

ISETTA GAZETTE



SPRING EDITION.....2022



MAGAZINE OF THE ISETTA OWNERS CLUB OF GREAT BRITAIN

The Isetta Owners Club of Great Britain Ltd.

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Editors Bit

A new year has started for us to think about the rally season and getting our cars out and about. Compared to many other clubs we seem to lack enthusiasm when it comes to showing our cars off. Considering the amount of spares we are selling there must be loads of cars being fit for the road.

When it comes to rally attendance we seem to lack behind marques with many fewer cars and members.

For my own part I am still struggling to get my 600 running properly, the fuelling seems to be the problem and the strange Zenith carburettor seems to be the root cause. I gave the carburettor to a specialist who has worked on carburettors for years and he hadn't seen one of these before. He was able to restore it but to no avail. I am considering consigning the carburettor to the scrap heap and using an SU carburettor which gave good results to many 60's cars and apparently has worked well on at least one 600.

Anyway, enough from me, let's hear more of your tales of woe.



Ian Parris

Chairman's Chat

Whilst the officers and committee of the Club are continuing to do a fantastic job, we need to consider the future of our Club. We need some new blood in the management of the Club so that the cars we love go on forever. Surely every owner of an Isetta has someone in their family who appreciates the car and someone that the current owner may bequeath it to in their will. I'm sorry to be the harbinger of doom but we must ensure that the Club continues to ensure the future for our cars.

I accept that post war austerity and the Suez crisis brought about fuel shortages and the development of our type of cars but who knows what the current world situation might bring about. I also appreciate that current generations appreciate different types of cars but that doesn't mean that our cars need to be forgotten. So please could we have some new, additional members, nominated to serve as Club management and ensure the future of the Club and the longevity of the cars we know and love. I'm sure we will find additional committee roles if required.

Jeff Todd

At the beginning of August, my Isetta, plus three others, travelled in convoy to Glossop, from West Yorkshire.

Nigel Owens had planned the event, and the three other cars met at his house for coffee and biscuits before setting off. Our route took us down towards Huddersfield, before vectoring off to head up the Holme Moss. That was a trip, I can tell you. Uphill, doing about 15mph in 2nd gear. As we got towards the top, we met the cloud coming down, and it was definitely headlights and wipers on for the moment. Then, as we passed the summit and started down again, we reached the heady speed of nearly 50mph. I think the old girl could have gone a bit faster, but those hairpin bends suggested otherwise! Especially as we sighted a Luton van, upside down in a field on one such bend. (And my Isetta was 60 years old on the 1st September 2021 – although the “old girl can hitch her skirts and run”, such behaviour is unbecoming these days).

Skirting around Glossop itself we drove past an alpaca farm, and it was hilarious to see their heads shoot up, ears forward, and mouths open as we pattered past. You certainly see the world in an Isetta.

Eventually we arrived at Manor Park, Glossop, and drove in in convoy. That too engaged the crowd at the entrance, and there were many a photo taken as we took up our place.



The event was the Glossop Classic Vehicle and Military show, run and organised by the Glossop Vehicle Enthusiasts Club. There were 400 cars on show, so the Isetta's represented 1% of the total on view. We had many a visitor over the day, reminiscing, remembering, asking questions, and photo opportunities in and with the cars. It was a very good day. I got the table set up, laid the table cloth on it, and the four of us had a good go at the grub on offer. I was particularly impressed with the alcohol-free red wine I'd brought with me.

About 4:30 the weather hinted that it might not remain good for much longer, and, as the pack up was clearly underway, we took the opportunity to load the cars up and decamp. Then, it was the drive past the alpacas again, and the long climb up the hill to the summit of Holme Moss where a final photo opportunity availed itself. I'm sure now that you are reading this in the depths of winter, the long summer days seem a while ago. Dark mornings, early nights, yucky weather. Luckily, I've still got the 'Seaside Shiver' to write about. That's happening on the 28th December. Anyone fancy coming with me?

Richard Jones.

