

L'Aronde

The Magazine of SIMCA Club UK
Vol.45 No.4 **September 2025**

Club cars 40 years ago at 1985 Silverstone event featured in David Chapman's article



SIMCA

Chrysler

MATRA

Talbot

Phil Hart and I were booked in for the third FCTDC trackday of 2025. At the briefing I thought Phil hadn't arrived with his SIMCA. At the end of the briefing Frank Hall the organiser asked for everyone to hang on a minute and called me forward. Then Phil appeared along with Frank Breidenstein retiring president of the German SIMCA Heckmotor club and builder and original owner of my ex 'Youngtimer Trophy' racecar. Frank and his wife were in the UK for the Goodwood Revival. Great to see the Breidensteins and swap SIMCA info etc Frank enjoyed many laps of Blyton at the wheel of his old racer for the first time since Daniel Burrowes brought it to the UK some 15 years ago. He also sampled Phil's SIMCA on the track. Next Blyton Trackday for us is on 14th November where we'll be joined by Richard & Fred Troop in their Avengers.



Frank Breidenstein and me...



Frank raced the car for many years in group 1 and then 'Youngtimer Trophy' races including a 500Km endurance event. While it's had a gearbox rebuild and various other jobs, the engine is still performing well. We used to see Frank and his German 'Heckmotor'

2 FCTDC = Frank's Charity Track Day Club.... With money raised from the events supporting a number of causes over the years.

friends dominating the up to 1300cc races at the much missed Zolder 'Classic Club Race' events which were a regular visit for some of us with our SIMCAS until 2005.



Phil Hart and Frank Breidenstein



Frank Hall FCTDC organiser presenting Frank B with FCTDC mug to mark their visit.



The car going up Shelsley Walsh Hillclimb at the Retro Rides Gathering August 2016 when I'd just bought it from Dan Burrowes.

‘Editorial.... September 2025

This issue features the ‘70s range quite heavily but I’ve tried to include material on the earlier and later cars. Please keep sending me anything you have on the early cars and the later Talbots.

As can be seen on the facing page we’ve been quite busy recently giving our 1000 Rallyes some ‘exercise’ on the track. I must thank Phil Hart for arranging the reunion of Porsche engineer Frank Breidenstein with his former race car. A total surprise for the current owner Me

Clive Forder suggested at last years AGM that we had a club get together at Shelsley Walsh hillclimb’s ‘Chill on the Hill event’. I took the Rallye 2 and had a great day speeding up the Hill. Interest from our members was limited. Running up the Hill is not cheap but I entered the September running of the same event recently and managed 10 runs up there.. great fun.!!!

Guy Maylam has raided his Archive for a MATRA article that I’ve not seen before this time.

David Chapman goes back 40 years to the earlier days of the Club meeting at Silverston at Motor 100, 2 cars from that featuring on the front cover.

Colin Hill updates us on his current projects ...

Clive Milner begins the story of his customised 1100 VF1 van that is now with me. He has already sent me part 2 which I’ll include next time. I also include progress on reassembling it along with a progress report on my VF2 pickup which is proving far from co-operative at present.

I’ve included a few ‘archive’ photos from facebook etc and my own collection. Plus a Michelin Tyre advert from ‘76 featuring the Alpine.

New member David Handley has sent in photos of the early stages in a full restoration of his Samba Cabriolet.

Not to everybody’s taste I know but I’ve always been into modifying things so I’ve done a page on some of my major engine etc ‘transplants’...

Die cast models featured last time. This time Facebook friend Paul Sargent has supplied info on a Rancho model. Here’s one of my collection, a rather battered Tagora.



probably the full size is now rarer ???

Forthcoming events features the club discount code for tickets for the November NEC Classic Motor Show, a reminder about our AGM and links to the 2026 International SIMCA Meeting at Herve in Belgium.

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Welcoming new members..

Robert Masters from Kings Lynn Norfolk

Will Hull from Garstang Lancashire

Neville Tuck from Farnsfield Notts

Simca Club UK - www.simcatalbotclub.org Directory



Reformed by Bob Friendship in 1980 as the Simca Aronde Owners Register, later the Simca Owners Register
Now also incorporating the Talbot (1979-1986) Owners' Register

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4 All the above were re-elected at our 2024 AGM.....

The views expressed in articles or letters in L'Aronde are not necessarily the views of the committee of Simca Club UK No responsibility will be accepted for loss, damage or injury arising in the consequence of anyone acting on information contained in this publication

Services, parts suppliers and Sales& Wants

Angel Motors..... Dick Husband is now at Unit 5, Spring Gardens Industrial Estate, Whitland, Carmarthen, SA34 0HZ. He is working on reducing his huge stock of parts in light of rising storage costs. He may just have that elusive part for your 'club' car. . EMAIL.....
angel.motors.wales@gmail.com 07785 595221

TALBOT..... Exhaust systems / windscreens / gear change rods /driveshafts /water pumps /alternators / starters /service items plus many bits you thought you couldn't get again, and free advice on these models..... Contact COLIN HILL Horizon / Alpine /Solara spares /servicing 01473 737325 or 07510180574
colihill@hotmail.com also for Talbot stickers

GUY MAYLAM can supply new old stock parts for most SIMCA, Talbot & Chrysler models.....
guymaylam@aol.com or tel. 07801 187131

KEVIN WARD can supply parts with particular emphasis on MATRA-SIMCA Bagheera and SIMCA 1100 items. Contact him on 01246 278508 or email kev.ward1204@btinternet.com



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Email philhartsr3@talk21.com , or phone 07949 440 721 *Phil also has a stock of 13/1501 parts contact him for more details*

MICK WARD

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SIMCA TALBOT MATRA scukmick@aol.com



Brakes, steering, suspension, filters, gaskets, wheel bearings, etc. Contact Mick for all things SIMCA TALBOT MATRA.



Forthcoming events 2025.....and into 2026

If you are in the Derbyshire area on Mondays with your classic, parking is free for those vehicles in the market area. , 09.00 onwards to 4pm ish. Enter from West Bars by the Portland Hotel (Wetherspoons) along bottom of market redevelopment site turn left after Market hall and left again above that to our line up.... More info from Mick Ward Editor.

The UK 'SIMCA Racing Team' have been out on the track at FCTDC's 'Charity Track Days' at Blyton Park this year. A late season extra one has now been added on Friday 14th November.... Phil Hart and myself will be there with our SIMCAs along with Richard and Fred Troop with their Avengers.

