

# A classic just built for safari

By GEOFF LEWIS

One thing about the French is that they tend to do things their way and make no apologies. The distinctive Citroen D series is an example.

Hamilton couple Bill and Janet Parsonson have had almost a lifetime of experience in French vehicles. Bill can trace his first contact back to Dunedin as a child in the 1930s. Janet's early association came during an OE in France.

But the couple started off with a 38 Vauxhall when they first married and later toured the country in a Mini. Their first Citroen wasn't spotted until the early 1960s.

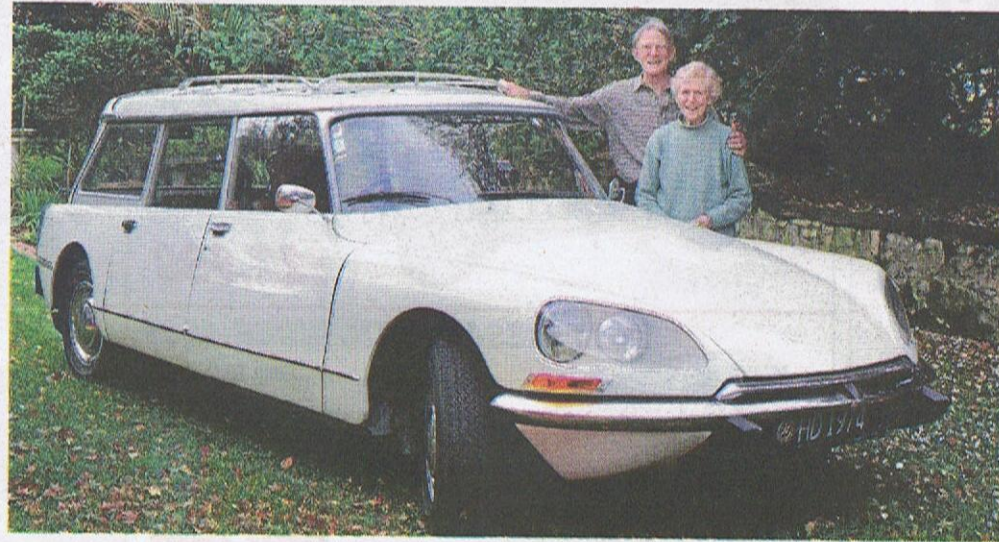
"It was the most beautiful cream and maroon colour," Bill said. "It looked like something that had arrived from Mars, especially in the 1960s when we were so used to the high old things. We thought we would love to have one."

The other-worldly comparison was appropriate too, according to Janet, as the "DS" is a play on French pronunciation and sounds very like the word for "Goddess" – the nickname for the type.

They bought their first example in Palmerston North where Bill was working as a secretary manager for Winstone Steel. The opportunity to

**Citroen fans:**  
Bill and Janet Parsonson with their 1974 Citroen DS Safari.

Photo:  
SHANE  
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purchase the DS 23 Super Safari, at the time one of only about 10 in the country, arrived in 1974.

Today the car is believed to be the last example of its type in Hamilton. There were at least three at one time. One belonged to Anglican Bishop David Moxon but was damaged in an accident and cannibalised for parts. Another belonged to the late Canon Monty Pierard. Bill suspects that car died of rust.

Rust, in general, has been the undoing of many Citroens and the superb condition of Parsonson's example can be credited to the liberal use of protective fishoilene – promptly making it a favourite

with the neighbourhood cats.

The original design for the D Series began before World War II and became a platform of the then-revolutionary Michelin radial-ply tyres when that company owned Citroen.

The Citroen DS was built from 1955 to 1975. Styled by Italian sculptor and industrial designer Flaminio Bertoni and the French aeronautical engineer Andre Lefebvre, the DS was known for its aerodynamic futuristic body design and innovative technology.

Citroen sold nearly 1.5 million D Series during the model's 20-year production run.

Probably its most outstanding feature is the hydropneumatic

suspension, and as Bill has found out, it doesn't matter how much weight is put in the vehicle it always rides at the same height. He says it actually handles better with a few extra kilos on board.

Bill and Janet have toured the DS around the South Island, loaded with kids and camping equipment and for a period owned an example of the quirky Citroen 2CV or "Deux Chevaux" – two horsepower.

The go-department in the DS is a four cylinder in-line 2347cc engine which should only be approached with a large set of multigrips, a flashlight and a determined expression.

The contents will come as a shock to anyone used to conventional automobile layout as the spare wheel lies in front of the radiator. The apparent disadvantage of this configuration is made up for by a scoop underneath and an effective electric fan.

with the transmission out the front leading the charge.

Bill recounted one incident of a clutch failure while in Auckland. The AA was called out but the serviceman took one look and booked the couple a hotel for the night while expert help was found.

The Parsonsons have been members of the Waikato Citroen Club since 1976 and these days also run a 2003 Citroen Xsara diesel, which is shorter and easier to park than the 5.5m-long DS.

Known for their comfort, the Safari is also equipped with two fold-down dickie seats in the rear.

The Waikato Citroen Car Club is one of six provincial clubs in New Zealand. It is part of the Citroen Car Club of New Zealand and exists primarily to enable people who have an interest in Citroens to meet and enjoy both their cars and the friendship of like-minded enthusiasts.

The Waikato club comprises 65 families living in and around Hamilton, Tauranga and Rotorua.

Club events include trials, gymkhanas, country tours, visits to car museums, visits to local sights, inter-club and social activities.

Membership costs \$50 a family a year and members receive both the regional magazine and the national magazine for this price.

Each year in turn, the provincial clubs host the national Citroen rally.

The Waikato Citroen club president is Robin Tervit, who can be contacted on 07 574 8110 or robinintervit@paradise.net.nz.