Hi Ian,

Thank you for your welcome to the IOC.



My Dad had a Spanish built ISO Isetta back in the late fifties in which he travelled with a friend all the way from Spain to Stuttgart. I remember him telling stories of frequent



stops to change plugs, cool down the engine and miscellaneous mishaps. He always spoke wonders about the BMW version and how much faster and reliable it was.

So here I am, more than sixty years later, buying a LHD 1957 BMW Isetta 250 in August 2021. The car was built in Ger-



many and restored in Madrid between 2019 and 2021 by a chronic microcar collector.

He bought the car in Germany and did a full nut and bolt, bare metal restoration to arguably better than new condition. The car is matching numbers.

This was his third Isetta restoration, having also restored a KR200 Messerschmitt, a Vespa 400 and several other microcars, plus a long list of Vespa, Lambretta and spanish bikes. He is currently finishing yet another KR200.



I've only had the car for a few months and I'm still getting used to it plus getting the courage to try to sort out a few niggles. For example, adjusting the gear linkage to avoid it jumping out of 2nd and 4th gear. Or investigating the new fuel valve which shuts off petrol flow in the reserve position.

I have a fully restored BMW R27 bike with a very similar engine.

I'm also somewhat careful in choosing routes around my home where I don't feel intimidated by some massive SUV on the school run ramming me from the back.

I also have a 1955 Jaguar MkVIIM which is itself massive and cocoons me in leather armchairs and wood trim that provide another level of perceived safety and comfort. But that is another story

I enclose a few photos of the "before" and "now" of the Isetta.



Best regards,
Jorge Edelmann

Body Beautiful.

Getting the body back from the panel spray company has really got the ball rolling and now sets the scene for the spring time restoration of my Isetta to get under way. Choosing to return the car back to its original colour of light green I believe has been a good choice, and one that I am very pleased with. So now the fun begins with what bit goes where and what should I start doing first.



Remember those days of getting your first Airfix model and diving straight in with assembling bits without really following the instructions, or destructions as I used to call them. Well that's where we are now. Sure enough, I have bought a couple of reference books and run a bit of research on the net, but there's nothing quite like getting stuck right in and working things out along the way. Ummmm! I hear you say. 'I bet these guys are going to hit a few rocks along the way". Well I guess that we will, but

with a bit of true grit and a lot of patience, I am confident that we will come out the other side. What has helped so far is being able to crawl all over a very fine example while I was at the Bromley Bubble Car Company when collecting a few restored parts including my beautifully restored gearbox. There's nothing like getting acquainted with the real thing to not only give you encouragement, but to certainly give answers to many questions as to how the end result should look like.

The biggest problem that I have had to deal with so far is the mysterious engine problem. This being the fact that when the crankcase was opened up we discovered that the engine had obviously sat in water for a prolonged amount of time, which had caused a severe degree of corrosion to the crankshaft and main bearings. I say mysterious simply down to the fact that the car had never been anywhere near water. By chance I checked the engine number on the logbook only to find that this did not correspond with the number stamped on the engine block. How could this be? It turns out that the only time that the car



was out for my watchful eye was when it was stored at a garage in Tunbridge wells awaiting work to be carried out. This was over fifteen years ago and the perpetrators of the alleged engine swap have long since moved on. How sad it is to know that there is a small amount of people amongst us that are prepared to carry out such criminal act. Meanwhile, David at the Bromley Bubbly Car Company is now well underway restoring the engine.

There are a few parts that we have yet to place our hands on, but are confident that all will be in place within the next few weeks. The main aim regarding this project is to have it up and running by the summer and to do a few drives up and down the high street of Wadhurst in full glory. Nice to know another of these amazing little cars is to be brought back to life. Upwards and onwards and we look forward to keeping you updated as to how this restoration progresses over the coming weeks. Bring on the springtime and brighter evenings.

Written by Nev Pooley on behalf of club member Chris Mannion.

