

Fernand Migault was the son of the founder of a small toy factory situated at Paris, 166 rue de la Roquette. In 1922, this car enthusiast wanted to extend the range of his products, and he made an accurate model of a Citroën car. In 1919, André Citroën had built a large plant for manufacturing cars, and he was very busy. So it was not easy for Migault to have an appointment with Citroën, but as soon as he saw the model car, he was very excited: Citroën strongly believed in publicity, for ten years he displayed his name on the Eiffel Tower with 250,000 electric bulbs. He immediately understood the value of reproducing his cars as toys: the children would speak of these cars, and later on would buy them. Moreover, if these toys were sold in his sales agencies, when the father accompanied his child to buy a toy car, it would be an excellent opportunity to sell him a real one.

Thus a profitable collaboration began between Migault & Citroën: each year Migault suggested toy prototypes of a real car and he had access to all the plant documents for this car, even if the production had not started. But as the goal was the promotion of existing models, the toy was no longer made as soon as production of the original car stopped. At the beginning, Migault had only one customer, a company belonging to the Citroën group called Les Jouets Citroën. Its address was the same as the Citroën company: Paris, quai de Javel, now quai André Citroën. Migault delivered all the production to this company, which delivered the toys to its own customers: department stores, toy retailers, & naturally Citroën agencies, which were strongly encouraged to open a toy section.

The cars had various scales from 1:3 to 1:43, most of them were at 1:10 scale, and from 1928 constructional sets were added to the range. Sales soared, to 287,000 cars at the 1:10 scale for the year 1932. The small Paris workshop was soon overwhelmed, and a new company was formed, the Compagnie Industrielle du Jouet, or CIJ. A plant, employing more than 200 workers, was built at Briare, a little town on the river Loire. With the success of the cars, Les Jouets Citroën sold other products such as books, cube games, educational toys, etc., all linked with the Citroën cars. Naturally, these new toys were produced by other manufacturers, while CIJ made almost all the metal toy cars.

André Citroën had a high debt ratio and with the crash he had to cede control of his company to Michelin in 1934. CIJ, knowing its customer's difficulties, began to diversify its production. As Michelin was not very interested in selling toys, CIJ concluded a similar agreement with Renault, and Les Jouets Citroën became a mere shadow of its former self. CIJ continued to manufacture toy cars but unfortunately, facing strong competition, sales declined, & it was finally liquidated in 1965.

Most CIJ products were cars, often at the 1:10 scale, with working steering, a clockwork motor, and optional lightning. Although many cars were sold each year, not enough cars in good condition remain for the numerous avid collectors: a good condition car, not too rare, in its original cardboard box may be sold for the price of a #10 Meccano set, much more if it is rare. Several books describe all the Citroën cars made by different toy companies, while some of them specialize in the cars sold by Les Jouets Citroën. Among them, we have the four volumes of the bilingual (French-English), *La Saga des Jouets Citroën* by Patrick Pierron, and *L'Histoire des Jouets Citroën* by Paul Weill & Jean-Raoul Chaigné.

We are naturally particularly interested in the constructional sets with metal parts and N&B: the Bébé 14 Chassis; the C6 Chassis; and the Garage. These products were rather successful: the three of them are considered by *La Saga* as easy to find.

The Bébé 14 Chassis

The name of the corresponding chassis built by Citroën was

B14. It was manufactured from 1926 to 1928, and nine kinds of bodies could be fitted to it. In 1928 Les Jouets Citroën started selling a constructional version of it in a 57*34*4cm box (right). It



