. Sure, there's some body roll if you rush at a mini-roundabout, but Monty [the dog] isn't the only one in the clan who doesn't appreciate fast cornering much.

No, more important is the colour, which we like, the exterior styling which I like but Carol doesn't particularly, and the huge sunshine roof which we



also like, assuming you're doing no more than 45-50mph [when the noise becomes obtrusive], and that it won't perish and leak after a few years' use.

Fiat Multipla

I'm standing beside the Multipla which is parked outside my

house. A middle-aged Aussie woman in a newish Espace screeches to a halt next to the Fiat.

'What kinda car is that?' she calls out.

'It's a Fiat Multipla,' I reply.

'It looks part toad to me,' she yells.

'The looks do grow on you,' I retort.

'Hmmm' is her final say and, after a moment of contemplation, she's gone. Yes, I know



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many thought we were bonkers to make it our Car of the Year, but I don't give a monkey's. And more importantly in this context, neither does Carol. We like it, it's individual, purposeful, unusual and has character and, dare I say, a touch of humour.

An adult can all but walk around inside it, and to a little 'un the interior is a veritable adventure playground. In addition, it's externally the shortest car here, 4cm shorter than three-door Bravo and 20cm shorter than a five-door Brava, which is a] remarkable and b] handy if you live in London and like to park near your house. Which we do.

And let's not forget, it seats

six which is also handy because, with three children between us, the Picasso and Scenic fill up fast. The Fiat's two middle seats are also more accommodating than the centre position in row two of the Picasso, Scenic and Zafira. But at weekends Granny sometimes comes along too, which meant that neither the Picasso nor Scenic saw weekend service with us during this test, whereas the Multipla and Zafira both did.

That aside, what else? Having said that we're ambivalent about the Picasso from behind the wheel, the same can't be said of the Fiat which, for reasons hard to explain, seems less anodyne from the driver's point



of view. On paper there's nothing to say its engine is more willing than the Scenic's, so it's not that. More likely that the Multipla's steering feels a bit more lithe and agile.

It could also be that there's a greater novelty aspect in driv-

ing it due to the unusual central instrument binnacle, the huge windscreen and glass area and the unique interior layout. Whatever, the Multipla's more interesting.

The rear loadspace with all seats in place is shorter than the Picasso's, Scenic's or Zafira's in five-seater mode. But it's lower, wider and taller, [and of much more use than a Galaxy's/ Alhambra's/Sharan's in seven-seater mode] and plenty big



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enough for a mammoth Sainsbury session. With the three rear seats folded or removed [both straightforward procedures] you could just about signwrite 'Pickfords' on the side and get away with it.

As an added bonus, Monty can't hop over the rear seatback into the child's lap. Significantly, this also means that piled-high luggage is less likely to find its way forward during heavy braking.

This leaves me no space to tell you about its pleasing seat fabric, oddments stowage or other design cleverness which the Multipla has in abundance.

Renault Scenic

Straight after this photo shoot

ended, Carol had to dash off to Guilford for an appointment. I handed her the Scenic keys and asked that she make a mental note of what she liked and disliked about the car on the journey there and back. Upon her return that evening, I sought some feedback, whereupon she replied: 'Oh I don't know, Tom I wasn't thinking about that at all, I was only thinking about meeting Shirley on time. Sorry.'

And that says it all really because, although no paid-up member of the Top Gear road test department, she genuinely does enjoy driving and had previously commented that she liked the Multipla, didn't like the Zafira much and also made no

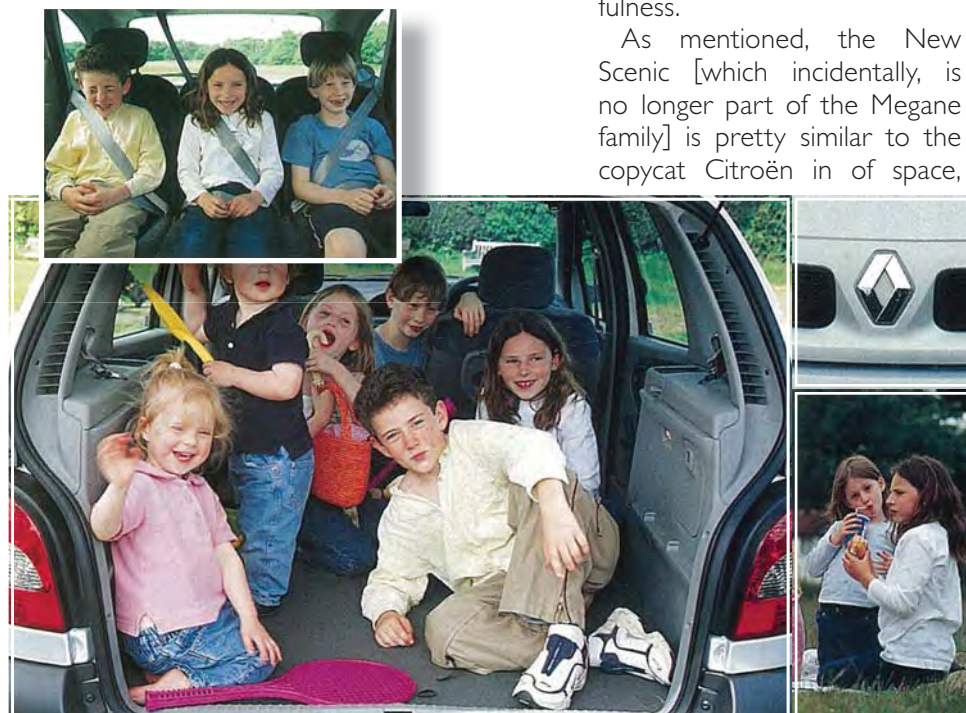


comment regarding the Picasso. This, driving-wise, places the Scenic into the same category as the Picasso. That is, we're both ambivalent about it ~ not thrilling, not disappointing, so nothing really to say. This is fine because only a fool or a sales-

man could ever claim to be excited by either.

No, what we have to concentrate on with the Scenic is its looks, which are hardly worth writing home about, so we'll pass this particular category and go on to its practicality and usefulness.

