

Built to drive

Jon Langman drove CXs in his youth, but when he returned from abroad the **CX GTI Turbo** he wanted was all but extinct - so he built his own

WORDS NEIL CAMPBELL
PHOTOS JASON CRITCHELL

The restorer

Jon Langman is 46 and lives in Norfolk. He works as a development manager for an assisted technology company in Norwich, which develops products to help people live independently in their own homes. Before that he worked in the avionics industry but got 'fed up' working on aircraft. It's always either boiling hot and sweaty or absolutely bloody freezing cold,' he says. Jon is no stranger to CXs, but this is his first restoration.



AFTER

Even the rust and leaks didn't put Jon off buying the CX.

BEFORE

Jon Langman's Citroën story begins as a teenager when, aged just 16, he joined the RAF. While serving he became friends with a distinctive young chap called Kev Spruce. Unlike most of the other young recruits, who mainly drove Fiesta XR2s, Kev wafted around the base in his home-restored Citroën DS. 'Boy did we take the mickey out of Kev and his ugly old car,' laughs Jon. 'Then he got a silver CX, too. I didn't even know what it was, but I loved the

drum dials on the dash.'

Thus started not only a lifelong friendship, but also an obsession with the CX. 'I had a series of them,' Jon says. 'Mostly GTIs. You could buy one for £500 then.' Jon would drive them until they rusted away, then buy another. After moving up through the ranks in Avionics, Jon left the RAF for a job at Bombardier. He kept in touch with Kev

and kept driving CXs, until, a couple of years later, he left the UK for a position with the United Arab Emirates Air Force. 'I tried to find a CX in Dubai but there weren't any,' says Jon. But the love of CXs



Don't be ashamed of getting work done by professionals if you get stuck (or if you have a prolapsed disc!). It can give you a bit of a boost and keep the project moving.



Jon turned his aircraft repair skills to good use on the CX.

never left him. It's still the only car I feel comfortable in.' Jon vowed that, upon his return to the UK, he'd buy another. In 2005, after 10 years in Dubai, he did just that.

I decided I'd like a series one GTI Turbo as I'd never owned one. They only imported 300 to the UK so the only one I could find was a £100 wreck. It was so rotten the roof had separated from the body,' says Jon.

With little else available, Jon bought it

anyway. 'It became clear that I'd have to buy something in need of work and learn how to fix it.' Jon and his wife Wendy went through three house moves, eventually settling in Norfolk. The last move proved too much for the CX though, and it began to fall apart. Jon was all for giving up on the idea when another GTI Turbo turned up on eBay.

'We were in rented accommodation searching for a house to buy, so I didn't bid on it,' Jon says. It quickly reappeared on eBay just a few weeks later.

'It kept being bought and sold soon afterwards,' says Jon. 'It must have gone through four or five owners in as many months, but it never left Norfolk.'

Jon decided to view it one dark rainy night in late 2007. He noted some rust, a significant LHM leak, and no brakes, but bought it for £200 anyway.

'I put it into storage while I bought a house with a nice garage.' Now safely ensconced, Jon started to strip the car. 'I'd polished a bit of the paint and it came up nicely. I really believed I'd got the bargain of the century, until I stripped it - then I realised that I'd probably paid too much.'

Under the reasonable looking exterior was rust, and lots of it. 'I couldn't believe it. Both inner and outer sills were shot, the floor was rotten as was the bulkhead, and the front subframe. The entire underside was a horror show.' Having never welded before, Jon bought a MIG welding kit and asked a friend, Jason Lane, for help. Jason showed him how to set up the welder and the basics, using pieces of scrap metal. 'I learnt how to plug, seam and spot weld, and then basically got stuck into the CX.'

Jon started on the rear nearside and worked his way around. Carefully measuring

1985 Citroën CX GTI TURBO

ENGINE 2473cc/4-cyl/16V
POWER 168bhp@5500rpm
TORQUE 217lb ft@3250rpm
GEARBOX 5-spd man
0-60MPH 8.6sec
TOP SPEED 128mph
FUEL ECONOMY 21mpg
WEIGHT 3107lb (1410kg)
PRICE WHEN NEW £32,575
AGREED VALUE £6000

and making cardboard templates, then beating out his own repair sections, before stitching them into place. It took him a long time as he often had long breaks to allow his enthusiasm to come back. 'Restoration was a means to an end. I wasn't after a show car, I just wanted a GTI Turbo to drive,' says Jon. 'The only way I could get one, was to build one.'