Fig.1

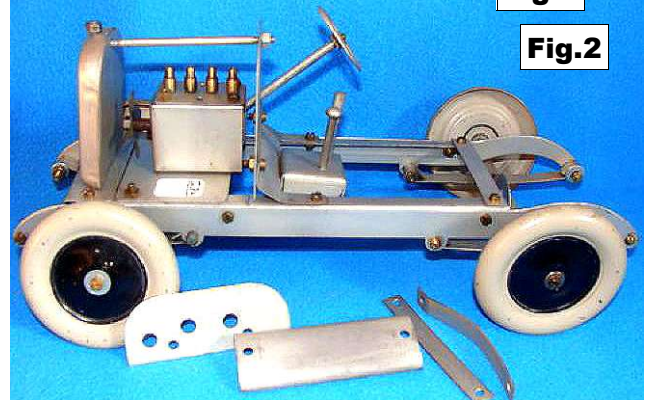


Fig.2

was at, very approximately, 1:10 scale and was not motorized. This set was an anomaly in Les Jouets Citroën range: the maker was not CIJ, but another company (I could not find its name). Unlike the CIJ products, it was very basic (Fig.2 above): the representation of the real chassis was not accurate, and the finish was not perfect. Almost all the parts, except the radiator, are flat, bent when necessary, but not pressed. Moreover, there were assembly problems in building the model. It is rather rare to find the box with its parts: as with many one model systems, one often finds it already built, the child has no interest in taking it apart, it can only be built again. It was sold for 140 francs, while the No.2 MECCANO set was sold the same year for 110 francs, & Set 3 for 185 francs.

The 4 page instructions were in French, English, & German. 26 steps, A to Z, were necessary to build the Chassis. Each was described in one paragraph, followed by its translation in English & German, in smaller type. This allowed the drawings to be put in the right place, only once for the 3 languages. All of this manual is shown in *L'Histoire des Jouets Citroën*.

The second volume of *La Saga* contains a picture representing the parts as they were displayed on the insert. Surprisingly enough, 90% of them are identical with those of the Chassis sold by Les Jouets Scientifiques Peugeot. The main difference is naturally the radiator, and none of the parts are painted red. Citroën was not very happy with the model, and stopped selling it when the production of the B14 chassis ended. The unknown maker wanted to write off the cost of its investment, so it then bypassed Citroën, selling directly to the Citroën agencies: in *La Saga*, a letter from the Citroën company to all its agents asks them not to buy directly the Chassis Bébé 14 offered by the commercial travellers of this maker. The reason given was that Citroën was preparing a much better toy, which will have an 'impeccable finish'; an implicit criticism of the Bébé 14. The lid of this 'pirate' set was different, probably because the initial one was made by Citroën. This explains why I have seen at a toy fair a Citroën Bébé 14 set with a lid similar to the first version of the Peugeot chassis (Fig.1 in OSN 45/1361), but with the Citroën name: two boys with voluminous hair either side of a Chassis. It seems that the maker, rejected by Citroën, then offered its model to Peugeot: an approximate Citroën Chassis can be taken as an approximate Peugeot Chassis. The Peugeot car was a Citroën chassis with a Peugeot body! When it began to manufacture for Peugeot the maker kept the picture on the lid of its last version for the Bébé Chassis.

The C6 Chassis

Citroën produced the C6 chassis from 1929 to 1932. The '6' came from the 6-cylinder engine. There were 11 different bodies. 3 sets (Fig.3) were made for this Chassis, & a fourth was planned but was never marketed.

1. Set 300/1. Le Chassis C6 Démontable. In 1929

covered with paper showing the part that must be strung at each place. It was sold for 140 francs. It has a suspension and its mechanical features are the steering, and the Cardan Shaft which is free to rotate.

The parts (see Fig.4) are numbered from 1 to 46; as there are 2 or 4 of some, there are 62 main parts in all. Except the rubber Cardan Washers & Michelin Tyres the parts are steel, with several of them pressed. The N&B are in one of the small blue boxes, the Tools in the other.

