

PAST EVENTS – 2011

Paris Retromobile 2011

Mick Popka, TOC Webmaster, tells us about his visit to the 2011 Paris Retromobile.

My first visit to Retromobile was back in 2007, when the 15th ICCCR bid team gave our initial presentation for the bid which we would submit in 2008. Since then it has to be said that the size of the show has not changed, and although it no longer runs for 1 week, it has introduced late night opening! I was accompanied by Barry Annells, his son Peter and Bernie Shaw.



I thought that Mötley Crüe was an American heavy metal band - DH

Unlike the Classic Car Show held at the NEC, the whole “style” is more of a showroom of luxury accessories – yes the Chinese tool stalls are there, however there are also American Gas Stations of the 50’s and glorious stands with very few expensive works of art (if you need to ask “Combien?” then you are not the customer they are aiming at.

Retromobile 2011 was a bustling show and the Citroën Stand proved to be very diverse; celebrating not only the 50th Anniversary of the AMI but also stands dedicated to Rosalie Racers and the Kegrresse expeditions in Mongolia.



1933 eight cylinder 1453cc record car. The third in the Citroen 'Rosalie' series built for record attempts at Montlhéry. The first two were Rosalie I and Rosalie II, both six cylinder cars. The 'Petite Rosalie' set records in 1933, going on for 300,000 kilometres, 133 days, and averaged 58 mph. It had beaten 106 world records and 191 International records. Photo courtesy of Veloce Today and Hugues Vanhoolandt



Citroën Kegrresse. Photo courtesy of Mick Popka

Going under the hammer was a child's model Citroën Traction Avant Cabriolet built by Eric de Pauw.



Photo courtesy of Veloce Today and Hugues Vanhoolandt

The prototype was exhibited at Retromobile in 1989, chassis no. M01 001. Following the death of its creator production was halted at the 6th example. This one, number 3 of the 5 produced has a 140cc engine, three forward gears and reverse, electric starter and a host of details with all the characteristics of a real car. The original publicity catalogue was sold with the car. There was no reserve and the price was estimated at 7,000 to 9,000 euros. It sold for 28,052 euros.

Back to business – we were allocated space on the ACI stand area and we saw a busy trade in flyers and bumper stickers for the 15th ICCCR – in the 3 days we took 15 bookings.

On the Saturday afternoon we attended the ACI AGM at the Citroën Sport HQ near Versailles. Following presentations from the 2011 Event of the Year (2CV World Meet at Salbris) and ourselves for 2012, we were ushered to a very nice restaurant where a good meal was had by all, which was very kindly paid for by Citroën. Sunday saw us back at Retromobile with an early departure for Calais at 13:30 to catch the 18:00 ferry back to Blighty. If you have never been to Retromobile, it has to be one of those on the list of “things to do before.....”



1939 Panhard Levassor Type X81/140 Dynamic Limousine. There is something vaguely familiar about this car. Photo courtesy of Veloce Today and Hugues Vanhoolandt

The Brittany Club – Tour of Normandy – Hazel Nelson

This year Marcel and I decided to join the CTAB (Club Traction Avant de Bretagne) for the Brittany Club Rally which was held from 14th to 17th July. Being a ‘virgin’ rallyist I was allowed to enjoy the rally for two days and then I was asked if I would be prepared to write an article for Floating Power – what a way to dampen the enthusiasm! I hope I won’t bore everyone. Marcel has family members in Tours so we extended our holiday and visited them first.



Marcel with his 1938 11BL

On arriving in Tours we discovered that a rattle heard on the way down was due to a hub cap which had parted company with the car somewhere between Chartres and Tours. On Wednesday 13th the Brittany Club and TOC members met in Montvirion at Chez Helene for a prerally meal.



We were well looked after by the owner of Chez Helene and it gave me a chance to meet the English TOC members. Peter and Sue were the only familiar faces. It also gave us a chance to put faces to names. Mind you, remembering everyone became a challenge. The car did not want to start when we left, so we were given a push by Terence and Bill. Back to the hotel for a short night's sleep then off to Sartilly in the morning for the 'proper' start of the rally. There was a great turn out of cars outside the Mairie in Sartilly on the 14th where breakfast was provided.



