

# barchetta



## UK Owners Club

# Newsletter

## Issue 3

## October 1999

### *In this Issue...*

Welcome to the Newsletter

How Are We Doing?

Parts and Toys

Promotional Items

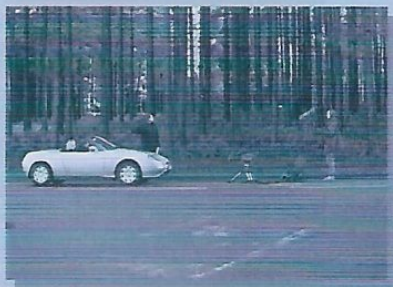
BBC Watchdog

Handy Addresses

Italian International Meeting

Upcoming Meetings

Club Addresses



Nick Warner filming for BBC Watchdog.

|           |                                    |
|-----------|------------------------------------|
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### *Welcome to the Newsletter*

Sorry for the delay in getting this latest newsletter to everyone, it's been a very busy couple of months, with organisation of the UK International Meeting, and my holiday to Turin, coinciding with the Italian one. Anyway it's been an interesting few months in the world of barchetta ownership, and I hope that this issue contains articles that you'll approve of.

The website [www.fiatbarchetta.com/club/uk](http://www.fiatbarchetta.com/club/uk) has undergone an overhaul too, and should be easier to navigate these days. We will aim to keep this updated with details on the pub and weekend meetings, as well as details of the bigger meetings here.

— Ian Farquharson

### *How are we doing?*

#### Thoughts on the club's first birthday

The UK barchetta club was officially launched just one year ago, with a one-day meeting at Beaulieu, but the story really began in September 1997 with the first UK barchetta gathering on Box Hill, Surrey. Organisation consisted of an email from Dave Burt suggesting a meeting in the car park at noon. Some of our best meetings are still organised this way! A dozen of us turned up on Box Hill that day, with one (a certain Stéphane Bazin) driving all the way from Birmingham. Although we all knew each other by email, it was the first time we had actually met, so it was a relief to find that we all got on well from the start.

Several pub meetings, and one rain soaked International later, we decided to launch the UK club. Stéphane and I both attend continental meetings regularly, and we were curious to find out how British barchetta owners would react to a club. Would they have the same relaxed, slightly crazy attitude as our friends on the mainland or would they turn up with anoraks and beards eager to discuss camshaft profiles, tread patterns and toe-in angles? We needn't have worried. Something about the barchetta attracts easy-going and compatible personalities; after all, you can't be too serious if you're driving a shiny barchetta top-down along a good road in the sunshine – especially in the company of other barchetta drivers!

So what shape is the club in now? We never set out to create a large club so didn't look too hard for new recruits, but 52 people have discovered and joined the club during the year. Most of them found the club via the internet and now keep in touch through the UK owners mailing list. The club meetings have been successful – especially the international Exmoor meeting in May and the AutoItalia event at Brooklands in June; other noteworthy successes have included Ian's very professional newsletters, the nearly-monthly pub meetings, the yellow T shirts, and several UK members going to continental meetings

Looking ahead to next year, there are some areas that I would like to improve. For example, we need to find a better way for disseminating information to members who don't have a computer, so miss out on the technical information and discussions that take place every day on the mailing lists. Also, it is very easy to organise something at short notice over the UK owners mailing list, but much harder to inform members who don't have email. This newsletter is good for providing technical information and for advertising planned future meetings, but it can't cover the range of topics discussed on the mailing list, and it can't include details of pub and one-day meetings where the arrangements always seem to change at short notice

Discussions are taking place between all the clubs about next year's international meetings to make sure that they don't all take place in the same month, and the provisional dates should be announced soon. At the same time I plan to propose a provisional schedule for some UK meetings. I hope that we can increase the number of meetings for next year, but that does depend on one or two volunteers coming forward to help with the organisation....

Other proposed club benefits for the next couple of months include an updated and extended "Technical Resource" document, containing answers to frequently asked questions, and some general information about the barchetta. This is designed particularly for owners without computers. For those who have computers (but not necessarily internet access) I have plans to produce a CD-ROM containing general and technical information, road-test reports, photographs from meetings and anything else I can fit on. I hope that the Technical Resource booklet will be available in October, and the CD-ROM later in the year

The range of club merchandise (which currently consists of our remaining stocks of T shirts) is about to be extended to stickers, baseball hats and new shirts, but other ideas would be appreciated. More information in the next newsletter.

— Geoff Bowles

## Parts and Toys

This issue sees us focus on toys, or rather models, as most of the barchetta models on the market are too expensive and fragile to really play with. The main reason for the delay in this newsletter was the nasty accident that happened to the BBR barchetta below on its way to England from Italy. The replacement arrived back safely, and was signed by Peter Davies, one of the barchetta designers. The two main resin/white metal kits are from BBR, and ABC Brianza, both in Italy. These cost in the order of 30 Pounds as an unpainted kit, or a 100-150 as an assembled model. They are not for beginners, at 1/43rd scale, and need a steady hand and a lot of experience to put together. They are however both very accurate scale models of our favourite little cars, and can be ordered in most of the colours. Anyone wishing to build one should take a look at [www.grandprixmodels.co.uk](http://www.grandprixmodels.co.uk) (The UK distributor for Brianza), as they have pages of help for modellers. It's also possible to order the assembled models through them. The BBR models are exclusive to Norisberghen, a small Italian Model shop, less than a kilometre from Maggiora in Chivasso.