Lancaster Insurance Classic Motor Show 2025 NEC Birmingham... On 7 to 9th November see SIMCA Club on stand 5-780..... See following page advert for Discount details using code CCCNOV5814 for club/facebook group members. Guy and Stuart will be hosting and setting up our stand as usual and this year we'll no doubt be celebrating 50 years since the launch of the Chrysler Alpine/SIMCA 1307/8.

SIMCA Club UK's AGM be held at our usual venue Longford House Beefeater Cannock on Saturday 25 October 5pm onwards. Come and let us know how we are doing running the club, even offer to help out?

The 2026 SIMCA, MATRA Talbot International meeting



Thomas Coppys has supplied these links for the event and accommodation
<https://www.simcabelgium.be/pages-club-pagina-s/ism-herve-2026.html>
<https://www.simcabelgium.be/medias/filles/logement-herve-2026.pdf> more to follow as website is added to.

The **BIG** end of season indoor show... See **SIMCA & MATRA** clubs there

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*Discount code is for club members, friends and followers use only. Quote the club code online to save £4 off single-day adult tickets or £2 off family, child & multi-day tickets. Club discount applied to advance ticket prices before midnight on Thurs 6 Nov and show open ticket prices thereafter. Full ticket information: www.necclassicismotorshow.com/tickets. Book by 16 Oct to help your club earn extra benefits.

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7 find us on stand 5-780

Shelsley Walsh 'Chill on the Hill' 20/09/25

Mick Ward

After the success of the earlier event MAC decided to repeat it. Billed as an event for road registered cars, I left the Youngtimer racer at home and took the Rallye 2. Great fun all day with its Phil Hart built 1442 engine and a bonus was... dodgy weather forecast meant some didn't turn up and some left early with the ominous clouds, those of us who remained got 10 runs. Will definitely do it again next year, maybe in the 1200S coupe?

Here's the write up on the earlier event from Midland Automobile Club's magazine.

[MAC NEWS ■ ISSUE 280 | 2025]

Chill on the Hill

Words: Arron Groombridge

Not wanting to sound too much like a cliché, but the second edition of Chill on the Hill on Saturday June 14 really did live up to its name – a chilled and thoroughly relaxed day of driving and socialising.



The atmosphere was serene; the paddock murmured with idle chat and easy laughter. Ice creams and pints in hand, many toured the paddock – as ever at any Shelsley event an impromptu car show in its own right. 76 cars entered for the day, with a clutch of classics and a healthy number of modern machines squeezing, gingerly, into the historic paddock spaces.

And despite a dodgy forecast, by some miracle of meteorology, the black clouds all around, barring a brief shower at lunch, generously chose to deposit their contents in the parched fields beyond this stretch of the Teme Valley.

The day ran smoothly from start to finish, with no major incidents to speak of – unless you count the emotional one suffered by the driver of a particularly pretty Fiat Coupé whose clutch gave up the ghost. It expired elegantly, in the way that only Italian cars can.

This allowed each driver the opportunity to enjoy up to six runs throughout the day. With no competitive pressure, it was all about the fun – ascending the hill, not attacking it and the clock,

simply enjoying the unique experience that Shelsley Walsh provides with just their road car and a helmet.

The amount of MAC helmets doled out on the day really did highlight that many of those who took to the hill weren't motorsport regulars. Chill on the Hill opens this oldest of motorsport venues to a whole new wave of enthusiasts and if that wasn't enough, paid for passenger rides had the bonus that each one contributed £10 each to Prostate Cancer UK.

Many participants – and quite a few spectators too – were already asking when the next opportunity would be to take part in a day like this: they will be delighted to know that we will be Chilling on the Hill again on September 20th

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took the Rallye 2 on the trailer behind my Suzuki Vitara, as past experience has taught me that any kind of competition can bring up unexpected faults. The car performed spot on with no issues. The entry list for the day was really varied with a good sprinkling of classics to newish supercars and all in between



Photos by Jake Owen



8 Clive Forder would like to see this as a club get together in future

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40 years ago and the early times of the club

Simca Owners Register at Motor 100 – our first large public display

David Chapman's memories

It was a sudden jolt a couple of months ago that I realized it was 40 years since we had a Club stand at Motor 100 at Silverstone. As the name suggests, this was staged to celebrate 100 years of the motor car and held at the Silverstone circuit. There was some debate in the motoring press as to the accuracy of 1885 being the right year, but the many classic car clubs that were invited to display cars were not going to argue. In fact only recently did I learn that the first British motor show was held in that year, an "Exhibition of horseless carriages" in London.

Our stand was well organized by Dick Husband and, given that we only had about 20 members in the Register at the time, very well supported with no fewer than 8 Simcas of various ages on display. The event was held on the Bank Holiday, 25 – 27 May 1985 and the cars were to be displayed on all 3 days. This meant staying overnight with a choice of camping or B and B accommodation. As my camping days were behind me, I managed to find a rather nice pub near Towcester, the nearest town to Silverstone. My friend Kim Tredgett also stayed there, his car providing us with transport to and from the circuit each day.

Our cars provided a good display of the range of Simcas built between 1954 and 1979. Oldest car there was Howard White's 1954 Simca 9 Aronde, in light grey. Howard only made it on the Sunday and Monday, having fought a dose of flu leading up to the event. Next was a 1955 Aronde Grande Large coupe in black owned by Mr Cheeseman of Thornton Heath. A Surrey registered car, it was in amazing condition with only 18000 miles on the clock. Many of you will have seen it in more recent years as it is now in Dick Husband's care.

Next was a 1959 Simca Aronde P60 Elysee owned by Jill and Phil Ewan. A LHD car, imported into the UK in 1982, it was in an eye catching red and white two tone colour scheme. Contrasting with the Elysee saloon was the 1960 Aronde Castell estate owned by Mrs Simmonds, who bought the car new. It was displayed at the 1960 London Motor Show prior to Mrs Simmonds' purchase.

1962 Aronde Monthlery P60 saloon owned by Dick Husband. In grey and as Dick said at the time, due a respray, it represented the last full year of Aronde production prior to the introduction of the Simca 1300 and 1500 range.

1972 Simca 1501 Special brought by Bob Friendship, founder of the Register. Bob's father purchase the car new.

1979 Simca 1006 GLS special in metallic green also owned by Jill and Phil. This model and the 1005 variant were the last 1000 models marked in the UK and came with tinted glass, velour upholstery and a folding rear seat. This latter feature was on early Simca 1000s but had not been available for a number of years.