The diameter of the thread is 3.0mm. The hexagonal Nuts (not

**LES JOUETS
CITROËN**

**Instructions
pour le montage du
CHASSIS C6
de Luxe**

Instructions for assembling the C6
"de Luxe" CHASSIS

Anleitung zum montieren des CHASSIS C6
der Luxus-Bausätze

Instrucciones para montar el CHASSIS
C6 Lujo

Istruzioni per il montaggio dello
CHASSIS C6 lusso

Fig.6



Fig.3



C

A

B

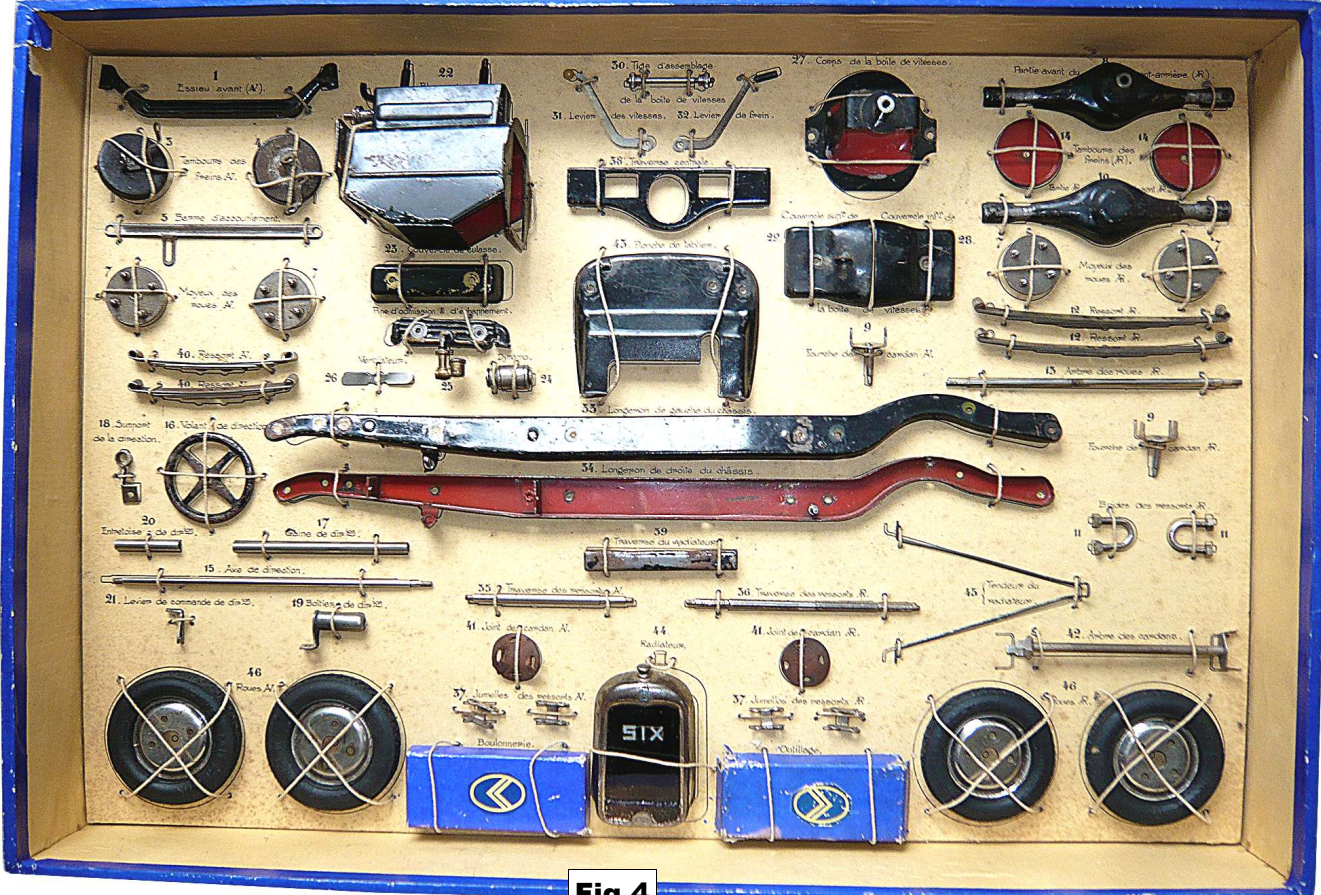


Fig.4

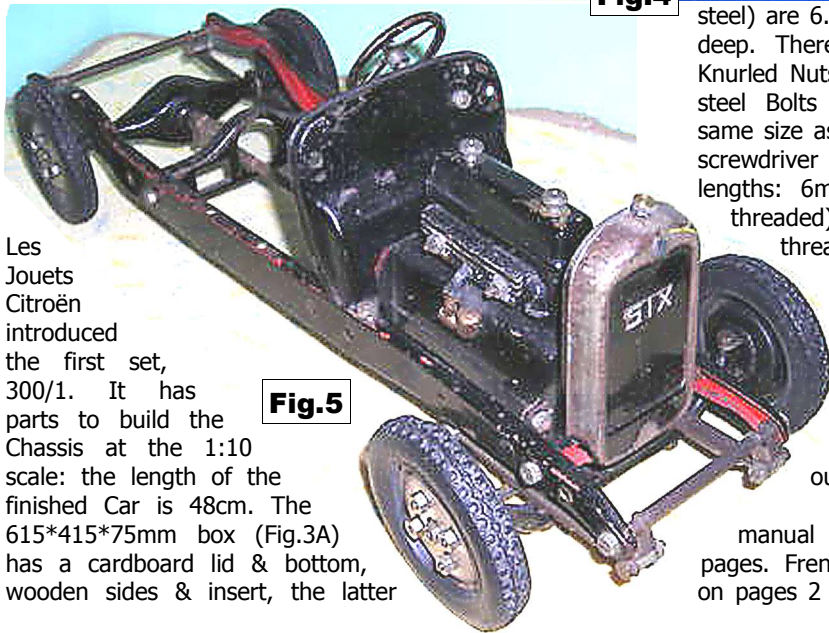


Fig.5

Les Jouets Citroën introduced the first set, 300/1. It has parts to build the Chassis at the 1:10 scale: the length of the finished Car is 48cm. The 615*415*75mm box (Fig.3A) has a cardboard lid & bottom, wooden sides & insert, the latter

