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ISETTA

GAZETTE

AUTUMN EDITION ...2011



NATIONAL MICROCAR RALLY, CALNE, 2011

MAGAZINE OF THE ISETTA OWNERS CLUB OF GREAT BRITAIN

The Isetta Owners Club of Great Britain Ltd.

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Editors Bit



A number of the microcar clubs are looking to distribute their magazines by email to save on printing and postage costs. I would be interested to hear from members whether you think this would suit you. This idea is particularly suited to our overseas members as the postage costs are becoming prohibitive. If any of you would be prepared to accept a PDF copy would you reply to me at isetta@ianparris.com and I will start with the Winter Edition of the Gazette.

The front cover of the Gazette shows the National Microcar Rally at Calne this year, apparently 163 cars were there but the record was not broken this time. If anybody would like to do a write up of the rally I will include it next time.

Ian Parris

ISETTA OWNERS CLUB ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM will be held at Beedles Lake Golf Club Leicester LE7 3WQ at 2:30PM on Sunday November 27th All members are welcome.

Chairmans Chat

Well another year has gone by and the AGM is upon us. The officers and committee have done a sterling job throughout the year and I thank all those for their efforts. Special thanks go to those who attended lots of shows throughout the year to attract publicity for the club. The club has gone through a traumatic couple of years and I believe it has emerged fitter and stronger for the future.

Formal notice of the AGM can be found elsewhere in this Gazette. The location is as central as we make it so please make every effort to attend. Your feedback at this event is most welcome and then we can consider any change that may be required.

The saga of my car continues, or not. The junk from my garage is still in the van although the MOT is due on the van so maybe I need to redouble my efforts to unseize the brakes Isetta and get it home and spend some winter nights getting it ready for next year. Watch this space.

Jeff Todd

The Cold War and my Isetta by john jensen

In 1942 I was a child in a small Iowa farm town. Once a week a man would come set up a movie screen, hang some side-curtains on an enclosure of telephone poles, then sell tickets and popcorn, each for 10cents. The movie would start when it got dark enough and we'd watch "Lassie come Home" or war movies laced with propaganda to keep our minds on the war effort.

Sometimes during the late afternoon a squadron of fighter planes would fly by overhead with their unique sound headed for some aircraft carrier in the Pacific.

I was about fourteen in 1952, filling sandbags along the Missouri during a winter flood. In those years we would often hear the drone of B-36 bombers passing overhead flying to or from nearby Offutt Air Force Base just south of Omaha. This enormous aircraft, with six piston engines plus four turbojets, had extraordinary range to fly from the US, deep into Russia to drop atomic bombs. Stanley Kubrick's "Dr. Strangelove" can tell you more about the Strategic Air Command.

In my home town in Iowa, in 1955 at 18, we all drove American cars. I may have read magazine articles about strange foreign cars like the Citroen or VW, but I had never actually seen one personally. "Hot rods" got a lot of attention. My father took me over to a sports car race at Offutt Air base about that time and we saw our first Porsche. Interesting little car.

I was working at Union Pacific offices in Omaha in '58, had taken a few night classes in math and engineering, hoping to go study architecture somewhere. I found a small college in Chicago. I figured I could afford it if I worked part time doing IBM work, punch-card accounting, a system used to keep track of persons in German prison camps during WW2. The numbers on the cards at Union Pacific had to do with freight cars, not people.

I needed some cash to get started at school and soon traded my huge 4000lb Oldsmobile for a near-new bright-red Isetta and \$500 cash for tuition. That event was a major tipping point in my life. I drove home across the Ak-sar-ben Bridge, the name is actually Nebraska spelled backward, typical cornbelt creativity.

My dream of actually going to college, already age twenty, was changing my view of life and leaving home at last. I loved the Isetta from the start. It was all I needed for personal transport. There were those who resented it as a foreign car, VW's as well. We were very nationalistic during this "cold war" with Russia.

Von Braun and other scientists from Germany were working for us now and Germany was our friend. Iowans who saw my Isetta were not sure how to react to it. Some people openly smiled and loved it, but others were suspicious. It didn't fit the mould, wasn't what they were used to. Communists were being sought and some people in Hollywood were black-listed. I wasn't actually political at that point, although I wanted to see segregation end in the South.