As mentioned, the New Scenic [which incidentally, is no longer part of the Megane family] is pretty similar to the copycat Citroën in of space,



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ambience and flexibility. The patterned seat upholstery is pretty tasteless and there's an uncalled-for expanse of unstimulating greyness about the dash, console and elsewhere.

Like the others, the Scenic's seating is at a good height for wrestling small ones in and out of their child seats, but like the Picasso, there are only five seats in total, so it isn't really a people carrier though the rear seats are removable [something easily achieved without resorting to the owner's handbook].

There is stowage aplenty in the Scenic, with a drawer beneath the driver's seat, under-floor stowage under the rear seats and a front-mounted air-

conditioned drinks box; big enough for three cans or most useful in the prevention of chocolate meltdown.

The new 1.9 dCi engine is 5% more powerful than the dTi it has replaced. It also produces the same peak torque at lower revs. Interestingly for me, though not for Carol, its peak power and torque and the revs at which they are produced [see spec panel] are also identical to the Multipla's. Which is something of a coincidence.

The Scenic, on paper, also has the keenest acceleration, highest top speed and, at 5.9L/100km combined, Renault has in theory managed to squeeze extra economy from



its dCi, which isn't to be sniffed at. With an on-the-road price of £15,700 it's the cheapest, it has the lowest insurance grouping and the lowest cost in terms of pence per mile ~ not to be sniffed at either.

Vauxhall Zafira

In this company, the Zafira has just one USP; it's the only seven-seater in the class. This could certainly have its uses but unfortunately this extra passenger capacity doesn't come without penalty.

Firstly, the two third-row seats are for children only. I sat in one, but briefly because the leg and headroom is tight.

Secondly, any children way back there are cut-off from the Zafira's other occupants. If



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there's any silent mischief going on then parents up front are unlikely to spot it. Conversely, a younger child might not appreciate being out of sight of the rest of the party.

There's no doubting that the way the seats fold flat and disappear to form the loadspace floor is clever; it does necessitate sliding the centre bench fully forward to bring 'em out or fold 'em away again. Which is easy enough assuming you don't have a child seat belted into position, in which case the procedure becomes a chore. But at least it's a chore not requiring the handbook...

And while we're on this subject, the second-row centre seat is only equipped with a two-point lap belt while every other of the 22 seats in this test have a three-point shoulder harness.

With the third-row seats tucked away, there's useful loadspace, especially length-wise, but with those seats up you'd better keep your baggage to a minimum because there are roadsters with as much boot-space ~ well almost.

The Zafira's exterior is the most dreary looking ~ colour-match the rear windows and you could be looking at a van ~ while the interior and dash are the least adventurous and utilitarian. That said, there is a front passenger under-seat

storage tray, a rear underfloor storage facility, storage lockers at each side of the rear, a second-row centre armrest with load-through access and 10 cupholders [on the Comfort spec version, at least, but you'll only find eight on entry level models] which actually hold cups while on the move, rather than the use-only-while-stationary cup-sized recesses found in abundance in one or two of the others. [Why Tom fails to tell us which cupholders are so useless is beyond my imagining. Ed.]

As for the engine, performance and driving pleasure, well let's just say the Zafira hasn't curried much favour. It has the least horsepower and torque of the group, the lowest top speed and what Quentin might term glacial acceleration. Probably not coincidentally, the unladen Zafira is the heaviest vehicle here by at least a 135kg margin.

Sure, the 2.0Di will drone down the M4 with six aboard at a speed sufficient to render the inattentive nickered, which for many is more than enough, but don't expect to be first away from the lights ~ you haven't got the hardware. The Zafira's motor is the noisiest and most diesel-sounding while its noise level seems more intrusive too. Conversation was frequently punctuated with, 'Sorry, I didn't catch that... '.

4 CARS, 20 DOORS, 23 SEATS, 3,479 CUBBY LOCKERS

| | Citroën Xsara Picasso HDi SX | Fiat Multipla JTD ELX | Renault New Scenic Alize 1.9dCi | Vauxhall Zafira 2.0Di Comfort |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Performance [claimed] | | | | |
| 0-100kph | 12.6 | 12.4 | 11.9 | 16.0 |
| Maximum speed [kph] | 175 | 171 | 180 | 159 |
| Costs | | | | |
| On-the-road price | £15,715 | £16,080 | £15,700 | 15,995 |
| Pence per mile | 38.3 | 41.1 | 37.9 | 39.3 |
| Test L/100km | 6.7 | 8.6 | 8.1 | 7.5 |
| EU combined L/100km | 5.5 | 6.4 | 5.9 | 5.2 |
| Insurance group | 7E | 10 | 6 | 6e |
| Service interval [km] | 20,000 | 20,000 | 16,000 | 16,000 |
| Warranty | 1yr/unlimited km | 1yr/unlimited km | 1yr/unlimited km | 1yr/unlimited km |
| Equipment | | | | |
| Airbags [dr/pas/side] | ✓ | ✓/✓[double]/opt | ✓/✓/✓ | ✓/✓/✓opt |
| Front pass airbag cut-off | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ |
| Alarm/immobiliser | opt/✓ | ✓/✓ | ✗/✓ | ✗/✓ |
| Alloy wheels | option | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ |
| Anti-lock brakes | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | option |
| Air conditioning | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Electric windows [fr/rr] | ✓/? | ✓/opt | ✓/✗ | ✓/opt |
| Max no of seats | five | six | five | seven |
| Power steering | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | option |
| Power sunroof | option [full length] | ✓[fr & rr] | ✓[fr & rr] | ✗ |
| Radio/cassette/CD | ✓/✗/✓ | ✓/✓/opt | ✓/✗/✓ | ✓/✗/✓ |
| Remote central locking | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Satnav | option | option | ✗ | ✗ |
| Trip computer | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | ✗ |
| Technical | | | | |
| Engine | 4cyl, turbodiesel | 4cyl, turbodiesel | 4cyl, diesel | 4cyl, diesel |
| Capacity [cc] | 1,997 | 1,910 | 1,870 | 1,995 |
| Max power [kW@rpm] | 67.1@4,000 | 78.3@4,000 | 78.3@4,000 | 60.4@4,300 |
| Max torque [Nm@rpm] | 204.7@1,900 | 199.3@1,500 | 199.3@1,500 | 188.5@1,800 |
| Transmission | 5sp man, fwd | 5sp man, fwd | 5sp man, fwd | 5sp man, fwd |

Verdict

So, not the Zafira then. Not because it's totally outclassed by the others, but because for us, it doesn't hold any appeal. If

we had four or more children [please God, NO!] then from this group the Zafira could become essential, but that would be a choice made out of neces-

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sity rather than preference.

