

barchetta



UK Owner's Club

Newsletter

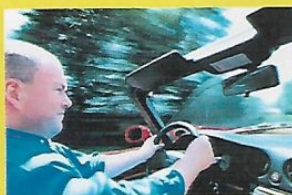
Issue 2
January 1999

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**Ian
Farquharson**

Editor, trying to
remember the
Summer!



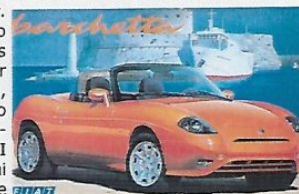
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Welcome to the Newsletter

Welcome to issue number two of the UK barchetta owners club newsletter, sorry it's taken a while to get it together. I've been a bit busy at work, while desperately trying to solicit articles from the e-mail members to widen the scope of the newsletter. Please send any articles you'd like to have published to the editorial address at the back. I can accept photos either as prints or as negatives (preferred), remember to enclose your address, so they can be turned straight around after scanning. To add a little incentive I have acquired a few of the Fujimi 1/24th models, and the best article over the next few editions will receive one.

— Ian Farquharson



Fujimi barchetta model

How are we doing?

Well, the club's four months old and the second newsletter's come round already. I believed that we needed 20 cars to make the club viable, but we already have twice that number, with one or two more joining every week. The UK internet list is over 100 UK owners, so this growth looks like continuing. Don't be surprised when you start seeing requests for volunteers to help with the organisation ...

As subscribers to the lists know, the club was recently approached by the BBC's watchdog programme, who wanted information about the barchetta's most annoying weakness - the camshaft variator. The problem was referred to them by Pete Richards (an erstwhile member of the mailing list) and Ian Farquharson and I were deluged with telephone calls from the programme's producers for a week before the programme went out. Thanks to the internet, we were able to provide immediate information about the nature and scope of the problem (including the sound samples on Marc's web-site) and put the programme in touch with many owners in the UK and mainland Europe who have experienced the problem. We also referred them to DTR, the independent dealer featured in this newsletter, and the company's Paul de Turriz appeared on the programme to explain why he believed it to be a design fault. The result was a promise from Fiat to fix any faulty variators free of charge, and to refund owners who have already paid to have it fixed by one of their dealers. For once, our friends on the mainland are looking enviously across to the UK, and wondering how to get the same deal at home.

The car has certainly established a real niche in the UK - and not only among dedicated Italian sports car enthusiasts. With so many cars coming into the country as imports, even Fiat probably don't know how many cars are in the country now. It is interesting that the barchetta is the only car in their range that Fiat have no plans to replace with a new model, and it looks set to remain in production into the 21st century. The barchetta's rarity still makes it an event to see another one on the road. To see several cars gathered together, and then to drive in company with them really is rather special, so I hope everyone manages to make it to a meeting soon. Unfortunately, we're getting to the stage when we have to limit numbers on some road events. I have driven in convoys of more than 50 barchetta in Italy and Germany but, sadly, I don't think English motorists - or the authorities - would be quite so understanding. This is not a problem with a static event like the AutoItalia meeting in June, so let's see just how many cars we can get there this year.

— Geoff Bowles

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New Forest Meeting



In the early autumn the UK owners club held a small meeting on a Sunday in the New Forest. We met up at the southbound services on the M27 near Southampton, and had a good turnout of around 15 Cars. After an hour of general chat, and introductions we headed off to the New Forest for a drive about, lunch, and a few photos.

Just after the services we encountered a disaster exercise that seemed to have every police, fire, and ambulance service member for Hampshire battling to contain some sort of hazardous spillage on the motorway. It must have looked pretty strange to the police to have 15 top-down barchetta to divert too. They held a roundabout though so we could continue on our way in convoy. Another mile down the road we provided a greater shock to the owner of a Green LE, who was taking one of his friends out for a spin in his unique new car, to find us swarming past. They came for lunch and were impressed by the team spirit.

Lunch was spent in a wonderful pub, in the National Trust village of Bucklers Hard. Matthew Weinreb has friends in the area and as a professional photographer knew this would be a great place for a picture. Matt used the second most important skill for a photographer, great negotiation, to allow us to take the cars round from the pub to the village. We took plenty of pictures and talked to a lot of interested little old ladies. The NT did ok for a donation too. Matt has been out of the country so we haven't yet seen any of his pictures. If there are some good ones I'll ask Matt if he'd be prepared to print some for the owners.

