

ISETTA



AUTUMN EDITION....2024

The Isetta Owners Club of Great Britain Ltd.

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Editors Bit

Another rally year is coming to an end, just 2 more rallies to go for me. I guess that's the same for most of you. Time now for you to put pen to paper and tell the rest of us about your experiences for the past season. For those of you still restoring or repairing your cars let us know how you have been getting on.

You will see inside the AGM is coming up in October, it would be nice if more of you turned up to see how the club is doing. Again it is being held just outside Leicester as close to the middle of the UK as possible for all to reach.

I must remind you of the 70th Anniversary Rally of the Isetta we are arranging next July at Mallory Park racing circuit again in the middle of the UK. The event will be free to enter for the weekend for all paid up members. We will be enjoying a weekend of the Mallory Motorcycle Racing Bonanza, one of the biggest events of the year and we will be parading our cars around the track 4 times during the event for the spectators to see (there will be no racing for us I hope). Don't miss this special Isetta event put it in your diaries.



Ian Parris

Chairman's Chat

Well, it's that time of year again. The Annual General Meeting is upon us. See elsewhere in this Gazette for its location, date and time. So, I will make my usual plea for members to come along and join the committee as none of the current committee are getting any younger and we are conscious that the Club needs to keep going well into the future to preserve the cars that we have nurtured for many years.

The classic car show at the NEC is imminent as well, why not show your car there? Again details are elsewhere in this Gazette. Please contact Dave Watson if you are interested in this event.

The latest news on my car is that I have to report no progress as I have had no time.

Jeff Todd

GOT THERE EVENTUALLY!

Many years ago – well, late 2019 actually – I wrote an article for this magazine about starting a long-term restoration project, having previously bought an Isetta in 1967, for the then only-just-affordable sum of £65.

I said the project would “take as long as it takes” and that I was “(fairly) sure I’ll be able to get the show back on the road, with the help of the Owners’ Club experts” – but little did I (or they) realise what a saga it would turn into....

Having built three kit-cars and restored two motorbikes at one time or another, I thought that – with help – I should be equal to the job of getting an Isetta back on the road.

I bought my project from a bloke who wanted to do the same as me, and had ended up with two supposedly complete Isettias from Ebay, sold by someone who had done a bit of work on both and didn’t want to separate them. Mine was in bits, so the body was stuck out the front of the house under a tarpaulin while I began on the chassis and engine.

I made early contact with Mike Ayriss, the Club’s Technical Advisor, and with his advice and John Jensen’s manual, made good progress to begin with. This ground to a halt when I (and my knowledgeable mate Roger) discovered by chance that while a new piston had been fitted, it was in the wrong way round! We soon sorted that but should have taken it as a warning that all was not necessarily as it seemed.

Minor problems arose and were solved and the outlay mounted steadily – I’d promised my esteemed partner that the whole thing definitely wouldn’t cost more than the completed car was worth – and I can see you shaking your head! I’ve always admitted I’m not really a mechanic, but I can follow instructions and work (some) things out for myself if necessary. And fortunately for me, my mate is one of those people who just love playing with old cars!

Eventually, it all started to come together, the wiring loom was in and the body went off for a professional respray, for a slightly alarming number of pounds. It did look pretty good when it came back, but that was the point when things started to go seriously wrong....

By early 2021, the car was fully assembled, battery installed and petrol in the tank. And it started! But although it would tick over OK, it wouldn’t run smoothly and usually stalled when I put my foot down. Must be the carb, we thought, and fiddled endlessly with cables and settings, to no avail. Though on the upside, my frequent test trips round the block got lots of interest from the neighbours and everyone wanted a ride when it was up and running properly!

Borrowing a different carb didn’t solve the problem and nobody was clear what to do next. I have to admit, I did get thoroughly fed up with the whole thing and shut the garage door on it several times. Success seemed so close, yet so far away and I even questioned whether it would ever be sorted, or if I’d have to sell it on at a loss for someone else to finish.

In the end, the solution came from Mike Ayriss, who told me he had a complete engine, which had been running recently and was definitely all right. I certainly hadn’t budgeted for that, but felt there was no other way forward, so agreed a part-exchange for my engine. Fitting it would be quite straightforward, he said – the original engine was already on the chassis when I bought it – and shouldn’t take more than an hour or so. Mmm, I thought, maybe it wouldn’t take you more than an hour, but I don’t know about me....

