

development was taken on by the Renault Sport engineers Dudot and Chasselut, and the job of creating the first prototype mock up was given to Joel Michel. On the subject of body styling this was entrusted to Yves Legal.

The whole team descended on the small Renault Sport establishment in Dieppe that prepared the sports racing prototypes for Le Mans racing, the factory was later to become known as BEREX (The Dieppe Bureau d'Etudes et de Recherches Exploratoires) The car building programme was then planned for production alongside the A310 at Alpine in Dieppe.

In the Spring of 1977 a bare 5 bodyshell arrived at Dieppe and the Black Prototype was born Chassis number 822.01. First of all the tubular framework was fabricated in order to carry the engine and transmission and they had to reinforce the bodyshell. The second car would have a modified bodyshell pre-strengthened. As the workshop was very small with no windows the mechanics had to keep on stopping work to go out side for fresh air away from the welding fumes. The suspension set up for the rear was borrowed from the A310 whilst the front was from a Renault 5 Group 2 rally car. This was so that costs could be kept to a minimum and the



A310 components could be evolved.

By July 1977 the basic car was complete and the only additions needed were the gear linkage and the steering along with a pedal box. A number of tests were carried out with the A310 to establish the best gearbox to use in the prototype and the R30 TX box was finally chosen for its strength and ease to fit. On the 9th March 1978 near to Dieppe twenty or so engineers gathered to see the prototype on its first outing. Gerard Larrousse and Michel Tetu were also there and the test site chosen was a 12 km run through the countryside out of public gaze. Larrousse drove 10 laps of the route and Tetu 11 laps. The pedals were found to be too heavy and the gear selection poor plus the noise in the cockpit not acceptable. The only other problems were a couple of oil leaks and an electrical short in the dash. Not bad for the first outing of a prototype. With three days to put everything right the team worked many hours to prepare for the second test at the Renault testing ground.

## THE BLACK PROTOTYPE.

So in March 1978, people living around Dieppe saw a strange black Renault haring around the country lanes. It was being driven by the ex formula 3 driver Alain Serpaggi, and was being watched over with the utmost concern by the team of production managers.

They were occasionally joined by the top men from Renault Sport. It was a day to remember and clearly there was much work still to be carried out. Head office followed the project with interest and with some excitement, for it meant not just a new concept car but a splendid training school from which everybody could get involved in. The engineers in the organisation could learn and solve some technical problems and could get close to the new project which everyone was talking about. The original prototype remained at Renault Sport for further testing in competition trim. One of these tests was at Leddenon on 23 rd November 1978, Guy Freguelin and Gerard

