

# Are you already familiar with DAF?



A small car from the land of clogs!

DAF is a Dutch automotive brand headquartered in Eindhoven.

The company was founded as a machine shop by brothers Hubert "Hub" Jozef and Willem "Wim" Doorne in 1928.



In 1932, the company started manufacturing trailers, and the name was changed to Van Doorne's Aanhangwagenfabriek (DAF).

Truck manufacturing in Eindhoven started in 1949.

At the same time, the company changed its name to Van Doorne's Automobielfabrik.



DAF started manufacturing passenger cars in 1958.

The 600 model attracted attention with its continuously variable variator transmission.

The small car was marketed as being easy to drive, quick to get going, and high-quality.

In Finland, DAF was already known for its trucks, and the little car received some attention in the press.

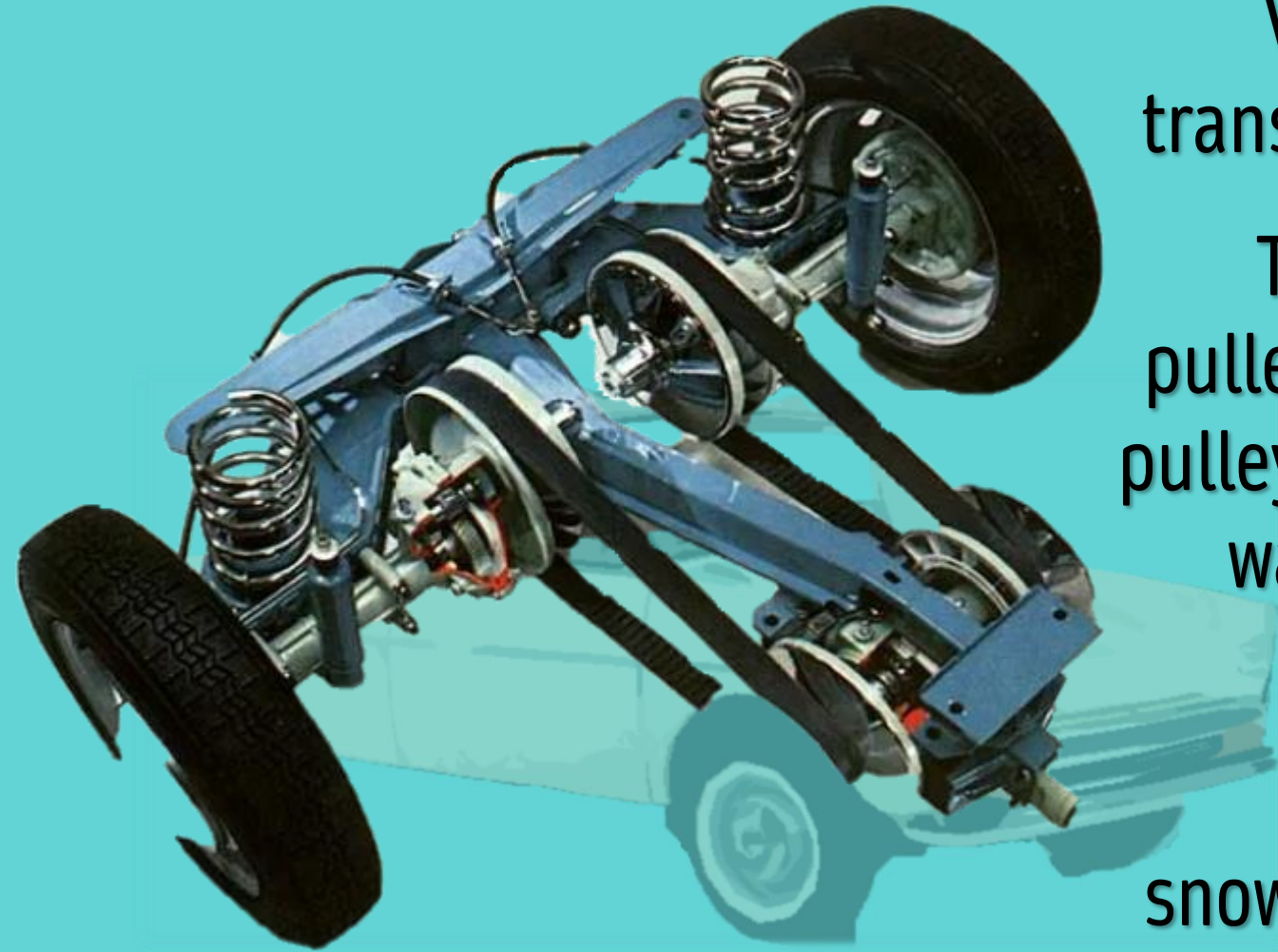
DAF engine displacement and power increased.

