

Geoff Cleall's Citroen 2CV Rebuild. (Part 1)

Geoff gives us an insight into his other passion of restoring vintage vehicles.



I acquired the car, a 1987 2CV Bamboo Model in 2003. It was difficult to get home because the engine kept flooding, petrol running out profusely and the split starter solenoid was sending sparks in all directions. I have no idea why it didn't catch fire. I sorted out those problems but the car still wouldn't run. If I turned the ignition key, the engine would spin and it would fire up but as soon as I released the key the engine died. It had to be the switch.

While I was experimenting with the ignition switch I heard a rasping sound from under the bonnet. I found the car now jammed in gear and realised that the tired old gearbox had 'unscrewed' itself. A problem that some worn out 2CV boxes get. I was sitting casually in the driver's seat with the door open and my legs outside while continuing to play with the ignition switch. Suddenly the starter spun and with the 'unscrewed' gearbox, I was off across the lawn, narrowly missing a tree and jumping on the clutch and the brake, came to a halt with the nose of the car nuzzling an old beech hedge. I jumped out, head spinning round to see if anyone had witnessed my stupidity. Yes yes, I know, always disconnect the battery.

The next major job was to remove the body. After taking off the doors/boot lid/bonnet/window glass and removing a few screws, two of us just picked up the tub and carried it away. As I told my non 2CV owning friends, "The 2CV is light, every part is designed to be light, how else can a four seat

car with an engine that only produces 29 bhp pull the skin off a rice pudding and still do 46 miles to the gallon? Just don't have an accident!"

Rust in the chassis and the body tub was now plain for all to see. The forward arms of the chassis were so rusty that one side had bent down under the weight of the engine and the other was so rusty that I could easily bend it by hand. It quickly broke off. (See Pic). No wonder the steering felt heavy with steering column pressed into use in resisting the droop-snoot effect. The sills were shot away together with the bottoms of the 'A' and 'C' posts. The adjacent nearside and offside floors also had holes, one big enough to put a foot through. The inner and outer bulkheads were full of perforations, part of the metal that holds up the rear seat deck had also gone, the rear seat belt mountings had rusted out and there were holes through the spare wheel tray.



The new galvanised steel chassis arrived (See Pic) and it shows the start of the rebuild. Many people think that the 2CV has torsion bar suspension but the picture shows the actual arrangement. The car has independent suspension with rods coming from the

suspension arms and going into a cylinder shown on the side of the chassis. In the cylinder there are two springs that are linked. When the front wheel hits a bump it rises and pulls the rod which compresses the front spring. That influences the rear spring which, in effect, knows there is a bump coming. You can see the shock absorbers also set horizontally along the side of the chassis. There are no suspension components impinging on the inside of the car.

I marshal for the Classic Sports Car Club and followed the National 2CV Racing scene, even present at the 24-hour endurance events at Snetterton.



However, my project was still in its early stages but optimism is everything.....more of that anon.
Great article – thanks Geoff, we look forward to the next instalment!