

Owners Club News

November 2001 Newsletter

barchetta



UK Owner's Club

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Questionnaire Results

More than half of all members responded to the questionnaire. Not only that but we also got replies from 10 former members with most wanting to rejoin.

Some key statistics

There is strong support for all things barchetta, with more than 50% of respondents interested in all of car accessories, clothing and club accessories. The most common specific requests are for a barchetta badge to replace the Fiat badge on the back and for baseball hats.

A massive 80% said they were keen for us to negotiate discounts on repairs, servicing and parts. More of you favour weekend meetings than weekday and what's great is many of you are willing to help organise them.

Your main reasons for joining are meeting other owners and sharing information and experiences. Perhaps not surprising then that 68% of those who replied are part of the UK discussion Group. The skills you all have that may help the club are extensive and we have been delighted to receive 13 offers to serve on the committee.

50% of you visit the club website at least once a month and 68% of you use the internet to obtain technical information. Nearly 40% of you do not read any car magazines on a regular basis (in which case of course you may not be reading this). Of those of you who do read car magazines your favourites are Auto Italia, Autocar and Top Gear.

Where do we go from here?

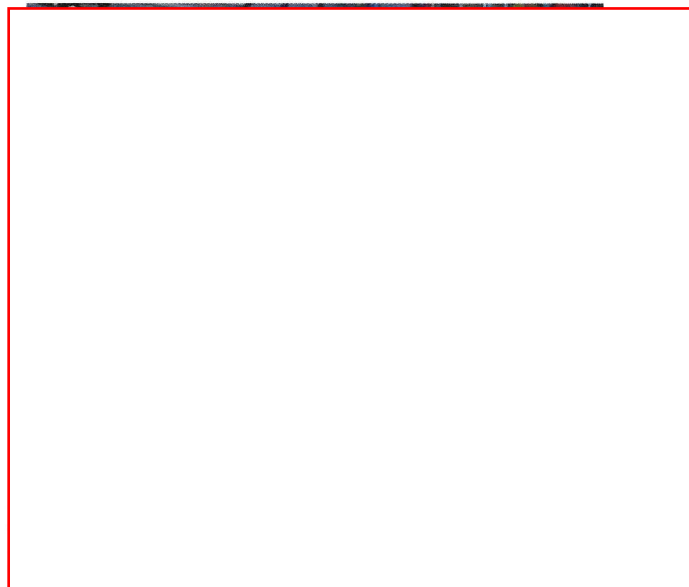
The questionnaire has given the committee a lot to think about, and more to the point a significant amount to get on with. Thank you to all who responded and particularly those who have volunteered your services, we will be contacting you shortly.

The good news is that with the strength of support we will be able to turn many of your ideas into reality fairly quickly. The first step is your very own insurance offer (see ad) something that 27 of those who responded suggested would be a good idea. Clearly this wasn't the prime request but we already had it in the pipeline. It is also our intention to produce the newsletter on a regular basis to help keep all members (including those who don't access the internet site or take part in the discussion groups) informed

A sincere thank you to all who have responded. If you didn't respond but would still like to please do send us your thoughts at the end of the day it is your club and the committee are only here to provide the things you want. We now look forward to acting on all your suggestions.

Time to Renew Your Membership

With this newsletter you will find details for membership renewal. For just £15 your barchetta can benefit from being part of what promises to be an exciting year for the club. Renewing promptly means you won't miss out.



Coming Soon

barchetta Owners Club

Insurance

Chris Knott Insurance Consultants Ltd
will be offering a special club scheme to barchetta owners. Full details in the next newsletter or keep an eye on the web site.

A Year In The Life...

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It's a love hate relationship

I originally set out to try and explain the events of my first year in Barchetta ownership, but now (due to my own laziness) it's gone on for a year and half. Thankfully, I've come to understand a little bit more, in fact, you could say that the car and I have kind of 'clicked' recently. In truth, if it was any other car (ferrari's and the like excepted) I could easily have sold it after that first year. But I didn't, and here we are, I've finally put ink to paper (albeit electronically) and my thoughts and experiences are recorded for eternity, both good and bad.

So how the... did I end up with one of these ?

I'd seen one in the work's car park and thought it looked right fancy. I'd always liked MR2s, MX5s, indeed anything that was standard hairdresser issue. So the Barchetta was right up there, with an important difference, I'd actively try to get one of these and not just talk about it, like I had with all the others. The only decision was the colour, and browsing the web convinced me that the turquoise was the one to get.

Looked around until I saw one, turquoise of course, and it looked fantastic, it had a soft top, it looked fantastic, it had leather, it looked fantastic, its left hand drive...oh sxxx !!