And it definitely did take longer, as I had no intention of dismantling the car again to put it in, so we had to manoeuvre it on to the gearbox without being able to see what we were doing. In the end, it just came together and we wondered why it hadn't before – oh, the delights of restorations!

Needless to say, this didn't solve the problem in one fell swoop. We fitted the dynastart that came with the new engine but guess what? – the wires were different colours from the wiring diagram and there was an extra wire that didn't seem to fit anywhere. We guessed which wire went where, but we guessed wrong and burned out sections of my lovely new loom – aagh! Fortunately, this didn't mean the whole thing needed replacing, just the wires that had burned out, so that was done and we put back my original dynastart with the correct wiring.

Since then, there's been lots of tweaking, not to mention the horn suddenly sounding when I turned on the ignition. But so close to completion, that just spurred me on and now – ta ra! – I've got a fully functioning 1961 Isetta which, to quote the handwritten comment at the end of the DVLA letter confirming my new registration, is "beyond cool"!

In the last few weeks, I've been gradually going further and further from home, with no new issues (so far), apart from having to remember how to double-declutch and then actually doing it every time I change down. Several neighbours have already claimed their ride and more are queuing up, though my daughter is horrified at the lack of seatbelts – I told her we'd only be going slowly and everybody would notice we were there, but to no avail!

It has been suggested that perhaps I shouldn't have started on the project in the first place, as I wasn't a mechanical expert and had to learn lots of things from scratch as well as relearning things I'd forgotten years ago. But if you had to be an expert to start a restoration, it wouldn't be long before Isettas just faded into history, which we can all agree would be a real shame.



I've certainly needed a lot of help, but I did learn on the job and I think it was bad luck that the work I was assured had already been done on the engine was done badly. Sometimes, I've found, what's needed is not just knowing what to do, but also how to do it – that isn't always obvious or properly explained in manuals or elsewhere! And having a three-wheel right-hand drive Isetta was a distinct disadvantage, when all the guidance (John Jensen, etc) is for a four-wheel left-hand drive model.

Anyway, the project is now finished and though I'm sure there will be more problems lurking round the corner, I'm looking forward to enjoying the Summer. And finally, I want to thank (again) the two people whose help made the restoration possible: Mike Ayriss and my mate Roger. I literally couldn't have done it without you and you'll always be welcome to come for a ride!

Mike Scott

My Story by Ronnie Legge

When I was 15 and had just started my motor mechanic apprenticeship, I dreamed of my upcoming 16th birthday and being able to be let loose on the road, I'm sure most of you felt the same.

Now just up the road from my home was the start of a new housing estate. The two houses nearest the road were already built and just beyond them at the start of the building site. Parked in this mucky place at the side of the building site track was a yellow Isetta.

Every morning on the bus to work I gazed upon this little car. Thought about it during the day, then gazed upon it again on the way home. I then found out that tricycles could be driven by a 16-year-old, so I thought, I'm just going to have to find out who owns that Isetta.

After a bit of searching, I found the owner, a deal was done. I bought the Isetta for £ 22.

Now I know you're thinking "that is cheap" and it was, but my wage was £3:17s:6p a week. So, as you can see, to me, quite a lot of money.

Much borrowing was done to scrape the money together.

Over the next few months, the car was got ready for the road by this very inexperienced apprentice. On my 16th birthday "L" plates fitted. Me and my dad were out on my very first trip, the little car did very well for several months, but rear suspension problems and an offer of profit caused me and my Isetta to part company, straight away I knew I shouldn't have sold it, but other things took my attention, scooters, motorbikes, girls, ah yes, girls.

Anyway, time went along, and at the age of I think 25 or 26 the Isetta thing came back into my mind and I eventually found one in Littleborough.

It was a bit rough. No, it was a lot rough bodily but much had been done to the chassis etc. kingpins, brakes and lots of other stuff but the body wasn't good at all. Oh, forgot to say, it had been on fire too. And it was all in bits spread out on the floor, or in boxes, I put it roughly together and took this picture.