The Model 31 in the brochure photo was launched in 1963. It was designed by the Italian Michelotti.

Models 31, 32, and 33 were all called Daffodil.

Easy handling and quick start-up were mentioned in the advertising.



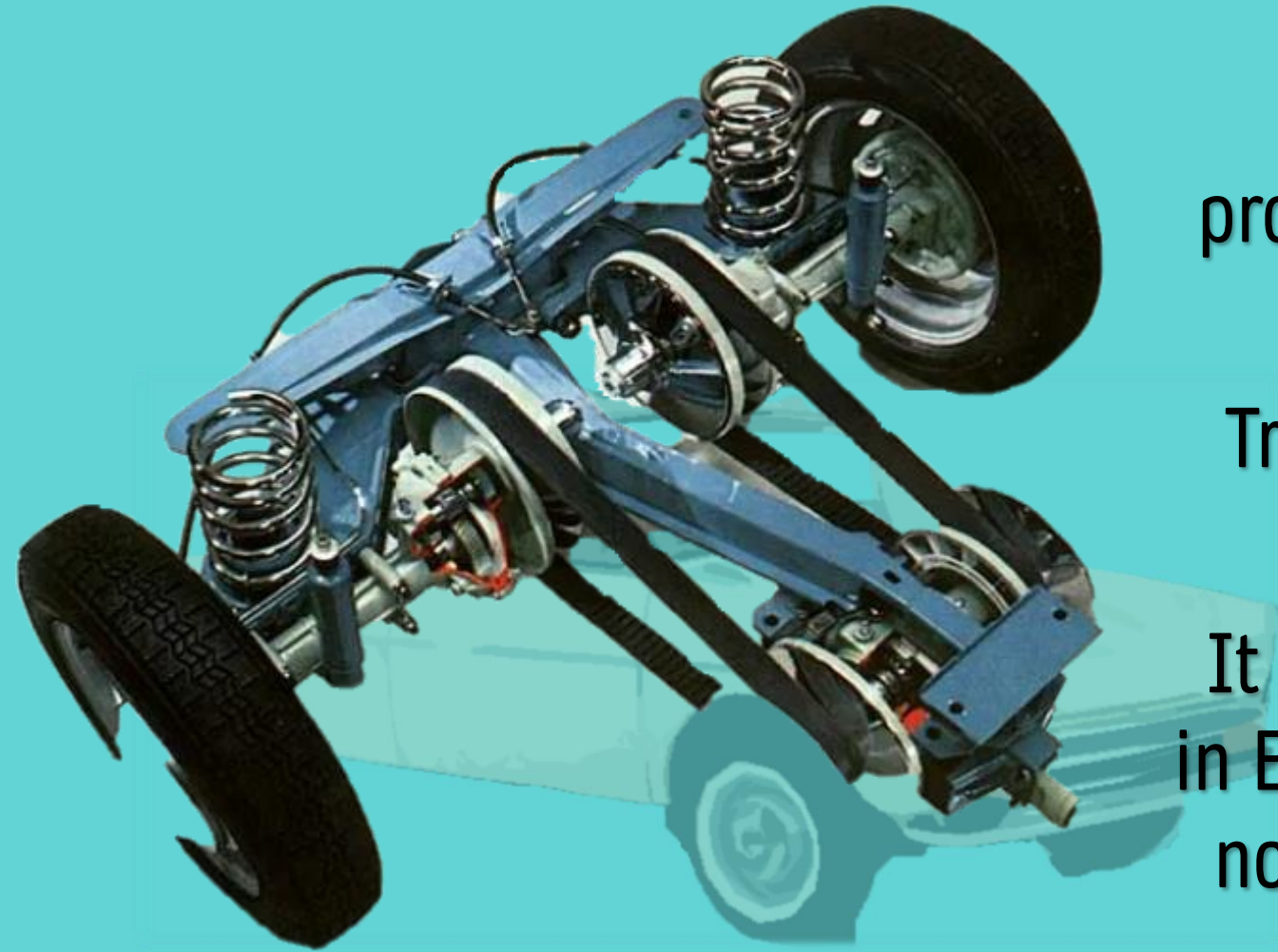


Variomatic, or continuously variable transmission ratio, was a DAF speciality.

