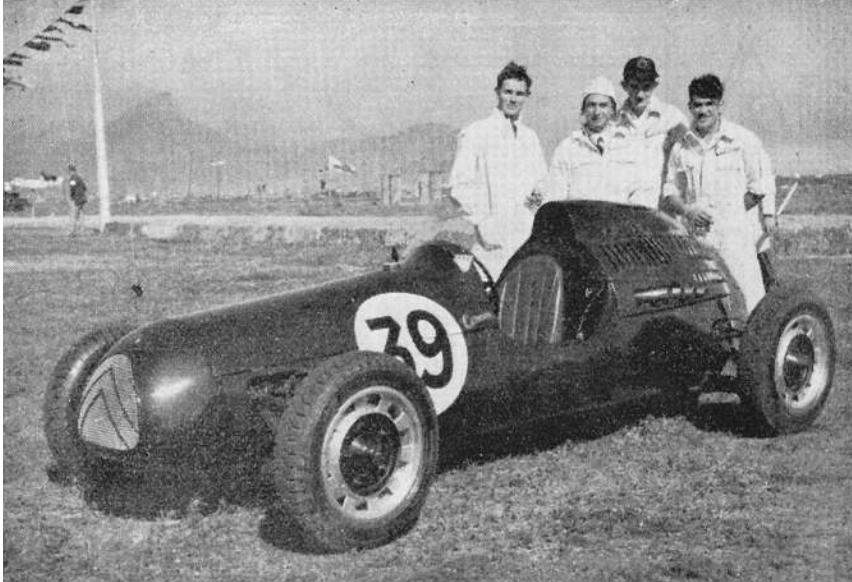


Our Post-War Motoring Scene

By *Derek Stuart-Findlay*

STANLEY REED AND HIS REED SPECIAL



The Reed Citroen Special at her racing launch at Paarden Eiland in 1949. Stanley Reed in the white cap with Johnny Barata on the right.

During the 1940s and 50s Stanley Reed and his immaculate Reed Special attracted an avid following from local racing enthusiasts. This beautifully-designed car, also known as the Auto-Citroën, had a rear-engine layout which was well ahead of its time. A decade was to pass before Charles Cooper, who is generally credited with the concept, produced his Cooper rear-engine (or rather mid-engine) single-seaters which set a new trend for the design of Grand Prix racing cars.

Stanley's father and uncle, Arthur and Alfred Reed, had established one of the earliest motor repair businesses, A & A Reed, in Cape Town in 1912 and during the 1930s Stanley and his brother Gordon became apprentice motor mechanics in the firm. The business acquired the DKW franchise in 1935 and these little fabric-bodied two-stroke 684 cc German cars became very popular. To promote them in South Africa, in 1936 Baron Klaus von Oertzen, the head of local DKW operations, brought out two sensational mid-engine 6006 cc V16 Auto Union racing cars. It appears that the design of the Reed Special was strongly influenced by the car driven by Ernst von Delius, winner of the Grosvenor Grand Prix at Pollsmoor in January 1937. After

the race it was put on show in the A & A Reed showroom in Buitengracht Street and Stanley remembered how - due to the low rolling resistance of the ultra-hard Continental tyres - the car could be rolled across the showroom floor by just one finger. Later that year, at the age of 17, Stanley took part in his first two competitive events - the Rand-Cape-Rand and the Round-the-Union Reliability Trials. He and his co-driver, Harold Kernick, A & A Reed's sales manager, navigated and drove an attractive little DKW sports car. Stanley remained with the company after qualifying as a mechanic.

The outbreak of war ended the DKW franchise, but Reeds had secured the agency for the front-wheel-drive Citroën, and managed to import a few of these cars before the French factory ceased car production for the duration of the war. When hostilities ceased Stanley designed and built his first racing car, a DKW Special powered by two 684 cc engines bolted together and driven by double chains. In 1946 he competed in both the Paarl and the Camps Bay hill climbs in this car, and although his concept proved to be unsuccessful, in the process he had gained valuable experience.

