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No 388

# ISETTA GAZETTE



AUTUMN EDITION ... 2022

MAGAZINE OF THE ISETTA OWNERS CLUB OF GREAT BRITAIN

# The Isetta Owners Club of Great Britain Ltd.

## OFFICERS & COMMITTEE

<b>CHAIRMAN</b> Jeff Todd	108 Clee Road, Grimsby. DN32 8NX <b>email:jefftodd1952@gmail.com</b>
<b>TREASURER</b> Bob Crompton	1 North View, Ryhope, Sunderland. SR2 0PE <b>email:bargeebob999@gmail.com</b>
<b>SECRETARY</b> Joanne Todd	108 Clee Road, Grimsby. DN32 8NX <b>email:joannetodd2006@gmail.com</b>
<b>MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY</b> Ian Parris	1 Winston Close, Nether Heyford, Northampton. NN7 3JX <b>email:isetta@ianparris.com</b>
<b>GAZETTE EDITOR</b> Ian Parris	1 Winston Close, Nether Heyford, Northampton. NN7 3JX <b>email:isetta@ianparris.com</b>
<b>USED SPARES MANAGER</b> Mike Ayriiss	29 Oak Drive, Syston, Leicester. LE7 2PX <b>email:michael.ayriiss@talktalk.net</b>
<b>TECHNICAL ADVICE</b> Lee Turnham Mike Ayriiss	70 Prebendal Avenue, Aylesbury, Bucks. HP21 8LQ <b>email:lee.turnham@talktalk.net</b> 29 Oak Drive, Syston, Leicester. LE7 2PX <b>email:michael.ayriiss@talktalk.net</b>
<b>NEW SPARES MANAGER</b> Lee Turnham	70 Prebendal Avenue, Aylesbury, Bucks. HP21 8LQ <b>email:lee.turnham@talktalk.net</b>
<b>ARCHIVE/RE-REGISTRATION and REGISTRAR</b> Dave Watson	c/o Ridgeway Furniture Ltd, Unit 21a Chartmoor Road, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire. LU7 4WG <b>email:d_watson@btinternet.com</b>
<b>WEBMASTER</b> Ian Parris	1 Winston Close, Nether Heyford, Northampton. NN7 3JX <b>email:isetta@ianparris.com</b>

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**TECHNICAL ADVICE 600's & 700's** Millstonford Farm, West Kilbride, Ayrshire. KA23 9PS  
Alastair Lauchland **email:alastair.lauchland@btinternet.com**

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United Kingdom (and members receiving an emailed gazette)	£18.00	<b>Annual Subscription payments should be made by PayPal to <a href="mailto:isettasubs3@gmail.com">isettasubs3@gmail.com</a> alternatively via the Online Spares System by purchasing an Annual Membership Subscription (Renewal Only) item or by Cheque to the Membership Secretary Ian Parris.</b> <b>For Standing Orders:- Sort Code 09-01-56 Account No. 00744809 to Isetta Owners Subscriptions Account.</b> <b>Ref. Your Name.</b>
Europe	£21.00	
Rest Of World	£25.00	

Registered Office: Geoff Davey ACMA, 46 High Street, Gargrave, Nr Skipton. BD23 3RB Company Reg. No. 2527362

## **Editors Bit**

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I would like to thank the contributors of articles for this edition, I still have a couple to be passed over to the next edition, but don't rest on your laurels I still need plenty more.

It has been a good summer to get your cars out so lets hear what you got up to.

The club AGM will be held on October 10<sup>th</sup> at the Beedles Lake Golf club, near Leicester. Full page announcement inside the back cover.

On the 600 front, my replacement gearbox came out of a 700 (I didn't realise that at the time) then found it hasn't got the appropriate lugs on the clutch housing to mount it to the chassis. I have just got it back having the casing modified accordingly.

Now to deal with the clutch problems.....



