

Corso Veloce

MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE NEW ZEALAND FIAT OWNERS CLUB

**December 2018/
January 2019**





MARK'S MUSINGS

Season's greetings. You'll see on the opposite page that I have given a bit of space in this issue to illustrating the recent Fiat 124 reunion held in Paraparaumu from 16-18 November. It was a rare opportunity to see so many in one place.

The event was organised by Canterbury Fiat Lancia Club member Lyn Parlane. Planning is already underway for the next event in 2020, to be held in Nelson. As Lyn explained, although billed as a 124 event, it is open to any Fiat (or Lancia). Based on the success of this event, I think there is scope to expand it – perhaps it could be a return to the days of the past Fiat Nationals that long-standing members will recall.

Thanks also to Cliff Gibson for supplying this editions member profile – part 1 of 2 no less. And to make it interesting, it doesn't even have any photos of Fiats!

Also, we welcome Paul Brice onto the committee, filling the space vacated by Bill Bawn. Paul hails from Foxton, and drives an Alfa Romeo GTV Spider.

Finally, in this issue I thought I'd try something new, with an occasional column reviewing diecast collector models of Fiats (or Lancia's). I suggested this idea to the committee a while ago, and took as an approval the fact that no-one fell about laughing!

I'm aware that some members collect models to varying degree. I well recall visits to the Birse home in Newtown, and being greeted by a display of assorted models in the entranceway. So hopefully some of you will find my reviews interesting – and maybe even inspiring.

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Fleet news

My main news to report on this issue is that a considerable amount of work has been under way on my 2300 Familiare. You may recall I said it had gone in to get an engine overhaul and repairs to the steering box. Predictably, and somewhat naively in hindsight, this has turned into a bigger job, basically an underbody recondition or dare I say, restoration. Not because more work needed doing to it, but because my *garagista*, Bristol Motors, recommended I should make the effort to renew the running gear while the other jobs were being attended to. Easy to say when you're not paying the bills! Its more than what I wanted or budgeted for really, but on the upside it will transform the way the car drove which is ultimately a good thing, and should give the car decades more use (albeit sparingly).

That being the case, the underside has been fully stripped and various mechanical and suspension components sandblasted, refurbished and powder coated or repainted, along with replacing the tie rods, universal joints, bearings, and various bushes. Too much work to detail here, but my mechanic and I have been busy searching the internet for NOS replacement parts, and in each case buying two of everything (or two sets), one for the wagon and one for the sedan which will need the same work done to it. Needless to say, this means progress on getting the wagon back on the road has taken longer than expected, and is not yet complete, so I will have still have an excuse to fill this column for another issue or two.



Some of the renewed components

CLUB EVENTS

Fiat 124 Riunione, 17 November

A fantastic event with 30 124's from around NZ attending the event based out of Paraparaumu. Several of our local members took part in the weekend, plus our club was invited along for the display at Southwards on Saturday morning, and road run to Martinborough for lunch, with 3 non-124s taking part in the convoy over the Paekakariki and Remutaka hills.

As illustrated, there was a good mix of all 3 coupe series, and Spiders (but alas no sedans). The Saturday display was judged by local car enthusiast, newspaper columnist and host of TVNZ OnDemand car show 'Start Me Up' Mike ('MOD') O'Donnell, with our own Dino Toscano taking first prize for best restored 124 for his AC. Best original 124 went to Greg Chapman and Marlaine Curtis-Chapman for their Spider. Phil Ward also received a prize for the best non-124 (judged by Mal Simmonds), for his restored 128.



Mike O'Donnell inspecting Phil's 128



(clockwise, from above) ACs, BCs, CCs and Spiders



CLUB EVENTS

Xmas BBQ, Otaihangā Domain, 9 December

Another great event, helped by great weather and shade by the trees at Otaihangā Domain. 17 people turned up in 8 cars, including the Adams and Toscano families, both arriving in their 124s. We also had a new member join us with what is now a rare Yugo 55, in tidy original condition. Earlier in the day, a number of club members attended the monthly 'coffee and cars' event for all-comers at Southwards museum.



Chef Mike gets the BBQ fired up...with help



NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome to new members who have joined us in the last few months:

Sam Mills, Paraparaumu – 1989 Yugo 55A

Sam with his Yugo (on left) chats with Paul Morgan, at the club BBQ



COMING EVENTS

- 28 January – Dannevirke Wheels with Attitude
- 10 February – British & European Car Day, Upper Hutt
- 17 February – Shannon Spectacular Car Show

Keep an eye on our Facebook page and email for more details in the new year.