steel) are 6.0mm A/F & 2.5mm deep. There are also a few Knurled Nuts. The head of the steel Bolts is hexagonal, the same size as the Nuts, with no screwdriver slot. There are 3 lengths: 6mm, 15mm (10mm threaded), & 20mm (5mm threaded). The Tools are a Spanner, a Tube Wrench, & a Pair of Tweezers.

As the Bébé 14, the C6 Chassis is often found already built without its box (Fig.5)

The 275*149mm manual (Fig.6) has 12 pages. French instructions are on pages 2 & 3, followed by 2

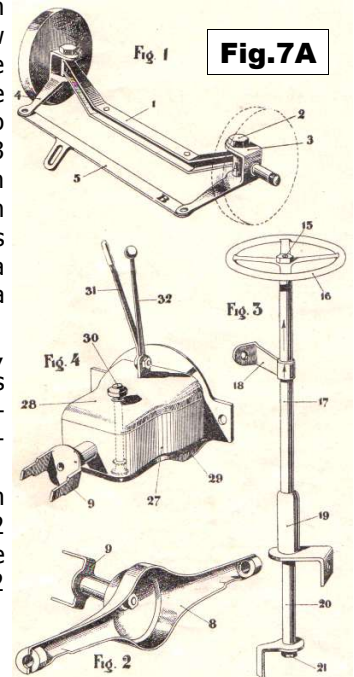


Fig.7A

Fig. 1

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Fig. 2

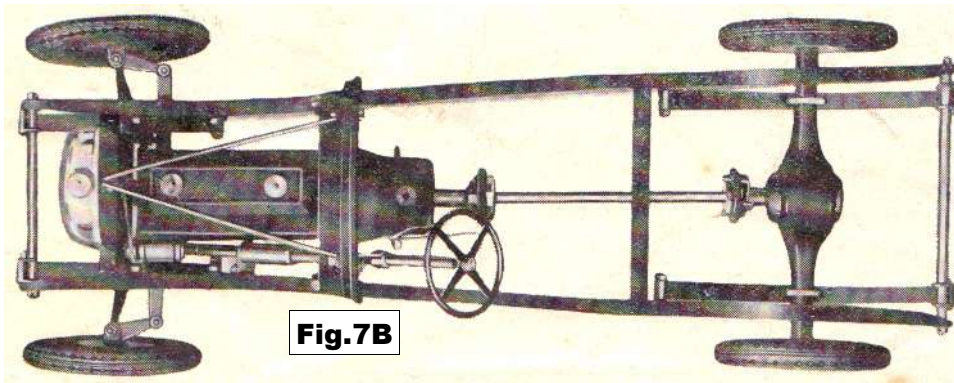


Fig.7B

pages for the English, German, Spanish, & Italian versions. The last page is a fold-out sheet: when opened its drawings can be used with any of the languages. The drawings from it are shown in Fig.7A & B.