**Ian Parris**

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## **Chairman's Chat**

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Sorry to keep harping on about new members to join the Club management committee but we need to ensure that the Club carries on into the future to ensure that our cars do the same. My son has confirmed that he will endeavour to be available for the next committee meeting which precedes the Annual General Meeting. He works a four-on-four off shift pattern so will have possibly book the day off to be available but let's hope he can. So come on members if I can find new blood for the committee then surely someone out there can do the same. We meet in the centre of the country so that it's as easy for everyone to attend.

Regarding my own cars, I still haven't made any progress with either of them nor another four wheeled semi-classic that I own and several other motor bikes and mopeds. Someday some time as they say when other things aren't craving my attention. Maybe I need to retire then there will be enough hours in the day.....

**Jeff Todd**

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# **MEMBERS LETTERS**

I am restoring two very poorly 300's and both have very rotten petrol tanks. So you can understand my excitement when I spotted that a very generous member was happy to give away two good tanks via a Facebook message. Not surprisingly, they were snapped up, immediately. Regardless, I left a message, saying that I would have taken them as I also needed two.

To my surprise and delight, another club member, Bob Fielding, contacted me, saying he too had two petrol tanks he was happy to give away, and then gave them to me. So, I would like to say a big THANK YOU to Bob for his generosity, and how nice it is to be in a club/community where members are so helpful.

## **Chess Ferrier**

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### **The Club is pleased to welcome:-**

Robert Doubleday	Devon	Graham Hallam	Loughborough
Kai Hansen	Norway	Rich Berry	Kendal
Trevor Sharpe	Chesterfield	Bob Nichols	USA
Tim Hustwayte	Reigate	John Horton	Solihull
George Hladik	Czech Republic	Gary Sutton	Redgrave
Richard Simons	Grinstead	Bob Bowron	Flaundon
Stewart Porter	Glasgow	Phill Mather	Bingley
Florian Rohkamm	Germany	Steven Wagner	USA
Denis Beardmore	Macclesfield	Janet Dunn	Worksop

### **New Members since the last Gazette**

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To advertise your items for sale or want adds etc. please email the editor at [isetta@ianparris.com](mailto:isetta@ianparris.com)

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## Sara & Mick Appleby's Story

In 2008 we undertook the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary Liege Brescia Liege rally in our 1960 Isetta 300. It was a tough, challenging event but one we absolutely loved. Great organisation, scenery, hotels, people and above all, we got out and really used the Isetta. The main bearing repair in a hotel carpark in Ljubljana was the only downside! So, 2 years later when we saw the Micro Marathon across the Pyrenees advertised we were in. It was another amazing trip and with slightly shorter days and relaxed atmosphere it was like a holiday.

10 years on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary LBL came around and we signed up in a flash. Car prep began and travel plans made. 6 weeks before we were due to leave my wife's father was taken into hospital with a very poor prognosis. The days ticked by and Sara was clearly not going to be able to leave her father. Rather than cancel the trip she was insistent that I still go. She wanted something lovely to come from something so sad and we invited our 15 year old nephew to take her place. A great opportunity for him to travel and create memories with his uncle.



Christopher had exams up until the day before the rally so I started the drive to Liege alone meeting him at the Eurostar Brussels the following day. A crash course in navigation on the phone from Sara and we were off!

It was a great trip, Christopher took to navigation like a duck to water managing to win the Best Navigator

prize and we come third overall in the rally. Some feat for the car with the smallest engine. As a surprise Sara came to the finish with Christopher's younger brother and cheered us home.

That evening, at the prizegiving dinner Christopher said that the rally was the best thing he had ever done and he really wanted to do another *but* he wanted to drive the next one. A seed was sown....

I have had another Isetta 300 which I purchased 35 years ago in pieces. Sadly, that is how it stayed. A deal was struck with Christopher, if he passed his driving test at 17, I would have the "yellow bubble" ready for him to rally in the Micro Marathon 2020.

When Covid hit I had the time and incentive so work commenced in earnest. The body had been sandblasted many years ago and fortunately I had kept it dry and it was in great condition. I had also rebuilt the engine when I first got it but gave that a good going over with Christopher assisting.