Then there's the New Scenic and Xsara Picasso. Both French, both five-seaters, both offering virtually the same content. Were it a choice between just these two, it would boil down to which dealership is more convenient, colour choice and who's doing the best deal. But if I must split them then I'll have the Picasso despite Renault's slight cost advantage. Not because it shatters the Scenic mould or anything radical, but because we think it looks better and we like that full-length sunroof!

So, the Multipla remains our first choice. The British public may not be ready for the Multipla's appearance, but we are. The six seats suits us, it's easier

than the two Frenchies to get in and out of, generally roomier inside, has a more sophisticated, funkier interior design and we both prefer driving it.

Yes, it's a tad wider, which we hardly noticed in parking, and it may prove to be a little costlier to run. Don't care. The Multipla is the cleverest thing on four wheels. Car of the Year? Damn right. I'm only miffed that both diesel versions cost a grand more than the equivalent petrol ones. Oh, and Carol wants black, I want blue...

This article was written by Tom Stewart with photographs by Jim Forrest. It first appeared in 'Top Gear' magazine in August 2000. It is taken from the Editor's archive.

Seen by your Editor in a National Trust car-park in the UK in 2000 in the back window of a Fiat Multipla. What more is there to say?



While I have already said thank you to the many members who wrote to me after I advised you all of the poor state of the quality control in last month's magazine there was one rather longer letter, prompted by my email, but not totally related to proofing. Here is most of what Greg Feinberg wrote to me...

Leigh,
It shows your normal... well nearly normal?
ROFLOL...

Regarding the last edition and the Visa and 'Wheels' magazine test drive; I had forgotten all about it. It was our car they used!

We were sort of friends with Peter Robinson, from 'Wheels', as we were doing the Birotor, and he had an NSU Ro80

We also organised a comparison between a Light I5, and ID I9? and a CX 2500. I went with them on the test drives, and honestly, they drove the Light I5 and the ID like proper wankers. [I think I have that article in my archive as well. Ed.]

On the previous story on the Birotor, there is a couple of things that one of your English writer from Citroënët got completely wrong:

He said that the factory tried to buy back all the Birotor's so they didn't have to carry spare

You Sed

parts. True, but the buy back failed completely, and its not hard to get evidence that it failed, as there are so many Birotor's still in existence.

He also stated that the buy-backs were crushed when they were repurchased. As far as I know, they had the VIN nos ground off the body, and the factory plates removed, and were given to Citroën dealers to scavenge any parts that were comparable with the GS. Although the Birotor was very unique, most panels and lamps were all GS.

The tombstone seats in the Editor's GS Birotor.



You Sed

This is how we purchased our Birotor... My thought was that it was a pre-production car? It was painted white, and was very early. The car in the workshop manual was white, and had 1,015 rear vision mirrors, as did the car we bought.

It was easy to tell '74 year model and '75 year model Birotor's, the '74 has early GS seat mounts, but the seat was smaller in width than the normal GS to allow for the wider Birotor console. The GS seats for the Birotor also had a change to the backrest, and was tombstone in shape. In 1975 all GSs had the new narrower seats, and new mountings, as a wider console was fitted to all cars.

The Birotor also received the new seats, and were also tombstone, but these type of seat now could be fitted into GSX2 and 3, so the cost of the Birotor front seat could be spread over more GS models.

As a consequence of Citroën being unable to buy back all the cars, they still had to sell spare parts. We purchased a complete new rotary engine in 1982. So while at that time there were certainly lots of trim parts that had gone NFP, there were no shortage of mechanical parts.

Hope this hands on story sheds a bit more light on the Birotor Story?

Best regards,
Greg Feinberg

Racing Traction in Ceylon

In May of this year, out of the blue, I received an email from Roger Thiedeman, from Keysborough in Victoria. Roger hails from Sri Lanka [Ceylon when he was growing up there]. He forwarded on to me a scan from a photocopy of a page from the 25th anniversary edition of the journal of the Ceylon Motor Sports Club. Over to Roger...

I am not a Citroën owner, but as a motoring enthusiast I have been fascinated by those quirky Gallic 'lemon-namesakes' since I was knee-high to a hubcap as a young lad in Ceylon [now Sri Lanka].

Speaking of Ceylon, reading about racing Traction Avants in recent issues of 'Front Drive' reminded me of the attached item. With apologies for the poor quality of reproduction from a sub-standard photocopy, it is an extract from the 25th anniversary souvenir of the Ceylon Motor Sports Club published in 1959. Perhaps not surprisingly, Colonial Motors Ltd, sponsors of the advertisement page, were local agents for Citroën, Fiat and Rover/Land Rover.

The cars, drivers and events depicted and referred to here are flashbacks to motor racing meets, for four wheels and two, held during the immediate post-war years at the Colombo-Ratmalana aerodrome, and

at Mahagastota, the venue for a hillclimb staged on a rough and winding tea plantation track in the up-country hill resort town of Nuwara Eliya.

While Mahagastota remains a popular annual event on Sri Lanka's motor sporting calendar, in the late 1940s or early 1950s circuit racing moved to a more permanent home, uninterrupted by occasional comings and goings of aeroplanes, at the disused Katukurunda World War II vintage airstrip 35km south of Ratmalana.

For the benefit of Citroënistes into the minutiae of chronology, the CE-series registration number on the Traction in the upper photo denotes that it was first registered in Ceylon around 1946/47, while the Z-series number plate on the second car suggests an earlier registration date in the mid-to-late 1930s.

Best wishes to you and all your readers – and keep up the great work with Front Drive.

Roger Thiedeman

I had the temerity to query Roger's assertion that the Z-registered car was in fact pre-War. Roger replied with the following...