The manual indicates that two sets are in preparation: Box No.2 - Electrical motor equipment for propelling the chassis. Box No.3 - Coach-body units for assembly. (These & later quotes from the manual are verbatim from the English text.)

2. Box 300/2. Mouvement. Eclairage. Habillage. The 615*415*30mm 300/2 box was introduced in 1930 as a complementary set. It included a Motor, and a Dry Cell for the Motor & lighting. However this version did not last long, these sets are very rare. The layout of the parts on the insert is as in the later sets described below (Fig.8) but with the pale blue printed paper slips in the centre & bottom right replacing the

with paper, and with the name & drawing of each part. They are numbered 201 to 235, but the Road Wheel was already #46 in the first box. The Motor was #204 & the Dry Cell #235 but as already explained they were replaced by paper slips: the Motor one indicates that the Dry Cell is only for the lighting and that the Motor is in one of 3 new boxes 300/3 (A, B, & C); the Dry Cell slip then says that it is more convenient

not to supply the Dry Cell because of difficulties in stocking them, and hence to use a suitable replacement. There are 32 new parts in this second version of this box, but given the several examples of some, the box has 46 large parts. The small blue boxes contain the N&B & Tools.

The parts are used for seven additions, including their fastening to the chassis: • The headlights. • The spare wheel. • The bonnet. • The mudguards & running boards. • The dashboard, including the switch for the lights. • The Dry cell mounting. • The parts connecting the Motor to the Wheels. They include a Contrate Gear, a Pinion, & a Fork Piece longer than the one in Set 1. They are useless without a Motor.

One often finds the Chassis without its box but including these complementary parts (Fig.9).

The 275*175mm manual has a cover in the same style as Fig.6 and again has 12 pages: two for each of five languages, including the last fold-out page with the drawings.

The manual was modified as follows: for each language, the paragraph indicating the electric connections was covered by a paper slip describing