I pinned down my sprayer and work on the body commenced.

Unfortunately, he changed employer a few times during the process and some bits got lost along the way. I had paid a set price for a full respray which never materialised. The main body was done but the engine cover and door were missing. We tracked down the door which was untouched and the engine cover, like the sprayer, were never seen again.

By this time, we were well into the 2 years I had to get it done. Christopher had kept his side of the bargain and passed first time. The pressure was on...

Then due to Covid the 2020 rally was postponed, whilst



this was a disappointment it did give me more time to get the remainder of the body sorted out.

Luckily enough, the club had an engine cover which I purchased and along with the door took to a different spray shop for painting.

After a lot of stress and additional cost the yellow bubble was, after 35 years, finally yellow!



Now to get it registered.

I took the required photos, sent them off to Dave Watson who very kindly verified them by return. Thank you! I then applied to the DVLA for a registration document. After some considerable time, the application was returned to me as I had not specified the number of seats and although the vehicle was pre-registered they were insistent that I pay the £55 first registration fee. I completed returned the application but frustratingly had to restart the whole process. The rally was confirmed for Sept 2021. It was now the end of August and we were still waiting. It arrived just in the nick

of time and we could set about insuring it. Another hurdle.

When Christopher passed his driving test we made some initial enquiries to various insurance companies. The original plan was that Christopher and his elder sister, Francesca, would do the rally together. We were struggling to get him insured to drive unless he was accompanied by someone over 25 but Francesca could get cover as she was that bit older and had more driving experience. We decided to arrange cover once we were ready to go.

Now the car was ready I started ringing around again and to my horror, no one would insure us. Since we made our original plans Francesca had started work and had no leave. My brother, Andrew, stepped in so I went back to the company who would insure him if accompanied by someone over 25. It was a no from them too! After much negotiation they agreed to cover us. Phew! After so many hurdles and setbacks we were finally ready.

The rally started in Toulouse so we decided to trailer the 700 miles down. It all went smoothly and we were raring to go!

In Toulouse the maps were prepped and we were off. The format was as usual, treasure hunt navigation, a couple of track tests and lots of unexpected adventures!



Day one we headed southeast. Christopher wanted to get used to being back in the Isetta, and find his rally feet before he started driving. We had a track test at Aigues Vives Kart Circuit.

Christopher with his Dad driving were the first Isetta out trying to match the bogey time set by the organiser. A gasp alerted me to the fact that all may not be going as planned. I am pleased to report that I did not see the Isetta at 45° but seeing the bottom of the (newly purchased and painted) engine cover ground away showed clearly what had happened.

My brother, being fully of the rally spirit, had simply gone into a corner way too hot! Years of motorcycling meant that his instinct took over and he leant over the airborne side and got it back on terra firma. We continued into the mountains with 9 passes taking us up to 6,500ft/2100m. We finished the day staying at the amazing Bishops Palace in St Lizier.



By day 3 we were on our way to San Sebastian but had 14 mountain passes to conquer first including the Col du Tourmalet at 6,900ft/2115m. It was a

very long day, 250 miles including a gravel section and some tricky navigation but we did it! Christopher took over the driving and was having a wonderful time especially on our next track

test at Circuit de Los Arcos in Navarra. It was a consistency test so considerably less hairy than his last! However, he noticed that the brakes were not what they could be. My brother and I had adjusted them a couple of previous evenings but were not overly concerned. With all of the delays we had getting the car ready, it had not had the shake down we would have liked so expected these sorts of adjustments.

The brake issues continued and by the time we reached Rioja there was no resistance in the pedal whatsoever.



After hours and hours of work we had to accept that the car was undrivable and the fault lay with a badly manufactured new master cylinder. As this was my brother's first rally and Christopher's as driver we did not want them to miss out so handed over our blue Isetta, which

was running beautifully. I contacted the rally mechanic and hitched the yellow one to the A frame.

We managed to source a master cylinder in Barcelona and they sent it to the hotel we would be at in 2 days. We shared the blue Isetta until we got to the hotel in Tarragona where the parcel was waiting for us. Thank you Antoni Tachó and Clàssic Motor Club del Bages!