At this point, I was fully qualified, and had been in business in my car repair shop for a couple of years. (I retired from that same business two-and-a-bit years ago having been there for 44 years), back to the Isetta. This one cost £100.

Over the next few months, I put it together and got it going, did quite a bit, well, quite a lot of welding and resprayed it. It was done to a reasonably presentable standard, the way you would do a car that cost a hundred quid.

We went all over the place in it. We live in Rossendale Lancs, which is about 20 miles north of Manchester.

One time I drove it to the national microcar meet at Weston Park, near Telford which is a loooong loooong way in an Isetta, so, you ask, where is this story is leading.

During this time, I came upon this vision of loveliness, my now long-suffering wife Karen. After some considerable time, convincing her how lucky she was. We decided to get married, the dear old Isetta was our wedding car. The wedding was a simple affair, just 7 of us.

Afterwards we reversed the Isetta into the local town park next to the flower beds in order to take a few wedding pics.

Very shortly after positioning, we got accosted by the park keeper and told to get out. But we got our pics. Just the seven of us and our dog Pippin.

The Isetta was still going well when we went to a show at Singleton near Blackpool. Us two and son who at that time was at that time 10 years old. On the way home the engine literally exploded, the cylinder cracked around the base and blew the top half into the parcel shelf, it was quite a challenging end to that day, walk several miles, tow the car home.

The car got repaired but afterwards the car wasn't used much. This was 1991, then it stood, and stood, and stood, initially in the workshop at work, then in my garage at home.



You know when you have a thought in your mind that goes on for years, mine was "When I retire, I'm going to restore the Isetta", well, last November our son Oliver said that he and his partner Lisa were going to get married, this was the kick up the backside that I needed, so, the restoration began. Body off, new floor, all around the sides where the floor mounts, wheel arches, repair inner arches, repair lower sill areas, rear corners, rear seams, bits of roof gutters and roof, then the door. Then have the body shell blasted and primed which caused quite a lot of distortion.

Much beating was required then spraying and rebuilding. I'm sure many of you have gone through a similar process.

At the end, after last minute problem (thanks Lee, Mike and Ray) it was all sorted, and the Isetta made it to the ball, just like Cinderella.

The car wasn't quite finished, but drove around at the venue and looked okay on photographs.

The main photos I wanted to show you was our wedding picture with the car and the kids.



Also, the same people Karen and I with son Oliver and daughter Victoria with the car 34 years later.

Sadly, poor old Pippin long deceased

Then our Son and Daughter in Law with their son Arry at their wedding with the rest of us.



I haven't spelt Arry's name wrongly. When his dad Oliver was a little lad, I always called him Arry (actually still do) I thought it annoyed him. Then he called his son Arry, so it's Big Arry and Little Arry now.

There a funny lot, I bet you're thinking, happy though.

Ronnie Legge

Things to do before you go!

Some of you may be well organised and have planned every detail of what will happen to all the items that mean so much to you, after you have gone, which may include items associated with your interest in microcars. I am sure that you wish to do something positive, altruistic, and worthwhile with your possessions, which have been carefully collected over many years and have significance to you. However, having spoken to some widows, their husband's/partner's plans often did not include their lifelong interests, and what they should do with all the books, files of documents, photographs, and magazines, they had accumulated over the years. Many widows/widowers may either keep everything as it was in the office, loft, or garage, in their memory. Others, including Executors, may well take a different path. Some will put aside anything that has an obvious value, like a vehicle, an item of furniture, or property, and having valued it, either offer it to a member of the family as an heirloom, or sell it off at auction, within the timescale dictated by Probate, and dispose of the rest. Others may well for quickness, and because they are unaware of the importance of the material, decide to recycle all paper items, rather than spend time looking for a suitable new recipient. Many is the time that I have heard too late that a collection has been sent to landfill. Once it has gone it will never return. or all microcar related books, magazines, brochures, photographs, both paper and digital, video recordings and other documents, there is another option. According to UK Inheritance Tax rules anything that is gifted or donated to a charity, is exempt from Inheritance Tax. Anything that can be gifted to a charity will inevitably reduce the size of the Inheritance Tax bill. The Archive of Microcars is a charity, and we welcome gifts of microcar related books, documents, and photographs, regardless of the make of the vehicle, language, or origin of the material. Our aim will be to incorporate as much of all gifts into the Archive of Microcars, and that which we are unable to keep we will find a new home for. The intention will be to preserve as much as possible of our microcar history. I feel sure that you would rather see your archive preserved, or at least passed onto somebody who appreciates the trouble you have taken to collect it. The practical application will require presumably you, a family member, or a solicitor, to add a document to your Will, instructing the Executor to donate, sell, or dispose of whatever you have in the way of microcar related items. If you want anything to be gifted to the Archive of Microcars, we can be found on the Internet, or contacted by email. For the foreseeable future, email chris@rumcars.org or malcolm.parker@rumcar.org. We can then assess the material content and agree on a plan to help you. I do realise that none of us knows when the day to say goodbye will come, so you may well outlive me, but with your help the Archive of Microcars will live on for many years to come and preserve the history of microcars.