The transmission was based on split pulleys and V-belts. As the halves of the pulleys moved closer together, the V-belt was pushed to the outer ring and the transmission ratio increased.

Variators are nowadays used in snowmobiles and mopeds, among other things.

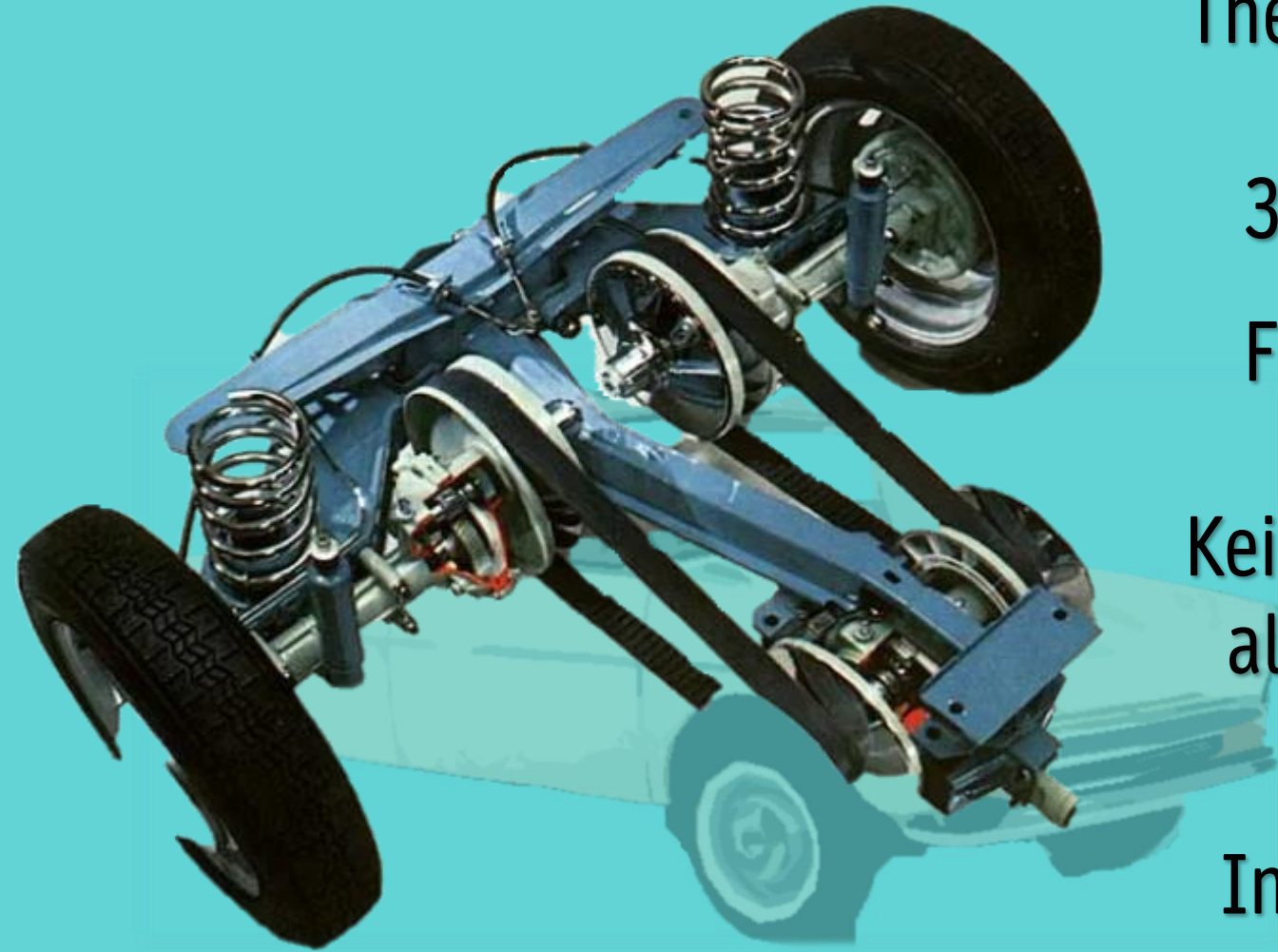
Thanks to its variator, the DAF was claimed to go as fast on reverse as it did going forward.