It was quite chilly so a hot cup of coffee was very welcome. It was amazing to see four Australians joining us as they apparently do regularly. What a long way to come for a rally.



Me checking the route

After the cars had been admired by the locals and the members taking part, we set off along country roads to Marchesieux for our picnic. Travelling in convoy causes quite a stir in all the villages and as soon as the locals showed their faces, the Traction horns would start a cacophony of sound. It created lots of smiles and clapping and was a great way to brighten the day. We were ably assisted by a group of motorcyclists (Motard) who make sure we are all travelling in the right direction and post themselves at every junction. They are an invaluable help especially as the route never seems to quite run to the one printed in the itinerary!

The weather turned out to be very hot so our picnic in the grounds of the ruined chateau at Marchesieux was a great success. Part of the chateau had been restored and housed a fascinating collection of beautifully detailed wood carvings. We were given a guided tour for which Marcel was volunteered by Bernie to translate. After lunch we set off for Isignysur-Mer and split up to go to our various hotels or the campsite. We were joined this evening by Walford and Frances, and Dave and Jackie who were only joining the rally for the weekend.

On Friday 16th we could either go to the campsite for breakfast, or meet at the Carrefour for petrol and picnic supplies before heading for Cherbourg via Utah beech. On to the Pointe de Barfleur for another picnic in the sun. Our ride then took us to Cherbourg and the Cite de la Mer where we were given a tour of the submarine Le Redoutable. Some of us opted to visit the Aquarium instead where we were treated to a very colourful display of marine life. This evening we met in Isigny at the Restaurant de Flambee.

On Saturday, the weather changed and it became dull and wet. We drove to Arromanches stopping on the way at the vast German cemetery at La Cambe. Unfortunately the weather was so wet that a picnic at Arromanches did not appeal so most of us walked into the town for a meal in the dry. The line up of 22 Tractions was very impressive on top of the cliff overlooking the sea. We had the afternoon free. In the evening aperitif's were served at the Campsite le Faval and we also ate our last meal of the rally in the restaurant there. We were entertained by the French with assistance from Marcel as translator and Dave as an actor in the sketch. Phillipe, and Marcel plus another of the French crew whose name I do not remember were then taken to the barber's! Jean sang and proceeded to treat them all to a dairy cream shave and shampoo.



Bernie gave his speech in French ably translated by Lionel as Marcel had gone missing. Everyone had a good laugh at all the antics. On the last day, in spite of the rain, we headed off south again for a scheduled picnic at St James. Dave and Jackie, and Walford and Frances headed for home from Isigny. Terence and Jane opted out at Coutances as Jane was complaining of trench foot, and they headed into town for a warming coffee then back to the port. In the light of the weather conditions, they probably all did the right thing. The picnic at St James was abandoned and we pulled into the cattle market at Gavray where at least we had a cover over our heads.



Marcel and I disappeared for a hot coffee and when we came back somehow the English members had extricated their cars and driven off to Martin and Vicki's for a picnic in the dry. We braved the weather and joined the French for a congenial picnic although we were paddling underfoot. All part of the experience. We met Martin, Vicki, Bernie, Pearl, Bill and Letsie later at St James and set off once again for Mece. By the time we arrived, although some of the locals had braved the weather to welcome us, almost all the stalls had abandoned the event and there was no chance of a game of Palets as planned. We stood forlornly in the rain and were eventually allowed into the hall for a short speech from the Mayor, drinks, nibbles and our mementoes of the rally. The rain eased temporarily and we all said our goodbyes and headed in various directions for home. Marcel and I were only too glad to accept the offer from Martin and Vicki to stay in their gite for the night before heading for the port on Monday. I must say, I thoroughly enjoyed the experience in spite of the weather and Bernie's mechanical monkey winding his car from the rear luggage rack had us in stitches every time we saw him.



