

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



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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 II 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



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

I went to Ganemulla with Yakoob 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

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

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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 Familiare 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: 2561

I. Date of first registration: 31/11/1954

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

IV. Date of transfer to present owner: 17/1/55

V. (a) Manufacturer's name: Citroën
(b) Model, name or number: 11 B
(c) Horse power: 15
(d) Fuel used: Petrol

VI. Type and colour of body: Saloon black
(b) Tyres: 5.50 x 16

VII. Manufacturer's No. of chassis: 123999
Manufacturer's No. of engine: DMO2402

IX. Tare: 22 cwt 3 qrs 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: N.T. Colombo

XII. Transferor's name and address: H. de Jonk, 690, Palimparah Road, Colombo

XIII. Previous licensing authority: N.T. Colombo

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

I certify that the above is a true copy of the registered particulars of motor car No. 2561

Motor car licence for 1955 was duly endorsed and reissued. 25/4/55

Date: 5/8/1955

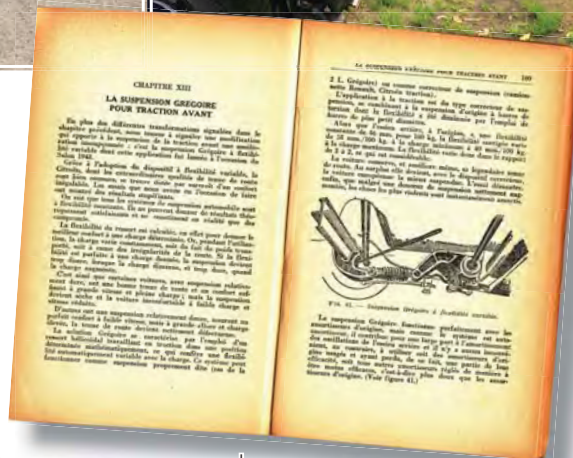
P. Sangarappillai
for Commissioner of Motor Transport, [p.o.]

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

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



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

Traction on Jersey.