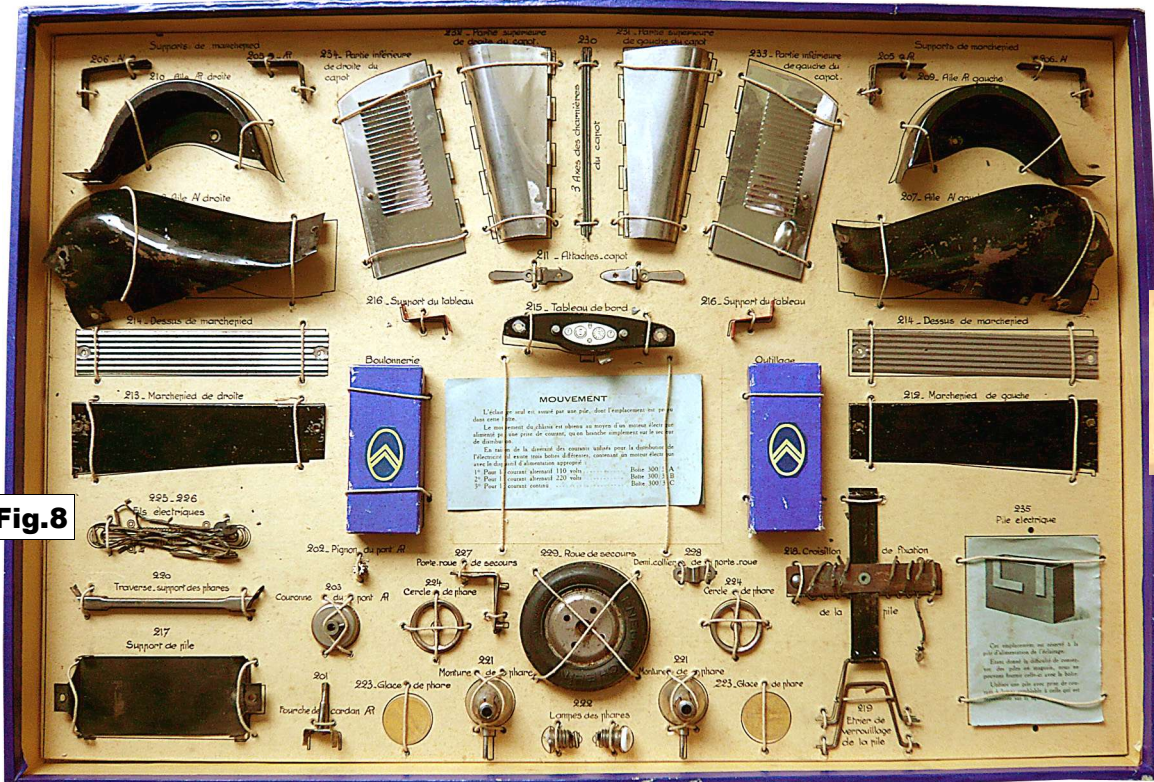


Fig.8



Fig.8A



Fig.8B

Motor & Dry Cell respectively, as shown in Fig.8A & B.

2. Box 300/2. Eclairage. Habillage. The 'Mouvement' set above was soon replaced by the most common version, without the Motor & Dry Cell; its price was 92.50 francs. It had been decided that there would be three types of Motor (110v, 220v, & DC) and the necessary bulky power supplies would not fit into the box. The chosen solution was to keep the box without its Motor, and produce three version of a new box, including a Motor & its power supply. Consequently, for all the boxes already made, it was necessary to glue a paper label on the lid (Fig.3B). It has 'BOITE No.2' over the main title and only 'Eclairage . Habillage' under it. The parts are strung to a wooden insert (Fig.8) covered



Fig.9

the new way of connecting only the Light Bulbs, & another paper was glued on the diagram fold-out. Moreover, for each language an inking-pad was used to indicate that this manual was for Sets 2 & 3. Also at the end of each text, a paragraph announced for the beginning of 1930: 'Box n°3 Removable Coachbodies', had the '3' covered by a red '4'. As many copies of the manual were printed, I am flabbergasted by the waste of human work brought about by this last-minute change: 16 modifications had to be made on each of thousands of copies!

(But everything was not removed; although there is no longer a dry cell Motor, a sentence not covered by a glued paper says: 'Be careful to bring back the lever to the dead point when through using the toy so as to prevent the cell from being discharged uselessly'.)

For each language, half a page described how to fix the missing Motor to the Chassis, using the Gears. This was useless for this set, but it is why, as explained below, a change was made to say that the manual was for sets 300/2 and 300/3.

I cannot understand the reason for this change of motor, Les Jouets Citroën had a good experience of dry cell motors: in 1927 and 1929 they had produced two 1:10 cars with one. It was ingenious: when a bumper ran into an obstacle, it reversed the direction of the motor. Why did they decide to disrupt everything drastically for a dubious change: it is easier to play with a dry cell car than with a car tied by a wire to a socket. Perhaps they were motivated by the electric toy trains, supplied by a transformer.

3. Box 300/3. Mouvement et Alimentation Electrique. This 325*260*80mm cardboard box (Figs.3C & 10), was a complementary set for the motorization of the Chassis. The small print on the lid is 'MOUVEMENT ET ALIMENTATION ELECTRIQUE'. The Set was sold for 30 francs. All in all, the price of the three boxes was 362.50 francs, when the price of the #4 MECCANO set was 340 francs in 1930.

There were three versions: 300/1 A (110 volt AC), 300/2 B (220 volt AC), and 300/3 C (direct current). My set (Fig.10) is 300/1.

Boxes 300/3 A and B contain a Transformer, and a Motor placed on a wooden support. Both parts and the Wires are strung to a wooden insert, covered by a paper with the names of the parts. I have never seen an example of set 300/3 C; the manual only mentions a transformer, which could not exist

for this direct current set.

The Transformer is blue, with a wooden base, and the well known Citroën chevrons on the top. Its height is 65mm, and its diameter 125mm. A 3.10m Wire connects it to the Chassis, while a 1.20m Wire connects it to a mains socket. The Transformer has no speed control, nor even an on-off switch.

The Motor has a speed lever with three positions: forward, neutral, and backward. This new Motor is longer than the dry cell Motor in the initial version. To install the Motor one must first remove the Gearbox, which is no longer used.

The 215*156mm manual, again with a cover in the same style as Fig.6, is simply a sheet folded in three, so that there is one page for each language. It indicates that mounting the Motor is described in the manual for Set 300/2. It contains mainly instructions on the use of the Transformer.