Isetta Online Spares

It seems that some members are not aware of how the online spares system operates. Lee Turnham has been asked in the past if members can come and see the spares as if we have a retail shop or an industrial unit where people are paid to deal with orders. The reality is that Lee is a full time worker with differing shift patterns.

When he gets home from work he checks online to see what has been ordered and picks and packs them ready for posting. Although we make an initial flat rate charge for postage this only covers small orders, most of the time additional postage is required and Lee has to get this cost from the courier and then email the member requesting the additional postage. Only when he receives the additional postage will he send the order as he has been let down in the past chasing members. On average Lee processes more than 10 orders a week taking up most of his spare time.

Lee, like the rest of the committee, does all this work free of charge, none of us are paid we are all volunteers and it can be very frustrating when members tell Lee the order is urgent. I have told people a number of times, if you want your order this week, order it last week, he turns round orders extremely quickly.

If you do need to telephone Lee, please do not do it during the day as he will usually be working, call early evening or email him.

The Club is pleased to welcome:-

Robert Wainwright	Warwickshire	Chayanin Debhakam	Thailand
Chris Cook	Mablethorpe	Stefan Jordan	Kidderminster
Sarah Harding	Colchester	Eddie Biggs	Scotland
Kristian Shunev	Bulgaria	Terry Holmes	Bristol
Jason Stubbs	East Sussex	Brian McNally	Sevenoaks
Mark Abbs	Shipleigh Bridge	Ian Wells	Knebworth
Steve Isaacs	Dorset	Hector Orlandi	USA
Roger Harvey	Staffs	James King	Sale
Richard Green	Andover	Tom Whyte	Leicestershire
Jorge Edelmann	Spain		
Antony Hyde	Herefordshire	New Members since the last Gazette	

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An update for my isetta one year on. By Robert Newton

It is around one year ago that I wrote an article about my isetta ownership, purchased in the mid seventies, seeing much use in the eighties, then kept in storage until just over 18 months ago.

So it was time to get the isetta out of storage, something I had been promising myself since I retired from work several years earlier, however my other classic cars had got in the way.

So my first job was to free off the brakes and remove it from the garage.

Years of dust removed showed it still looked reasonably sound and after a check that the engine was free, the oil and petrol renewed it started surprisingly easy on a slave battery. The exhaust had long since rusted but a short run of the engine still sounded brilliant.

Decisions then had to be made on the best way forward.

Further inspection showed the body needed some welding, probably beyond my abilities, even though my welding was good enough for sills and floors the bodywork on the isetta was to be clearly visible.

So I needed to find a welder who I could trust to do a good job at a reasonable price, easy to say but probably not possible.

Eventually it was much simpler than expected as after several enquires my son in law recommended a friend of a friend who had set up on his own after working for a car restoration business.

So the engine and gearbox was removed, as I would be handling the mechanics and the fully stripped out body, including fuel tank removal was picked up.

At this point I was not sure how far the restoration was to go so the body was still attached to the chassis which would also help control any distortion without the chassis datum points.

Once the isetta was gone I started on the engine, initially to be a gasket change and check over, but after contacting Mike and Lee at the club on their advise a more comprehensive strip down was undertaken.

Timing chain, valves and breather valve replaced then the engine was test run.

The parts removed prior to the body taken away were cleaned and painted as required, which then left me unable to proceed any further.

Some months later, time filled with maintaining my other classics, plus occasional visits to check how the body work was going, revealed although more work was needed than initially thought the work completed was of a very high standard and at a fair price.

Several repair panels were supplied by the club spares but all other panels were made by Chris the welder.

Well the isetta is now back and initially, although I was not sure how to proceed, I have decided to remove the body to do a more comprehensive rebuild.

I can recommend the welder I used and his details can be viewed on his Facebook page 'Chris's fab shop', in fact he is currently working on another classic car of mine.

Also I must thank both Mike and Lee for such valuable advice and instructions during the valve timing of the engine.

So more work still to be completed, but no rush.