His next design, the highly

innovative Reed Special, was a very different proposition; built initially for sprint work and hill climbs, it was a success right from the beginning. It had been based on the Citroën Traction Avant saloon cars which were technologically advanced for their day, they featured front-wheel-drive, unit-construction bodies, torsion-bar suspension, rack and pinion steering and wet cylinder liners. Stanley and Gordon adapted this cutting-edge technology in a highly innovative way. Needing as much traction as possible for their Reed Special, after machining 17 lbs off the flywheel, they placed an intensively tuned 1911 cc Citroën engine and gearbox over the rear

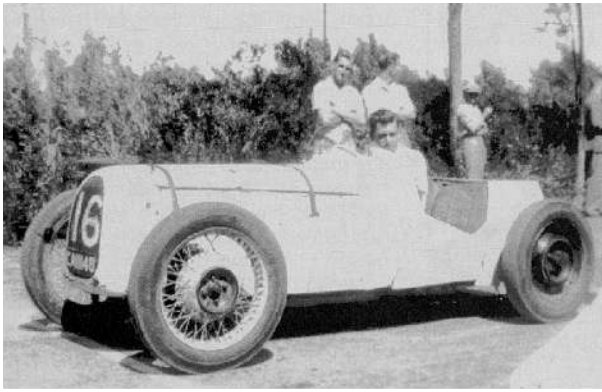
wheels. The crown wheel and pinion were reversed and two Traction Avant subframes were used, one at the front and the other positioned back-to-front at the rear, braced with torsion bars. The aluminium transmission housing was reinforced, and four parallel high tensile steel tubes were side-braced to form a very light but rigid chassis. All four wheels were independently sprung and stiffly damped, and the gear change mechanism was extended into the cockpit through the rear bulkhead with an automatic clutch stop to promote rapid gear changes.

A beautiful aluminium body was shaped jointly by Stanley, Gordon and HOFFIE le Roux, to be finished eventually in iridescent Prussian blue with white wheel rims. Although, on its first outing, the November 1948 Camps Bay hill climb, the car was still without its body, Stanley was able to set up second fastest time of the day. On his second event, the Parow hill climb of that year, he competed with a partially completed body. For sprints Stanley usually produced 147 bhp by using a 26% nitro-methane fuel mix, but he also ran the car in supercharged form on several occasions. After these events he began to think in terms of circuit racing, as the Citroën proved to have phenomenal road-holding on both tar and gravel.

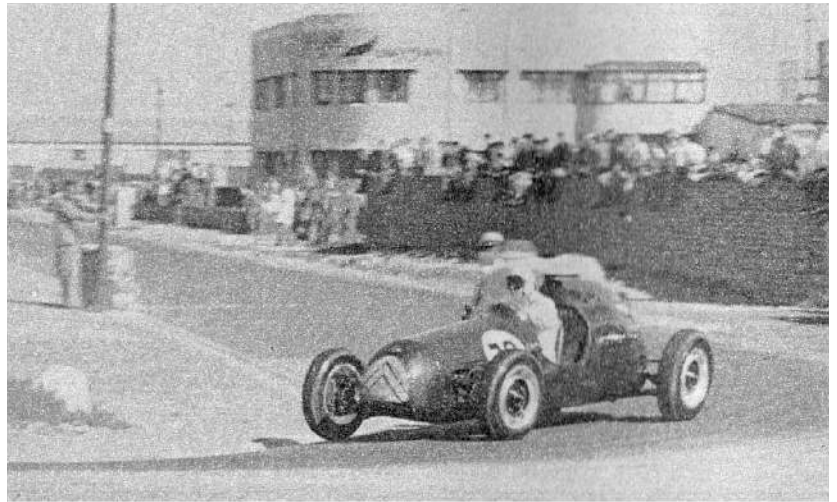
The Reed Special's first road race was one of the heats for the



Stanley aged 17 with Harold Kernick and the sports DKW in 1937.



Stanley in the twin-engined DKW Special at the 1947 Killarney Speed Trials.



The Reed Citroen Special cornering at speed, Section Street/Marine Drive Paarden Eiland, 1949

Arbor Day Race at Paarden Eiland in October 1949, in which it finished third. Two months later, in the buildup to the 2nd Van Riebeeck Trophy, it won a heat after a terrific duel with Frank Hoal's Riley. Then followed a highly successful seven-year racing period in which the car was towed to competitions all over the country by the family's Citroën Light Fifteen, with Stanley accompanied by his mechanic Johnny Barata. A reporter for the British Autocar at the Grand Central Circuit in November 1949 admired the Reed Special and its backup crew, turned out in immaculate white overalls.

