

2003 UK International Meeting Report

Shakespeare's Country 13th - 15th June 2003

Despite being Friday the 13th, the first day of the 2003 UK International Meeting was bright and sunny, and Deb and I safely made the journey to Woodside on Friday morning complete with monumental hangovers having stayed the night with old friends near Stratford-upon-Avon.

We arrived to find that those who had stayed over on Thursday night were "bright eyed and bushy tailed" and the usual ritual of car inspection, tyre kicking and debating the aesthetics of the third brake light followed (I'm still on the fence on this one!).

After final preparation of the packs for the attendees and the eventual appearance of our Chairman (always a welcome sight) we finally managed to get the convoy ready to leave.

The route to Warwick Castle was beautiful, as were all of the drives that followed. Top marks to Geoff and Ian for plotting those out. Deb and I chickened out in the earlier convoys and grabbed second spot behind Geoff. No chance of getting lost (we never were that great at following routes) but as such were denied the ever admiring looks of those mere mortals (that's non-barchetta-owning people to you and me) that we passed en route.

Warwick Castle was everything the hype claimed it would be. A beautiful castle surrounded by lovely gardens, with in-character staff (beware the Red Knight). Following a few hours strolling around the battlements (back to big kid mode for me) we all met for lunch in the stable blocks and introduced Susan, our Swiss-American friend to "Spotted Dick" (no sniggering at the back please).

That evening saw a great barbecued meal, distribution of the goodies kindly supplied by Fiat UK and was followed by a suitable amount of alcohol consumption in the bar plus cabaret by Deborah, Susan and Helen (well oiled dancing actually).

Everyone emerged on Sunday at a suitably relaxed time and we met over a thankfully none too health-conscious but delicious breakfast and welcomed one or two new faces to the event. Helen (aka "Blond Babe" on the e-group) had made the journey up from Swindon to spend the day with us.

Shortly after breakfast we headed off to Hatton Country Village with plenty of retail therapy available for all, followed by lunch.

Our next route took us to Mary Arden's house (Mary was Shakespeare's mother). This was an extremely interesting group of buildings to explore and included a bird of prey sanctuary. Some of the group are still rumoured to be staring skywards, looking for the Harris Hawk to make its return back down to earth.

On leaving Mary Arden's house we headed through more of the gorgeous Warwickshire and Gloucestershire countryside (anyone know of any cheap houses going in Broadway – let me know!) and headed to Batsford Arboretum for a cream tea stop.

Sadly this is where Deb and I had to leave the happy convoy and head back to Kent for work on Sunday. We had a great weekend and it was good to meet with old friends and make a few more. Thanks to everyone who was involved in organising the event and to all of you who turned up and made the event such fun.

Roll on next year's meeting and see you at the Auto-Italia Italian Car Day at Brooklands on August 3rd!

Richard Keogh



barchettas at Stoneleigh Abbey, Sunday 15th June 2003 (*Wot, no yellow ones? - Ed.*)

Photo: Paul Smith



Chris Auty
13 July 1952 - 17 June 2003

It is with great sadness that I have to report the death of my wife Chris on 17th June 2003 following a short illness.

Chris and I met at work in early 1992 and became a couple just over a year later. We set up home together in Macclesfield in August 1993, and married in February 1999.

As well as being members of the barchetta Club for the last four years, we have both been members of the VW Corrado Club of GB since it was first founded in 1996. Up until April 2001, I had been that Club's magazine Editor for five years, and Chris had been its Membership Secretary for four years. I think Chris thought I was a bit of a glutton for punishment when I volunteered to edit this Club's Newsletter at the AGM last November after a break of only 18 months!

We met and made friends with many people at barchetta Club meetings in the UK, and also attended the Dutch International Meeting in August 2000. Chris particularly enjoyed last year's UK International Meeting based in Portsmouth which was her home town until the age of 18. Chris always used to look forward to barchetta Club meetings much more than Corrado Club meetings, where she complained that all people ever did was stand around in a car park and look at the oily bits, but never go out to drive what is supposedly a "driver's car".

I would like to thank those of you who have sent me messages of condolence since Chris's death, and also wish to thank all members for the beautiful floral tribute sent by the Club on your behalf to Chris's funeral.

As Geoff Bowles said to me in an e-mail, "... it's hard to believe we will never see Chris's happy face smiling at us out of S4 UTY again".

She will be sorely missed.

Photo: © John O'Connor Photography (with permission)

Competition

In the March Newsletter, we asked for members to send in photographs of themselves with a piece of UK Club merchandise in exotic or unusual places.

This issue sees Richard Keogh sporting his Club polo shirt at the South Rim of the Grand Canyon in Arizona.



Tech Corner

DISCLAIMER

The Club wishes to point out that all technical advice is given in good faith, and that any work you undertake on your barchetta is entirely at your own risk. None of these technical projects have been approved by Fiat.

Please read ALL the instructions for a project BEFORE commencing any work, and if you are unsure about **ANYTHING**, do not start work which you may regret later.

All technical projects have a “spanner rating”, ranging from one (simplest) to five (scariest).

Maybe not such an appropriate time of year to be talking about this subject (!), but **John Turvill** discusses

Heater Problems

Spanner Rating:



PARTS REQUIRED

- Fiat Switch - Part No. 46721486 (current UK price approx. £5.73 + VAT).
- Fiat Resistor - Part No. 46721213 (current UK price approx. £10.89 + VAT).

TOOLS REQUIRED

- Phillips screwdriver; Allen key; a good small torch.

SYMPTOMS AND SOLUTIONS

This is a summary of the work involved to solve the problem of the heater fan working only on setting 4. The first stage was to install a new fan switch which in my case turned out to be a waste of time as the problem remained. However, I'm including the operation anyway! The second job was to install a new heater resistor, which cured the problem.