By '62 I graduated and was drafted into the Army, assigned to an Army Reserve headquarters in Atlanta.

I drove my Isetta from Council Bluffs to Chicago, Indianapolis, Knoxville, to Atlanta. In those days, they filled your tank for you at gas stations. That's why they called them "service stations". But they usually didn't mind if I filled my Isetta, since it only held a small amount of fuel. That was April of '62.

I think segregation had legally ended by then, but voter registration was still a issue. With my Iowa plates on my funny-looking one-door German BMW mini-car, I was not very welcome there. At gas stations no one asked me anything about my Isetta. They had a duty to sell me gas and that



was the end of it. I was wearing civilian clothes, but kept my dress uniform hat on the parcel shelf in plain view. My hair was cut very short. They respected the military, still do. I never managed to date even one girl in Atlanta. I'd open my mouth and they'd say something like, "you're not from around here are you". "No mam, I'm in the military." I almost got a nice skinny girl from Fayetteville to go see a live production of "I'll Abner", a Broadway musical. But she said her father was a Baptist minister and didn't want her to see that kind of entertainment, no movies either." Oh well. And then the Army handed me orders to report to Oakland Army Terminal and board a troop ship to Korea for a year of foreign service. How exciting!

The schedule did not allow time to drive my Isetta back home to store it, a 5-day adventure on the road, so I sold it to another soldier who was headed to DC. JFK was our President now. He was assassinated while I served in South Korea at an IBM facility south of Seoul. On that base we had an excellent hospital where they brought injured soldiers in from the DMV for care. In Omaha it had been B-36's and here it was those "Banana" helicopters coming in to land just up the hill with their blades popping as they slowed their forward speed. You can hear that sound in Coppola's Apocalypse Now. Brando, Ford and Hopper are in it, but Martin Sheen, Robert Duvall and Lawrence Fishburn are my favourites. I must admit the Playmates did an excellent dance routine: on a dock in the river in the jungle in the night, plus "Susie Cue", spotlights and smoke grenades for effect. I love that movie but am still protesting each war.



The current uprising of Egyptian people seeking a better democracy has stirred our President Obama to respond in some way appropriate for this situation, all very complicated due to past history. That history occurred when France, England and Egypt were tussling over free access to the Suez Canal. Britain and France wanted to control access to the canal, but Nasser wanted Egyptian control, planning as well to charge for passage and use the money to build the Aswan Dam, a dam that the US and Britain were going to help pay for.

But when Nasser pushed for control of the Suez, Britain and the US withdrew their Aswan aid, and Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal. I believe Russia helped them with the dam.

The British and French encouraged and reinforced Israel to attack Egypt, quickly securing the Suez region. But then... Nasser responded by sinking 40 ships in the canal and blocked passage. The UN stepped in, cleared the canal a year later, and Egypt retained control, while permitting all nations to pass through. During those years of fighting, Isetta sales did well, since fuel in Europe was very pricey.

It's only a theory, but I think my Isetta had something to do with shaping my life in a certain way. There is an unexplainable attachment there. The bright yellow safety flag I fly on the back says Democracy Now. My glasses say "geek".

.....



Monte Carlo ... or Bust!

By Terry Parkin

Part Four

... by the time we reached Marseilles our Isetta brakes had faded away to almost nothing. Oh Shame ! Now what do we do?



<http://autos.groups.yahoo.com/group/IsettaWorld>

The easy answer was “Wait”, and after several hours cooling off outside our oh-so-apt Formule One Hotel the brakes recovered, but they have never again been as keen as they were previously.

Marseilles is a far bigger city than we expected and the traffic was big-city impatient so as our Hotel was on a convenient bus route to the centre, the waterfront and the touristy bits we decided to rest our Isetta and mainly used the bus for our forays. It was a practical choice. No searching for parking spots and the bus was cheaper than the parking would have been. And I could enjoy a drop of the local brew without worrying about driving. When I say “local”, the Biere was not up to the flavourful, robust standards of the UK, but the Irish pubs in the dock area served a belting pint of Murphy’s, of which I had to enjoy more than several – I blame the heat. And most significantly, most of the vehicles in Marseilles bore the battle scars of Close Encounters of The Traffic Kind ... so not for us!