The other old favourite is the Fujimi plastic 1/24th scale model, easy enough for anyone to paint and assemble. Best place to buy these is Hamleys in Regent Street, London. Available in several variations, open, closed, hardtop, and ski, with varying colours for the bodyshell. The last two hard to find models are by Giocher (1/43, and not very accurate in colour) for about 15 Pounds assembled, and the Speedy Power diecast. It's not very accurate, and only available in Azzuro Mare or Orange. It does have (at least on the Azzuro ones) a pull back and go motor.

Last month saw the release of two limited edition barchetta specials from ABC Brianza. The Fiat Arbat Monotipo by Stola, and the Fiat barchetta coupé by Maggiora. These can be obtained in the UK from Grandprix Models. We've requested they consider they building the Dedic model too.



**BBR barchetta**

From Norisberghen in Chivasso

Signed by Peter Davies, at the Italian Meeting in Alba.

**ABC Brianza Stola Arbat Monotipo.**

Limited edition 1/43 model of the barchetta based Stola constructed FIAT Arbat Monotipo.



**ABC Brianza FIAT barchetta Coupé**

Limited edition 1/43 model of the Maggiora prototype Coupe barchetta.

**Fujimi Lightweight Sports Series barchetta**

This was the open version (orange kit) painted in a fairly close match to Rosso Speed as possible. This one is 1/24th scale.



**Giocher barchetta**

From Norisberghen in Chivasso

This is a lower quality production run 1/43 model. The orange is closer to brown unfortunately, and the shape is not 100% accurate.

**Speedy Power barchetta**

Of indeterminate scale and accuracy, the Speedy Power model does have some moving parts. This one was found in a tourist shop at Lake Garda in Italy. It costs about £3.





For the first time we are starting to see more exterior styling products become available for the barchetta.

These are coloured repeaters from MHW in Germany. Available in black, clear, red and blue. The blue look good on Azzuro/Midnight cars, and the red/black will probably work well on their respective coloured cars. The clear should work on any colour, but may look odd given the red lenses on the rear, and orange on the front. Distributed in the UK by ABC Design, and available from the usual mail-order car accessory shops like Demon Tweaks. Replacement Orange bulbs will be needed as the original FIAT lenses provide the tint at present. Driving about flashing a blue indicator is definitely for those challenged to wear a baseball hat the right way round.



Brake disks on the barchetta are also beginning to show signs of wear, as modern alloys and pad compounds mean they tend to have a 2-3 year life span. There are alternatives to the FIAT parts hitting the market now, with TAR-OX the Italian brake experts having various products (including a (£1000 6 pot caliper conversion) on the market. In magazine tests it's often the plain disc that has the best single use stopping power, but if you like mountain roads or drive with repeated heavy braking you might like to consider grooved / drilled discs. These scrape glazed pads, and allow vaporised pad compound to escape the surface. The frictional area is slightly less, but they won't fade. TAR-OX recommended the 40 shallow groove disc over the 8 deep grooves for road use at AutoItalia. They also warned against using race (high metallic content) pads with Alloy wheels. The high temperature compound will burn through the lacquer quickly. These and other good makes of disc are available through Demon Tweaks as usual.



Back to toys again, or Rather Video Games. September sees the launch of the Sega Dreamcast console, and one of the games available at that time will be the first to feature the barchetta. The picture on the right is one of the previews from Bizzare Creations website, showing a top down barchetta racing down a wet track. Glad to see they haven't taken the easy option of leaving the roof on to save rendering the driver in every frame.



Due in time for Christmas is the follow up to the best video game ever written. Gran Turismo 2 for the Sony Playstation. From the same team, Polyphony Digital, that wrote the original game. This time it's back with a lot of European cars, including the barchetta pictured right. Other interesting cars include the Alfa GTV and the FIAT Coupé. It's going to be a great Christmas, and next year's UK International will probably include a playstation challenge in the bar during the evening.



At present both of these are unconfirmed, with these photos coming from the respective companies websites. But both stand a good chance of including the barchetta in the finished game.

Fitting a new stereo?

Forget the FIAT fascia plate. It's of a very low quality, and fit. Autoleads part FP-01-01 is available from Halfords and other large accessory retailers



Not got Leather Seats?

If you fancy a weekend in Holland, very high quality custom leather covers can be fitted to your existing seats for 2000 nlg. This is a great price due to the Euro / Pound rate, being approximately £600. Contact Cabrio-Partner.