As the 3 parts needed to connect the Motor to the Back Axle are in set 300/2, it would not be possible to fit the Motor to the bare Chassis without it. To allow for this, a small complementary envelope set (Fig.11) was commercialized; it contained the 3 necessary parts that were in set 300/2: the Contrate, the Pinion, and the Fork Piece. The drawings of the three parts were printed on this envelope. There were also the instructions that were included in the 300/2 manual, of how to install the Motor.

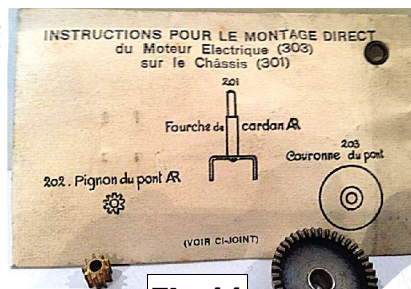


Fig.11



Fig.10

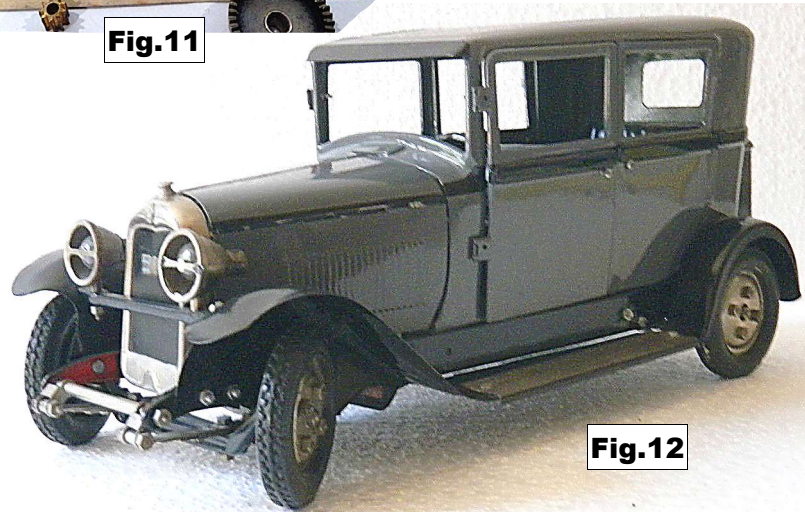


Fig.12

4. Box. Carrosserie This bodywork set, whose number would have been 300/4, was announced in two manuals, but it was never commercialized. However, there exists at least one prototype, which was given to a CIJ shareholder.

A picture of this set is given in the third volume of *La Saga*. This box had also the parts of the other sets, partially assembled into large substructures. Two bodies could be made with this set: a 6-Window Limousine, and a 4-Window Saloon Car.

A Chassis with a saloon car body (Fig.12) was offered on eBay. However, the seller was ambiguous as to the origin of the body: it is possible that the parts of the model were not made by Les Jouets Citroën, but by an enthusiastic collector. Anyway, it gives a good idea of what would have been the appearance of a completed Car.

Remarks The C6 chassis was very successful: one can find many examples, either boxed or ready built. Its realization is excellent if one considers it as a model, although it was not easy to build. Indeed, several steps, considered as tricky, are in italics in the manual, such as: '*The introduction of small bolts is facilitated by using the small pliers*'.

However, we have also to appreciate it as a toy to be played with once it has been completed. As in the American Model Builder motto: 'Half the fun is building the models. The other half is operating them when completed.' Playing with the car was limited when the transformer replaced the dry cell. With the car connected to the transformer it was almost impossible to play outdoors, and difficult to do so indoors. An attractive solution would be to drive it around in circles, as an electric train. But the author of the manual had foreseen that possibility: 'It is recommended not to have the chassis run ground a circle in the same direction for any length of time. This would twist too much the connecting wire and break it'.

Set 325/1 Le Garage Démontable

Since the beginning, several rather basic garages for small scale cars were sold by Les Jouets Citroën. From 1929, Set 325/1 was available, a Garage for 1:10 cars, to be built with Nuts & Bolts. Two different pictures exist for the lid, Fig.13 shows the most frequent. Many of the parts can be seen in Fig.14, and Fig.15 shows the completed model with a non-constructional car partially inside it. This garage looks like the workshops at the Citroën plant. The box is rare, usually one finds the model already built. It is very popular among collectors, who want to display



Fig.13



Fig.15

their cars in this Garage.

