

# Corso Veloce

MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE NEW ZEALAND FIAT OWNERS CLUB

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## MARK'S MUSINGS

### Hunting for treasure, part 2

Later in this magazine is a reproduction of an article in *Auto Italia* on some rare Lancias, including a Gamma Berlina and Beta Trevi. This gives me the excuse to prattle on about my own (very limited) interactions with these two models.

I have a bit of a soft spot for the Gamma Berlina – which is much rarer in NZ than the coupe (and that's hardly common) – because there's something about the styling that appeals to me. Although I've never driven a Gamma I have long thought it would be interesting to own a Berlina even though they do have a bit of a bad reputation.

Anyway, I have only ever seen one Berlina (pictured), and it was for sale about 5 years ago at Bains in Canterbury. Around that time I happened to be in Christchurch, so of course I took a look.



The price seemed appealing at first, but it had several flaws (I did not even drive it), and decided it was not the one for me. But I haven't completely given up on the idea!

The Trevi is more interesting, not least because of its crazy "Swiss cheese" dash (read the article to understand), but also because it was never sold in NZ. In the article, the author notes that the Trevi was also available in a supercharged VX variant – but only in LHD. But he goes on to say at least one RHD VX was made, which came to the UK and he asks if anyone knows if it still exists.

Well, funnily enough...

I'm able to shed a little light on this, so this is an excerpt of what I wrote back to the magazine:

*While I can't answer definitively whether the car still survives, back in the mid-1990s the RHD Trevi VX referred to in the article was based near New Zealand's capital city. I spotted the car in the photo [below] being driven in Wainuiomata*



*(somewhat worse for wear). I knew it was unusual (the Trevi variant of the Beta was never sold in NZ), so I followed the owner home! I got chatting to him, and he explained that it was the only factory RHD Trevi VX in the world, and that it had been built for an overseas embassy and was subsequently imported into the UK. Thus it must be the same car referred to in the article (note the Volumex badge on the boot). The owner was English, and had bought the car out to NZ when he emigrated.*

*Since that encounter, I have never seen the car again, it has never participated in local classic car events, so alas I don't know whether it survives, although government records show the number plate has been cancelled which doesn't bode well.*



As a postscript, I also don't recall the address, so would struggle to track the owner down. Shame, because the idea of owning a car that is unique in the world kind of appeals to me!

**Mark Stockdale**  
**FOCNZ President**



## CLUB EVENTS

### Annual BBQ, 26 January

Our annual Xmas gathering was postponed to late January by unseasonable wet weather, but the delay was worth it, with a great turnout with 11 cars and 24 people including first-timer Blair Wald and family from the Manawatu. Included in the line-up of cars at Otaihanga Domain near Southwards Museum was a matching pair of 20V Turbo Coupes, owned by the Wald's and John Lewis. Phil Ward also turned up with his latest competed resto project – a pedal car for his son! Later on a non-member drove by in a very rare 850 Spider.



*Treasurer Mike was on chef duties again. Pictured here with some helpers?*



*Our youngest club member? Max in dad Phil Ward's freshly restored...Ford*



*A rare sight: Fiat 850 Spider*



*Snap! Two near-identical 20V Turbo Coupes on the left*



## CLUB EVENTS cont'd

### British & European Car Day, 9 February

This is the third year this popular event has been open to Continental marques, and the club had a small number of cars on display at Trentham, including a non-member in a Lancia Delta Integrale (converted to RHD as it was an early import).



### Shannon Autospectacular, 16 February

Another of the busy calendar of car shows in February, a small group of members also attended this annual event, held for the first time at the larger golf course. A few non-members also joined our display on a second weekend of perfect weather.





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## MARK'S MODEL CORNER

### 1:43 scale models

In this column, I commence reviewing some 1:43 diecast models. Up until now I've illustrated 1:18 scale models (and some less common 1:24), but the 1:43 range (the classic Dinky or Corgi size) is even more prolific. As ever, I review models from scale model brands that I have purchased over the years.