Volvo bought DAF's passenger car production in the mid-1970s. The DAF 66 then became the Volvo 66.

Truck production was left outside the trade.

It has continued under the name DAF in Eindhoven, although the company is now part of the international PACCAR group.



The last model originally designed as a DAF was introduced as the Volvo 343 in 1976. It still had Variomatic.

Finnish drivers set the world record for reversing a Volvo 343 on the Keimola circuit in 1978. The record of almost 1,770 kilometres in 24 hours is still valid.

In the Netherlands, there have been several DAF races – in reverse.

# DAF and car sales in Finland



VR's Volvo L 246 truck, with a semi-trailer made by DAF. Year of manufacture 1951.  
Photo: Finnish Railway Museum CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

Oy Suomen Autoteollisuus Ab (later Sisu Auto) imported and assembled 96 DAF trucks as early as 1951.

DAF passenger cars were first imported by Autola Oy, owned by the Wihuri group, in 1958.

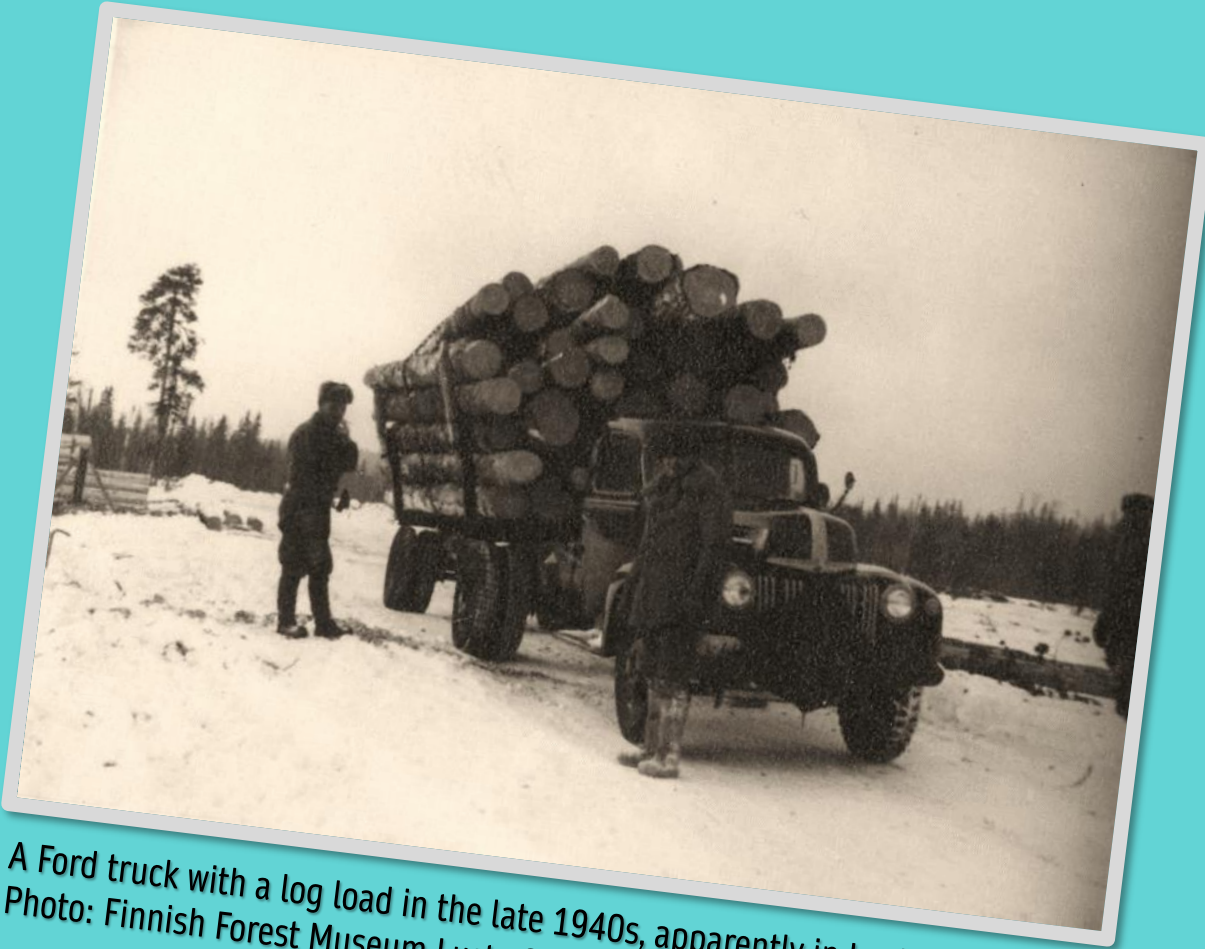


After the Second World War, Finland retained import regulations for cars.

The aim of the regulation was to save foreign currency.

Import licences were largely granted on the basis of pre-war imports.

Trucks were imported in greater numbers to boost reconstruction and the economy.



A Ford truck with a log load in the late 1940s, apparently in Lapland.  
Photo: Finnish Forest Museum Lusto CC BY 4.0.



S.P.J. Keinänen car dealership. Photo from the film Keinänen III Makupaloja. KAVI.