The LHD part, I overcame, rather easily talking myself round. Hell, I live on the continent, it'll be a boon, and major bonus, the wife won't want to drive it. Actually I think that sealed it, but, unfortunately she did want to drive it. Hmmm.....does that make it more a bird's car than a hairdresser's car ?

In the beginning

Gorgeous, this thing is simply gorgeous. I got to drive from the dealer in London (England) to Berlin for its first trip. The ferry lady was a bit curious as to why it didn't look too much like the VW Polo I'd come over in. But she commented on the beauty factor (of the car, that is), I'd never had that before. France, Belgium, Holland all came and went. I arrived in Germany, glowing. I really started to enjoy the car, parking it with the wheels set at just the right angle for coolest looks, leaving the hood down, always looking back as I walked away from it, you know the kind of thing. What a start to my open top motoring.

Ownership

Owning it was quite sensational in those early days, the weather was superb, the style oozing from every detail, inside and out, and I was just handed prime car parking space at work, it had all come together like the last turn of a Rubik's cube. This really was sensational for me, everything was right, this of course continued well into the first week. After which, I began to notice a shortfall or two. The radio, those cxxxx steelies, a stone chip (revealing that the paint was barely thicker than the hair on a gnat's bxxxxxx).....but, remember I only bought it for the looks.

Weeks and then a few months passed, I lived with the little problems and inconsistencies that occurred. In its defence, I did find the extra space very useful (my Polo was always full of all manner of sxxx. No way, was this happening with the Barchetta). Around this time though, something was about to happen, something that would change how I thought about and used this little belter of a car. It was a subscription the International mailing list.....



The mailing list was full of people from every corner of the cyber swimming pool. They were modifying; tuning; fitting swanky stereos etc. Two hours reading and I wanted all of that (except the colour-coded console). Good as the list was (is) it also had its problems,.....uncannily, people audaciously used it on a daily basis, purely to highlight all the problems that my car had or immediately would get. Most of which had previously gone unnoticed. For instance:

"Window sticks down in cold temperatures" Headbanger of Brentford

I've never had occasion to try mine in winter, I certainly never had a problem in summer, so lets check that then. Like magic, the window slid effortlessly into the door. Gleeefully, I set the button to raise the glass, but then, half way up..... "aw naw" (use Scottish accent here). It stuttered and stammered its way up, stopping about two inches from the top.

"Handbrake freezes on" Martha of Tydvil

I'm reading this one on the list and thinking, that is so unlucky, how can that be, surely impossible.....however, next day, "aw naw". I drove the eight kilometres to work with the car smelling of red hot brakes and grilled asbestos. Hmmm.....think I'll just leave it in gear tonight.

Winter passed, piling problem on top of problem, door handles freezing; door not closing properly; flat battery; annoying water leaks (especially after filling it with screenwash); dud fog lights; bonnet release lever broke off. I was just about to crack and sell the little sxxx, but, there was this other thing I'd promised myself.....I'd attend the international meeting in Italy, April/May 2001.

Well what can I say? In a single weekend, I am now one fully paid up Barchetta fan, this car has given me an experience I'll never forget. Never has any car before given me so much pleasure. Meeting new people from all over Europe, who, within a few days become such good friends. Seeing the spectacle of almost a 100 b's parked together. Driving country lanes in-line, and the actual journey getting there and back was positively breathtaking. This particular weekend has redeemed the car and given it even more potential.

That was followed up rather brilliantly with a meeting in Holland at the end of the summer, such fun. Next year I'll have to attend three international meetings (its really that good). Meeting's aside, its the only thing my wife and I have had in common in the last twenty years (apart from my wallet), she enjoys the experience as much as I and is keen to do it again.

So the Barracuda is mine for keeps (it seems). However, from this day forward, it won't see the dark of December ever again. I'll will use it only in dry sunny weather (mostly hot as well), my wife's name will be added to the insurance (no, not joking, apparently its cheaper), and we will for evermore, enjoy open air driving and participate in meetings with all types of Barchetta fans Europe wide.

Now then, that leaves me looking for a new winter toy. What a brilliant scam.....do they still produce the coupe
??????????????????

Jim Wyper.

PS. The new winter toy, I can now reveal, is in fact not a coupe, sadly it's a rather tired Trabant.....
(I hope for Liz's sake you aren't going to make her suffer the indignity of being on the insurance of that! Ed.)