## Promotional Items

We still have some of the T-shirts from the UK International Meeting available. These are in Broom Yellow, with the barchetta script on the chest. They are high quality 'Fruit of the Loom Screen Stars' cotton, and are available in Large or Extra Large. We are planning to make a new run of Polo Shirts soon, with the simplified 'orange book' logo as on the cover of the newsletter and website. More details to come soon.

The current shirts cost £6 and can be obtained by sending a cheque made payable to 'UK barchetta Owners Club' at the editorial address at the back of the newsletter.

## BBC Watchdog

In January the UK barchetta Owners Club was approached by Peter Richards to provide the names and phone numbers of members who had found their camshaft variators seized, and been asked to pay for the repair by FIAT UK. Peter had met with problems in getting FIAT to admit there was a problem with the part, and was told that he should pay for the repair himself, even though the car had been regularly serviced by FIAT. Several names were given and passed on to BBC Watchdog. The production team were very thorough, and balanced in their approach and found that the main problem was FIAT's inconsistent policy on this. Examples were found of people who's cars were out of warranty and had been fixed under 'goodwill', and those who'd been refused, and paid themselves. Over a busy week of phoning around, 4 cars were selected with different cases, and invited to the Transport Research Laboratories in Crowthorne, Berkshire. The TRL has a network of private roads and is often used by the BBC for filming. Here the Watchdog crew interviewed Nick Warner, and Dave Burt from the UK club from the UK club for the show. Recordings of Nick and Peters 'diesel' cars were made and Nick's car was filmed to morph into a London Taxi.

The programme also contacted DTR European Sportscars for their opinion on the problem. Having changed over 50 of these parts they could reliably state they felt it was a design flaw, and that FIAT was not reacting to the problem efficiently. DTR offer variator replacement as one of their fixed cost servicing options, and have had to refit numerous examples to correct timing faults left by FIAT technicians. Their contact details are in the 'Handy Addresses' section.

FIAT acknowledged the part has a design problem, and there is a new component, dubbed the Mark IV variator, available now.



**Top: The Stola Arbath Monotipo joined the cruise.**

**Middle: Stéphane Bazin takes the Dedica for a test drive.**

**Bottom: Lunch in Langhe, 50 barchetta in the carpark.**

## Italian International Meeting

This year, the Italian International meeting was held in the Langhe region of North-west Italy. This is the area in which some of the best Italian wine and cars are made, and the tour featured both of these heavily. Turin is approximately 1200km from England, avoiding Paris, and you need to cross the Alps from France to get there. It was a long drive for Geoff and myself, but we arrived in Alba the evening before after 2 days of autoroute, mountain pass, torrential rain, and tollbooths. Both of us took separate routes, but crossed the Alps via the high passes, where snow still lay above the clouds. Definitely better than 20km tunnels full of HGVs. The first day of the meeting saw us gathering at the hotel at 9am. We were told by Marco and Stefano that there were 4 guests expected. The two mechanical ones 'Monotipo' and 'Dedica' arrived together turning a hundred and one heads in the town, and parked up with their mortal cousins in front of the hotel.

After an hour of photo taking and 'having a sit'. All the cars headed off for a tour of the Langhe. We visited the Barolo castle, the administrative centre of the wine trade in the region, and were joined by Peter Davis, and Andreas Zapatinas the barchetta designers. They joined the tour, and we headed off for a day of driving, stopping for lunch, chocolate, and drinks all laid on by hosts.

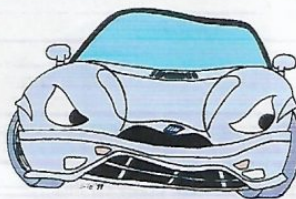
Returning to the hotel, a great dinner was had, along with a lot of barchetta talk and malt whiskey. The next morning we headed off to the North to Chivasso, and Maggiora. Arriving at the factory, we filled the staff carpark, and proceeded inside for a tour of the production line. It was a wonderful sight seeing hundreds of cars in various states of assembly, on the Sunday when the line is shut. Several of the finishing technicians were in, making adjustments to the cars made that week. Fixing leaks, rectifying paint work, refitting bumpers. The barchetta is made with pride, and leaves the factory in perfect shape, each having a quality control 'birth certificate' documenting all the production steps. Also at the factory were the Maggiora Coupé prototype, and Trofeo race prototype.

After a weekend of great food and hospitality everyone went their separate ways, but it was something definitely not to be missed, and perhaps a few more folk will choose to make the trip together next year. Ideally try to arrange a week or two either side of the meeting in Italy or France to allow more time for relaxing.



Thanks to Marco Pifferi and Stefano Lavazza for their wonderful organization, to Maggiora for hosting us on their day off, and to Peter and Andreas for putting up with the fans.

— Ian Farquharson



Stefano's name badges for the meeting included this aggressive little b. Anyone fancy it on a T-shirt? (All colours possible)

## Upcoming Meetings

**Tuesday 2nd November. Pub Meeting.**  
The Cricketers, Downside Nr. Cobham. 7pm.

**Wednesday 8th December. Christmas Drink.**  
The Windmill, Clapham Common. 7pm.  
(Nearest Tube Clapham South, turn left, 5 mins walk.)