The Marseilles waterfront is now more “Marina” than “Docks” and there are some beautiful long walks along the coast and up the hills into the city itself, and for the tourists there are even little street trains like you see at Cleethorpes and other UK resorts, and which you may have noticed are made by “Dotto” in Italy.

Except, paradoxically, despite the South of France neighbouring on Italy, the trains there are made by a different company whose manufacturer’s nameplate amusingly read “PRAT Automobiles”.



We also chuckled when the little PRAT took us to the cathedral which is the pride of the locality and



overlooks the city from a commanding hilltop. Here our attention was directed to a magnificent golden statue atop the highest spire which the informative taped commentary told us was “Madonna and Kid”!

It was in Marseilles, in the old-town district, that we took the opportunity to have a special meal to celebrate our birthdays– my 65th and Carols x th.. We settled into a friendly looking pavement restaurant and perused their extensive seafood menu. Despite the myriad of delicacies on offer we had actually made up our minds before we even sat down. Of course, we chose the world-famous Marseilles regional speciality – Bouillabaisse. (Well, you wouldn't go to the zoo and ignore the lions would you?)

All-too-soon our week's stay in Marseilles came to an end and back in our faithful Isetta we set off almost due North to traverse la France, destination Brugges in Belgium. We left mid-morning, intending to just drive and drive, see what happened and take events as they occurred.



The first event occurred after a mere 30 minutes, only a few miles from Marseilles....

A backfire started when climbing a steep gradient, followed by a misfire whenever I opened the throttle more than a touch. So we stopped at a gas station. There was fuel but no water in the carb glass bowl - OK. I turned the motor by hand and could feel good compression - OK. I got out my light-sabre (no, no, sorry, I'm getting carried away!) I got out my test lamp and confirmed that the ignition timing was correct, therefore the points gap hadn't altered and the c/b points were opening and closing.. OK. Disconnecting the H/T lead and using a spare spark plug I confirmed there was a healthy spark, so the coil and condenser were - OK. All non-invasive tests completed I reasoned the culprit must be the plug, so I took it out for examination. It was rather cacky (technical term). Then I realised that this same plug had taken us abroad five times, and I hadn't even cleaned it

before this trip (well, you can overdo this maintenance lark if you're not careful...).

So I fitted a new plug, the Isetta fired up like a good 'un and we resumed our Northerly trek. No further significant events occurred. We drove. We took on fuel. We drove. We took on fuel. We repeated this process all afternoon, and all through the subsequent night and about 800 miles and almost exactly 24 hours later, the following morning we arrived at Brugges. Here we found a quiet spot in an underground carpark and dozed for an hour or so before we went to explore the city's treasures and have something to eat.

Come early afternoon it was time to chug to Zeebrugg(es) to meet the Ferry for England and as we surfaced from the underground car park I spotted a group of classic vehicles on display ... so I drove our Isetta and its trailer into the midst of the display.

The crowds gathered around it and posed for their friends with cameras. The spectators loved it. The exhibitors loved it.



The Organisers, on the other hand seemed just a tiny bit peeved that I had stolen attention away from their display of immaculate classic vehicles, but we had a ferry to catch so we didn't stay long.

The next morning we woke up in Hull Docks and drove the few miles home. Our "Monte Carlo or Bust" expedition was completed. Our 50-year old, faithful, incredabubble, unburstabubble Isetta had towed its trailer weighing 420 lbs (190 kgs) laden and carried us there and back, including touring all the Riviera's Mediterranean resorts and a couple of laps of the Monaco Grand Prix circuit, clocking a total of 2,204 miles, while needing little more than a plug change.

Our progress among Les Francais was twice halted by Officialdom. The first occasion we were leaving a Peage when a group of Douanes (Customs) Officers pulled us over. It was soon obvious that they simply wanted a look at our Isetta. One of them told his colleagues that it was Fiat-based. I said "No, it was a BMW product". He said "No, it's Fiat." So I agreed. Argument was clearly futile.