After a couple of hours work the work was done and the brakes were better than they had ever been. The yellow bubble was back on the road.

The great braking was much appreciated as we crossed into Andorra and tackled the Port d'Envalira. We had a little stop enroute for points adjustment but had a great run into the finish at Carcassonne.

What a privilege to be able to process through the ancient walled city and display the cars there. It was quite a spectacle for the other visitors.

We were fortunate enough to stay at the stunning Hotel de la Cité, what a location! The prizegiving dinner was a great opportunity to chat with our fellow ralliers and reflect on our achievements. This edition of the Micro Marathon may not have been the holiday we had expected with 81 mountain passes completed and 1600 miles driven across France Spain and Andorra but what an achievement. New friends have been made and how wonderful to have the next generation of Isetta enthusiasts well and truly hooked.



Thank you to Malcolm McKay for another great event!

Now for an overhaul of both cars and our youngest nephew has just passed his driving test...

**Sara & Mick Appleby**



## My Isetta Tale part 2 by Paul Robinson

To carry on from my last time in 2016. Having finished rebuilding the engine and mounting it on the Chassis it was time to test it, I hung a plastic bottle with petrol in it from a roof beam and connected it to the carburettor. I then connected a battery and tried to start it with no joy, after further investigation, I found I had assembled a jet upside down in the carburettor, this put right I managed to start the engine.

The one problem I found was the carburettor that came with the car was from a Triumph Motorcycle, so I went about trying to correct this. I managed to locate one on eBay which I managed to get for £80, it had a few bits missing which I was able to get from the Club Spares Service. With the new carburettor fitted the engine ran much better.



Next, for a Christmas present my daughter gave me an old hand crank sewing machine so now I can get on with recovering the seat. Stripped off all the old covering, painted the frame with Hammerite then covered it with Hessian and foam and then made new covers for it with my sewing machine.

### **Lock Down**

Time for the re-spray, finished preparing the body and all of the bits luckily the weather was kind, and I managed to get the re-spraying all done in three days.

It was time to remarry the body to the chassis. I looked on eBay and managed to get a half ton chain hoist, I made a frame in the garage from timber and lifted the body up, I then pushed the chassis under the body. Next it was a case of slowly and very gently lowering the body down onto the chassis, which I am glad to say went without a hitch.

Now it was time to fit the door and all of the lights and windows, there was a slight problem with the wiring and I had to replace a couple of wires to the headlights. The hardest part of fitting the windows was fitting the sealing strip in the front and rear window rubber, a silicon spray helped a lot plus a shaped tool I made from wire.

Over time I had lost all of the interior panels, so I looked on eBay and managed to get an old door panel and one side panel. I then went over to Birmingham and bought four millboard panels, using the old panels as patterns I cut out new ones, for the parcel shelf I made a cardboard pattern then cut and riveted the millboard.

Next we get on to the sunroof, I still had the original which was old crisp and split but could be used as a pattern so I bought some hood material and got out my old sewing machine again and made and fitted the new sunroof with a rivet and screw kit from Oldtimerteile.

The last thing was the road test but as I could not get the car out of the garage yet (that is another tale) I jacked up the rear wheel, put it on axle stands to check the gears and the clutch are working OK. I started up the engine put it in gear let out the clutch and away it went, I ran it up to 30mph on the speedo. Job Done.





I have now registered WVC 510 with DVLA as a historic vehicle

The only thing left to do now is to get it out of the garage. The only problem is the door is in the wrong end of the garage so I will have to put a new doorway in the garage.

**Paul Robinson**  
(Nuneaton)

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## **Erik's Isetta**

It was the year 1960, my grandparents had recently moved to Canada and were in the market for an inexpensive vehicle. In the local newspaper, an ad for a strange BMW was listed for 850\$ CAD. The car was advertised as having great fuel economy, low maintenance and ease of operation. The next day, my grandfather offered 800\$ CAD for the car and drove it home.