### Minichamps

Minichamps are a long-established diecast brand, dating from 1990, who've produced a wide range of 1:43 scale models (although they also produce some 1:18 scale). In my opinion they were for a long time probably the highest-quality diecast brand – with prices to match – although that title could probably be challenged with the plethora of new manufacturers in the last decade or so, and the brand itself does not seem to be as prolific as it once was.

Although based in Germany (but made in China), they have produced a wide range of models of cars from across the world. Illustrated are examples of Fiat and Lancia models, although on their website most of these are listed as 'sold out', but can still be found on eBay.

I own a few Minichamps models of various car brands, but only one Fiat which is an X1/9 1300. Compared to other diecast X1/9s I own from other brands, there is a definite air of quality to the Minichamps model, which you would expect considering the higher asking price. Accurately replicating cars at 1:43 scale is harder than 1:18, but Minichamps do a



good job, with greater attention to detail than cheaper brands, including picking out the windscreen surround in silver, along with the top of the doors and around the buttresses. Even the interior has fine details like a silver gear knob and stripes on the seats, and contrasting colours for the arm rests and window winders etc. It even has a removable targa roof! Other scale model brands X1/9s just come with a fixed roof (not even painted black), or nothing at all. The Minichamps proportions and stance look just right, and better than any of the other X1/9s models I have.

While I don't have any of the other Minichamps Fiats or Lancias pictured, other non-Fiat Minichamps I own suggest they will be just as well detailed. Not cheap maybe, but very realistic and flawless.



*Minichamps X1/9. Note the detailed interior*

A couple of years ago, Minichamps launched a cheaper brand, called oddly enough Maxichamps (which would have made more sense if it was for their 1:18 range). One of their earlier releases was another X1/9, which, comparing side-by-side is almost certainly the same moulding as the former Minichamps-branded model (including the removable targa roof), but in new (and somewhat plain) colours. Externally, I can't really tell any difference, but the interior is simpler and all moulded in black. If you can live with the basic interior, then Maxichamps represents better value at under \$80.



*The Maxichamps version of the X1/9. Externally it looks the same as the earlier Minichamps version of the same mould (no longer in production), but the colours are not as interesting.*



*Minichamps Fiat Panda*



## MARK'S MODEL CORNER cont'd

Some examples of the other 1:43 Minichamps Fiats and Lancias that can still be found on eBay (clockwise from right: Fiat Dino, Lancia Beta HPE, Beta Zagato Spider (also available as a standard coupe), Fiat 850 Spider and Lancia Fulvia).



## COMING EVENTS

**15 March:** Southwards Coffee & Cars (from 10am-1pm)

**29 March:** Wainuiomata road run and visit to Baring Head lighthouse. Meet at Avalon carpark (Fairway Drive opposite GNS) at 9.30am. After walking to the lighthouse, the road run will conclude with lunch at the Seashore Cabaret in Petone.

(right) Spotted at the January Southwards Coffee and Cars was this Lancia 037 replica



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# Man on a Mission

Patrick Hurst is a passionate collector, determined to save forgotten examples of one of Italy's most illustrious marques. His trio of large Lancias includes one that's never even been on the road

Story by Phil Ward  
Photography by Michael Ward







**P**atrick Hurst is a serial car collector and restorer living near Belfast in Northern Ireland. He is well known as an Alfa Romeo enthusiast, having owned more than 50 of them, including his very first car, an Alfasud TI, which he still has. Recently Patrick has turned his attention to Lancias, which he believes is a marque that is underappreciated and undervalued. *Auto Italia* has already featured some of his Lancias, including two Beta VX Coupes and his Thema 8.32.

What we're in Northern Ireland to see this time, though, is a selection of three recent acquisitions: a Trevi 2000, a Gamma 2500 saloon and a Kappa Coupe 2.0t. Patrick runs a restoration business called Originale Italiano and his team Greg and Gary have given the cars expert, detailed attention. Gathered together for the very first time for our feature shoot at Sketrick Island on the beautiful Strangford Lough, the weather was sadly awful. "That's why Ireland is so green!" laughs Patrick. So what's the story behind each of these Fiat-era Lancias, and what makes them special?