It was possible to obtain the currency required to import cars through export trade. Lingonberries were exported from Finland to Great Britain, for example. Used cars were traded – often well-used cars that had been through wars.



Oy Konela Ab donated the thousandth Moskvitsh 402 passenger car to forester Erkki Miettinen on 24 October 1956. The car was handed over by Lasse Jaakkola, CEO of Konela. Photo: Erkki Voutilainen 1956. Finnish Heritage Agency CC BY 4.0.

In 1948, fuel import regulation ended and Finland signed the Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance with the Soviet Union.

Finland and the Soviet Union had a bilateral clearing trade, which brought cars from the Soviet Union to Finland. It was also politically easier to import cars and other products from Eastern Bloc countries.

From the Soviet Union, the cars were sent by the export company V/O Avtoexport, and in Finland, they were sold by the Soviet-owned Oy Konela Ab



Car dealership Autola Oy, Heikinkatu 9. Photo: Eric Sundström 1927.  
Helsinki City Museum CC BY 4.0.

Autola had been importing Packards and other vehicles to Finland since 1922.

Autola became a Volkswagen representative in 1950. Two years later, Wihuri set up its own import company for Volkswagens, the VW-Auto Oy.



The DAF Daffodil of the exhibition in the 1960s. Photo: Olavi Sallinen. Mobilia's collections.

The liberalisation of car imports at the beginning of 1962 opened up a huge market, which the importers tried to fill with whichever cars were available.

However, the temporary car tax of 1958 and subsequent currency and tax regulations favoured small cars.