MEMBER PROFILE—CLIFF GIBSON

Being of a certain age and an extended history I thought that breaking my profile into two chapters might be sensible. The first chapter covered my motoring history, beginning in Auckland, until I encountered “love at first” sight for the second time. I will refer to this period as “before Fiat” or bF followed by “after Fiat” or aF.

As a 16-year-old I purchased a 1931 MG M-type, the earliest car produced in volume(?) by Morris Garages. I was later to realise it had been badly butchered having had the beautiful boat-tail removed and replaced with a slab rear end, copying later models. Powered by a 750cc single overhead cam engine covered with a louvered bonnet held in place with a leather strap, a 16-year-old driver's fantasy was emulating Tazio Nuvolari (go on, Google it).



After a year I got fed up with no weather protection and dodgy electrics and it was sold. Next came a 1934 Wolseley Hornet Special. Magnificent mechanically but the body was originally a coach-built fixed head coupe and as the rot had set into the wooden frame it literally parted company with the chassis. Weather protection, not this time either.

By now I was a member of the MG Car Club (membership by invitation only!) and another member was restoring a 1948 MGTC. I spent many hours helping the restorer and once back on the road I had to have it. Working two jobs I managed to raise the purchase price. This was a delight to drive, had a semblance of weather protection and we covered many miles together with numerous events; motorkhanas, sprints and hillclimbs. Although the body and chassis had been restored the mechanicals had not received the same attention. The XPAG MG engine although robust was susceptible to head-gasket



issues. The original 19-inch wire wheels were constantly being re-spoked and other reliability issues caused me to sell. Working and studying left little room to nurture the MG so I had to get sensible.

My “sensible” purchase was an FC Holden. Oh dear what a comedown. Apart from the fact it was deadly boring it did not have brakes! The car would not stop from its maximum speed of +/- 125kph with one pedal application. Brake drums were so light that heat caused them to distort, severely limiting the stopping performance. Quickly learned to pump the brake pedal.

Mental health was restored as I found an MGA 1600 Mk1. This car had been driven from the UK to New Zealand. On arrival the engine was refreshed but the gearbox was broken. With the help of a fellow car club member we rebuilt the gearbox replaced the (wooden) floor and checked the rest of the transmission. On the road I enjoyed a “modern” MG and campaigned it as enthusiastically as my activities in the TC.



The photo shows the MGA minus shiny bits on its way back from frontal damage caused by a multicar accident – thankfully, no one injured.

The MG Car Club met every Friday night at a Scout Hall in Mt Roskill and was very active in Auckland motor sporting events winning the annual inter-club motorkhana trophy consistently. I served a term as Club Captain. Several of the then membership subsequently had success in national and international motorsport. Roger Anderson was national saloon car champion in 1968 in a Mini Cooper and later in a BMW 2002Tii. Colin Beanland worked with Bruce McLaren at the beginning of his career and several others became engineers and team managers for Kiwi drivers offshore. Heady days! I even got to drive a Cooper Bristol (Formula 2 single seater) back from the Ardmore circuit in the rain – of course (weather protection absent again) while the owner (Peter Elford) drove home in a weather tight saloon.

In 1965 an opportunity arose to purchase a brand-new car. Back then import restrictions limited the buyers of new cars to those with offshore funds, enough to pay the ex-factory cost. The only exceptions were some brands assembled in NZ.

continued on next page

Wanting a Mini Cooper S, a Dominion Motors salesman found a way this could be facilitated. Not wishing to incriminate myself I will not disclose the method except to say that my name never appeared on the ownership papers. The 1275 Cooper S was Australian assembled with some tweaks as part of the homologation process for the Bathurst 500 which it won in 1966.



My car had wind-up windows (as opposed to the sliding windows fitted to the UK built versions) and twin fuel tanks. It served as day-to-day transport, occasional events, honeymoon transport and sometime later delivered Julie to the maternity hospital for

the birth of our son. Sadly, it was sold (at a profit) in 1968 to fund the now three of us travel to London where I took up a scholarship.