## LANCIA TREVI

In the early 1970s, Fiat's range of 124 saloons and coupes was getting long in the tooth, while the conservative 132 saloon looked dated from the outset. Having acquired Lancia in 1969, Fiat chose the brand to develop a new range of sporting coupes and saloons. The Lancia badge added an upmarket cachet to the range, boasting an edge over Fiat.

Former Lancia engineers were tasked to develop the Beta, and in 1972 the Beta saloon was launched. Fiat's highly successful twin-cam engine was redeveloped and, for the first time, installed transversely to drive the front wheels. The new model was designed as a medium-size five-seater in two-box configuration. It looked like a hatchback, but it wasn't.

About 195,000 Beta berlinas were built in three series. In 1979 the final series was introduced with the signature corporate front grille of the period (as adopted by the whole Beta range and the new Delta). The interior was dramatically revised and the Mario Bellini-designed controversial 'gruyere' cheese dash was introduced. Bellini was a prominent Italian designer noted for his work with chairs, tables, electronic office

machinery and hi-fi equipment. He also attached his name to an upmarket limited edition all-black Fiat 132 saloon. Bellini's Trevi dashboard is a clear case of form over function. Most of the 29 holes are dedicated to superfluous warning lights, while Lancia's electrical department must have run out of ideas because two recesses are unused. The main instruments are where they should be, directly in front of the driver, nestling behind the oh-so-spindly lighting and washer stalks. The gauges have colours rather than graduations and, typical of Betas, are pretty optimistic.

It is said that Lancia recognised that the hatchback appearance of the Beta saloon met with some resistance among more conservative car buyers. As a result, in 1980 radical changes were made to the Beta with the introduction of the booted Trevi notchback version. Trevi is a contraction of 'tre volumi' (three box), rather than referring to the famous fountain in Rome.

The Trevi's styling was carried out in association with Pininfarina. Quite what involvement Pininfarina had is uncertain, but there is a numbered plate in the engine compartment of Patrick's example that records it as 'Pininfarina 693 06168'.

The Beta title was dropped when the Trevi was



*Gloriously wacky dashboard looks amazing but is pretty tricky for the driver to navigate*



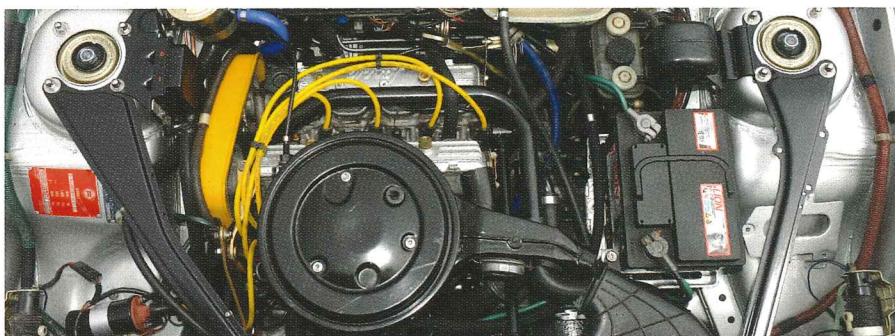




## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

### LANCIA TREVI 2000

ENGINE:	1995cc 4-cyl DOHC
BORE X STROKE:	84mm x 90mm
POWER:	115hp @ 5500rpm
TORQUE:	129lb ft @ 2800rpm
INDUCTION:	Weber 34 carb
TRANSMISSION:	5-speed manual
WEIGHT:	1165kg
MAX SPEED:	110mph
0-62MPH:	11.0sec



launched in the UK in 1981. Two versions were available: 1.6 and 2.0-litre carburettor petrol. Eventually the 2000ie with the excellent Bosch fuel injection became available. A supercharged Volumex version was available in mainland Europe from 1982 (3844 built). The VX was not available in the UK although it is known that at least one right-hand drive version was built for the Italian Embassy in Pakistan and was imported into the UK. Does anyone know if it still exists? In 1984 Trevi production ended, some 40,628 examples having been built in all.