After leaving Bucklers Hard, and picking up a couple of more stragglers we moved on to the National Motor Museum at Beaulieu. Here we met up with Michael Ward from AutoItalia, who'd come along to take some photos for the magazine. We had an hour long chat, and Michael wrote up a small article with a similar photo to the one left, for the magazine. We seem to have forged a small allegiance, especially as one of the staff cars is the family barchetta. They've suffered the same broken variator trouble as many of our members now, and have written to FIAT for an explanation.

A few of us went to the museum but the weather was turning bad and most folks headed back north, and east.

**Left, National Motor Museum lineup.
Below, Bucklers Hard.**



Once again it was a Silver and Red day, though the Green and Blues fought back well. The car that really caught the eye of AutoItalia was of course the Orange. The barchetta is still the only car on the road that looks cool in that sort of colour. We still hope to have a complete set of all the colours for this years international meeting.

DTR European Sportscars

DTR have been a regular advertiser and contributor with AutoItalia for a long while now, and have recently started expanding their barchetta business due to the demand from folks not too pleased with FIAT prices or level of service. Geoff Bowles decided to pay them a visit when his standard exhaust took exception to the daily commute from High Wycombe to Southampton daily. Based in Mortlake, South West London, we went along one Saturday

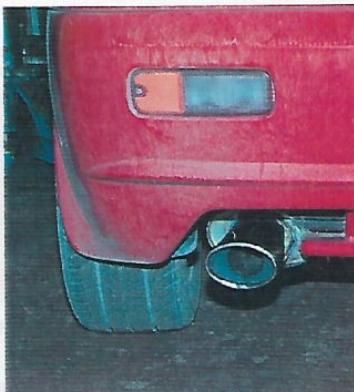


morning for a chat about the business, and for Geoff to have a new stainless steel exhaust fitted. We met Paul De-Turris, who explained that the majority of aftermarket exhausts copy the convoluted design of the standard FIAT part on the left. They tend to fail mostly due to the fact they weigh the best part of 30 KG. Often taking the downpipe to catalyst joint with them. DTR have a straight through design made from much lighter gauge stainless steel. Geoff was the first person to have one fitted, though Steve Perry turned up about an hour later



to have his failed FIAT part changed too. To be fair, Geoff had to return a couple of weeks later as the new design was fouling one of the heatshield bolts and wearing both. They replaced this without question for him.

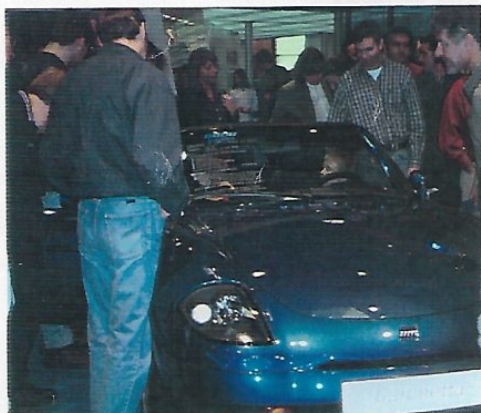
DTR also capitalise on the variator problem. Paul agreed to talk to BBC's Watchdog show, as an independent expert on this problem. As a result, FIAT have admitted there is a recurring fault and new variator units will be available in the coming months. DTR's level of service on this extends the work that a FIAT dealer would do. They take great care to accurately time the camshaft after replacing the variator, and also change the cambelt while the timing system is being worked on anyway. As with most modern cars losing a timing belt on the barchetta breaks at least one of the 16 valves. Alfa Romeo have recalled all their models fitted with this component, but not FIAT. DTR recommend a good synthetic oil, if the car has covered less than 15,000km, or a semi-synthetic if a higher mileage has been covered. Other services include import conversions, lights, speedometer, foglamps. Paul also has a prototype replacement dials for kilometre cars that is properly backlit, but fitting is difficult. They also have a full body repair shop, and MOT facilities.



Top, Paul and Geoff in the workshop with some wonderful spiders. Top Left, The FIAT exhaust system.

Above, The new stainless tailpipe, and Geoff's brown barchetta.

Above Right, this weeks variators. Also one cannibalised to make a tool for setting the timing pulley.