Finally was my 1979 Simca 1100 GLS Special in navy blue then with under 9000 miles recorded. The only front wheel drive car on display, and paving the way for the Alpine and Horizon, examples of which were still being made at the time in both Coventry and France.

Howard supplied a very professional looking sign saying Simca Owners Register for the front of our stand and Dick brought some display boards with photos and sales brochures of Simcas

More on Motor 100 at Silverstone 1985

over the years. Our stand was visited by many members of the public and we regarded ourselves as a proper classic car club. Weather over the 3 days was mixed. The Saturday was hot and sunny, it turned humid on the Sunday morning and the afternoon brought torrential rain that continued for Monday morning. It eased off in the afternoon when it was the turn of classic car clubs in the "R to Z" category to take to Silverstone circuit for 5 laps. This was great fun as the surface was still wet and my 1100 was able to "out corner" a couple of Sunbeam Tigers. Needless to say, they left me well behind on the straights.

This was the first time I had met other members of the Register and I must thank Bob, Dick and Jill and Phil for making me feel welcome. They had all met before at a gatherings held at the Yeovil Festival of Transport in Somerset. The friendships forged at Motor 100 have lasted 40 years even if we only see each other occasionally now.



Photos on front cover supplied by Kim Tredgett

Members' cars.... Andy Stubbs' extra Alpine..... Cars at Thoresby Show



Andy has acquired another Alpine, an '81 peony red 1.5GL formerly owned by Tony Owen and more recently Alan Sykes..... Below £ rarities at a recent Thoresby Park Classic Show.....



New member Neville Tuck's recently restored Rancho, Your editor's '84 Talbot 1100 pickup and brother Kev's late model MATRA Bagheera.... My pickup disgraced itself by conking out on the way home failed electric fuel pump. Engine I'd fitted still had mechanical one.. repiped and away again.

1981 Talbot range and Horizon tackling the Sahara Desert the same year



Clive Milner's custom SIMCA van... the French Dressing saga

Going back to October 1976, myself and then girlfriend on a visit to my sister and family in London, my nephew mentioned there was a custom car show at Alexandra Palace. A day out so all three of us went. It was amazing. The result of this was that my ex GPO Anglia van received a makeover. It already had a 1550 Cortina engine and gearbox with shortened propshaft, polished, ported and planed head, Alexander twin Stromberg 150 carb conversion and went rather well. Its original colour had been the GPO olive green, but had later been painted in busby yellow. After the Ally pally trip it gained a Sunbeam Rapier grille- off a mid '60s model and was painted black. I was quite happy with that.

My cousin and uncle called in at my dad's one day and Jeff mentioned he was buying a van as a runabout for his shop... A SIMCA van from Randerson of Horsforth. They were a Rootes Group/Chrysler/SIMCA dealer, and the van had been their parts collection and breakdown motor until replaced by a newer model. All they had to do was to remove their lettering and put an MOT on it.

Two weeks later when Jeff came back it was still sitting in a corner of their yard, untouched. Another couple of weeks, they said, been busy. By this time he really needed a van so he went elsewhere.

Fast forward some months and my Anglia had a mishap, no anti-tramp bars fitted, and one day during about of spirited acceleration, both front spring hangers tore out of the chassis. This was terminal, and I needed transport. Many times when passing Randersons I had seen the van sitting forlornly in a

corner, so I went and asked about it. I think they were glad to get rid and use the space. A deal was struck and I took it to a friend's house where I could work on it in his garage, oil and filter change etc. As I recall I couldn't find anything needed in regard to MOT work, so, after a week of removing their lettering and generally cleaning up it went back to them and sailed straight through. I was mobile again. The Anglia went up my dad's drive while I decided what to do.

The SIMCA was already in the corporate colours so I left it that way. There were a pair of spot and fog lamps on the front bumper, no rear fog light in those days. I think it had only done thirty-something thousand miles when I got it. They had taken it in part-exchange and decided to use it, all white at the time (blanc Tacoma) they had bottom-halved it in Chrysler Carib Blue, there is a photo of one on the back page of L'Aronde Vol. 44 No.1 Jan/Feb 2024.

I know that later vans had a mesh frame behind the seats to stop loads forward on braking. I don't know if mine ever had. Maybe as 1971 they didn't do it then. I do know that Randersons were impressed with the cleanliness when I took it back for test. So began a long association with the company. In fact, that is where I obtained my various Alpines over the years.

In 1978 a car show was held in Horsforth Park. I went along and was again bitten by the custom bug. There were customs, yanks, kitcars, all sorts, a FIAT 500 with wide wheels and large air intakes either side of the engine lid. I never found out what was in it nor have I ever seen it since. I came away with a head full of ideas and acquaintance with some people who later became

Clive Milner's custom SIMCA van... the French Dressing saga

good friends when I joined the Leeds and District Cruisers.

Bear in mind this was just a 2 tone van at the time, a useful load carrier, with part of the hubcaps picked out in red, a tidy motor, but things were going to change. A couple had recently bought a house near where I worked at the time, and were making improvements. The kitchen must have been panelled out in wall boarding, the type that looks like fake planks. I scrounged a couple of sheets off them, and a joiner friend and I cut them to shape as side panels for the rear and tailgate. With loft insulation behind them there was less road noise and, at the time, I thought they looked good, suppose it did really. 2 holes cut in them and speakers fitted, cassette player under the dash, needing somewhere to keep the cassettes, I got a glovebox from a scrap car and threw away the little fibreboard parcel shelf from the passenger side.

Following the Horsforth Park car show I bought an airbrush, as can be seen from the photos taken in the winter of '78. I am not and never will be Ray Mumford, but I was pleased with my achievements at the time. That summer a bunch of us had a week at some holiday flats in Morecambe. By that time the van had the obligatory sidepipe. On returning to the flats and parking up I was surprised to see an officer of the law coming to see me, with some trivial excuse or other. I think he just wanted a nosey. Anyway, he said the sidepipe was hot. It would be, it was the exhaust! He said that someone could burn their ankles on it. My point was that if they were standing that close they were up to no good. He said it needed a heat shield on it, so once back at home I went to Doubtfire Engineering

who had shortened the Anglia propshaft for me. He rolled and bracketed one out of aluminium. This you can see in second photo.

So many vehicles at shows had names, therefore mine needed a name too. French Dressing came to mind – French vehicle dressed up.. why not? The seats at the time were the originals, with a cover on the driver's seat which made it look and feel like a bucket seat, an add-on headrest completed the job.