The other occasion was on the Autoroute where a police car followed our Isetta and its camping trailer for about 4 miles before signalling us to stop in an "Aire" (one of their frequent laybys-with-loos). The police car (Police, not Gendarmes – I wonder why?) contained a mature Officer and three very young ones, obviously rookies. The senior Officer asked for our papers, which Carol had ready, and he passed them to one of his trainees without even glancing at the documents. After the usual "What is it?" questions he took the still-unopened docs from the rookie, gave them back to us and wished us a safe journey. Yes, he was just interested in



the Isetta.

Would we do it again? Maybe...
But not this year,
mon ami mate!



Carol and Terry Parkin

<http://autos.groups.yahoo.com/group/IsettaWorld>

Mr. Intrepid

January 30, 1964 I turned 27 that day at sea in the Pacific on the USS Breckinridge, a WW2 troop ship on it's last voyage from Korea before switching to Vietnam duty. I was returning to San Francisco for discharge after two years as a draftee. Two months earlier, President Kennedy had been assassinated. LBJ was now our president. He did not assign a vice president. Commercial jets were soon transporting our military to Viet-



nam. I met some at Oakland Army Base. They wore tropical boots for jungle duty. Our Korean unit was still in winter uniforms.

Along with money I had saved on-base at Ascom near BuPyong by not spending it on the local girls, I had \$900 in my pocket at the time of discharge. My plan was to remain in San Francisco. California had been a dream of mine since childhood. All I needed now was a job in structural engineering or architecture. At that point, the world was my oyster, but I no longer had my beloved Isetta.

I got a room at a residence club in San Francisco, surprised to find a good buddy of mine from Iowa living there. Dave actually had a car, a red VW bug. One Saturday we were on our way to a Sears store for some tools. I had my Nikon with me, loaded with tri-x, and took pictures out the window. Up ahead I saw an Isetta headed west on Mission. I encouraged Dave to get closer so I could get a shot of it. A year after having to sell my beautiful red Isetta deluxe, I was thrilled to see one again.

I observed the Isetta driver, a guy much like myself, probably from Iowa, right? It reminded me of my own Isetta being the sole means of transportation from one side of the Missouri in Iowa, across to the Nebraska side to work in Omaha, a 5-mile commute. One of the richest men in America lives there, Warren Buffet. Warren and I probably took our dates to the same drive-in movie theatre in our youth. For all I know, he may have owned an Isetta, but something tells me it was more likely a Chevy six. Warren is, very thrifty. I doubt that he ever spent much money on a car during his youth.

Traffic stopped for a red light. I watched the Isetta driver; cool, calm and collected, his engine idling quietly. Dave had ridden in my Isetta often back in The Bluffs. In fact, we had our very first taco one evening cruising around North Omaha in the Isetta and stopped at a taco stand. Those tacos were hot spicy and delicious. None since have tasted so good.

The light changed to green and the Isetta moved out smartly as a big '58 Buick to his left began to pass him. This gave me almost a clear shot. I only got one frame of the Isetta, figured I'd probably see many more now that I was back in the states. I waited eighteen years to see the next one.

Two weeks later I was working as a structural engineer on a Ghana/Alcoa project. I didn't make much money, but when you're young and single in San Francisco, one doesn't need

much money. Unfortunately, the employers know that. The Beatles were introduced to American television on the Ed Sullivan Show. My friend Julie from England saw it with me. At the time, I didn't even know about the 3-wheel Isettas or the Brighton factory. The Austin Mini was very exciting though.

When I first saw the photo I had taken of that Isetta, it didn't seem very special. There was movement blur everywhere, but today it fascinates me. That car with the big fins just to the left and blocking my view is a '58 Buick I believe. Recently I photographed one at a car show. They were so beautiful, so huge, so well suited for cruising Las Vegas or Hollywood. They more or less said, "Hey, Babe, look at me. I've got money to burn. Wanna go for a ride in my car?"