Autola's need for new representations, DAF's easy driveability, and the factory's desire to export may have brought the brand to Finland.



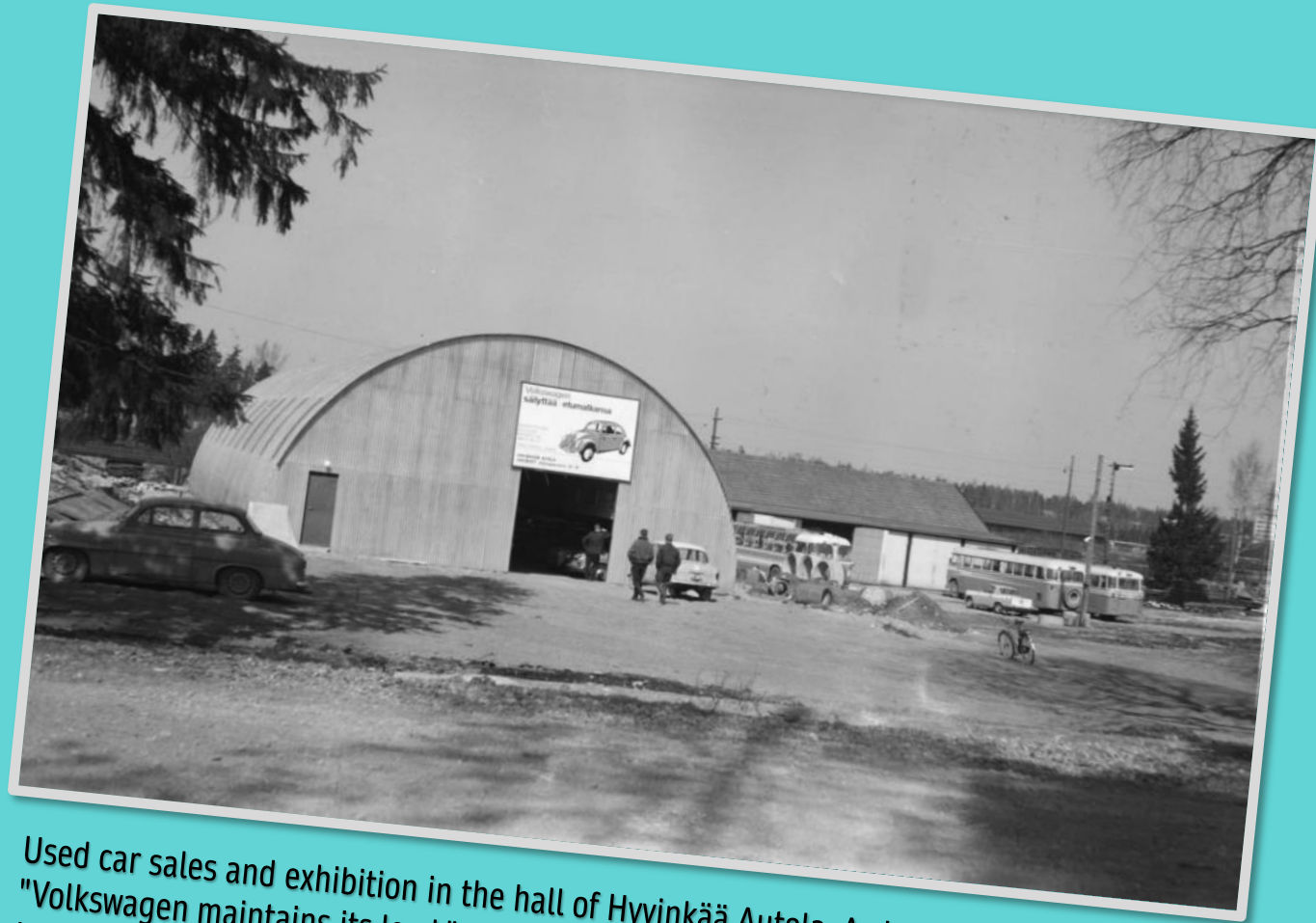
DAF had a good reputation, but the cars were expensive for their size and performance.