Chris Thomas

The Archive of Microcars

FOR SALE

1960 Isetta 300



Extensive restoration carried out in 2015/16 (Photos to show) Comes in a lovely dark maroon There is an A frame with attachments for towing A luggage rack with baskets is fitted Original buff logbook , original handbook and Isetta maintenance manual as well as a detailed Isetta Owners Club instruction book on how to care for the cars.

The car retains its original registration number. Loads of history and bills.

£19,995

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Restored. Original engine/gearbox & colour. Only 38,000 mls. with original reg. no. All it's history inc. copies from DVLA of old log books. It has a current mot , workshop man. All old mots , handbook, runs well and is in vgc.

Only £19,995. ovno. Contact Keith on 07941508749.



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The AGM of The Isetta Owners Club of Great Britain

Will be held on 13th October at 2pm at Beedles Lake Golf Club, 170 Broome Lane, Goscote, Leicester. LE7 3WQ

All members are welcome to attend.

The Club is pleased to welcome:-

Andrew Smith	Surrey	Grace Bleakley	Poole
Kneale Metcalf	Norwich	John Sole	Royston
Doug Watkins	Sandown	Jane Yearley	Havant
Mark Brown	New Zealand	Myles Schofield	Huddersfield
Marcel Cameron	Australia	Hugo Prat	France
Trevor Walters	Bristol	Kurt Saxby	Nottingham
Emilio Belmonte	Canada	Clare Laverick	Somerset
Sean Jose	Truro	Malc Perry	Nottingham
John Boon	Kettering	Peter Dietsch	Surrey
		David Hebblethwaite	Cheshire

New Members since the last Gazette

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

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New Drums For Old by Julian Foster

I was happy to change my brake drums recently for new ones from Moto-Klassik in Germany (<https://www.isetta-shop.de/en/>). Braking with my old drums was associated with a noise and roughness from bad wear - you can see the old braking surface on the inside of the drum in one of the photos, contrasted with the new one. The process was reasonably simple:



1. Chock the rear wheels, jack up the front of the car and put on axle stands.
2. Forget you haven't loosened the wheel nuts and they're too tight to undo now the front wheels are off the ground.
3. Let the car down.
4. Loosen the wheel nuts.
5. Get the car back up on stands again.
6. Take off the wheels and old brake drums.
7. Take off the shoes and use special brake grease to re-lubricate the contact surfaces of the shoe with the adjusting screw at one end and the brake cylinder piston at the other end.
8. Loosen off the brake shoe adjusting screw.
9. Put the new drums on.
10. Seat the shoes within the drum by applying the brakes as hard as you reasonably can by pushing on the brake pedal with your hand.
11. Adjust the shoes with the adjusting screw to just the right spot.
12. Put the wheels back on and tighten up the wheel nuts.
13. Let the car down, further tighten up the wheel nuts and go for a very tentative, very short drive to make sure she still stops when you apply the brake (logic says she should but have you done everything right??).
14. Jack the car up again and make a final adjustment of the shoes.
15. Go for a very pleasurable drive and enjoy smooth and silent braking.

Yay!

Braking is now a pleasure - pulling up nice and square and with no horrible noises!

Thanks, as always, to the committee members and spares service for all the hard work you all put in for us.

Julian Foster

National Microcar Rally 2024

The 49th National Microcar Rally was held right next to the Hampton Loade Severn Valley Railway Station, so steam locomotives came and went all weekend, adding a 1960's feel to the Unicorn Inn Rally Site, which this year was organised by the Bond Owners Club who are celebrating 75years of the mini car.