Partick's 1982 Trevi 2000 was advertised by its Aberdeen then-owner on eBay with just 58,000 miles on the clock. Even though the car was in remarkable condition, it was still subjected to a complete Originale Italiano nut-and-bolt restoration, which included a bare shell repaint and a full engine rebuild. New parts were used throughout – hard to enough to locate even when the Beta was still in production, let alone today.

Like all of Patrick's cars, the Trevi drives very well and its lusty 2.0-litre carburettor-fed twin-cam has that attractive, characteristic burble. The Trevi has an air of elegance and quality about it and perhaps its styling has matured over time. Often overlooked, this Trevi was well worth preserving as a usable, extremely rare modern classic.

### LANCIA GAMMA BERLINA

The Lancia Gamma is something of an enigma. The model was intended to be a replacement for the Flavia 2000 and was a long time in gestation, following an abortive attempt at a co-operative arrangement with Citroën.

The Gamma is 100% a Lancia but it was not launched until 1976, seven years after Fiat took control of the company and four years after the all-new Fiat/Lancia Beta saloon arrived. The Gamma Berlina was designed by Aldo Bravarone (of Dino 206 fame) and built by Pininfarina, its fastback styling bearing a certain resemblance to the Centro Stile-designed Beta saloon.

The Gamma range would also replace Fiat's logo-penalised 130 as a luxury product, and indeed the 130's Lampredi-designed V6 was a likely candidate as the power unit. However, the bizarre decision was taken to build a Lancia Flavia-derived flat-four engine in two sizes (2.0 and 2.5 litres). The flat-four definitely felt out of context as a form of propulsion for a luxury car. Remarkably, 15,272 buyers were found for the Gamma Berlina and just 6790 for the better-looking Gamma Coupe.

Despite the Gamma being something of a curiosity, Patrick Hurst's attention was drawn to the discovery of



an unused and unregistered example in northern Italy. This Berlina is one of those mysterious cars that has been stored out of sight for many years, in fact in this case since it was new in 1976.

The story goes that it was allegedly ordered for a British diplomat in Milan, hence why it's right-hand drive. For whatever reason – and who knows, it might even have been sinister, given Italy's politics in the 1970s – the diplomat never collected the car. It eventually surfaced when the car dealership in Cuneo, where the Gamma had been stored, went into receivership. The untouched car was discovered in the back of the workshop covered in 40 years of dust. Because the ownership title could not be verified, the car was put up for auction by the official receiver. Partick's 'man' in Italy was immediately put on the case and eventually the car found its way to Northern Ireland.

Finding a dry-stored classic car with just 16 miles on the clock is an enthusiast's dream. However, this Lancia was holding a secret – no, not a body in the





# LANCIA TREVI, GAMMA & KAPPA



## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

### LANCIA GAMMA 2500 BERLINA

ENGINE:	2484cc 4-cyl boxer SOHC
BORE X STROKE:	102mm x 76mm
POWER:	140hp @ 5400rpm
TORQUE:	153lb ft @ 3000rpm
INDUCTION:	Weber 38 carb
TRANSMISSION:	5-speed manual
WEIGHT:	1320kg
MAX SPEED:	122mph
0-62MPH:	9.2sec

## LANCIA KAPPA

The Kappa replaced the Thema as Lancia's executive product in 1994, with production running up until 2001. While the Thema had been popular in the UK, the Kappa never made it to Britain officially; 1994 was the year that the Lancia marque departed Britain for good. The Fiat Group instead concentrated on Alfa Romeo with the 164 and later the 156.