A priori, from its manual (Fig.16), only written in French, building this Garage looks simple. However, it seems that this is not so easy, the author of La Saga writes: 'One cannot imagine the time and the patience... one has to expend for reaching the final result! All those who realized it will understand me.'

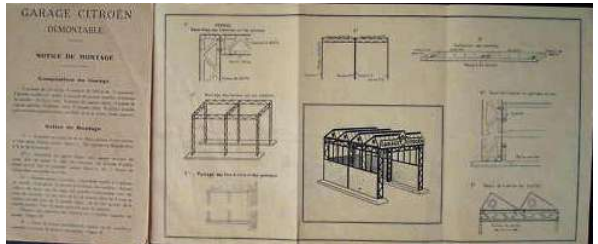
factured by CIJ, were high quality toys: they were excellent models, and children loved to play with them.

The most interesting of the construction toys are the 3 sets for the C6 Chassis.

End Word

Les Jouets Citroën, & particularly those manu-

The reason why the dry cell was given up remains a mystery;



this curious decision restricted the development and the use of this model.

Fig.16

CITROËN: S5

OSN 50/1536



Fig.1



New System: PLAYABLEMETAL This patented system (US: 7967656) with aluminium parts held together by right & lefthand threaded Grub Screws, was designed & is made by Taken Fun & Art Co. Ltd., Taiwan. The American agent is Beyond123 LLC, New York. www.beyond123.com/playablemetal.html gives details.

10 sets, called Models, are listed: A Force; C Bot; F Car; G Animal; H Dino; J Zodiac; L Pal; P Pose; R Flux; S Infinity.

Fig.1 shows a Model L with silver parts, and Fig.3 all the system's main parts. There are right (+) & left (-) threaded versions of each. Fig.2 shows the Tool in use for a '+' thread. The Grubs include one with right & left threaded ends. The use of +/- threads is a novel & potentially useful idea but has perplexed some (grown-up) purchasers.

The basic cube side & hole pitch is probably 2cm and so the thread is perhaps 6mm Ø.

The Animal left is from the Patent; the Set models are much simpler with the Fencer far left as large & complicated as any. Up to 10 or so models are shown for each set and most are just about recognizable. Some indeed are quite good, though none to my eyes have the charm of many of the 'simplicity' models made from 'conventional' systems.

The L set on Amazon costs \$20, the other sets up to \$60.

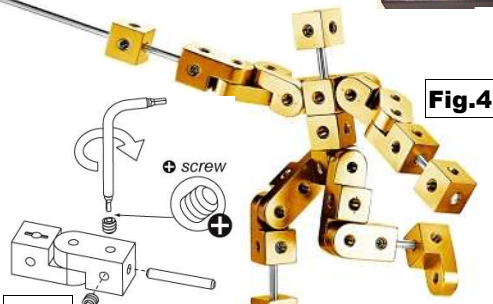


Fig.4



Fig.2



Fig.3

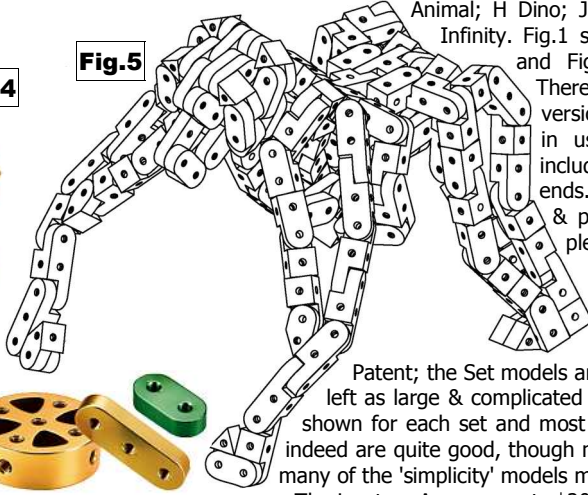


Fig.5

PLAYABLEMETAL: S1

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