We set up camp, in the corner, next to the Chain Foot Ferry crossing, which, unfortunately is no longer in operation and the Isetta was unloaded, from our specialised Trailer which turns into a Caravan, we were then ready for the weekend, with the first drive out on the following day.

The Friday run out Start Time was 10am and, with a cloud of Blue Two Stroke smoke Bond Mini cars led the way, followed by Heinkel / Trojans, Isetta, Scootacar, Bond Bugs, Fiat 126 Bis, Berkeley, Messerschmitt, Fiat Gamine, and Goggomobil etc. to our first stop at Cleobury Mortimer where we had a welcome comfort break and Coffee stop. Our next stop was Bewdley Brewery, for a Factory Tour, in the art of Beer making, before our final destination for the day at Kidderminster Seven Vally Railway Station, making the road run 30 miles, twice the distance of the Train journey from Hampton Loade.

Heading back, on a much shorter route, our Isetta had clocked up 48 trouble-free miles, but, Keith and Alison's Bubble Window Isetta had a small issue easily sorted by resetting the Contact Breakers back to 16 thou that unleashed the full 13bhp once again.

The Unicorn Inn served good Food, excellent Beer, and great company so, the evening was well spent catching up with other Bubble Car Owners including Ian Danaford who had travelled all the way from the Isle of Wight, in his AC Petite, a drive of some 200 miles, but, not without some issues including running out of Fuel, due to a small leak from the Carburetors Steel Float Bowl, that had rusted through just enough to lose fuel, but, easily repaired with a 5mm patch of JB Weld.



Saturday and the Tony Marshall Road Run was to the Black Country Museum, for a full day in this large Open Air Museum with its' 1950's Town, Canal Wharf, Coal mine, Trolley Bus System, and, more importantly Coal-fired Fish and Chip Shop which judging by the queue was very popular. Not wanting to leave the Museum, really, but all good things must come to an end, several Cars set off. in small numbers. back to Hampton Loade, and what a day out and in bright sunshine all day. Sunday is the day we don't drive our Cars, but park them on the "Rally Field" usually by Make and this year it was no

exception. The NMCR has awards for Best in Show, Jean Hammond Award, Concours de

“Grot” and of course by Make. Five Isetta and one BMW 600 made the line up, this year, a far cry from the 40 plus, in previous years, and where have they all gone, I ask?



In the Isetta Class a very nice restored Orange and Cream RHD 3-wheeled car, owned by Philip Durow, took a First place, Helen Ayriss and my Green RHD 4-wheeled Car came in Second and Dave Watson, completely un-restored, Yellow LHD 3-wheeled Car in “as found condition” taking Third place.

So, there it is, another Rally over, with the 50th National Microcar Rally next year, to look forward to but, who is going to run it and where will the location be, but, more importantly will your Car be ready for this Special Event, we hope so, see you there?

Mike and Helen Ayriss
Sept 2024

East Anglian Micro Car Club Weekend

This Rally was held, over the weekend of Friday June 7th, for a 3-day event, close to Caister-on -Sea, on England's East Coast.



Our Friday run out was to Horning Village and a trip on the “Southern Comfort” Paddle Steamer, which gently took us into the Norfolk Broads, with relaxing views and Sunshine, all the way there and back, but not before we had great views of a Kingfisher flying, and then perching, at Water Level, lots of Mallard and Great-Crested Grebe with young, also a few Marsh Harrier flying, majestically, in the Sky.



Our Isetta ran perfectly, during the 40-mile round trip, but some cars did have issues, with a Bond Twin, deciding that it did not want to Start, and a Fiat 126 Bis experiencing, the not uncommon, Fuel Pump problems.

Saturday was a longish, all day, drive out, with Tony Pettingill, in his white Bond Mini Car leading the way to the Armingdale Car Show and Autojumble, near Norwich, our first stop of the day, but just for a couple of hours, which was time enough to check out what Isetta Spare Parts

they may have been, but alas, none today.