I note your doubts about the vintage of the Rajaratnam Traction in Ceylon based on its 'Z' 4000-series registration number. I would be interested to know what your reference books reveal about the pos-

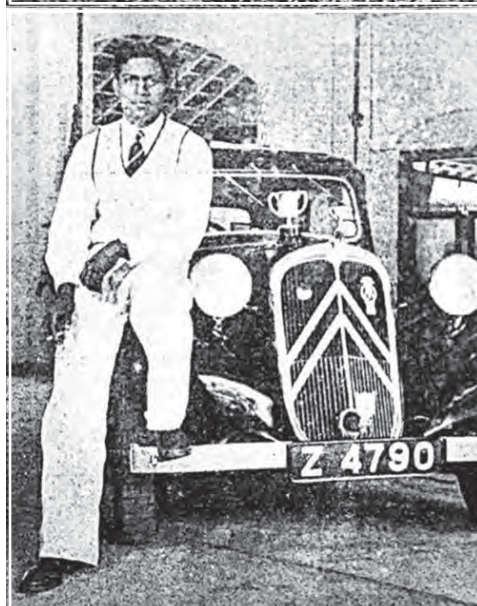
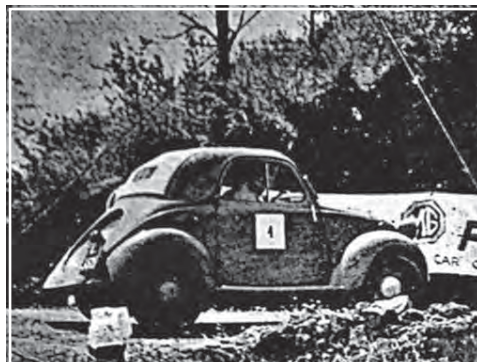


Racing Traction in Ceylon

Right: Brilliant Performance by Cedric de Soysa in the Citroën resulted in a convincing win for cars up to 2,200cc at Rarmalana in December 1948.

Below: My Road, Sir, says Edward Mason, as he goes on to win in his Fiat 500cc. For many years this familiar combination was unbeatable in the 750cc class and earned for this brilliant driver and sportsman the nickname of 'Bugs'.

Bottom: Triumphant! DC Rajaratnam with the Citroën in which he won his class at Mahagastota. Winning became something of a habit with Raja.



Colonial Motors Ltd. are particularly happy whilst celebrating their Golden Jubilee to offer their congratulations and best wishes to the Ceylon Motor Sports Club on the occasion of the celebrations of the Silver Jubilee of the Club.



sibility, or not, of that being a pre-War car. Having just taken a quick look at my Ceylon registration material, I can confirm that several cars on that randomly compiled list, with reg. nos. ranging from Z-4705 [an Austin 'Big' Seven] through to Z-9825 [Chevrolet Fleetmaster sedan], were all registered between 1937 and 1939. Which ties in with my suggestion that Z-4790 is a 'mid-to-late 1930s' registration.

Ah well, such conundrums are sent to try, perplex and, hopefully, satisfy us ~ if and when the answer or reason is finally revealed. I've 'been there, done that' many times, especially during my ongoing research project into the histories of Rolls-Royce cars delivered to Ceylon/Sri Lanka over the years [I mean real Rolls-Royces, not those latter-day Teutonic impostors from Bavaria via a detour to Goodwood].

Now that I am back in Melbourne with my reference books I think I can confirm this is a 1938 model year car.

For the '38 model year the grille received polished rather than part-painted chevrons and gained a circular badge set to the left [as you face the car].

That circular badge is visible on Raja's car, despite the poor photocopy from Roger.

For the 1939 model year the

chevrons were deleted from the grille. So, the grille points to the car having been built at some time between August 1937 and August 1938.

But, that might not be the end of the story as Roger returned with more information regarding another Sri Lankan pre-War Traction. Here's what he said...

Further to your question about the vintage of DC 'Raja' Rajaratnam's Traction registered Z-4790, I remembered a recent article written by a friend in Sri Lanka, Ali Azeez, about his Traction II B Familiale, registered Z-5615 in 1937. Mindful of the fact that motor vehicle registrations in Ceylon/Sri Lanka were [and almost certainly still are] issued in strict numerical order, is that sufficient to conclude that the Rajaratnam car was indeed of pre-War vintage.

The records indicate the Familiale was built in August 1937 and registered in October of that year.

If we allow that Raja's car was built about the same time as this II B, allow a month for shipping to Colombo then it could have been registered a month or six weeks prior to the II B.

With that knowledge, I think we can agree that Z-4790 was built in mid-1937 and registered in late-September or early October that year.

Roger Thiedeman and Leigh F Miles.

Not Quite a Member's Model

In the previous article I made reference to Roger Thiedeman's knowledge of an 11 B Familiale that resides in Sri Lanka and with which he is very familiar. What follows is an article written by the car's owner, Ali Azeez.

1937 Citroën 11 B Familiale 7-Seater Saloon

History and Ownership

- Date of First Registration: 31 October, 1937 [manufactured in France around 15 August, 1937]
- First owner: JB de Bonnetot

of 690 Palmyrah Lodge, Colpetty [Kollupitiya], Colombo 3

- Second owner: Henry de Jonk of 22 Pamankada Road, Wellawatte; from 31 July, 1969
- Third owner: Mohamed Ali Azeez; from 10 June, 1999 [current owner]

The Vintage Car Owners' Club [VCOC] organized the Oberoi Vintage Motor Show which was held from 11th to 14th March, 1999. My nephew Yakooob Bin Ahamed, a member [like me] of the VCOC, was very active at the show. A visitor

who had observed Yakooob approached him and said that he had an old Citroën he wanted to sell. Then man gave his name and address as Randal de Jonk, of 241/A Galhitiyawa, Ganemulla. Yakooob mentioned this to me when we went home that evening. I was interested but not sure what model/type Citroën it was.

A few days later Yakooob and our driver David went to Ganemulla to see the car. They weren't able to locate the house easily, wasting several hours looking for it. Finally they asked

a boutique-keeper, who said that the house was only two or three doors away. Yakooob then met the owner and saw the car, which was in need of restoration. The price quoted was Rs 700,000 [about A\$3,500], and as usual the owner said that he had an offer close to it. Yakooob offered Rs 100,000 [A\$500] and returned.