Whilst in the UK I believed I could purchase a car and import it to NZ as baggage without needing an import license or paying duty. An Alfa Romeo Giulia Super was the subject of a search which was satisfied with the purchase of a one owner example with less than 25k miles. Shortly after the rules changed which dissipated the anticipated profit of selling it on my return. Keeping the Alfa in the UK as a student with infant son was not only unrealistic, it was irresponsible – it had to go and it did. The short but splendid experience of an Italian masterpiece was to eventually change everything.

Returning home transport was a family-friendly Ford Zephyr Mk3. Reliable, practical, comfortable and having a 4-speed gearbox it was not a bad drive. The “dark ages” were to follow

as company-supplied cars were to be the day-to-day transport for the next 15 years. Julie did have a couple of quite surprisingly competent cars. A Renault 12TL was followed by a 4-door Mk4 Ford Escort assembled in South Africa and powered by the GT engine.

Setting up my own consulting business meant I could choose the next car. Our daughter had developed an interest in horses (another story!) which suggested towing. I found an immaculate low mileage Triumph 2.5S whose first owner was a titled lady. It served its purpose admirably until I was sucked back into being employed once again with a company-supplied car. But we bought a Rover P6B 3.5 litre as a tow car. A relocation from Auckland to



Wellington and with a daughter who now had her driver's license and a horse grazing in Pauatahanui, we decided to keep the Rover that we had all become attached to.

Two years after arriving in Wellington I was looking for a toy and fruitlessly searching for a Mini Cooper (trying to recapture my youth), I saw an advert in the classifieds for a Fiat 124 Coupe. Remembering an Auckland friend who had bought one of these new and raced it successfully and admiring it at the time, I was intrigued. A phone call and a drive to the Hutt brought Julie and I face to face with Mellow Yellow. After a brief inspection we started the road test which lasted about 500 metres before deciding we had to have it. As I have said “love at first sight”, an epiphany had occurred.

You will need to read the second instalment to find out about “after Fiat” (aF).



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FAMILIARISATION—MELLOW YELLOW FINDS ITS WAY AROUND

December 2018

Is it Spring or is it Summer? It's generally warmer here in the Waikato and the rain is plentiful enough to grow grass so those conversion machines can convert it to milk.

HWMBO (he who must be obeyed) is not making use of my attributes as much as he did in Wellington. Initially I was miffed being snubbed but my garage mate confessed he was similarly underutilised. Not complaining as I am fundamentally lazy. It appears the HWMBO is wearing out shoe leather instead of Pirelli rubber.

Some four weeks ago I transported HWMBO to Karapiro lake where he was attending a two-day economic summit whatever that means. On Thursday we had an enjoyable jaunt down the expressway, travelling legally at 110kph before turning into a pleasant country road, across a bridge to a parking spot overlooking the national rowing venue. Pulling up alongside me was a double cab ute as he described himself. These seem to be very fashionable in the Waikato. My friendly neighbour introduced himself as Japanese with a name I've forgotten but included Zs and Us. Wishing to reciprocate his friendliness I listened to his description of himself while I gazed at his hubcaps and underside of his wheel arches. Eye to eye contact was a non-starter! Anyway, he is powered by a 2.2 litre engine fed with oil through a pair of something he referred to a pair of "hairdryers" I explained that my engine was fed with petrol through two double throat Weber carburettors. "Weber, I've seen their barbeques but carburettors, what are they?" was my new-found friend's retort. I rolled my eyes to the ceiling and changed the subject.

Fortunately (facilitating a change of subject) we simultaneously noticed these long skinny boats traversing the lake with the drivers facing

the rear. Just as well our drivers aren't facing backwards, we concurred, otherwise it would be unlikely that this conversation would be happening.

The rain "precipitated" down on the return journey and I fogged the windscreen to keep HWMBO on his metal. Heater fan on full and a window slightly open ensured we stayed on the black stuff and didn't encounter a physical relationship.

Twice in the past month I have been stalked. Two vehicles (and their drivers) have followed me home and engaged in conversations about the virtues of Fiat 124s. After close inspections and HWMBO saying complementary things (I trust this does not mean he will be asking me to do things beyond my pay scale) I appear to have new fans. Perhaps I need my own Facebook page – just kidding!

All the best for Christmas, possibly talk again in the new year.

Ciao MY



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MARK'S MODEL CORNER

In this column, I will review manufacturers who produce scale models of Fiats and Lancias. Whilst some of the models I review may be especially relevant to me, the manufacturers make other Fiats or Lancias (and other marques for that matter), so I hope you find it interesting and relevant to your own favourite cars.