I think of that lean businesslike Isetta owner on his way to work in his sustainable, reliable, thrifty, minimal, sensible BMW automobile as "Mr. Intrepid". Now and then I see them driving one vehicle or another, a car they are totally content with, plain, simple, unpretentious. He's being passed by the big Buick, and his Isetta is easily doing 5000 rpm in 2nd gear, preparing to shift into 3rd, all in due time.

The driver of the Buick hears nothing more than the radio playing some KFOG morning jazz. For the Isetta driver, every moment is a Stirling Moss moment, man and machine harmoniously at the max. You can't even come close to this experience driving a big V8 Buick with a slush-box automatic transmission. 5000rpm, hah!

After I had saved some money for a car, I bought a used Renault Dauphine. I loved the car, this one had a warped head. I was soon looking at used TR-3's and found a '61 TR3a for \$1100, black with a white top plus a tonneau cover. That was a wonderful year while it lasted. My new friend Stacy, a dancer, hit some puddled water one rainy night and hydroplaned in circles before smacking the guard rail. She was okay, but the car was a goner. I was soon in a sensible '63 VW ragtop, air-cooled like the Isetta, but with a marginally better heater.

That was about the time we went to see Kubrick's Dr. Strangelove, still a timely film. 20 years later my wife and I went to Story, just two weeks after Chernobyl, but we used a shallow breathing technique. So far, so good. Hans was there, too, and sold me some choice items for the Isetta I was restoring.

Today my Isetta is running fine. I have still not as yet seen an actual 3-wheel Isetta. Julie returned to England. Stacy returned to Seattle. My wife, Rosalyn, is much too sensible to ride with me in the Isetta. Our son is very excited about the new 4-door Mini Cooper.

I will take a little ride through the California Hills today to hear that BMW single purr and note a few more smiles as I pass by younger folks who never ever saw an Isetta before and are fumbling to get their cell-phone camera out to grab a shot before I'm out of sight. I know the feeling.

john jensen





Andre (Moto) Baldet
feature, September
4, 1959

Labour MP for
Northampton, Reggie
Paget purchased this as,
at the time of the Suez
crisis [1956], there was a
petrol shortage.



Craven Motors
advertising feature,
May 29, 1968

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Isetta for sale

Stephen Berry has in Isetta for sale and would like it to go to a club member. The car is in good condition and has always been garage stored --- good paintwork, no rust, good upholstery, no battery, everything works but needs a clutch rod fitting into the engine. £5000 ONO. Call Stephen on 01204 698048.

The Club is pleased to welcome:-

Peter Bampton	Aldershot
Louise Bolton	Alton
Tom Rodger	Belsize
Brendan Gibben	Armagh
Mike Ryan	Dublin
Keith Broyd	Halstead
Linda Brown	Guernsey
Wilbert Clarke	Ballymena
Stewart Nicoll	Montrose

New Members since the last Gazette.

Koshi Nishimura Japan
(Returning member)

BMW 700 COUPE OUTER SILL EXTENSION PANEL TO REAR WHEEL ARCH

This is professionally made in 18 gauge thickness mild steel (Thicker than original BMW 700 bodywork) and is made to be welded onto the end of the outer sill at the rear of the sill and includes the rear wheel arch up to approximately 75mm above the outer sill height. Price £55 plus postage. Tel. 07968-048762

BMW 700 PARTS FOR SALE

New old stock BMW 700 parts including body panels, glass, chrome trims, engine cylinders and heads, electrical switches and lights, spare parts list, repair and maintenance manuals. Too much to list. Kindly contact John Baldacchino -Malta -(356) 21674918 or email: sivent@hotmail.com

Wanted :

Lucas L559 'pigs ear' indicator metal base as shown in the pictures. This type has an addition steel 'lip' all the way round the edge unlike the standard type fitted to the Isetta. This lip is so it can be fitted through a cut out in the body work so the lamp base



remains on the inside. Will happily swap for a new complete 'Isetta' type pigs lamp or buy out right. Please contact Grant Kearney on 01796 470440 or e-mail grant.e.kearney@talk21.com

To advertise your items for sale or want adds etc. please email the editor at isetta@ianparris.com

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The Berkeley Story by Ian Parris concludes

Eventually I had no parts left to fit and the time came to bite the bullet, get the car out and drive it to the MOT station. With my wife following along behind I started the 7 mile drive to the station. I was fortunate in only seizing the engine 3 times during the journey. The car passed the MOT first time and the details were entered on the DVLA computer.