A new petrol flap was obtained, and treated to a mini mural- the van driving down a road under blue skies passing green fields.

A mate to Greece on holiday and brought back a skeleton to hang from the mirror. Hopefully it's still there. Same mate went to Russia, Luckily I didn't get a Lada.

At some point I was offered Alloy wheels, 100+ Octavos, set of 5, £45, had them bead blasted, painted inside the spokes and lacquered them. 2 on in the winter photos. By the way I didn't paint the name on the van, I had it done by a signwriter I had known since a kid, that's why it's neat.

Being a French vehicle it needed further enhancement, sort of. We had an elderly artist living nearby. He agreed that with a plan of the bonnet he would draft up the Eiffel Tower on to tracing paper for me, but not actually paint it on to the bonnet, as he only worked in water colours. I borrowed a book from the Library and he enlarged a picture on to tracing paper. It was eventually transferred to the bonnet by Bob Wood, who did all the artwork at Len's Lambrettas of Windhill, Shipley, but that is moving on too far. Bob is a long-time friend of Mark Harriman, who used to be into Humbers, and outside **15**

Clive Milner's custom SIMCA van... the French Dressing saga

whose home the photo was taken of my green and gold Alpine the night before his wedding (published a few issues ago). Another mate, Pete, with whom a pack of us visited Belle Vue, Manchester Custom Show in 1979, informed me that one of his neighbours had wrecked his 1978 Alpine, as it was in the garden we went to see it. No doubt about it was a write off and as so the idea of a transplant occurred when the insurance company sent it to a scrapyard, Dickinsons just over half a mile from here. Negotiations took place and I ended up the owner of a 15000 mile 1442cc engine. They removed it for me... ,



So we got as far as buying the engine, I couldn't afford the gearbox and diff, assuming the driveshafts would. fit anyway. The next couple of weeks were spent preparing what might be needed..

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such as accelerator cable, clutch, exhaust twin front pipe and flexy to sidepipe. I rented a workshop for a weekend and, with a couple of mates, we got stuck in. Saturday saw the engine out (see photo) relevant parts changed over and the new one fitted. Sunday had it up and running... noticeable difference in performance. The bonnet didn't shut, due I suppose to the extra height of the engine, but a bit was cut out of the ribbing and problem solved (had same issue with 1442 swap in my other 1100s solved in same way...ED)



At some time later I had a vinyl roof fitted, a blue one. After that I was offered a boot lid spoiler off a Viva. This was the kind which was mainly flat with both ends turned down. On measuring up, it was better without the ends, so they were cut off and the spoiler went off to the vinyl people to be covered. When fitting I put a pair of accessory rear fog lights underneath it....

Thanks Clive..... story continues next time.....

Meanwhile..... I've made some progress on it, fitting doors and front wing, had engine running. Issues on my 1100 pickup keep taking me away from it though..... Ed.

L'Aronde article

From: Colin Hill (colihill@hotmail.com)

To: scukmick@aol.com

Date: Tuesday 9 September 2025 at 11:18 BST

A great pleasure to receive the July edition of our magazine and see another Horizon Pullman in such great condition. My own Pullman has spent a busy year with 9 Classic Car Shows attended ,and 1 more to go. I attend many of them with Emma Chinnery -daughter of the much missed Robert Chinnery- and her rare Citroen GSA. She also organises a local monthly Coffee and Classics morning ,so the car has been well seen ,enjoyed and approved of. Naturally the only one at every show. It became Tax Free this year ,so an added bonus ,and next year my Solara Rapier also becomes Tax Free ,so will be taken out then. Unfortunately, I will be unable to attend the AGM this year ,as a) the distance is too great for me to drive now and b) after I was hospitalised with pneumonia, I was advised to steer clear of hotels etc where one cannot guarantee the quality of the cleaning regime, despite now having been vaccinated against pneumonia twice. The joys of old age eh.

I've not had to do any work on either of my Talbot's ,so am concentrating now on an MG Midget 1500 which I bought 2 years ago ,as a local car ,and was unable to find a Talbot that was in need of restoration. Ironically Guy Maylam and Stuart Wade found an Alpine soon afterwards , not that far from me ,and stopped on the way back to show it to me when they collected it. The Midget is a total basket case ,but absolutely everything is available from a couple of sources. Reminds me of the glory days of R.J.Grimes when most things could be got from them. In addition ,I bought an MG ZR (based on the Rover 25) as it was about to be taken into my local scrap-yard, only to find it's a rare car with a 1.8 litre VVC engine with 160 BHP on tap ,but with a bright yellow paint finish that has a hint of green in the sun-light- a swine to try and match up. Again ,virtually all parts are still available from various sources. A complete restoration ensued ,and what a machine ,and only now being appreciated as being more than 'badge engineered' version of the 25. Quick reaction steering ,close coupled gearchange ,4 disc brakes , Leather seats and yellow colour coordinated interior trim. Quite a machine.

Going back to the car shows ,it's amazing how fondly the Horizon is remembered by many people in the day. I had one couple come up to me and the husband said that his wife had said as they left home - I bet we don't see a Horizon!. Quite made her day. In addition ,a common comment is about the Tagora which people remember ,but never bought. Another friend of mine ,Ron Bensley passed away this year and still with his black Tagora 2.2 in his lock-up. Will be interesting to see if that appears on the circuit in due course.

I was recently given a few older car magazines by Emma Chinnery ,and was delighted to see an article that featured our very own Mick Ward and his racing exploits. No doubt Mick was too proud to publish it in L'Aronde ,but would like to suggest he does ,as it's fascinating reading.

Classics World. July 2024. Page 20. (I have a copy I could send you if needed).

Colin Hill

Ron Bensley RIP and Matchbox Model Rancho.....

Colin Hill mentioned the sad passing of Ron Bensley, a serial Tagora owner and the black one he still owned. Here's a photo of that car I think at a Ragley Hall event quite some years ago...



Also a Talbot Sunbeam that he'd fitted with a PRV V6 engine on a Volvo gearbox I believe.



Paul Sargent, facebook friend and former SIMCA dealer has sent me these photos of a Rancho model. From a diecast model website 'Matchbox' model No.37 from around 1983 is featured. This one in yellow with clear windows and a yellow tailgate. Earlier variations apparently came in blue. Yellow ones came both with and without the red stripe.

It's amazing just how many different models of the Rancho were produced in various scales. I suppose, at the time the concept was revolutionary. Just a pity on the full size Rancho MATRA completely forgot about rustproofing the structure, the 1100 pickup base not needing any help to rust..! as I know only

too well..... ED.