I've been enthusiastically collecting for over 15 years, mostly 1:43 scale models (the classic 'Dinky' or Corgi' size) but also some of the larger 1:18 scale (which I limit due to the lack of space to display them), and I'll cover both scales in this column.

To collectors, the scale model hobby has expanded significantly in the last decade or so which I expect is due to improved mass-production technology (mostly made in China) for both traditional diecasts, as well as resin models which enables smaller production runs. As a result, the array of collector models worldwide today is huge, so there will definitely be models of cars you own or are nostalgic for.

Anyhow, to backtrack on my intro above, in this issue I am going to review some plastic kitset model Fiats instead – which are manufactured in 1:24 scale. This is a completely different hobby from collecting, which I have been doing for 35-odd years. Although it won't appeal to everyone, some of you may be interested, so below is a review of a couple of kitset Fiats I've built.

Tamiya Fiat 500/695SS Abarth

If you don't know about kitset models, the only thing you need to know is that Tamiya is the biggest and best kitset brand. Whether cars, boats, aircraft, military or radio-controlled models or whatever, any modeller will confirm that. So that makes the Fiat a great kit which I enjoyed building. This kit dates from the 1990s when Tamiya went through a phase of making classic cars e.g. Mini, Citroen 2CV, VW Beetle etc. I collected and built them all.



This kit is available in two variants: a standard 500F, and the 695SS Abarth. The Abarth kit was basically a standard kit with an extra plastic sprue (to use the modellers terminology) for the Abarth bits, i.e. the

wheel arch extensions, race seat, plus extra decals for the go-faster stripes. It's quite a simple trick for kitset manufacturers to get extra value out of their moulds.

You could say kitset manufacturers make kits in two levels of difficulty – those with engines and opening bonnet and/or doors, and those without. The ones without engines are quicker to build simply because they have fewer parts, but otherwise the quality is the same (and always improving as technology and detail accuracy improves).

The engine detail is often my favourite part, which this kit featured. As kitsets go, it's the smallest I've ever built, which reflects the real car of course. But being Tamiya quality, it was



great to build with everything fitting together as it should. I chose to paint it off-white, which is how I recall seeing photos of the real thing, with a black interior. I left the so-called fabric roof off (actually just a plastic insert) so you could see the interior detail. I painted the steering wheel in a wooden colour to replicate a wooden wheel. The body and seats were painted using Tamiya aerosols (straight from the can), with everything else brush-painted using Tamiya acrylic bottle paint. But since painting this model (years ago) I now paint all my kitset bodies using an airbrush (by decanting the aerosol into the airbrush bottle) to improve the finish, but that obviously requires more investment. But for a beginner, using the aerosol will do.

This was a great model to make, I still like it even though my modelling skills have improved since I built it.

Fujimi Fiat 500 Abarth

Having built a 1960s Nuova 500, I just had to build a new one. This kit dates from when the real car was launched, but I only built it 2 years ago (using the aforementioned airbrush). Like the Tamiya, this kit comes in two versions – a standard model and an Abarth with the go-faster bits to add on, although they are fewer than the earlier Tamiya model (no wheel arch extensions). They also do a Tributo Ferrari version.

Fujimi kits today are almost as good as Tamiya, and being a



recent kit are much better than earlier Fujimi kits dating from the 1970s that I've also built, but which don't fit together so well. I have no complaints about this kit, but it has no

engine (or opening parts) which means it's quicker to build. The most complex part was the dashboard, which I decided to spray-paint in 3 colours to replicate some of the real cars I had seen. Due to the curvey shape of the dashboard, this involved some tricky masking, which included using a gloopy product called 'Maskol' which you paint on the sections you want to mask, but which dries to a rubbery compound (otherwise masking involves using tape in straight lines). It wasn't 100% successful, but I was able to touch up the end result by hand-brush.



