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Thursday, 18 October 2007 Citroen's 1933 Rosalie records honoured at Montlhery

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Aided by J-P Bush and John Sutton

Display of Classic Citroens at Montlhery

6th - 7th October 2007



The normally quiet backroads that lead to Linas Montlhery, in the southern districts of Paris, were uncharacteristically busy over the weekend of October 6th and 7th this year. The traffic was unusual too in that a fair amount of it consisted of classic Citroens dating back to the 1920s. The occasion was an anniversary celebration of outstanding speed and distance records set by the marque in the early 1930s.



Three quarters of a century ago Citroën and the oil company Yacco joined forces in a series of events at the then newly-constructed Montlhéry Autodrome. The facilities were impressive, with a 2.5 km oval saucer with an adjoining 12.5 km track. Included in the facilities were administration buildings, laboratories, machine shops, and sections of track for a variety of testing including waterproofing, suspension refinement, road holding, and safety.



Above: The Citroën Rosalie - 1935



Above: Citroën B2 - 'Docteur'



Above: Citroën C4 1929/30

Particular attention was given to an incredible achievement in 1933 of a standard 8 hp, 4 cyl car in popular use, that was known as the Rosalie. Over 134 days and nights the car travelled over the Autodrome for 300 000 km at an average speed of 93 km/h. The achievement was lauded by M. Adre Citroën himself who journeyed out to Linas Montlhéry to honour the drivers and the support teams. Various old videos that include the scrupulous scrutineering that took place on the test carb, can be found on Youtube.

The Montlhéry celebration this year could well be the last motorsport event to be held at the famous old Autodrome - land prices and the demands of nearby military establishments look set to encroach on the valuable real estate.



Above: Citroën B2 'Caddy'



Above: The gentleman from Tours.



Above: The reconstructed record-setting Rosalie.

In its glory days, the Autodrome and its Administration buildings, spectator stands, testing laboratories, and workshops, hosted both automobile and motorcycle racing until WWII, when track and buildings were severely damaged. It served as a prison for a while, and then as an American military base. Enough repairs were done to enable the 1948 Paris Grand Prix to be held there, but it has never returned to its old status and popularity.

During the course of the day, Motormarques co-director, John Sutton, arrived from Britain, creating a sensation in his giant 30-98 Vauxhall.



Above: Citroen 2 CV Racer



Above: Autobianchi



Above: Panhard



*Above: Rosalie with 6 Cyl
engine*



Above: Trabant



*Above: John Sutton's Vauxhall
30-98*

The gentleman from Tours who drove me around the Autodrome in his 1928/29 Citroen B14 passed on his pleasure in sharing the enthusiasm for classic car revival with like-minded people from Europe, France, Britain, Australia, and wherever else in the world they get together.



*Above: Pascal Pannetier, editor of
the excellent journal **Route Nostalgie**,
who made arrangements for our visit .*