I was curious to know more about the type of car, so Yakooob opened my copy of the book Cars of the Thirties and Forties by Michael Sedgwick and showed me a picture of a



Not Quite a Member's Model

1930s Traction Avant model. He said that the car he'd seen was longer than the one in the book. This suggested that it was the 11 B Familiale model, with three windows on each side [ie six-light saloon].

A few weeks later the owner contacted Farih Fauz, another member of the VCOC, and told him about the car, now quoting a price of Rs 300,000 [A\$1,500]. Knowing of my interest in the car, Farih negotiated with the owner on my behalf and succeeded in having the asking price reduced to Rs 165,000 [A\$825] and agreed upon by both parties.

To transport the car to my property I contacted my friend Susantha Welgama of SA Welgama & Sons. He said that they only had lorries for transport,

but he would provide a large one free of charge. However, this type of vehicle was not suitable as it meant having to manually lift the car onto the lorry. So I next spoke to VCOC member

Lasantha Senaratne of Jayalath Transport at Baseline Road. He seemed more interested in the Citroën, and offered the use of a boom truck at a price of Rs 7,000 [A\$350] ~ a reduction

from the normal hire cost of Rs 12,000 [A\$600] ~ to which I agreed.

I went to Ganemulla with Yakooob and David, followed by the boom truck, on 10 June, 1999. I met the owner, Randal de Jonk, and asked whether he was related to Randolph H de Jonk, a class-mate of mine at Royal College who travelled to school by train from Ganemulla. He said that Randolph was his elder brother who had migrated to England many years ago. Randal was an English teacher.

We tried to take the boom truck up to the garage, which was behind the house. Unfortunately, the gate posts were not wide enough. So the car was pushed out of the garage to the road where the truck was



Not Quite a Member's Model

parked. While the car was being loaded onto the truck, many curious villagers turned up and said that this was 'Jonk mahath-thaya's' car, and asked where it had been all these years. Randal was too embarrassed to answer them. Eventually the car was loaded, covered, and transported to my home at Bolgoda, Piliyandala.

On inspecting the car the next day, Yakoob discovered that not only was the cylinder head not bolted onto the engine block, but vital components such as pistons were missing, along with other parts. So Randal was contacted and another trip made to Ganemulla to collect all the missing parts, which were lying around in sacks at the de Jonk property. Apparently after the death of Randal's father the car hadn't run since 1972, despite attempts made to restore it. As the Citroën had been last licensed in 1972, I obtained a licence for it in 1999.

Yakoob began putting the parts together and started the engine. The electrical system was converted to 12volts from 6volts. Tinkering was done on the body, which was painted in red primer. When the gearbox was dismantled it was noticed that there was damage and wear to vital parts, which needed replacement as repairs were not feasible. At this time of writing [March 2023] several

parts have yet to be located and fitted to the Citroën.

The Certificate of Registration was available but in poor physical condition. It was in the name of the second owner, Henry de Jonk who had passed away. Therefore, a procedure had to be followed for the vehicle to be transferred to my name by the Registrar of Motor Vehicles. Randal had signed some documents, but a few more were needed. We spoke to him, but he never responded. He could not be contacted again, and we later learned that he had moved to Kandy.

Technical and Other Features

- Citroën 11 B Familiale Traction Avant six-light saloon
- Type of Body: 4-Door 7-Seater Saloon [including 2 folding seats]. All-steel monocoque, unitary construction
- Chassis No.: 123999
- Engine No.: DMO2402
- Engine: 4-cylinders, ohv with push rods; wet liners; bore 78 mm, stroke 100 mm, capacity 1,911cc; compression ratio 6.1 to 1. Develops 56bhp @ 4,200rpm; RAC rating of 15hp. The complete power unit is flexibly mounted
- Crankshaft with three main bearings; cast iron detachable engine head and block
- Single downdraught Solex carburettor; AC mechanical fuel pump; fan cooling; coil and distributor ignition; firing

order 1-3-4-2

- Electrics: 6volts
- Steering: Rack and pinion type
- Transmission: Front-wheel drive; three forward speeds and reverse through helical toothed gears, and synchromesh engagement for top and middle ratios; single dry plate clutch; gear lever protrudes

from dashboard; drive is taken from clutch to a gearbox just behind the radiator

- Suspension: The engine, gearbox and final drive form a compact unit housed in the scuttle structure of the body, and the front wheels [which are individually supported by transverse radius arms] are also sprung by torsion bars; hydraulic telescopic-type shock absorbers front and rear

• Brakes: hydraulic type on all 4 wheels

• Wheels: Steel; Tyres: 5.50 x 16

• Weight: 22cwt 3qtrs 0lb [1,160kg]

• Overall length: 16' 11½"; Width: 6' 2"

• Ground clearance: 7"; Height: 5'

• Wheelbase: 10' 9"; Track: 4' 8" [front and rear]; Turning circle: 45'

• Capacities: Petrol tank: 10gallons; Oil sump: 8pints; Radiator: 14pints.

• Top Speed: 80 mph

• Original Colour: Black

This article was written by the car's current owner, Ali Azeez.

CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRATION.
(To be preserved by the owner.)

Distinctive number: 25615

I. Date of first registration: 21/11/1972

II. Full name and address of present owner: [illegible]

IV. Date of transfer to present owner: 21/11/1972

V. (a) Manufacturer's name: Citroën
(b) Model, name or number: 11 B
(c) Horse power: 15
(d) Fuel used: Petrol
(e) Wheels on rear axle: 5.50 x 16
(f) Tyres: 5.50 x 16

VI. Type and colour of body: Saloon black

VII. Manufacturer's No. of chassis: 123999

VIII. Manufacturer's No. of engine: DMO2402

IX. Tare: 22 cwt 3 qtrs 0 lb

X. Purpose for which motor car will be used: Private

XI. (a) Place at which motor car will usually be kept: 117 Colombo
(b) The licensing authority for that place: 117 Colombo

XII. Transferor's name and address: H. B. de Sumanat, 690, Palimpraha Road, Colombo

XIII. Previous licensing authority: 117 Colombo

XIV. Name of claimants, if any: [illegible]

I certify that the above is a true copy of the registered particulars of motor car No. 25615