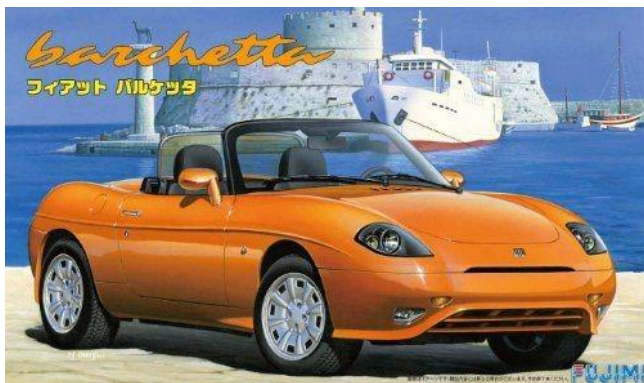
The two kitsets side-by-side show how much smaller the classic 'Bambina' is compared to the new 500

For the exterior, this time I chose grey to contrast to the Tamiya model after seeing a full-size grey Abarth in Wellington, so I selected a Tamiya paint that was a close approximation.

Overall, an easy kit to build (easier than the Tamiya) and accurate and fits together well.

Other Fiat kitsets

Fujimi also make a Fiat Barchetta kitset, which I expect will be similar quality to their 500.



Fujimi Fiat Barchetta

As for other Fiat Group kitsets, if you're a fan of the Lancia Delta Integrale, you're in luck as this is produced by two manufacturers – Hasegawa and Italeri. Hasegawa are similar in quality to Fujimi but as it dates from the 1980s my only comment would be that it may have a few detail flaws or fitment issues compared to the very good quality modern kits. I'm not sure how old the Italeri kit is, but my experience of older kitsets from this brand is that the detail



*Hasegawa
Lancia Delta
Integrale*

quality and fit and finish is not as good as the Japanese. Italeri has also recently produced a 1:12 scale model of the 500F, which looks great (but is expensive), but I have not built kits of this scale so can't comment.

Incidentally, whilst not new, all of the 1:24 kitsets can still be purchased online through specialist kitset websites, or eBay. A quick scan suggests that they can be bought for around \$50 not including shipping.

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BAMBINO BONANZA

Tommy Cerrone's love for baby Fiats is in the blood, says **Andrew Roberts**, and he's already passing it on to the next generation

PHOTOGRAPHY TONY BAKER





From top: Maria Cerrone with beloved Multipla that she can't wait to drive; superb detailing includes badge and dash; functional cabin of 'luxury' 500L

The sun is shining, the sky is blue and at first glance this glorious array of baby Fiats belongs not in the Home Counties in the 21st century, but in an Italian comedy of the 1960s. You might have reasonably expected Vittorio Gassman or Alberto Sordi to arrive at any moment, or perhaps a ballad from Domenico Modugno. But we really are in England, to visit the incredible collection of Tommy Cerrone – a group that represents over three decades of devoted work. “You could say that these cars are part of my heritage,” he says with a smile. “I was raised here, but spent so much time in Italy as a child and a young man. Over there I would see Fiat 500s and 600s every day, and I think these memories shaped my taste in cars.” Whenever Cerrone displays one of his menagerie at the NEC Classic Motor Show – or simply drives one of his various splendid Fiats around the village – it seldom fails to make an impact.

The smallest member of the selection is a 38,000-mile 500, which dates from 1972: “I bought it in 1987, and it was given a respray when the body began to look tired.” In the late 1980s, the Fiat 500 was still a not uncommon sight on British roads, but today it has to be one of the most collectable Italian cars of its generation. No matter how many times you encounter a Nuova 500, its size continues to amaze (it's shorter than a Mini), as does its innate appeal. The Cerrone 500 saloon is one of the final examples of the breed, and is an L – for *lusso* (luxury) – a model that was introduced in 1968. As such it sports extra chrome, an uprated fascia and more elaborate door furniture – but beneath



these decadent luxuries, it is still suffused with the brio that made the Nuova 500 world famous. "It is taxed – ready to go and to be generally enjoyed," says Cerrone. "Of all my cars, it is probably the 500 that gets the most attention – with ladies in particular finding it cute."

Joining the 500L is one of the most important cars in the history of the Fiat marque, and also of post-war Italy *per se*. Launched 63 years ago, the 600 was Fiat's first rear-engined production car; it marked a watershed in the story of mass motoring, and was the automotive embodiment of the Italian post-war economic miracle. By 1961, Fiat had already sold more than a million 600s and, as Cerrone puts it: "When I was growing up, I used to see them everywhere in Italy." In the UK it was marketed as one of the cheapest methods of transporting four people, but today it is among the rarest cars on our roads: "Quite a few people recognise the 500, but by and large they are unfamiliar with the 600."