I met some lovely people, had a lot of fun and it has made me decide that I must try to learn at least a little French before joining another Brittany rally. Many thanks to Francois Marc for organising everything so well and to everyone else who made me feel so welcome.

TOC Annual Rally , Chatham Dockyard – 22nd-23rd July – Martin de Little



Admiring the assembled Tractions in the square at Chatham dockyard, from the corner of my eye I potted Bev Oates sidling towards me. Bev gave me a story about how new club members at the annual rally invariably write a piece describing their first impressions. Plausible but unlikely, Bev must have thought that I had come up the Medway on a water biscuit – an appropriate metaphor I think, given that the river was only yards from where we were standing. When we arrived on Friday evening, my first impression was that I might never get from the front to the back of the Ships & Trades pub – where the TOC folk were gathered – because a series of Friday evening drinkers wanted to know all about the

Tractions. I was especially impressed by one fellow who wanted to know if it was necessary to add “lead tetraethyl” (two words you won’t hear together very often in Chatham) to our petrol. Our host Chris Hodgson greeted us, and as our names were ticked off “goodies bags” were issued. Maybe it was me, but the temptation to turn out the bag there and then on the pub table was a strong one; not dissimilar to the ritual of working through the Christmas stocking at four in the morning – when I used to have one you understand!

Before the event Annette and I had debated whether to stay at the Ramada Hotel or the Ship & Trades. We finally decided on the Ramada. The correctness of this decision was confirmed on Saturday morning when reports filtered back of an altercation that took place outside the pub in the early morning. The burden of the argument was that a young woman exclaimed (expletives deleted) that she was not getting into a car with a particular bunch of blokes and they were rather keen that she should. To compound the noise problems, some of the pub bedrooms are above the adjacent Co-op which, unfortunately, was taking deliveries for much of the night!

Saturday morning and we loosely formed up outside the Ramada for our briefing.



Curiously and despite Chris Hodgson’s best efforts, at no point were the Tractionistes entirely attentive. As an ex teacher you notice these things, it never leaves you, a bit like playing the triangle. However, as rally plaques were issued the drivers suddenly became very alert; and as they rushed to fix the plaques to the bumpers of their cars they were all dramatically slowed in their movements by their creaking and long suffering knees. Once in our cars we formed up into an orderly queue and drove all of 500 yards into the dockyard where the dockyard manager organised our parking. The keen eyed among you will have noticed that it is a chevron formation, but that was probably more down to chance than any intended design. Alec Bilney immediately spotted an opportunity to get an aerial shot of the assembled tractions but was thwarted in his first attempt. Plan B was to negotiate the use of the dockyard cherry picker. Could we use it take the some pictures he asked of Olivia, who had just issued our tickets? From Olivia’s expression you might have thought that we had just declared ourselves to be a couple of convicted paedophiles on the run. Although Olivia was initially indifferent to Alec’s blandishments she was won around. When finally the cherry picker appeared, it had the driver lashed in with a five point harness, a man walking in front of it, and another bringing up the rear clutching all the necessary paperwork. Alec and I gave the cherry picker driver a quick lesson in how to use our cameras.



29 of the 32 Tractionistes assembled in chevron formation

Even from the ground and with our novice photographer some 40' up in the air, it was apparent that his handrail was going to feature in most of the pictures, but fortunately there came a few decent ones. A little later I spotted Olivia trotting across the square firmly holding onto a decent bottle of Rose, she had finally accepted a small "thank you" from Alec (he could have probably charmed a robin off a perch in his youth). So that, gentle reader, is why Alec has a Familiaire – that he can carry his own wine cellar around.

Organising any event such as this is fraught with imponderables. On the Sunday do you for example: have a longish drive, do you organise folk in a regimented fashion or perhaps do you let them do their own thing? In the event it was a short drive to the Museum of Kent Life where we were left to our own devices. The weekend ended with a fine cream tea, the shortest speeches that I have ever heard and the awarding of various prizes.

Organising the rally would have been a big task for a committee, but for one man particularly so. On behalf of all those who attended, our sincere thanks to Chris for organising an excellent weekend.