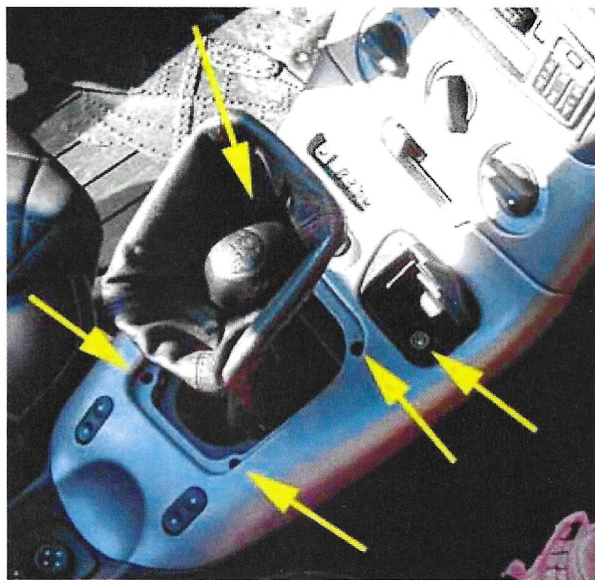
Changing the Clock Light

1. Remove ashtray inner section (by lifting out)

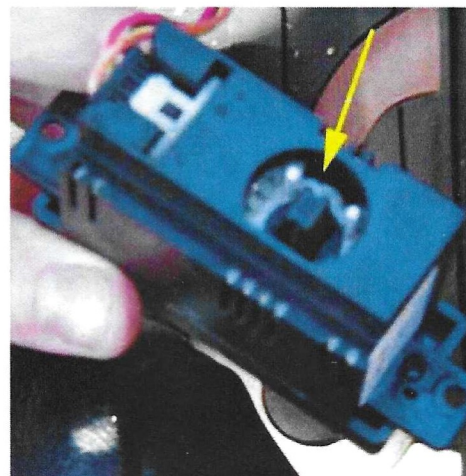


2. Remove the gear stick gaiter by pressing the centre of the surround in toward the gear stick then lifting. It is held by 4 lugs shown above

3. Remove the 5 screws shown by yellow arrows. Lift out the ashtray and remove the LED (by pushing it through the panel). Lift the console panel from the handbrake end to release it



4. The bulb holder is located at the base of the clock as shown, it can be released with a quarter turn (you may need some pliers to grip it)



5. Remove the old bulb from the holder by pulling it and insert the new one

6. Put everything back together in reverse order, make sure you locate the 3 panel lugs correctly when refitting the console panel



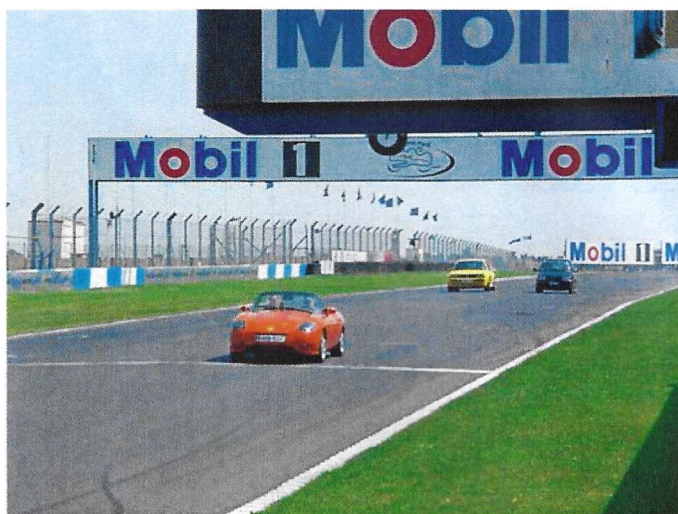
Crossing The Finish Line

July 29th saw the first Auto Italia car Trackfest. Although the main attraction was the track action, there were also owners club meetings from the likes of Alfa Romeo and Lamborghini plus obligatory trade stands. Over 600 cars attended throughout the day.

There were various ways to get on track. You could pay to go on the track like a conventional track day, pay to be a passenger in some very special Italian machinery or you could take what I thought was the safe way and pay for 5 'controlled laps behind a pace car' (just £20).

It was excellent to see all types of Italian machinery being hustled around the track. It was even better to see that most of those with exotic machinery were not afraid to use them properly.

Our turn came and we were duly waved on the track one by one. During the first lap it became apparent that everyone had ignored the word 'controlled'. The pace car had shot off into the distance and it was every man for himself - excellent! As each lap passed, my confidence grew. The B handled impeccably and the tyres gripped like leeches. It's amazing how smooth a race track is and how much grip is available. There were a few corners where I got it all wrong with Denise covering her eyes but the B took it all in her stride.



Start/Finish line approaching 100 mph. Try as he might, the Lancia never got close (picture Nick Anderson)

.It was a fantastic day out and great to meet some more fellow Barchetta owners. I'll be back next year. Maybe we should arrange an official owners club meet for next year too?

Stuart Auckland

For more info see www.auto-italia.co.uk