We headed off next to Rosy Lees Tea Room, at Lodden, which again was on the Broads, where we filled this small Café to the brim, but as the rain had stopped, and the Sun had come out, Garden Seating became, available for those who didn't bring a Flask and Sandwiches. Lunch over we drove to a small Private Car Collection, which included One RHD Isetta and, just as important to me, a Nobel



200, and because I run the Nobel Register, I checked to see if it is a known Car or not.

The day was disappearing now and what else but Fish and Chips at the Seaside, to finish the day off, and Gorleston, with its Edwardian Beach and Traditional Gardens, was the place for us and, as the Sun started to dip, so did the Temperature, we all headed back to the Campsite but, not before driving the full length of



Great Yarmouth Sea Front, to the smiles and waves from the Holiday Makers who excitedly filled the Pavements. The days' trip was not as far as it sounds, around 60 miles, and with only the Bond Twin returning to the Camp Site, at the Start of the day, a good time was had by all.

Sunday Lunch, at the Lacon Arms, was only 4 miles from Camp but, taking the longer Scenic Route added to the experience of what was a super Weekend, run by Tony Pettingill, in his Bond Minicar, along with his daughter Katie, who buzzed around in her Messerschmitt KR 200, ensuring we didn't get lost. How many Isetta at the meeting? Proudly but disappointingly just the One!

Mike and Helen Ayriss
Sept 2024

Mike and Helen Ayriss
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Isetta World

The IoC's Forum on Facebook

[Facebook.com/groups/267159327250111](https://www.facebook.com/groups/267159327250111)



With the now-common vogue for “A”-framing an Isetta (or other small car) behind a Motor Home, Ray Glendinning has researched the current legislation concerning such practices and has compiled his findings – he writes ...

At the time of writing (March 2024) the following was correct. A bit of a long read but worth it to those who indulge in “behind the camper” activity.

Trailers, i.e. the A frame and the micro car combined, and having a maximum laden weight not exceeding 750kg are not required to have brakes fitted. An Isetta plus A-frame is probably about 400kg.

However, if the trailer regardless of mass is fitted with a braking system, then all brakes in that system must operate correctly and efficiently. This means that the braking systems of small ‘microcars’ (under 750kg in weight) must still operate, even when the vehicle is being towed, unless the vehicle is broken down.

The law when towing a traditional trailer is reasonably clear whether in the UK or Europe. But to tow a car behind a motorhome on an A-frame and the situation is not so clear.

There has been some debate around Directive 71/320/EEC and UNECE Regulation 13 concerning braking system type-approval, however this only relates to new vehicles. Motor vehicles and trailers are within the scope of these technical regulations but A-frame devices are not.

The Department for transport (DfT) states – There is no harmonised EU legislation concerning the type-approval of A-frames and they cannot be considered as vehicles in the context of the legislation as they merely form a link between two vehicles. However, for many years the DfT was clear that the use of devices such as A-frames, spectacle lifts and dollies were intended only for the purposes of recovery of broken down vehicles.

The current DfT information sheet on this subject states: “ We believe the A-frame and car become a single unit and as such are classified in legislation as a trailer. It is our understanding that the use of A-frames to tow cars behind other vehicles is legal (in the UK) provided the braking and lighting requirements are met.”

However, on the Continent most countries still see it as a recovery tool and the DfT believes the Vienna Convention 1968 on Road Traffic cannot be used as a defence in disputes because the A-frame would not have been foreseen at the time of the Convention.

Therefore you are strongly advised to abide by the local laws for each country you travel through. In practice this means putting the car on a trailer.



A number of Club members towing with A- frames on the continent have been stopped by local police. In several cases in Spain, police officers have insisted on the decoupling of the A-frame and separate travelling, so be prepared for your partner or ted.

Lighting is one issue that can be largely resolved by a connection to the towing vehicle's electrics so all the Isetta's normal road lights function correctly. The regulations require a trailer to display two red triangular reflectors – which are often overlooked – and also to display the number plate of the towing vehicle.

Braking requirements are not so easy to comply with as many A-frame systems use a relatively simple overrun (also known as inertia) braking system, as used on caravans, to operate the car's brakes. However, the DfT comments : “ If the trailer braking system has power assistance it is likely that this assistance will be required while in motion to meet the required braking efficiencies.”