Anything on SIMCA, MATRA, Talbot models welcome for L'Aronde.... ED.

18 I wonder what the rarest models of cars in the range are.....??

New member David Handley begins his Samba restoration

David's Samba Cabriolet DHA222Y so far with the engine to come out shortly. A new roof is being made right now. The car will soon be off to the bodyshop.



19



Just when I was searching for Samba material for our mag. Thanks David



19

Restoring a 'club' car? Please let us know about it with photos... Ed

Matra maintenance meeting and club cars at Thoresby Park Show

On 5th October the MATRA Club revived their 'Maintenance meeting' at the venue of previous ones, the 'Green Man' on the A43 near Silverstone. Cars turning up were mostly Murenas, with an Espace 3 and rare Djét. Our cars were invited but the only ones there were my Talbot 1100 pickup and former member Sam Burgess' modified Horizon sporting a bike carb conversion. It was suggested parts could be bought and sold there so I filled the pickup with Alpine, Samba, 180, '01 parts surplus from job lots we'd bought. Pity there were no customers from our club although some parts common with the Murenas and Bagheeras found a home. A good get together at a welcoming pub.... So worth the trip and the pickup fresh from loads of work performed spot on.



As I complete this issue of L'Aronde I'm aware that I have some material recently sent in I was not able to include this time. Fear not, It will go into the next issue to follow soon....



At Thoresby Park Show we had 3 cars together, the only Talbot/MATRA cars there that shared parts. All three had a 1442 cc engine, Bagheera's twin carb and mid mounted, front structure torsion bar suspension. New member Neville Tuck's Rancho of course was based on the 1100

From the launch of the original 1118cc SIMCA Rallye, the kits available to upgrade it for competition, engine parts, suspension, lightweight panels etc...

HAWAS CONSEIL

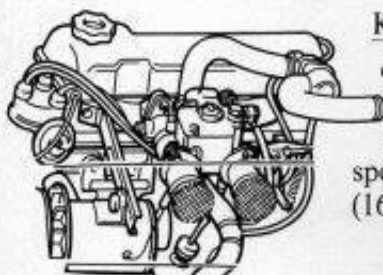
11

8995 F.*

La Simca 1000 Rallye est déjà compétitive.

5 kits la font entrer dans la compétition.

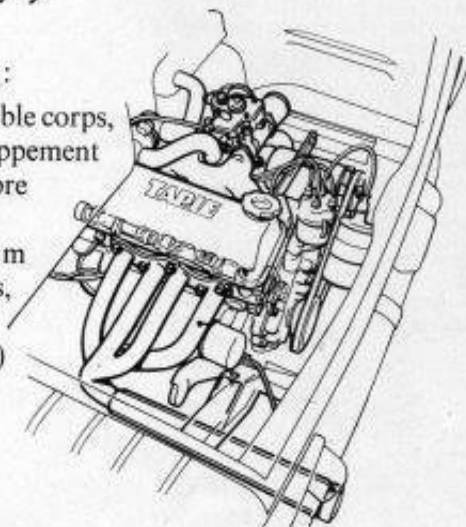
Pour les mordus, un spécialiste compétition a réalisé 5 kits qui s'adaptent à la Simca 1000 Rallye.



Kit performances:
carburateur Weber 40DCOE double corps, tubulure spéciale d'admission (160 km/h).

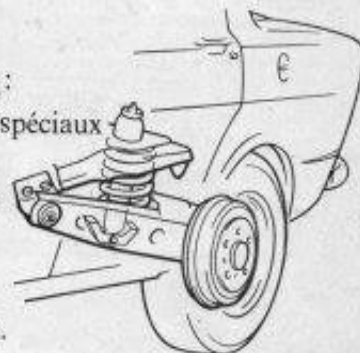
Kit compétition:

carburateur double corps, tubulure d'échappement compétition, arbre à cames spécial (170 km/h - 400 m en 16,3 secondes, le km départ arrêté en 32,3 s.)



Kit suspension:

4 amortisseurs spéciaux tarage rallye, 2 ressorts AR. hélicoïdaux, 1 jeu de cales spéciales pour suspension AR.



Kit jantes larges:

roue monobloc largeur 5 1/2 et 6 pouces. Et, pour compléter cet équipement: arceau de sécurité, manomètre pression d'huile.



Kit allégement:

4 ailes en plastique avec passages de roues modifiés pour jantes larges, 2 capots en plastique, 2 pare-chocs en plastique avec dispositif de fixation des phares à iode.

8995 F. La Simca 1000 Rallye est déjà compétitive. Il suffit de 5 kits pour qu'elle entre dans la compétition.

Simca 1000 Rallye/6 cv/150 kmh



**CHRYSLER
FRANCE**

* T.T.C. + FRAIS DE LIVRAISON / CREDIT CAVIA / POUR LES "MORDUS" : CHEZ VOTRE CONCESSIONNAIRE CHRYSLER-FRANCE : 5 KITS / LEASING LOCASIM
SIMCA A CHOISI L'HUILE SHELL SUPER 100.

Mick's 'Modifieds'..... Transplants over the years by your editor

Not to everybody's taste but I've always liked to try to make things that weren't available from the factory. It all started in the '70s in grasstrack racing. Needed more power than the 1500S VW engine in the Karmann Ghia so fitted a Lotus-Ford twin cam to the VW gearbox via a Hewland adaptor kit.



After years of circuit racing SIMCAS where I had to use the original engines, I returned to the Tarmac ovals using a SIMCA 1100 with a twin weber carbbed 1442 engine with race cam. Too heavy against the smaller Fiestas, Corsas and Metros, I saw the rules allowed engine swaps from the same manufacturer. The 'Poissy' engine doesn't fit a Samba.. it does with the front end of a 309 welded in..!! So in went the 1442 never got the 205 Gti though .



By the mid 00's I'd retired from competitive racing to just doing trackdays. One of my old racecars came back to me. I needed an engine. Not bound by class rules. What modern engine rotates anti clockwise like the SIMCA 1000 engine? The Honda D and B series...So an Ebay bargain '89 CRX twin cam went into the SIMCA on carbs for simplicity. It went well but the SIMCA Gearboxes are close to their limit as I found, crown wheel and pinion being the weak link. That car was sold less the engine and the spare bodyshell is now back with me after a couple of 'dreamer' owners, on the list for restoration



Always admired the tiny Abarths but not the prices. The SIMCA 1000 has FIAT 850 heritage so bought A SEAT built 850 rehash the 133 and fitted a 1294 SIMCA engine with Rallye 3 cam and Honda Bike carbs, gave it steering and brakes to cope with late 1000 front suspension giving discs and rack & pinion. My 'FIMCA' went well never bothered about the cosmetics though. Sold, several owners on it came up on Ebay for £5K fully restored..!!