The superbly designed little Citroën racer won 54 trophies in its lengthy career, including Fastest Time of the Day in the Camps Bay and Parow hill-climbs in 1949, and firsts in the 3rd Van Riebeeck Trophy in 1951 and the False Bay 100 in 1952, both at Gunners' Circle. He also secured firsts in both the Formula Libre Rhodesian Championship and the East London Winter Handicap in 1954. Stanley competed successfully in 1955, with a third place in the first post-war SA International at Eerste Rivier and a second in the Fairfield Handicap on the Snell Parade in Durban, before retiring from racing at the end of that year.

Unfortunately, due to business commitments, Reed could not compete in all the events that then formed the SA Drivers' Championship series, and as a result never won the national title. One of his rivals, Bill Jennings, in his famous Riley Special, secured this honour three times. Frank Hoal was of the opinion that if the RAC had introduced the competition a few

years earlier, Reed would definitely have been the South African champion in 1951 and '52.

With his wife Doreen acting as navigator, Stanley also competed in saloon car events. In the trusty family Light Fifteen the couple won one of the post-war Oudtshoorn Double Twelve Reliability Trials

under extremely difficult winter conditions.

In 1957, A & A Reed and its Citroën franchise was sold to the Bothner Polliack organisation which had already acquired Chiappini Motors and its Nash agency in Observatory. Stanley stayed on as works manager, the well-known

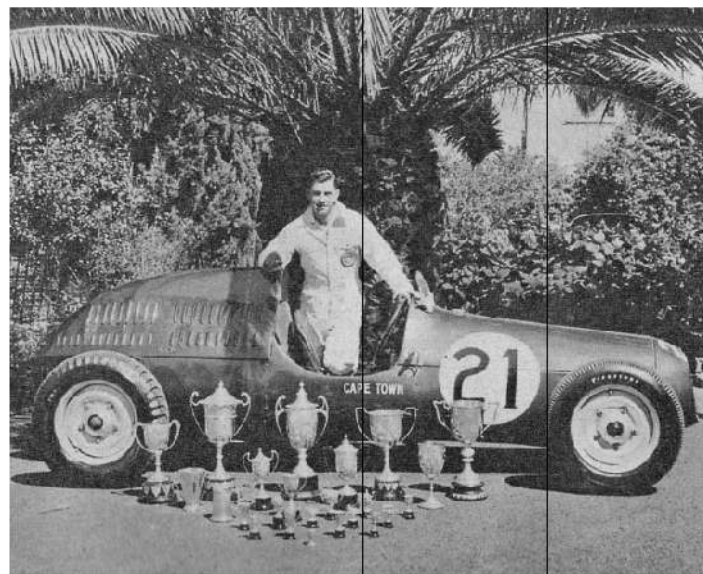
racing driver Ian Fraser-Jones was appointed as MD and the company was renamed as Reeds. The company replaced the Nash and Citroën agencies with a General Motors franchise, and today Reeds is the oldest surviving motor business founded in the Cape.

But Stanley's twenty-year association with Citroën drew him back to the marque, and after a few years he left Reeds to set up a Cape operation for the Citroën agents Atalanta Industries. Ten years later he was appointed development engineer for Citroën in Port Elizabeth when, to produce the DS20, the company took over the Rover plant at Neave. Stanley retired in 1973 after a new plant had been set up to assemble the GS Club at Silverton, Pretoria, and he and Doreen moved up the coast for sixteen years before returning to the Cape. He was a regular attendee at the Killarney race track, together with his friends Pat Brown, Peter Macintosh and Nigel Payne, before his death in 1997 at the age of 77.

The South African motor racing fraternity holds many long memories; seventy years after Stanley Reed launched his innovative Auto-Citroën Reed Special, he and his famous racing car are still held in high esteem.



The family Citroën Light Fifteen competing at the Eerste Rivier Circuit.



Stanley posing with the Special and its racing trophies in the mid-1950s.

Acknowledgements to The Autocar Nov 25 1949, SA Motor & Cycle News October 1950, The South African Motorist August 1954, The City of Port Elizabeth by Ramon Leigh, Andre Loubser in CAR magazine October 1991, Classic Car Africa June 1995, April 1998, March 2017, Alan Tunbridge and John Brewster. 🏎️