During its seven-year production span, the Kappa was fitted with no fewer than seven different power units, five petrols and two diesels, almost as if Lancia couldn't make up its mind what to use. The 2.0 16V turbo was inherited from the Thema, while the 3.0 was Alfa Romeo's Busso V6. Then there were the 2.0-litre five-cylinder 20V and 20V turbo units, as later adopted by Fiat for its Coupe, while the five-cylinder 2.4 20V was shared with the Stilo Abarth. Kappa body styles included a two-door coupe (designed by Centro Stile), a four-door saloon (by Ercole Spada at Idea) and an estate (by Pininfarina). Kappa production reached 117,216 units, with Italy its most important market.

The Lancia Kappa is a without doubt a 'Marmite' car, dividing opinion among the cognoscenti. That's especially true of the Coupe, which does look rather top-heavy, making the wheels seem undersized. I had never warmed to the Kappa but Patrick was convinced I would change my mind after I had driven his. "But then he would say that wouldn't he," I thought.

Patrick's car is designated Lancia K 2.0t, which has the same 220hp 2.0 five-cylinder turbo engine as the Fiat Coupe but with the benefit of an overboost facility,

*Although Gamma has zero mileage, Patrick's team has still restored it, complete with replacement engine*

boot, but something very surprising under the bonnet. UK-spec Gammas were all fitted with 2.5-litre engines, while the Italian market got 'tax-break' 2.0-litre. During Patrick's recommissioning, it was discovered that the engine number had been tampered with in an attempt to disguise the fact that a 2.0-litre engine had been substituted, and a clapped-out one at that!

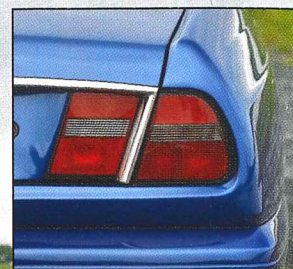
A replacement 2.5-litre engine was duly sourced and rebuilt. Not content with just a new engine, Patrick elected to strip down the whole Gamma to a bare shell and have it repainted. The result is almost without doubt the best Gamma Berlina in the world.

We love the typical Lancia engineering touches, in particular the window in the bootlid to aid reversing, complete with a hinged louvre to assist in cleaning the glass. Another nice touch is the fuel filler hidden behind the air vent, just aft of the rear passenger's window. And why would you need five bulbs in the interior light fitting?

Patrick's Gamma has never knowingly been out in the rain since it was incarcerated in 1976. Ironically, we managed to pick one of the worst possible days for our photo shoot in weather terms – not untypical for Northern Ireland but possibly the first rain the Gamma had ever witnessed. Not only that, but the Gamma had not been driven on the road since restoration. But none of this seemed to phase Patrick who was quite happy to drive the car to the lakeside location in between showers.



“ Turbo overboost adds extra whoosh at the top end...  
I was super impressed by the ride quality ”



## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

### LANCIA KAPPA COUPE 2.0T

ENGINE:	1998cc 5-cyl DOHC turbo
BORE X STROKE:	82mm x 75.65mm
POWER:	220hp @ 6000rpm
TORQUE:	220lb ft @ 2750rpm
INDUCTION:	Bosch Motronic M2.10.4
TRANSMISSION:	5-speed manual
WEIGHT:	1480kg
MAX SPEED:	144mph
0-62MPH:	7.3sec



and is good for 154mph. The performance is impressive with the turbo overboost just adding that extra bit of whoosh at the top end.

I was super impressed by the Kappa's ride quality. The body was reported as having twice the torsional rigidity of the outgoing Thema and was, said Lancia, 15% stiffer than any of its rivals – and you can tell. The chassis is well damped and body roll is minimal. Build

quality is outstanding and the interior is beautifully appointed, with excellent sound insulation. If I was being uncharitable, I would say that the best thing about sitting in the plush interior is that you can't see the exterior. This is a true GT car and you could cover continents with ease and style, which is exactly what Patrick does with it. Well, I have to admit Patrick was right – I do like it. 🇮🇹