The variator power transmission also increased fuel consumption.

The DAF was seen in the press as particularly suitable for female drivers, the elderly and, for example, disabled war veterans.

DAFs were usually acquired for a specific reason.

The SOS sign was introduced in 1966. The sign indicated that there was an emergency situation with the car. This car is a DAF 750. Mobilia's Road Safety Council collections.



Used car sales and exhibition in the hall of Hyvinkää Autola. A sign on the wall reads: "Volkswagen maintains its lead." Hyvinkää Autola was the district dealer for VAG cars in Hyvinkää until 1996. Photo: Voitto Kivi, 1960s. Hyvinkää City Museum CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

In the 1960s, used cars were still being sold in the basements and on the streetsides of city apartment buildings.

However, car dealerships were active and growing.

Financing conditions were still tight, instalment periods short, and interest rates high. Oil, on the other hand, was very cheap.

Importer representatives began to set up car palaces across the country.

By today's standards, they were still modest.

The car trade enjoyed a boom until the 1973 oil crisis.



Sakun Auto Oy's car dealership in Nurmijärvi 1974. The second photo shows Sakari Jauhiainen, the dealership's manager, in 1971.

Photos: Matti Rintala, Nurmijärvi Sanomat. Nurmijärvi Museum CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.



During the 1980s, the economy started to boom rapidly.

Borrowing money became easier, especially in the casino economy at the end of the decade.

Car sales were increasingly made behind larger glass walls, but also in backyards.

Car dealerships were still private and local, but chains were rapidly forming.



The Kim-Auto dealership building in Klaukkala on 28 October 1987. Photo: Merja Ylioja.  
Nurmijärvi Museum CC BY-NC-ND 4.0



Kaupunginportin Auto Oy's car dealership in Hyvinkää in 1996. Photo: Ari Peltonen, Aamuposti. Hyvinkää City Museum CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

Then came the 1990s, the banking crisis, and the deep recession.

Car dealerships faced a wave of bankruptcies, and the sector was reorganised. Two thirds of all dealerships were affected.

After the recession, the sector became more concentrated in chains. Factories' own imports accelerated.



The early 2000s were marked by growth, optimism, consumerism, and growing concern for the environment.

A major societal challenge for the automotive sector was to address the issues of safety and low emissions. Electronics and diesel were seen as the answer.

Car sales were concentrated next to supermarkets, at city entrances and along bypasses.

Retail trade was concentrated in strong private chains.

Harapainen in Lappeenranta: a hypermarket, a fuel dispenser, and a car dealership at the intersection of the urban structure and a four-lane road. Photo: Scanfoto. Museums of Lappeenranta CC BY 4.0

The Finnish car trade has come a long way into the 2020s. The last decade saw huge themes, such as:



Vapaus valita - auto ("Freedom to choose - a car") is a multiannual programme that aims to provide information on car use and the future of mobility, and to bring new perspectives to the debate around them.

The programme is organized by the automotive industry: The Finnish Central Organisation for Motor Trades and Repairs, the Association of Automobile Industry in Finland, and the Finnish Information Centre of Automobile Sector.

The Finnish Information Centre of Automobile Sector is a partner of the exhibition and provided the story about the small car from the land of clogs.

Other modes of transport are also becoming increasingly organised and being visibly lobbied.

*Continuing concentration in the car sector,  
disappearance of old brands and dealerships*

*New entrants and e-commerce*

*Polarisation of debate*

*Shared use and private leasing as alternatives to  
ownership*

*The image of the car in the face of climate change*

*The driving power revolution  
and the issues of the future*

So what happened to Autola?

During the 1960s, Wihuri and its subsidiaries imported more than a dozen car makes, most of which were represented by Oy Autola Ab.

By the end of the 1970s, most of these brands – especially the English ones – had disappeared from our market.

VW-Audi went to Kesko. The remains of Chrysler Europe were transferred to Peugeot's importer, the S Group.



Autola switched from importing cars to selling accessories.