International Motor Show

Since the last issue the UK International Motor Show has come and gone again. This year at the NEC was probably the largest show of it's kind in the UK, covering countless halls, with plenty of room to move about between the displays. We visited the FIAT stand late on a Sunday afternoon, and without any surprises the star of the stand was this very shiny midnight blue car, with leather, and comfort pack. At any one time there were 15-20 people waiting to take a closer look. I took the opportunity to ask the representatives if FIAT were ever going to market the car properly in this country. Underwhelming response from the FIAT staff (who really needed to know how to pronounce barChetta before trying to sell them) seemed the norm. We'll be a long time waiting for adverts on television. The plus side is they were giving away nice posters of the 'Who cares if it's left hand drive' adverts, seen very occasionally in some magazines. There were several other manufacturers offering new barchetta style sportscars. Maserati also had a 3200GT on display, proudly sporting many barchetta parts.

Upcoming Meetings

Now that 1999 is underway, here are the dates as known at present. Full details will be in subsequent issues, for any member that wishes to attend an International in Europe. Those with internet access can always get the latest dates from :-

More details on the British meeting are enclosed. While we haven't yet finalised the costs, it's going to be based in Taunton, and cover the North Somerset coast, and Exmoor.

Country	Month	Dates	Location	Organization
UK	Apr/May	30th-3rd	UK Meeting TBA	Geoff Bowles & Ian F.
UK	June	26th-27th	AutoItalia @ Brooklands	Geoff Bowles & Ian F.
France	July	10th-11th	Auvergne	Fred Fatoux
Netherlands	August	20th-22nd	Zeeland	Rein Douma & Ruud Besems
Germany	Sept.	18th-19th	TBA	Andreas Kleist
Italy	TBA	TBA	TBA	

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A Nice Morning Drive...

The route across the Chilterns from Windsor to Wallingford is a well trodden one for me. The Thames links both these towns but it takes a rather circuitous route. Going over the Chilterns by road is fast and fun with plenty of undulations and long, lazy curves. Westbound from Windsor, leaving the M4 at junction 8/9, the road soon gives a taste of things to come, with a series of tight bends at the Temple Golf Course, near Hurley. However the road is rarely quiet enough to enjoy them to their fullest. Soon the barchetta is plunging down Remenham Hill through an enclosed Beech canopy and over the Thames at Henley into Oxfordshire. Heading out of the town on the A4130 you climb on a fast dual carriageway up Bix Hill. After a few miles through more Beech woods and a slow dawdle past the flint cottages lining the road at Nettlebed, you approach the escarpment of the Chilterns and ahead the six cooling towers of Didcot puffing away are usually visible. There follows a fast descent and some long straight stretches, but with some blind dips, before the Chilterns traverse ends back at the Thames at Wallingford.

Alternatives to the A roads are numerous. One is to branch off onto the B480 just past Henley to Stonor and then head for Christmas Common before descending to Watlington and on to Ewelme and Benson. Alternatively you can leave Henley on a well wooded route past Greys Court (National Trust property) and the Maharajah's Well at Stoke Row, another flint village, before rejoining the A4130 at Nuffield. But my favourite stretch is Britwell Hill, where the unclassified road falls downwards through cornfields and with excellent visibility ahead you can soon build up some speed. After crossing the Ridgeway at the bottom you soon arrive at Britwell Salome, where the Goose pub is to be found. (This has an excellent restaurant serving locally grown food.) There are many other small and sometimes single track roads across the Chilterns which are worth exploring. Get out OS map no. 175 and have fun!

— Nick Warner

Meet The Owners



Above, Annie and Peter May

Annie and Peter live on the South Coast, and can be seen plotting a route home from Beaulieu.

Parts And Toys

Not a lot's been happening in barchetta toy-land this month. Christmas brought a nice big MOMO sports bag that fills the boot. (From Demon Tweaks, in blue, with flashes of red, and yellow). A couple of folks have changed their alloys though. I've had a set of 16" * 7.5" MOMO Racer wheels put on. Dino Laudato has a new set of 15" * 6" OZ Polaris. Both are relatively soft, spoked designs that seem to go well with the barchetta curves. Importantly both are made in Italy too.



Left, MOMO Racer. Right, OZ Polaris

Promotional Items

At the time of writing we still don't have a good supply of things like owners club t-shirts, baseball hats, etc. Before the next issue this should be resolved hopefully. If you have any good ideas for something a little different, please drop Geoff a note, with any designs you'd like featured too.

The next issue will feature an article on the available barchetta models. Written by Nick Barnes. Remember, you've a couple of months to get an article in with a chance to win one of the Fujimi ones.