His rotten first project car donated its bonnet, boot and one door, before being stripped and scrapped. Jon wanted to finish the car before 2011, a generous target, until his back went. 'I continued to weld and didn't have much left to do, but my prolapsed disk made it excruciatingly painful,' says Jon. Wearing weightlifting belts for support helped, but it became clear the project would have to stop until he got better. 'Having an understanding wife helps,' says Jon about Wendy. 'She suggested that I get a local mobile welder in to finish it off.'

After struggling on a while longer, Jon reluctantly agreed. It took two days for the mobile welder to finish the job, saving Jon several weeks of pain. 'I won't mention his

Jon's classic CV



**1987-88
1980
Citroën CX**

This was my first CX, and I'm kicking it as it had broken down (again). It was bought new by Edwina Currie's husband. It was total rubbish.



**1988-89
1972 Ford
Zodiac MkIV
hearse**

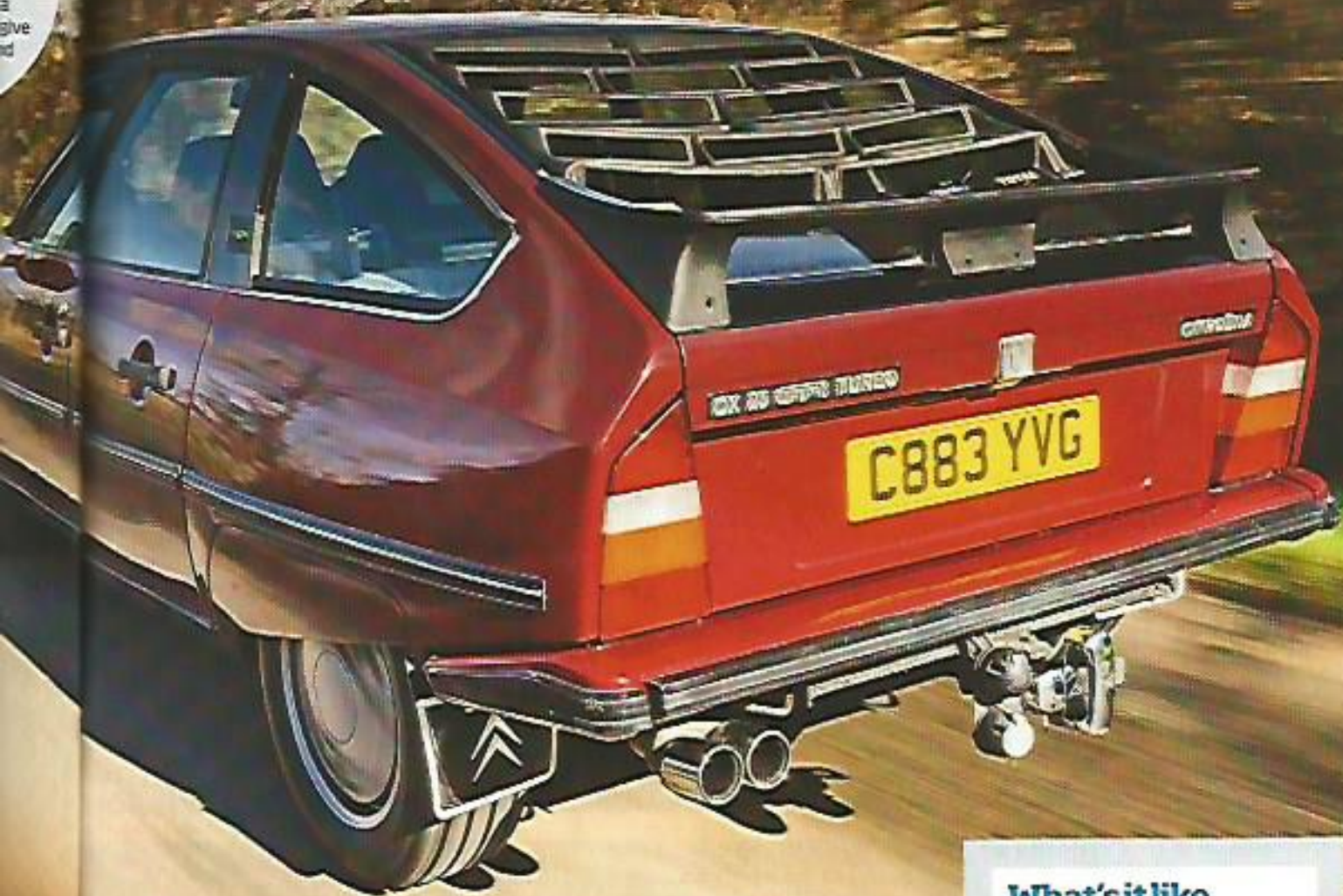
I jointly owned this with my friend Andy (right) and that's Kev in the middle. It was fantastic in a line but a boat in the corners. I nearly rolled it on a Cheshire country lane.