I had been in talks with the DVLA a number of times concerning the original registration number and even had a letter dated 1983 from the Department of Transport confirming the association between the registration mark and the car but unfortunately this didn't allow me to get a registration document. With the help of the BEC I eventually restored the original number to the car and got it taxed.

My friend Geoff was concerned about the seizing up of the car and questioned me about my driving habits. I explained to him that as a rebuilt engine I was being very careful how I drove the car. I asked him to come and try it out to get his opinion as he had been driving his Berkeleys for the last 30 years. Well off we went, not changing into the next gear until at least 5000rpm came up on the revcounter. We went round the country lanes like we were on fire. Geoff reminded me that we were running a 2 stroke not a 4 stoke and not to let the engine labour. Enough said, that is the way I am now driving and the engine doesn't dare seize up, it hasn't got time for any of that nonsense!

I decided to send a couple of pictures and a paragraph to 'Practical Classics' magazine to see if I could get my car onto the 'Your Cars' page. Almost by return I had a reply that they would like to do a 'Reader's Resto' feature of the car. Arrangements were made for a photo shoot and an interview during December 2010.



After 4 hours of talking and driving around the countryside in freezing weather in an open topped car the pictures were in the can. I couldn't wait to see the result. The car would be featured in the March 2011 edition and so I must wait. Usually the editions are published about the middle of the month prior to their date so it was a surprise to me when my copy arrived in the post late January.

Reading through the article I was most impressed with the written content considering the interview was really just a friendly chat but the editor had picked up things I wouldn't have thought relevant. It was quite

pleasing to see myself on the bookstands in most newsagents and to be able to bring Berkeleys to the attention of the public. As there were less than 3000 of all marques built, and only 1800 3 wheelers, not that many survive and therefore not many people have even heard of them.



CLASSIC car enthusiasts rallied together in memory of a much-loved figure in the world of cars and motorsport.

Members of the Berkeley Enthusiasts Club (BEC) honoured the late Ian Mantle by following a 45-mile route through Chronicle Country on Sunday (July 10).

Eleven Berkeley cars travelled through Biggleswade, Dunton, Eyeworth, Sutton, Pottton, Gamlingay, the Gransdens and onto Everton as they remembered the late Ian Mantle.

Mr Mantle, who died in August last year at the age of 90, ran new and used vehicle retailer Mantles in Biggleswade, and was instrumental in developing and publicising the Berkeley sports car in the town in the 1950s.

His son John also followed the route in the 1966 Mini Cooper S that his father used to rally in, and presented prizes to drivers in a variety of categories at Mantles in London Road.

BEC chairman Geoff Toyer said: "We had a good turnout – Berkeley enthusiasts travelled from as far away as Kent and the Isle of Wight to take part.

"Biggleswade Town Council also kindly let us park the cars in the town square at the end so the drivers could chat to members of the public."

Awards were presented to the driver who finished in the average time and to the two who took the best and largest number of pictures of items that organisers had flagged up along the route.

Geoff, who organised the rally with fellow enthusiast and club member Darren Jeff, added: "We gave them a list of features along the way, like grit bins and signposts, and asked them to take photographs from certain angles.

"The rally went swimmingly and John was very pleased – we hope to hold many more in years to come."

Article reprinted by kind permission of The Biggleswade Chronicle.

MOT Testing Station

It is often difficult to find a garage that can MOT 3 wheel cars so I am going to start the ball rolling by giving details of my local garage in the Northampton area. It is:-

John's Motors Ltd
Old Forge Garage
Watling Street East
Fosters Booth
Near Towcester
NN12 8LB
Tel. 01327 831191

John is a classic car enthusiast and very sympathetic towards older cars.



Alan Town is asking when this badge existed as he has never seen one. Anyone have any idea please let us know.