Motor car licence for 1999 was duly endorsed and reissued. 25/4/1999

Date: 5/8/1999

P. Sangnappimai
for Commissioner of Motor Transport.

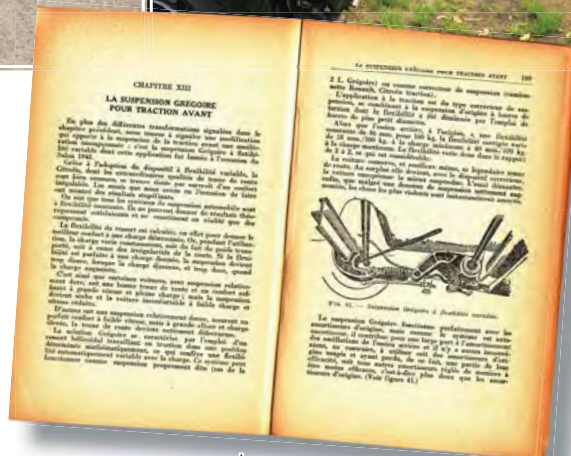
Totally Traction

Commerciale and C4G: front and rear.



As I write this the TOC Jersey rally has happened but the TOC Devon rally has not ~ it's getting close though! Jersey was great, with over 30 Traction of one type of another and Bernie Shaw's B5 and Stephen Prigmore's C4G. I was particularly pleased to see the latter because I hadn't seen it before. It has a tailgate and looked very good next to the Traction Commerciale. These cars represent the world's first and

La suspension Gregoire pour Traction Avant.

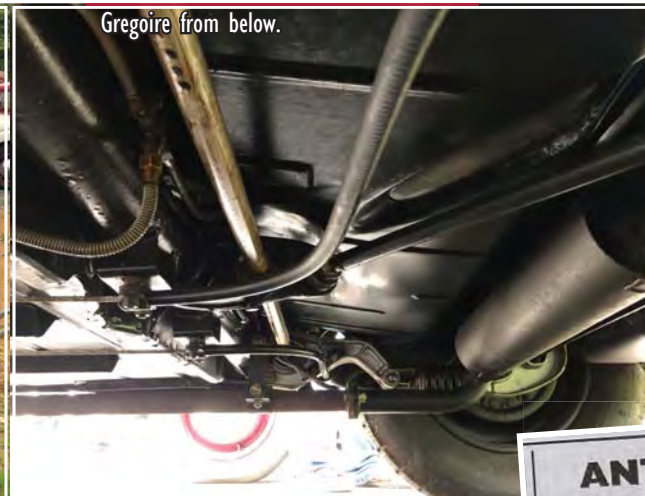


second hatchback cars.

Almost the whole range of Traction came on this rally ~ from a [actually the] 1934 Slough-built Coupe, four [yes count them four] Slough built Roadsters, as well as examples of Light 15, Big 15, Légère, Normale, Commerciale and a Big 6. Notably absent was a Familiale [which we would have had, if it hadn't been taken ill with big end problems



Gregoire from below.



Eric's steering lock.



on the way] and a 6H. One of the Normales was even fitted with Gregoire rear suspension.

It was a very pleasing array of cars which we displayed in various places around the island including the front garden of the Seigneur's rather splendid manor.

This collection of cars contained a few points of interest [to me at least] that represented new information.

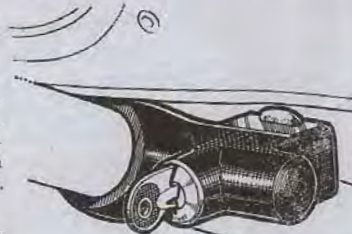
Torsion Bars

I had assumed that the rear torsion bars on a car with Gregoire suspension were the standard item ~ but James Geddes [for it was his car that was so equipped] told me the Gregoire kit includes springs with a lower spring rate. This means soft springing most of the time becoming stiffer as the deflection increases. Actually I should have known this because

ANTIVOL "KLAXON"

UNE ASSURANCE TOTALE CONTRE LE VOL
(Licence MEIMAN)

L'Antivol Klaxon est le seul qui coupe l'allumage et immobilise la direction lorsque la clé est retirée. Une notice détaillée est jointe à chaque appareil.



PRIX avec 3 clés (prêt-à-être monté)
180. »

a chapter in a contemporary book describes it exactly.

Steering Locks

And then there was Eric Pennington's steering lock. In the UK it became mandatory for new cars to have steering or transmission locks from 1971 which meant most cars adopted combined ignition switch and steering lock. My 1971 Triumph Herald has such a thing which makes it a rare and prized thing amongst those who like Triumphs. Eric's car was made in

Totally Traction

1952 and looks like it was fitted with a steering lock/ignition switch from new.

But what happened to the hole in the dashboard for the

original switch? There is no hole in the dashboard ~ and no evidence it has been filled in. Such switches were advertised as aftermarket items but did Tractions ever come out of the factory that way? Eric's car suggests they did.

Boot Scrapers

And then I discovered boot scrapers! You will have seen the aluminium trim pieces at the bottom of the front and rear wings. In the accessories catalogue they are called Sabots d'ailes which Google translate says mean wing hooves. I rather like that. [Ed: I did a translation using DeepL and came up with wing tips, wing pads, wingshoes or fender clogs... which has to be my personal favourite. LM]

In France they were supplied by Robri or Axo. I had not realised that Slough cars would be fitted with items made by Radwar. In each case those for the front are available as long or short version and may feature slots to which I had paid no attention at all. I had to go all the way to Jersey to learn that the slots are boot scrapers. My car does not have such slots which may explain the state of the inside.

Before we left for Jersey I did a little maintenance in the form of greasing. I also got around to a couple of electrical jobs.

For some time, my headlight switch had been getting rather temperamental needing to be set in just the right position to give dipped beam and not working at all on main beam. It was also getting rather hot. All this pointed to oxidation on the contacts ~ or worse. So I took it apart and cleaned the contacts and tweaked the springs to give a bit more contact pressure. It now works as it should and does not get hot at all. I last did this in 2015 so I guess I can look forward to doing it again in 2030.