There are also concerns about the ability to reverse a car on an A-frame when using an inertia braking system. Traditional braked trailers can be reversed without problem because they have auto-reversing systems in the wheel hubs that cause the brakes to collapse when rearward motion is instigated. Cars do not have such systems. The DfT information sheet states: ” From 1 October 1988 the inertia braking system was required to allow the trailer to be reversed by the towing vehicle without imposing a sustained drag and such devices used for this purpose must engage and

disengage automatically.” This will be very difficult to achieve on an A- frame using an inertia (overrun) device.

Some inertia-braked A-frame suppliers claim testing has proved their system meets the necessary braking force regulations and argue that cars on inertia-braked A-frames can be reversed without the need to manually operate any mechanism. One supplier says: ” It takes a little skill, but with care, gentle reversing can be successfully achieved.”

In the past few years some A-frame suppliers have implemented designs to operate the car’s braking systems, including the power assistance system using electrical power from the towing motorhome. Suppliers claim these electrical systems provide the required braking efficiency and allow trouble-free reversing as the car’s braking operation depends on the motorhome’s brakes.



To avoid all the above technical problems relating to braking requirements, some campers have argued the braking requirements for A-frame towing of cars can be avoided by using a lightweight micro car where the GVW does not exceed 750kg. The argument goes that with a GVW (including A-frame) of less than 750kg, the unit can be considered as an un-braked trailer. However, if a braking system is fitted (as all Microcars do) then the regulations require all the brakes to operate correctly .

While the DfT has set out its interpretation of the regulations, it has declared it is unable to give an authoritative interpretation of the law as this is a matter for the courts to decide. As far as we are aware, no one has yet been taken court in the UK for towing a car using a braked A-frame. As there is no mandatory testing regime in place, it is down to individual manufacturers to ensure their products meet the statutory requirements. If you decide to purchase and/or use an A-frame it would be wise to seek written assurance from your supplier that it complies with the regulations as laid out by the DfT.

If you do go down the A-frame route, check that your car can be towed. Some cars, especially automatics, can have their transmission system damaged by being towed. Also inform your insurance company for both the car and your motorhome and check it is happy with the arrangements,

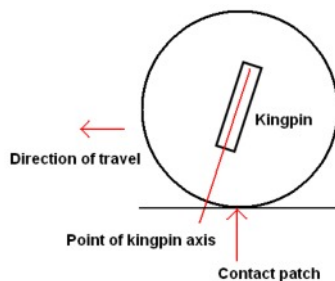
especially if you intend to use the outfit outside the UK. And remember, reversing with a small towed trailer is notoriously difficult, especially when it is out of sight behind a Campervan. Using a rear view camera can be helpful. Such cameras are now available as an aftermarket accessory.

Note that - I have towed my Isetta in the UK on a home made unbraked "A"-frame with a lighting board attached to the rear of the Isetta with no means of making the brakes of the Isetta work when I slow down and I have never been stopped, (just saying).

Thank you to Raymond for this thorough review of the towing regulations applicable to "A"-frame users in UK and the Continental mainland.

My own experiences go back to the 1970's when I used a commercially produced universally adjustable "A"-frame, sold at that time as a "Recovery Frame", which prompted me to make my own in the mid-1980s to trail my Isetta behind my everyday car. Like Ray, my experiences were free of complications, apart from explaining ad infinitum why the contraption was NOT linked to the Isetta's steering.

The one aspect where I would take issue with today's "A"-frame manufacturers is that of reversing. The reason that vehicles on "A"-frames do not require a connection to their steering systems is because of the "Castor Action" which is a feature of all vehicles and is due to their king-pin inclination (measured in degrees from vertical) . It is this Castor Action which keeps a vehicle travelling straight forward when you momentarily let go of the steering wheel BUT, unlike a supermarket trolley which has a swivel mounting to each wheel, a vehicle's king-pin inclination is fixed and therefore eliminates Castor Action when being reversed. So when an "A"-frame manufacturer claims "It takes a little skill, but with care, gentle reversing can be successfully achieved." My belief is that they are optimistically misguiding the user.



When point of kingpin axis is ahead of contact patch, the vehicle will travel forward without steering input
Drawing by Terry Parkin April 2024 E. & O.E.

Ray Glendinning and Terry Parkin
Isetta World – the Isetta Owners Club's home on Facebook
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