22 Current transplants recreation of Honda CRX/SIMCA 1000 and SIMCA 1000 powered Ransomes Mini crawler tractor when I find the time....!! Ed.

SIMCA/Talbot 1100 light commercial progress here in Derbyshire

My '84 Talbot 1100 pickup has been fighting me all the way since I fitted a replacement 1442 engine. Once I'd sorted gearbox etc oil leaks and refitted everything... time to try it out. Ran but very hit & miss with no power & leading to checking & readjusting almost everything. Finally got it running a bit better but struggled to get reliable tickover. Ended up trying various carbs and manifolds, eventually replacing fuel pump with an electric one. Then drained fuel tank and replaced flexible parts on fuel line and new filters... a bit better. Today as I write this have found one of the new spark plugs I'd fitted, while appearing to be firing, the metal connection to the plug lead was loose in the ceramic part. Replaced...now starts and ticks over Ok on the drive... yet another test run will tell tomorrow..... Then hopefully I can get on with the cosmetics after over a year off the road.



running it off small mower tank to eliminate blockage problems elsewhere.



As for the '71 1100 custom van. I'd have liked to be further along with it but attention to the pickup intervened. I have had it running, initially from the small mower tank in a previous photo. Fired up almost straight away and sounds great... just as Clive said it would. The 1442 engine on twin 36DCNF Webbers from a 1204 Special should make for lively performance. Next jobs involve getting it moving and stopping. I knew it needed new rear wheel cylinders and shoes, all of which I've got. The clutch pedal feels solid, suspect seized master cylinder which I've got. The slave cylinder looks more recent. Meanwhile I've made some progress on bodywork. Fitted O/S front wing and door. A new N/S door came with it so fitted the glass, winder and all the fittings and hung the door at which point I found a problem Kev had found on his '71 1204 Special. The early cars had a proper outer door handle rather than the later irritating flaps. Obviously part way through production of the early doors SIMCA moved the lock assembly down slightly.... This was one of those doors. The lock assembly and the 'nog' on the pillar didn't meet... A bit of cutting and redrilling door back edge and sorted. Next jobs refitting the rear wings and glass and lights in the tailgate.





Top: The older Bagheera faces the newer, red, Murena
Above from top to bottom: The sleek lines of the glassfibre-bodied Bagheera date back to 1973 and have worn well; the three-abreast seating from the Talbot Murena; the Murena looks shorter and more hunched than the Bagheera, but at the same time more modern

MATRA BAGHEERA & MURENA

Although very few Bagheeras were officially imported, a surprising number have made their way to Britain. **John Dalton** tells you what to look for in the exotic mid-engined three-seater and its more modern replacement, the Talbot Murena

A curious machine is the Matra Bagheera (the name is that of the Black Panther in Kipling's *The Jungle Books*). It's a mid-engined coupé, very well-styled in most people's opinion, has three-abreast seating and is both light and fast. Technically, the specification is impressive, for the car has all-independent torsion-bar suspension, discs all round, an undertray-type chassis with bulkheads at each end under the glassfibre bodywork and, with a 1296cc or later a 1442cc engine, 102 or 115mph performance, with acceleration to match.

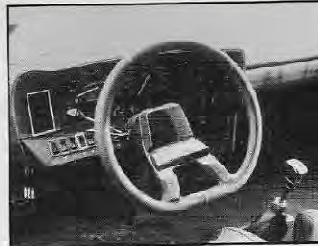
That, as Hercule Poirot might have mused, is quite enough to agitate those little grey cells, especially when examples can be bought for anything from £500. Why do so few Englishmen drive them? Does the car's

singular layout and foreign genesis frighten them, or is there another side to the story? Although only a few were officially imported, second-hand examples are not hard to find, and with personal importing now so much easier, there are a great number to be found just over the channel.

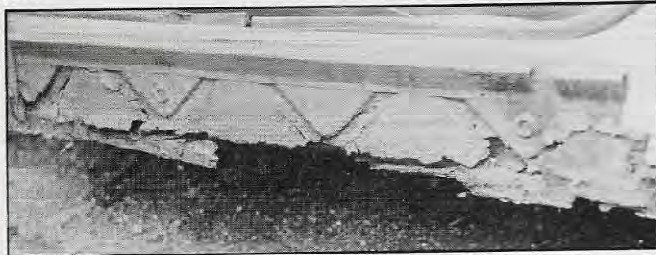
The Matra company, based at Romorantin, just south of Paris, has a most impressive racing heritage. In 1972, '73 and '74 the 3-litre V12 M670S, huge, bullet-fast two-seaters, won Le Mans in style, also scooping the World Endurance Championship Constructor's Cup in the latter two years after an extraordinary series of wins. During those years the company, which was part of the Société Anonyme des Engins Matra, an organisation also involved in aviation, telecommunications,



Under the glassfibre skin rust can cause havoc



Interiors and dashboards were unmistakeably French



Although rusty sills can look very bad indeed repair is quite straightforward, as it is to the whole chassis

sophisticated optics, microchip technology and civil engineering, was attempting to market the strangely styled Matra 530 two-seater sports car, a V4 Ford-powered 2+2 seater targa-top model which was about as rigid as a Galois packet when the roof panels were removed. Despite that, the car both drove and handled well, but because Matra were so heavily involved in the racing programme the 530 could not be built and sold in sufficient numbers to make it a practicable proposition. At the same time the company had been working with Chrysler France on a replacement coupé for the 530 model, aimed at the European youth market and codenamed 550. When it emerged in France in June 1973, the company was completely dominating endurance racing and the Bagheera was an immediate success.

This first-series car was powered by a 1294cc, Simca 1100 Special engine, a four-cylinder, overhead-valve unit which produced 84 bhp with its twin Webbers. The car received good reviews, and *Autocar* found it would reach 60mph in 12.3 seconds and carry on to over 100mph, as well as deliver between 30 and 40mpg. A few found their way into England, but owners everywhere soon realised that it was somewhat underpowered, for the balanced, mid-engined layout, excellent suspension and strong brakes were clearly capable of handling more horses.