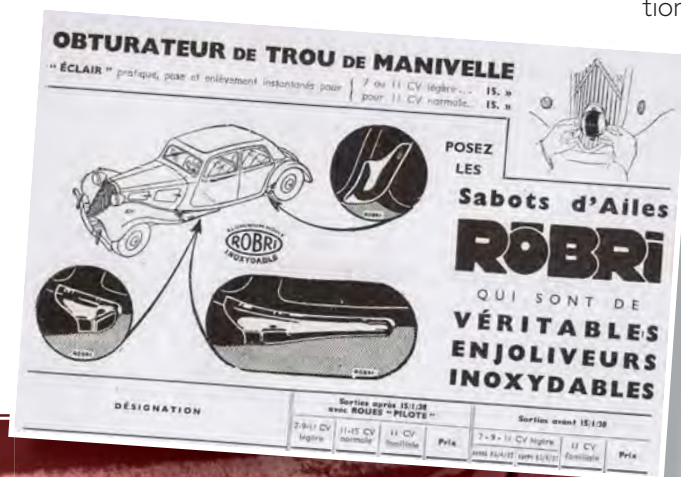
I also, finally, fitted the new indicator switch with the hazard warning feature. This replaced both the older column switch I had fitted in 2014 and the relay that failed a few months ago. What do I think of this switch?

On the whole I am pleased. It's easy to fit but it's not discrete, being shiny chrome effect with a big red knob on the end. It is secured on the column using a jubilee clip which holds it firmly in place. I find the shiny finish reflected in the windscreen so I may be adding some black tape or paint to the top surface, or even the whole body. The stalk is the right length for the Traction steering wheel and the switch operates with a solid feel. The stalk itself is a little rough on its rear edge but I'm the only person who knows that ~ except I've told you now.

The switch body has tell-tale lamps for left and right which, with my two-spoke wheel, are obscured when going straight on. A car with a three-spoke wheel would not have this problem. Is it even a problem? Well, the point of the tell tale is to stop oneself being that person who drives along a straight road for mile upon mile with the blinker flashing. One can always wire in separate tell-tales somewhere more visible.

The relay that comes with the switch is solid state for use with LEDs and I expected it to be silent ~ not so, it has a proper click. Thinking there would be no sound, I fitted mine under the bonnet where it is accessible rather than inside the car under the dash. Even so, I can hear it clicking so I'm not really bothered about not seeing the tell-tale. There is a big red light for the hazard function which is operated by a red pull knob with a separate red light. This is quite bright and visible even behind the steering wheel spoke. I was surprised that the red light flashes once every time you turn the indicator off. I don't know why this is but it does not flash the indicators themselves.

Happily, in Jersey my car did not require the use of the hazards, although another car's misfortune did when all the smoke escaped from its clutch leaving it stranded and blocking



Long Radwar foot scraper.



Short foot scraper.

Totally Traction

Right: The CV joint boot as was in 2018.
Below: The boot as looked in 2023 when Chris removed it.

the road.

Now with Jersey behind us and Devon approaching I decided to tackle another long-put-off job. I don't mean changing the oil ~ although I did do that and was pleased to see less metallic debris attached to the sump plug magnet. At a minimum this means the magnet is cleaning up the engine faster than the engine is wearing out and that's a good thing.

CV Joint Boot Replacement

My long-put-off job was replacing the torn CV joint boot. I replaced the original drive shafts sometime around 2016, choosing to dispense with all the UJs and have both inner and outer CV joints. I'm not sure this was a good idea. If I did this again, I would probably retain the splines and the inner UJs and just have CVs on the outer joints. This is the second time the boot on the nearside inner joint has failed. The first time was in 2018 after about only two years. When I replaced it the first time I discovered the inner surfaces were already damaged ~ probably due to a blanking cap having become trapped inside the joint causing side loading. This was the case with the other side too. Notwithstanding that I put it back



together [without the cap] to see what would happen. Eight years later it was interesting to compare the condition.

I had been driving the car with the torn boot for the last two years. 'That's terrible', I hear you say and, had it been subject to an MoT it would of course have failed. The boot is there to keep the road grit and water out and



Tractions at the Imperial Hotel, Barnstaple.

I was expecting to see some really grubby, crunchy grease and rust inside ~ but not a bit of it. The grease was perfectly clean and there was not a spot of rust. The damage seen in 2018 had got slightly worse ~ but I have put it back together again ~ again.

There is often a slight single audible click when starting off but that's the only symptom and it has not changed over the last five years. It's not doing any good as the damage must be impeding the sliding action ~ which must be adding to the axial load on either the outer joint or the gearbox bearing ~ or both. Why did this boot ~ and only this boot fail twice? None of the other three have failed at all. I don't know why the first one failed but I wonder if the second one suffered from some kind of memory of

the stress from being stretched over the CV joint. At some point I will have to replace both shafts. My options are to buy new shafts with either CV joints at both ends or just at the outer ends, or to rebuild my original shafts with new UJs. I am tempted to do the latter but am willing to be talked out of it. Meanwhile it's time to give the car a clean...

One Month Later... Promises, promises

Last month I left you with the promise that I was going to give my Normale a clean before the TOC Rally in Devon. Did you believe me? Well, that's what I did ~ T-Cut and polish were involved and, whilst the rusty bits would not take a shine, the black paint did and the car looked quite respectable.

One of the rally participants suggested I am someone who keeps saying what he's going to do to the car, and then never does it. I admit there is some truth in that and yet the car made it there and back in one piece. Some of that is due to the car being in regular use. I had a think about this and I have covered about 65,000km since acquiring the car in 1997. I hardly used the car for about the first 10 years which means it has done on average about 4,000km per year in the last 16. That's not exactly taxi or sales rep mileage but it's enough to

Totally Traction

keep things from seizing up.

It was a good trip ~ up and down the hills, nice weather, great scenery and good company and good food. The car did well. No discernible engine oil or water was used, although some discernible patches of gearbox oil were left in the hotel car park. [They all do that, Sir, and they all did. Apologies to the hotel]. Actually we were all highly impressed by the quality of the Imperial Hotel Barnstaple ~ highly recommended if you are in the area. We put on a good display of Tractions at the Lyn Valley Classic where the cars were all parked together [and on grass so no embarrassing stains were left behind].

6-volt Battery

Speaking of water, one of the cars on the trip had a problem starting which was diagnosed by our crack team of experts to be a lack of water in the battery. This was

Traction at Ilfracombe, parked in front of art by Damian Hurst

a 6-volt car and so it had an old fashioned style, but not that old, 6-volt battery. The significance of it being old fashioned is that it is not sealed and therefore requires maintenance in the form keeping the electrolyte topped up. A significant amount of distilled water restored the battery to some form of life, if not rude health.