**1989-91
Another CX**

I had so many it's hard to keep track, and I got my two housemates into CXs too. The neighbours loved us. When Kev came to visit there were four CXs in a row.

get
a
give
and



I just wanted a GTI Turbo I could drive. The only way I could get one was to build one'



Turbo-powered smooth operator.



Metric spec tyres can be expensive.

What's it like to drive?

Space-age, magic carpet ride, bonkers, cool – they're all things you're likely to read in any article relating to the Citroën CX. Overused? Well, yes. True? Definitely.

Just look at the dashboard. The Turbo GTI was the first CX to be fitted with the normalised 'eurodials' rather than the amazing-looking tumbler gauges, but that doesn't matter. The indicators are still exactly where they shouldn't be, and the ride is oh-so-smooth. It's a proper Citroën that is quick, refined and grown up, with power coming in progressively – like a modern turbocharged car, in fact.

That Citroën engineered it like that when everyone else wasn't is bonkers.



Reader's Restoration

Spot map light disguised as a CB radio and a very strange ashtray.



name, though, as he'd plug welded the last sill on and it failed the MoT? Jon enjoyed his welding break by refurbishing the mechanical parts and working on the engine. It had done 160,000 miles but didn't use any oil and ran sweetly. 'All I did was lap in the valves and reset the tappets, it didn't need anything else.' Jon also replaced all of the pipework on the engine, fitted new seals and replaced all of the troublesome parts.

'I'd not restored a car before but I have done hundreds of thousands of miles in ropey CXs, so I know what goes wrong with them,' laughs Jon. He fitted a new coil, flywheel sensor, oil pressure switch, thermostat and water pump. 'I carry a toolbox with a spare ignition switch and an accelerator pedal, too. I've had two accelerator pedals snap on me in the past.' Jon fitted new pads, discs and flexi hoses to overhaul the braking system. 'I bought some hydraulic pipe and a flaring kit, and set about finding the little leaks in the suspension low pressure return pipes,' Jon says. 'There are hundreds of these pipes. I found a new leak this morning before you arrived. I'm sure one day I'll finish this car.'

After refitting the engine and connecting everything up, Jon couldn't get the suspension to rise. Fortunately, help came

via the Citroën Car Club forum. 'A chap asked if it was on axle stands, which it was. He suggested I remove them and let all of the weight sit on the wheels.' As soon as he did, the suspension sprang into life. 'It's a self bleeding system so it needed the extra pressure to work.' Midway through 2010, Jon decided to throw it in for an MoT to see how far off he was, but a quick 200-metre run down a local farm track set him back.

The driveshaft seals started to leak. One of the bolts is only accessible by removing the bellhousing, and I spent several nights threatening to burn the car rather than taking the blasted engine out again.' That problem sorted, it promptly failed the MoT.



A fabulous paint job finished the project in the perfect way.