The car was a Canadian import, 1958 BMW Isetta 300 and for three years, was well used and even driven through the rough Canadian winters. My grandparents had three children and used the little Isetta as the family car, and even used it for some lengthy distances, driving it to their country home, 120 kilometres away. After a mere 15,000 miles of driving, the little Isetta needed to be permanently stored due to some un-repaired mechanical issues.

Until one day, in 1962, when a teenager who was riding his bike noticed the car in the garage and offered \$300 to buy it. My grandfather, looking to clear up some space in the garage decided to let it go. Two weeks later however, the same boy returned to my grandparents' house and insisted on a refund as he could not repair the mechanical issues and was unsuccessful in getting the car to run. Since then, the car had been stored in a barn in Ontario for over 50 years giving me the chance to take over!

After much discussion with my dad who agreed to assist with the finances, I took possession of the little 1958 Isetta with the bold goal to work on a full restoration of this unique, little antique car. At the time and in the beginning in 2018, I was starting my engineering degree at McGill University so dedicating time to this project was limited.

We faced many challenges as we were first time car restorers. Luckily, we found a great fellow in Toronto who had just completed the full antique restoration of his own Isetta. How amazing and incredibly lucky we were to have found this contact! He provided so much expertise and support by rebuilding the engine, transmission, and chain case all while giving us great insight on how to restore the chassis.

Today, we have a completely restored chassis, and the body will be professionally painted in the next few weeks in a professional body shop in Kingston, Ontario.

Once completed, we plan to enjoy the car, driving it around from car show to car show and we are all so excited to see the final product! It is a very special car for us, one that has been in the family for over 60 years. The project's progress can be followed on Instagram @isetta\_mtl.

# Isetta World

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An ISETTA as a main prize ...

We all dream of winning an Isetta  
( or at least, we used to ).



Back in the days of “Black and White” TV, In the USA version of “The Price Is Right” there was even an Isetta offered as a Star Prize, although history has not recorded whether anyone won it.



Nearer to home, in Germany, Ulrich Lokies will never forget October 26, 1956, when he won an Isetta. Photographer Lutz Kleinhans captured the moment.



It was sheer coincidence that Ulrich Lohies visited the International Bike and Motorcycle Exhibition (IFMA) on October 26, 1956 at the Exhibition Centre, Frankfurt.

At the time he was studying mechanical engineering in Darmstadt and wanted to look at the latest designs with his then girlfriend Dorothea Schard.

It was pure coincidence that he won a BMW Isetta as the 200,000th visitor.

The couple, who were beaming with joy, were photographed in the vehicle, and a day later Lutz Kleinhans' photo appeared with a few lines of text at the Frankfurter Rundschau.

He wrote "It is part of the current exhibition "Schauplätze. Frankfurt in the 1950's" at the Urban History Institute and is featured on the cover of the current event program."

Tobias Picard chose the photo from 80,000 images to represent the years of the economic miracle.



The Isetta was one of the most popular cars in Germany at that time and you could drive cars up to 250cc with a motorcycle licence. It was therefore crucial that the young couple in the image would "fascinate with a radiant naturalness to show the joys of ownership".

Ulrich can still remember the unexpected event very well despite it being 66 years ago.

He recalls - At the entrance there was a barrier and a lot of people, including photographers. " I told Thea someone must have won a moped. I never thought I could be the winner of something ". When someone asked if he had a moment, he replied that he was in a hurry and that he only had a couple of hours to tour the exhibition. The man replied, "What if you have now won a car ? ".

Of course, that changed everything and thwarted the couple's plans: a 2-hour visit to the Exhibition and Trade Fair had become an afternoon and an entire evening. Because Ulrich and Thea were asked to attend at the Gala Night to be officially presented as the Lucky winners.

"Then it became complicated", Ulrich recalls " The red Isetta with white roof had to stay for the duration of the exhibition. Then when I went to pick it up, the vehicle was gone. Nobody knew where the Isetta was! Finally, I called Munich and found out I could pick it up at Glöckler, from a BMW representative. However, I didn't get very far on the first trip, in fact just from the car dealership in Galluwart to Friedensbrücke. (about 2,5 km !!!!) The Isetta stopped and had to be dragged into the workshop. I don't even know what broke".