Matra compiled in 1977, and the new Bagheera was fitted with the 1442cc Chrysler Alpine engine, which, with its twin Webbers, produced no more horses but more torque. The S and X derivatives of that engine, however, produced 90bhp at 5800rpm, 6bhp more than the 1294cc engine, bringing 60mph in 10.6 seconds and a top speed of 115mph. The bodywork had been restyled too, the nose lengthened and given a wraparound bumper, and the quality of the interior trim had been much improved. In terms of a second-hand buy today, the latter model is clearly preferable, but both offer outstanding performance and economy for their size of engines, as well as

being guaranteed to turn a few heads. But how practical are they?

One man who knows both models very well — and the later, similar styled Murena, which has 1600cc and 2.2-litre engines — is Dick Gilbert of the Matra Enthusiasts' Club, who enjoys what is known as 'The Peterborough Effect'. He has owned and rebuilt Bagheeras as well as worked on many club members' cars, and on the day we visited him there were examples of all three Matras on his property, including an accident-damaged and rust-covered Bagheera which he is in the process of rebuilding.

Dick was first attracted to Matras 'simply because they were different, like the Citroëns I had beforehand. I read the old road tests, which said wonderful things about the car, and thought "Right, I'll get one", which is how he learned all about Bagheeras.

Easily available parts

As with any vehicle you tend to get what you pay for, and a car for £500 is bound to have a few problems. If it's foreign and unusual you might assume that any faults will be prohibitively expensive to put right, but the main advantage of the Bagheera (and Murena) is that virtually all the mechanical components have been cannibalised from mass-produced saloons, and are thus easily obtainable either new or from the scrapyards. Furthermore, he enthused, 'the car having a glassfibre body means that rust doesn't show'. This may sound a mixed blessing when inspecting a prospective purchase, but the advantage here is that most of the steel sections prone to rust are either flat or right-angled, and can be replaced by any competent welder.

But let's start with the engine, not much of which can be seen through the hatch just forward of the boot. It looks difficult to get at but is actually quite accessible once one has climbed into the boot and removed the large air-box over the Webbers. The most noticeable thing about Alpine engines in

operation is the noise of the tappets, which Dick says is mainly caused by insufficient oil changes. The oil supply to the rockers is not particularly direct, and once the passage gets gummed up with sludge the resultant sluggish feed accelerates wear to the rockers and shaft. 'However,' said Dick, 'every Alpine under the sun has noisy tappets. You can spend days and days setting them up and they'll still sound like a bag of nails, but it doesn't seem to affect the performance of the car. The Bagheera will still go like the clappers. It's just an evil racket.'

With the air box removed, regular maintenance is not difficult, and in fact tappet-adjustment on the Matra is easier than on Alpines because of the angle of the engine. Although the distributor is set at a different angle, timing-adjustment is unnecessary anyway because of the use of pre-set points on the early cars, the same as those used on the Citroën GS, and later cars have electronic ignition. The plugs can be removed and checked by means of a socket and extension, as they are somewhat hidden by the carbs.

Weak synchromesh

The most difficult component to remove, should it be necessary, is the starter motor, which has to be approached from underneath. The job involves dismantling some of the suspension, loosening the engine mountings and then levering the block up with one's knees. The starter, Dick found, then follows the course of gravity and accelerates at the rate of 32 feet per second per second towards the garage floor, in this case avoiding damage by landing first on his face. But, he added cheerfully, that doesn't need to happen very often.

The only common problem with the four-speed Talbot gearbox is its weak synchromesh, which on some early Bagheeras began to show signs of trouble after only 25,000 miles. After fruitlessly searching for a company willing to replace just the synchros (rather than offer an exchange box), Dick decided to tackle the job himself, and found it remarkably easy. His record for removing a gearbox, he claims, is 9m 50s, and he reckons he can remove the box, change the synchros and then refit the box in under two hours, for which he charges just £50. Even if the Alpine 'box or engine are completely beyond hope, exchange units can be obtained for moderate prices, an engine currently costing around £360.

The gear linkage, being some 6 feet long, may be sloppy on a well-used car, but the nylon cup ball-joints are not difficult or expensive to replace. They should, in good condition, provide a remarkably precise gear-change, but any wear will of course be exaggerated over such a length. The gear-change is likely to be sloppier on the 50 right-hand-drive Bagheeras which were converted and imported. On these the linkage was moved across the car by means of a 90 degree bend, and in this there is an ineradicable lost movement. The same holds true for the brakes on these cars, which Dick says will always tend to feel rather spongy because of the extra linkages. 'The Bagheera was made to be left hand drive, and that's how it should be,' he said.

The torsion-bar suspension may at first glance appear rather mysterious to those of us raised on leaf and coil springs, but the Matra's system is remarkably simple and effective. The ride in a Bagheera is

comfortable, yet the balanced design, low centre of gravity and suspension geometry mean that the car is wonderfully controllable, a trace of understeer being felt once the car is really pushed into a corner in the dry, and easily manageable four-wheel slides being possible in the wet. At the front there are longitudinal torsion bars, hydraulic dampers and an anti-roll bar, and on cars which have long been inhabited by just the driver the near-side can tend to sag. Unlike coil springs, however, the front torsion bars can be easily adjusted by means of a bell-crank and nut at their rear ends. Furthermore, if the alteration provided is insufficient to level the car, the bars can be pulled from their housings, turned one spline and put back. Dick pointed out that this is more likely to be a problem on the right-hand-drive models, for all Bagheeras were built with a stiffer spring on the nearside, and in the converted cars the driver thus sits over the weaker spring.

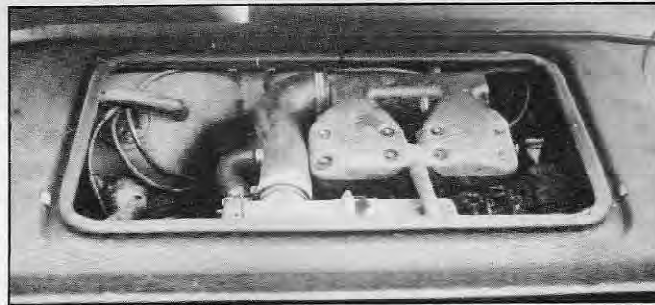
The front wishbones and the steering rack are from the Simca 1100, and spares are easy to find. The only likely necessary replacements on a well-used car are the track-rod ball joints and the anti-roll-bar bushes, both of which are relatively easy and inexpensive jobs to do: the bushes, for instance, cost about £1.50 each.