Here's how Jon did it



1 October 2008 In the beginning

After some time in storage, the £200 CX GTI Turbo is trundled into Jon's new double garage. It looked OK from the outside, but it really wasn't.



2 November 2008 Stripdown

The engine revealed how long the car had been standing. It did run, but the engine bay around it was in a poor state. Stripping revealed even more problems.



3 May 2009 Welding begins

With the engine removed, Jon could access the chassis legs, subframe and bulkhead. All of which were rotten and needed welding.



4 June 2009 More welding

The more Jon explored, the more rust he discovered. He also fully reworked the wiring and altered the loom to tidy up the engine bay and allow access to the battery.



5 July 2009 Patches

Jon used cardboard templates and careful measuring to make up new repair sections to weld in. It was a long process for the first-time restorer.



6 May 2010 Still a way off

With the bodywork welded up and the bonnet fitted, Jon was hoping an MoT wouldn't be far off. It was. The wheels are from an Alfa Romeo.



READER'S RESTO TIP

Take your time and think about what you're doing. Write copious, detailed lists to make sure you don't miss anything. Looking at things logically really helps during a restoration. Keep calm!

I've done over 20,000 miles in the past two years. Some people think that's criminal - but I restored it to drive

Project Car Buying Tips by Jon Langman

If you're after a later plastic-bumpered series II CX, there's still a few around to choose from, but the series I cars remain the most sought after

thanks to their purity of line and chrome bumpers. Series I cars are now becoming tricky to source. All CXs rust, so pay attention when inspecting

any project. Parts and panels can be sourced through the club members though, which is very friendly, enthusiastic, and helpful. Don't be scared of the suspension – it's actually very simple when you understand it and parts are available. Metric tyres are very expensive, so factor that into your budget if your car has them.

Citroën Car Club's Franklin Rugg was a real help.



For a vehicle that was intended to be restored as a 'user', the fruits of Jon's labour are quite stunning.

'A slight weep from one of the brake hoses, offside headlight aim and emissions were easily sorted, but redoing the welding I'd paid someone to do was extremely annoying.' Then on the retest there was an advisory on a ball joint. 'It was brand new and had only done eight miles between the MoT station and my house, so beware of cheap parts.'

The hard-wearing interior was in good shape after a clean and some new vinyl trim. 'I had to call upon my wife's wallpapering skills,' says Jon. 'She did a

great job fitting the headlining.' Now Jon had the car he wanted, but Wendy wasn't happy.

'Bless Wendy, she said it was a shame that it looked so scruffy after all the work I'd done. She suggested we use some of our savings to pay for a respray.' Jon hadn't intended to restore a show car, he just wanted a GTI Turbo to drive, but he agreed and a local garage resprayed the car in the original Delage red.

'I got it back from paint on December 31, 2010, and she was right, it looked fabulous. I spent the whole day putting it back

Useful contacts

- **Broadland Leisure Vehicles**, Norfolk (paint) 01493 751515 www.leisure-vehicles.com
- **Citroën Car Club**, (parts, advice) www.citroencarclub.org.uk
- **CX Basis**, Graben-Neudorf, Germany, (new and used parts): +49(0)7255762680 www.cx-basis.de
- **French Car Forum**, (advice, support) www.frenchcarforum.co.uk
- **Pleiades Car Services**, Cambridgeshire, (hydraulics) 01487 831239

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together and later that evening we drove it to a friend's new year's party. It was finished for 2011, but only just.'

Since then and hydraulic leaks aside, Jon has been enjoying the car he'd always wanted. 'It's the CX's 40th anniversary in 2014 so I've been putting it back to standard to celebrate.' So far this year Jon has painted the metal bumpers body colour, as they would have been originally, and thrown away the Alfa Romeo Teledial wheels, which he'd been using, in favour of the original metric Citroën T-Slots.

'The metric tyres cost me £1200 alone, which is why I'd been running around on modern wheels,' says Jon. 'I've done over 20,000 miles in the past two years. Some people think that's criminal as there are only six of these left. I disagree. I restored it to drive, I use it every day, and I love it. Argument over.' We couldn't agree more. ■

'I had to call upon my wife's wallpaper skills. She did a great job fitting the headlining'