As time went by, the Isetta was enjoyed but didn't suit the lifestyle of 23-year old Ulrich. "The prize was great, of course. But I already had a car, which was unusual at the time", says Lolie, who originally comes from Bochum. Back then, he only got excited about inaccessible dream cars such as the Mercedes 300 SL "Gull Wing".

However, he used the Isetta for trips from Darmstadt to Frankfurt (44 km)( about 27 miles) to visit his girlfriend Thea.

He drove a total of 8000 kilometres with the "Knutschkugel" (aka "The Kissing Ball", as Isettas were affectionately called) before selling it to a colleague after just six months, for Dm 2,000. The most spectacular thing he remembers doing with the car would probably be worthy for today's Guinness Book of Records: "In a test we drove with seven people inside", Lolies says and laughs. "If you put me in an Isetta today, I'd drive it without hesitation" .

" My time with Thea was happy too", Lolies says. The former couple met at a restaurant but they parted in the late 1950s, and both lost contact. Ulrich is now glad to learn that Thea is still alive, as Jutta Zwilling at the Urban History Institute was able to tell him, after a little research. " We split up in good relationships and if I get her address, I'll get in touch with her " he says.

"I was a true car and motorcycles fan", he says today, at 87 years old. " Ulrich still drives a BMW – but now it is an elegant 320 Coupe with a 6 cylinder engine.



Terry Parkin, Isetta World,  
[Facebook.com/groups/267159327250111](https://www.facebook.com/groups/267159327250111)

## GUILTY MEMBER

I felt guilty that Ian was short of material for the Gazette and I hadn't submitted anything for years. My Isetta hasn't done much lately though – no film/TV work; no restoration – it mainly just sits in the driveway being a talking point! So, instead here's a tale of cause and effect, based around bubble cars.

As a child I was fascinated by bubble cars, but by 1979 when I was fourteen 14 they had all but vanished from the streets. Then someone called Pete Baynham who was a few years older than me started driving a nice Isetta to school, and it got me thinking that maybe I could find one. He'd seen it in a back room of a garage in our home city of Gloucester, bought it, and restored it, painting it blue and white – matching his similarly-restored Lambretta scooter. He pointed me to the Isetta Owners' Club and in 1980 I became an owner myself and have been ever since (lots of stories about this covered in previous articles). Incidentally, Pete's car 233 DFH is now orange and white and owned now by club member Philip Durow.

Fast forward to 1983 and I saw a 1957 Heinkel Perle moped advertised locally for £30 and, due to the bubble car connection, I bought it. It was a lovely little thing, made of aluminium and light as a feather. I used to ride it all over the city!

After a few years, I sold the Heinkel to a gentleman called



Harris Mann who restored it, re-painting it from its original maroon to metallic green to match one that he had owned in his youth. I subsequently met him at a National Microcar Rally (where he was displaying the moped) and many years later bumped into him at the NEC show. We

became friends and regularly chat bikes and cars at length on the phone. What I didn't realise until his name kept cropping up in books was that Harris was responsible for designing a lot of things over the years, including cars such as one of my favourites, the Triumph TR7.



Come 2021, and having owned more than 130 cars over the years (and almost as many bikes), I had settled into a pattern of one sensible car, one van-type-thing, one Isetta, and one other 'classic'. My last two classics had been a Morgan 4/4 and a Bentley Brooklands, and I decided that I wanted something

more day-to-day useable. I narrowed down to Dolomite Sprint, Avenger Tiger, and TR7. The TR7 might have won anyway, but my association with Harris and his encouragement no doubt helped give it the edge. Hence, I now have one!

So, if Pete Baynham hadn't happened to walk into that garage in the 1970s, I quite likely would not have had Isettas in my life for more than 40 years, wouldn't know any of you, wouldn't know Harris Mann, and wouldn't have a TR7. Thanks, Pete – I think!