The rear suspension consists of alloy trailing arms and transverse torsion bars, the latter being non-adjustable. 'They are in theory,' said Dick, 'but forget it: it's a steel carrier which runs in the alloy trailing arms, and it seizes within seconds of coming off the production line. I've never known one that you can adjust, but then I've never known a car that needed it. The rear suspension is so firm they hardly seem to move, so the dampers don't wear very much either. It's a firm ride, but not uncomfortable, and the Murena's is, if anything, rather harder. The ride of an XR3i is by comparison much harder, much too harsh. On the whole, the rear suspension is very trouble-free.'

No braking problems

The Bagheera's disc-brake system is shared with several other cars. The front calipers are ATE units used also on Simcas, Vauxhalls, Opels and BMWs, and brake pads can be found at Halfords in the box marked 'Vauxhall Chevette' for about £4 a set. Dick recommends the cheaper, softer-compound types because of the Bagheera's lightness — harder pads tend to squeak. The brake servo and master cylinder are shared with the Chrysler 180 and the rear brake hoses come from a Renault. They are all well-proven parts and there is little likelihood of expensive problems. Of the brakes, *Autocar* said: '... on the open road, they proved beyond reproach'.

One of the most common faults with Bagheeras is pop-up headlights which don't. This problem is linked to a lumpy tickover, for the lights are raised and lowered by means of engine vacuum, made in a large tubular chassis member which traverses the car just in front of the engine, and which provides mountings for the torsion bars and trailing arms. If you look behind the rear wheels you will see in the wheel arches the ends of this pipe, each covered with a disc of steel, rather like a core plug. On older cars the salt and spray do their work and perforate the ends, which has a twofold result: the air-leak into one cylinder of the engine causes an erratic tickover, and very high revs are necessary before there is



As with virtually all mid-engined designs, access to the engine is extremely awkward and very frustrating

sufficient vacuum to raise the headlights. The problem, should it be present, is easily cured by welding new plates over the ends of the tube, sealing them and protecting them with paint and underseal.

The headlight problem can be exacerbated by the headlight-pod hinges, which can become stiff due to their exposure to dirt and water. This can cause the glassfibre around the headlight pods to flex and hair-line cracks to appear. The hinges are actually very difficult to reach, and need a regular squirt with a freeing agent to keep them lubricated. Should it be necessary to remove the car's nose section at any time (not a difficult job) the hinges can then be cleaned and greased.

The Bagheera's chassis does attract its fair share of rust, not much of which will be apparent without a thorough examination. A favourite spot is the top of the bulkhead, just in front of the windscreen. On each side there is a pad of foam for the nose section to sit on, to reduce vibration, and water soaks into these sponges and rots the steel beneath. However bad it looks, replacement steel can be welded in.

The sills are another major rust trap, and they are made in three layers, with a steel box-section and glassfibre on the outside. Water usually enters at the front and then creeps along between the two materials, rotting the outer (but invisible) steel plate and then entering the box section, where it sloshes around doing its worst. Dick assured us that replacing the metal is neither difficult nor particularly expensive, as the sills consist of flat and right-angled plates. A local welder recently completed the job for him for £100. The car being glassfibre, MIG welding is preferable.

The Bagheera's body has a superb finish, and being non stress-bearing, should be virtually free from cracks and crazing. It is attached to the chassis at all points by large rivets, the type used on lorry bodies, and the shell can be removed by simply drilling the rivets out and pulling off the panels. Replacement is just as simple, and the chassis can be driven without the body. Accident damage is usually confined to splits, cracks or shattered panels most of which can be glued together with time and patience. If they are needed, new panels are obtainable, and a nose section will cost around £400, with another £100 each for the two headlamp units. Non-proprietary noses are available from about £175, but Dick warned that one which was offered on the market, albeit with an excellent finish, was $\frac{3}{4}$ in longer on one side than the other. You pay your money...

If the doors show any sign of sagging it will probably be only the hinges that need

replacing, just 17p each from Talbot dealers. On really well-worn cars the hinges, welded to the pillars, can sometimes start to tear away if very rusty, but this can be remedied by opening the door, jacking it up and then MIG welding the hinge back.

We come at last to the interior, which will tell you much about the way the car has been treated. All the trim parts, seats and controls, are still available from France, although they are rather expensive. The majority of Bagheeras were the S model, trimmed with a rather coarse tweed on the seats, and once the Stilsons in your back pocket have gouged a hole the material continues to unravel. As with all cars, the interior is the most difficult area to repair (especially if your *forté* is spanners) and yet it's the part that you see most of the time. The answer is to find a scrapped Bagheera, and for the diligent, there are still such cars to be had.

Inside, the Bagheera feels very wide, thanks to the three seats and the slender nature of the doors, yet apparently it is actually no wider than a Capri. Dick said that it had taken him two weeks of driving the Bagheera before he durst overtake a cyclist, fearful lest the offside of his car be removed by approaching traffic. Now, as we experienced, he can judge the width perfectly.

Luggage space in the Bagheera consists of the generous boot behind the engine, some space behind the seats, the glove-box and whatever can be squashed around the spare tyre at the front: some models were fitted with detachable purses for the doors. Most Bagheeras were fitted with electric windows, and the instrumentation was good on all models, even the earliest having a battery gauge, oil-pressure gauge, brake-failure light and a voltmeter. The dials and gauges are all arrayed in a squarish binnacle in front of the driver, easily visible through the open wheel.

As with most mid-engined designs, the interior rear-view mirror provides a limited view, and it is the offside wing mirror which gets most use. However, like most drivers of left-hand-drive cars in this country, Dick no longer feels it to be much of a disadvantage.

The inspection over, it was time for a drive, and as the Bagheera was partially dismantled we travelled out in the Murena 1500, which shares the suspension, brakes and general layout of the Bagheera. With feline grace it zoomed along the dual carriageway of Peterborough, lapping up the miles and purring enthusiastically (but not noisily) behind our heads. The steering was light and precise, the cornering delicious. 'Formidable!' Poirot would have exclaimed. It's a Matra fact. ■

Samba photos, members' cars past & present and press photos

Samba rallyes etc mainly cars owned by David Hart in the past, the cabriolet I think is owned by Terry Curtis.... I'm always looking for Samba material for L'Aronde..... Ed.
Press photos from David Chapman...



PEUGEOT TALBOT NEDERLAND N.V.

Samba owners... let's see and hear about your cars

ED.

27

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