As regular readers will know, I turned my back on the 6-volt system years ago and I have not regretted it for an instant. I am not suggesting that 6volts cannot be made to work properly since they obviously do on many cars. But they do need work and that's not for me. As well as maintaining the battery all the connections need to be tight and clean or the few volts you have just disappear. Not only that, the ignition and fuel system need to be in tip top condition to reduce the amount of churning needed to get the engine to fire. A 6-volt battery has less capacity for continued cranking than a 12-volter.

One of the cars due to join the Devon rally failed to arrive. It was a very hot day and the car had difficulty restarting after a stop, quite likely due to fuel vapourisation. If you recall, I had this problem last year, solved by emptying a couple of litres of water over the fuel pump and pipe. I said would reroute or insulate my fuel pipe to prevent recurrence. Of course, I haven't yet got around to that but my car, being 12volts [did I mention that?] is quite resilient but the car in question only had the 6volts it had when it left the Paris factory and it gave up.

Roadster on Exmoor



Now we're back my next thing to do, which I really will do soon, is adjust the brakes because there is more pedal travel than there used to be.

I am very grateful to Tony Stokoe who read about my sticky steering wheel and donated me the cast-off wheel from his Big 6. It also needs work, but my plan is to spend a little time tidying up Tony's wheel and then fit it to my car ~ and then spend more time cleaning and painting mine.

When we were in Jersey my wife had the opportunity to ride in a couple of other Tractions. One was a Slough car and one was another Normale. Apparently, they were quieter and smoother than mine. I have very little experience of other Tractions as I tend to drive mine. I recently had the opportunity to have a little drive of a very nice lowish mileage Normale

Tractions at the Lyn Valley Classic



Totally Traction

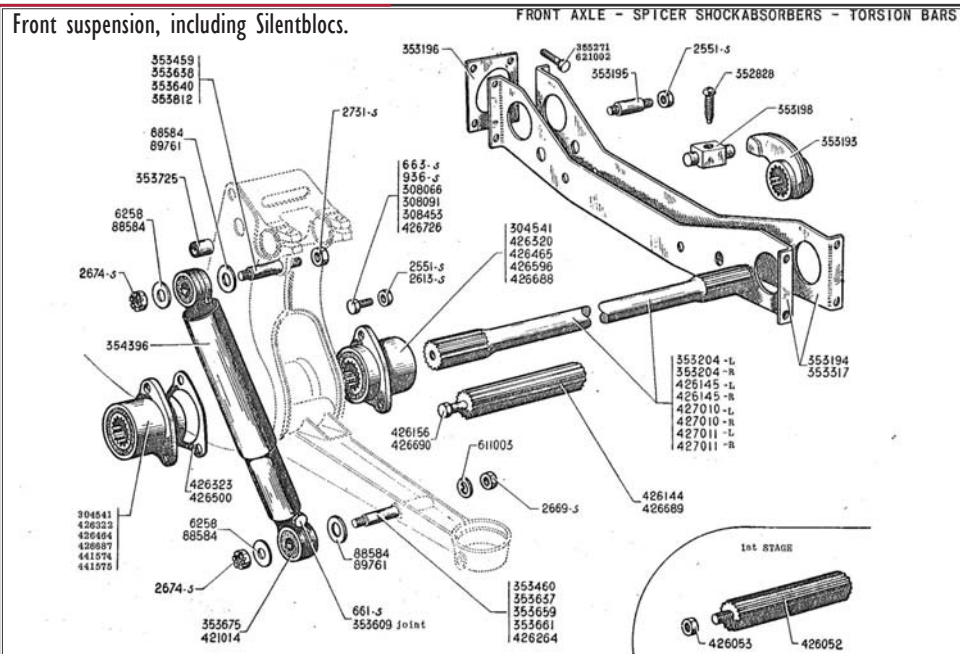
that was for sale. It was located near here which is a long way from the prospective buyer who asked me to have a look at. Names withheld to protect the innocent. This was a very nice car and, although I didn't take it on the open road, it certainly seemed smooth and quiet. I can understand what my wife means.

First of all, I know my gear-box whines a bit. A few years ago I planned to rebuild my broken one ~ I have the parts and four of us got together to build our respective boxes. We built three ~ mine is yet to be built. That will help quieten the car a bit. All I need to do is build the 'box.

A very dry
6-bolt battery.



I have an annoying buzz at 59mph which I think is a loose baffle in the silencer ~ it may be making noises at lower speeds. A new silencer may be on the cards.



A very nice Traction for sale



head under the battery box. I recently saw someone posting a picture on Facebook of their DS with the whole front end stripped down. That job started as 'I'll just replace the hydraulic pump'. I am worried that, if I send

my cradle away it will be gone for a while, during which time I will get distracted, and the job will get out of hand. My alternative is to get hold of a press and do the whole thing myself. It may take just as long but I will have some control and will be motivated, once I start to get it done quickly. The sensible thing would be to have a rebuilt gear-box ready to go in when the rebuilt cradle is back in place.

Before I get to work on any of this, I need to sort out a couple of things on my DS and tidy the garage.

I'm not sure I have actually said I am going to do any of this ~ except adjust the brakes but eventually I will have to do all these things.

All this trouble is the result of my wife and I experiencing other cars. There's a lesson there. Chris Bailey

But the real difference will come from replacing the silent-bloc bushes in the front suspension. That is where most of the rattling and clonking is coming from. Is it 'Silentbloc' or 'silent block' I wonder? I suspect it is both ~ 'Silentbloc' being a trade name of a manufacturer who no longer makes the things. No matter the exact name, the parts are available, but the job is not something to be taken on lightly. These bushes are pressed into the 'cradle' and need a very heavy press to remove them. I do not have such a press so this may be a job I will ask a specialist to do. Alternatively, an exchange cradle may be the route to follow. Either way, the cradle will have to come out, which means the engine must come out too. And while that is out, that may be the opportunity to tidy a few other things up ~ like repair the corrosion in the bulk-



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CLUB OF AUSTRALIA**
Australia's National Citroën Car Club