The example in the Cerrone collection is a 600D, which is powered by a 767cc engine and is particularly rare in being a UK-specification model: "It dates from 1963 and I've owned it for about seven years. When I came by it, the 600 had been kept in a garage for a long time and it did require some bodywork. It's well suited to local motoring, although I am not too sure about the prospect of using it on the motorway!" As with the rest of the Cerrone Fiats, it is the details that fascinate: the doors, the almost baroque instrument cluster and the folding rear seat-back. One of the features that particularly appeals to its owner is the heater control – a valve mounted below the squab of the back seat.

If the sight of a 500 saloon and a 600 together was insufficiently indicative of *La Dolce Vita*, there's also not one, not two but three examples of the stylish 500 Giardiniera estate. The oldest of the trio dates from 1963. "It's a UK model and, unusually, is fitted with front seatbelts," says Cerrone. "I've had this one for about eight years and it's in fair nick. There is a little filler here and there, and in the future I am going to take it off the road for some TLC."

The Giardiniera looks utterly delightful, in addition to being a masterpiece of packaging. The sunroof extends over the luggage bay – in its homeland, the 500 station wagon was often used by tradesmen carrying ladders – and the powerplant was mounted on its side, to allow for additional boot space.

The set also includes two more recent examples of the Giardiniera, dating from 1971 and '72: "The earlier car is solid, but perhaps a little tatty around the edges. At the moment it is awaiting restoration, while the third one is very low mileage – just 1800 miles – and is even still on its original tyres. Someone drove it to the UK and it sat in a London garage until about five years ago."

And finally we come to the two Fiats that are Cerrone's biggest head-turners. "When I was growing up," he recalls, "I didn't see many 600 Multiplas, but one was used as a taxi in my mother's village." At first sight, this ancestor of the people carrier looks as if it was designed by two different parties, each working from the opposite end and finally meeting at the back



Clockwise: Giardiniera is in regular use; later Autobianchi-badged car; super-original '72 model; folding rear bench of 600



"TALL PEOPLE CAN DRIVE THEM – IT'S JUST ABOUT GETTING THE KNACK OF ENTRY AND EXIT!"

doors. "They are so versatile," observes Cerrone, "and with more space inside than you might imagine." Furthermore, despite the fact that the front bench is not adjustable for reach: "Tall people really can drive them – it's just a matter of understanding the knack of entry and exit!"

Fiat launched the Multipla in early 1956 and, although they became a common sight in Italy (just look at any film footage of Rome in the late 1950s or early '60s), this was not the case in Britain. At that time, Fiat offered its entire range to UK motorists but the Multipla was both too

expensive – it cost as much as a Ford Consul – and too offbeat for *Semi Detached Suburban Mr James*. To own just one right-hand-drive 600 Multipla would be enough for many, but Cerrone has

two – although he does concede: "I often wonder who would have bought one over here."

The 1959 example is actually the property of his daughter Maria, who eagerly awaits the day when she can take the wheel. "I was offered the car at the NEC some time back," says Cerrone Snr. "I was on the Fiat Motor Club stand with my other car, and a guy came up to me and said 'I've got one of these at home'." The subsequent restoration process lasted five years and included plenty of challenges: "Various parts for the Multipla are unique to that car. Things such as trim for the windows can be very difficult to source. As for my '63, I have owned it for quite some time and its condition was much as it is now, although I have done a few bits and pieces."

Reactions to the Multipla range from bafflement to sheer amazement: "When people see it, they generally don't know what it is. I occasionally encounter an Italian expat who recognises it, but to most the name Multipla means the newer model." The impact of the original car on a generation raised with the Brava-derived MPV is understandable, because while the Multipla might look distinctive in repose, this pales in comparison with the spectacle of one in motion. It does not so much drive as scuttle about the tarmac; in an age of conformist modern motoring, a two-tone classic Fiat is a veritable tonic.

Cerrone's advice to anyone embarking on the rebuild of a rear-engined Fiat is to ensure that everything is done to the best-possible standard first time out: "You don't want to have to undo the effects of a sub-par restoration." And he isn't finished yet: "I like 850s, especially the Coupé, and I've a hankering for a 126." Cue Domenico Modugno singing *Nel blu, dipinto di blu...* CLASSIC

Thanks to the Cerrone family; Gavin Bushby of the Fiat Motor Club (www.fiatmotorclubgb.co.uk)