Installing a new fan switch

Remove radio and fixing plate. Remove the ashtray inner section to expose a single screw and remove this screw. Remove the gearstick gaiter by pressing the centre of the surround in toward the gear stick then lifting (it is held by four lugs) and then remove the four screws exposed at the corners. Lift the lower console up and over the gearstick, leaving all cables connected.

Remove the upper centre console by withdrawing the mix of Phillips and Allen screws. Remove the four screws retaining the heater assembly, and carefully invert this section inside the aperture until you can get at the back of the fan switch. Using a small Allen key, remove the two screws, and withdraw the switch.

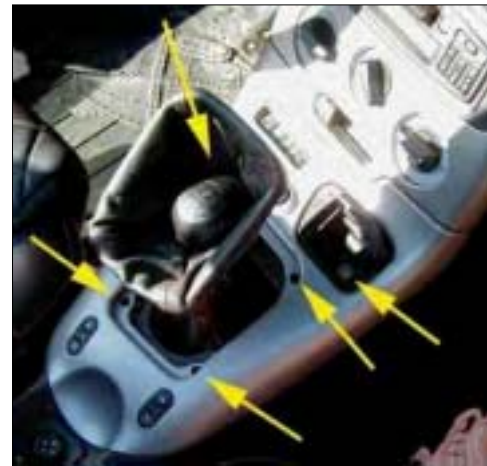
Fit the new switch and re-assemble everything in reverse order.

Installing a new heater resistor

The resistor unit is located at the back of the fan assembly above the passenger footwell. It is just possible to replace this without removing the plastic floor covering, but you'll need small fingers and some patience!

Lie on your back in the passenger footwell with the door open (push the seat back as far as it will go). Remove the connector from the socket. Press down the surrounding floor covering, (perhaps wedge it with the torch) and using a small angled Phillips screwdriver or ratchet, remove the two screws holding the resistor in place. Pull the old unit out, install the new one and refit the connector.

Sounds easy, but space is very limited and screws can easily drop down behind the floor covering!



Me and my *barchetta*

While on holiday in France one year, I bought a French car magazine and read a review of a silver car called a barchetta. It was being compared to a Lotus Elise and I fell in love with the car at once. Over the following months I kept going back to this article (I still have it today) and just could not get this car out of my mind. Prices in the U.K. at that time were very high, but a few second hand examples were being imported by dealers in London and I made enquiries as to whether any were available. I had just started a new job so full of confidence went to the bank to get a loan for my "new" car.

Helen thought the car looked nice from the photos she had seen and we had narrowed it down to a choice of either blue (Helen's favourite) or silver (mine). After several years of driving around in Vauxhall Novas I think she would have been happy with any other car! We went down to London to look at some cars and ended up at Autorosso. There outside were two cars which fell into my price bracket, both of a very similar specification - one silver, one blue. Much discussion ensued between Helen and I, but as I was paying I won and it was the silver car I went for due to the carbon fibre dash that broke up the expanse of black in the blue car.

A test drive (with the handbrake on!) and I knew I had to have a barchetta. But - Saturday afternoon, banks shut, 250 miles from home, if I wrote a cheque I'd have to come back next week. HHHMMM??? Ping One barchetta at £11,000 on Switch (receipt to prove it!).

So I entered the ranks of barchetta owners and the fledgling Owners Club where I met Geoff & Bernadette Bowles, Bert Reid and all the others. What a great bunch of people and how helpful they were. Questions answered, worries appeased. Driving in a convoy paradise. Since then we have been to several meetings and enjoyed every one. An early meeting revealed several people to have glove puppets, an idea which was guaranteed to make people smile. Helen and I even have a store card now for the Bear Factory. Are all barchetta owners a bit mad, or is it just us?

barchetta ownership is very interesting, amusing and fraught with danger. I love having a car that people say is a TVR, BMW, Porsche, kit car, worth at least £25K. I hate the moments when Fiat dealers and insurance companies say "What is it?". Mechanically they are not perfect, practically they often leave a lot to be desired, but nothing else after four years still makes me look back and smile ("Poor you" says Helen).

Bernadette Bowles once said to me "You buy the car and get the lifestyle" - never a truer word spoken.

See you all soon.

Paul Harris & Helen Grieveson

Helen and friends!





Paul's barchetta in action at a track day

FIAT UK - Variator Replacement Policy

Fiat Auto UK has stated that they believe that the main problem with variators (the very early in-life failures) has been overcome and they are now receiving far fewer support requests for these units. Fiat UK's offer of a goodwill contribution will depend on age and mileage - they will use the same premise as for the Fiat Coupé Owners Club i.e. up to 5 years of age, under 100,000 miles and full service history.

Fiat Auto UK will assess each case on an individual basis. For anyone wishing to send in a claim for a goodwill contribution to the variator replacement, the procedure is as follows:

You should enclose:

If there is any occasion on which Fiat are unable to support a goodwill contribution, a decision and explanation will be given in writing, both to the Club member and if required the UK barchetta Owners Club representative.

Note though that whilst Fiat have confirmed that goodwill contributions will range from 0% to 100% of variator replacement costs, they "clarified" that goodwill contribution payments normally only cover the cost of the part and not the labour. They did however admit that they had also covered labour costs in several cases e.g. very early life failures.

Whilst Fiat hinted that a car with a status such as '3 owners, 60k miles, no service history' would be at the bottom end in terms of a goodwill contribution, they are not willing to give further status-versus-percentage scenarios as they say the range of possibilities is too numerous, which is why they will consider each claim individually.