This kind of thing fascinates me (and indeed is a theme of my latest (hit) novel – 'Neighbour from Hell', which is about a classic car enthusiast!) How many of us, I wonder, wouldn't have had Isettas taking over much of our lives if not for one tiny incident – and what would we have done instead?!



**Neal Bircher**



Back in 1970-73, my wife and I were living in West Kirby, on the Wirral Peninsula. I was an American post-doc student at the University of Liverpool. I needed an inexpensive car to commute to the university via the Mersey tunnel. We found a well-used Isetta in central Liverpool, that I bought for the princely sum of 64 British pounds. In spite of its somewhat shabby appearance, it was a delightful little red Brighton-built LHD machine, and as a car-guy, I very much enjoyed driving it. We were living on a university scholarship, so the cut-rate Mersey tunnel fare for 3-wheel cars plus miserly gas-consumption was most appreciated.

I can recall two stories associated with this little car during those early years in England. One day, my wife was using the Isetta to pick up groceries in West Kirby. A lady saw her getting into the car and started a conversation with her. It turned out that the lady's son had an old Isetta in their garden which was not running anymore, and she asked my wife if we would want it for spare parts. My wife said yes, and we towed the little blue car, another Brighton-built RHD, home. Photos of the two cars taken in 1972 are shown below including one with 30-year old me standing by.

Another instance showed the kindness of the folk in Liverpool. I was driving through the busy city traffic during rush hour, when my arm unknowingly moved the fuel-turn-off lever to the "off-position." As the engine sputtered and stopped, I coasted to the curb, which happened to be at a long stretch of multiple bus stops. The crowd of a dozen or more people waiting for arriving buses quickly formed a human wall around me and my car as I jumped out to remove the engine cover - thinking that the spark plug wire had come adrift, which happened frequently. When I got the cover off and saw that everything was OK with the ignition wire, I then realized what I had done. Embarrassed, I put the engine cover back on, stood up and thanked everyone for their protective efforts. I said the car would be fine now. Getting back in the car, I carefully nudged the fuel cutoff lever back into the "on-position," started the engine and drove off "triumphantly," though still embarrassed.



When it came time to move back to the US in 1973, we decided to sell the Isettas (one still running quite well, and the other as a donor car); a decision I have regretted for 50 years.

Regards,  
Russel Hertzog  
1001 Shinnecock Hills Drive  
Georgetown, Texas 78628

Dear Ian,

First of all, please forgive my poor English.

Reading the last issue of our Gazette, I felt sad to that nobody had a text suggested for insertion.

Five years ago, I had the opportunity, in the store of a French broker of old cars, to look at what became my First Lady. How did she arrive in France, when, why, I strictly do not know? Still with a UK registration, with a charming name:



Since then, we have a French registration and she is located on my island named Île de Ré. During an average six month spent there in spring and summer, my lady is running almost every day. Driving around the small harbour of Saint Martin de Ré is a pleasure not only for me but also for those who remember their youth and look at it with a large smile.

If this is of some interest, I give you two links for videos. The first one was shot by a local admirer, the second one by the marketing team of our regional BMW dealer.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GKzOPx3ujQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DCQQ1tAwNwo>

But I would also ask you to make me understand some points about the history of Isetta in the UK.

To my knowledge, Iso Rivolta sold the license and / or the associated patents to BMW and some others including Velam in France.

But mine was manufactured in the UK and wears a BMW logo.

Does that mean BMW created a manufacturing unit in Bristol?

Or was this factory created and handled by UK people?

If such, did they benefit a sub-license granted by BMW?

Rather than by Iso Rivolta.

And who were these clever people launching the Isetta concept in the UK?



Another point questions me:

Were all Isetta's manufactured in the UK as three-wheelers?

What is the reason leading to this change from a four-wheeler into a three-wheeler?

Is it for local regulations?

Or for a driving license point of view?

Or tax reasons?

I would be pleased to understand much about these two points.

Kind regards.

François Gravereaux

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