Isetta WORLD

BMW wasn't the only company to licence the Isetta from ISO of Italy – there were two others; Romi in Brazil and VELAM in France.

VELAM stood for “Véhiculer Léger à Moteur” (translated “light vehicle with motor”). It was a newly-formed company with dedicated production lines set up by Michel Cromback in Anthony Lago's old Talbot factory in Suresnes, in the western suburbs of Paris. However, due to a lack of available body tooling and dies at the time, VELAM elected to develop their own bodywork and various chassis components which became necessary as the design progressed.



Among the differences were the lack of a handle for the front-opening door; instead there was an inconspicuous button just in front of the right-hand headlamp. More noticeable inside the car was that the speedometer was in the centre of the steering wheel !

Production started in June 1955 and initially sales were brisk, - the work force of about 350 staff manufactured 20-22 cars per day and 4886 cars were built in the first year. However demand

The VELAM cars were actually quite different in their construction and detailed design from any of the other Isettias. In fact there were 34 listed differences... For this Cromback employed a team of engineers to design an all-new body-chassis unit, along with its tooling and the layout of its factory assembly plant. The front suspension was by rubber loops however, they bought the 236cc 2-stroke “Twingle” motors from ISO.



dropped to only 1005 for 1957. In response to this, Cromback hatched some plans. These included extending the range of cars offered with the base model continuing to be marketed as the VELAM Isetta.

One of the expanded range's introductions was the VELAM Décapotable Cabriolet - a convertible version of the Isetta. Like the Isettias from other sources, this design added a folding rear section in addition to the opening sunroof, while

the rest of the car remained the same as the “standard” car.

He also increased his factory’s expenditure , perhaps because of the Parisienne’s love of “chic”, by developing and building a completely new bodyshell which they launched as the Velam Ecrin. It was produced in addition to the standard “Bubble window” bodyshell of the other two models and marketed as a “Luxury GT” with sliding windows. “Ecrin” is the French word for “Jewel Box”.



Very few examples of the Ecrin survive, presumably because it did not sell well . The probable reason that Velam sales plummeted was



that, in the interests of reducing fuel consumption, VELAM fitted all versions with a different carburettor to the Italian car, which yielded an amazing 3.5 litres/100km (about 81mpg), Unfortunately, in addition to being 30kg heavier than the ISO car due to improved amenities like armrests, glove box, radio and trim; the Ecrin also got improved sound proofing that included a thicker sound-deadening coating to the underside of body plus two large air filters under a larger engine cover to reduce induction noise) , all of which took away what little performance the cars had. It was laughingly reported that “Chaque tour des roués est une victoire” (Every time the wheels make one turn is a victory).



Cromback even developed a simpler, sportier (?) version of the Velam with no front door and a canvas roof and sidescreens so passenger entrance was through cut-away step-in bodywork on both sides. This was designated VELAM Sport, and was considered for production but remained a one-off, perhaps because it was felt that the Cabriolet covered that market segment.

Cromback even had ideas to achieve a real “Victory” and taking advantage of the International Class K for cars with an engine capacity of less than 250cc, produced a car intended for Record Breaking. He hired a designer by the name of Bianchi to create the cigar-like body shape, earning it the nick-name of “Mini-Zeppelin” although it never had an “official ” name and various magazines called it Le Speciale, Le Corse, or the Aero. Using the same wheelbase and track as the stock Velam, Bianchi created a body made of aluminium plates riveted to a frame which was a mere 730mm (approx 29 inches) to the top of the headrest.



The only other major modifications to the basic Velam were gearing altered for the expected higher speeds, an enlarged fuel tank, a mechanical fuel pump to keep the carb fed on the 45 degree banking, and a special "doped" fuel mix raising output to 12 bhp.

The car was prepared at the beginning of 1957 and sent to the Monthéry banked race track with a team made up of Velam factory employees; the drivers Peslier and Bianchi were chosen not for race experience, but according to their minimal size and weight.



On 30 July 1957 the car won seven International class records, with a best lap of 118.55 km/h (approx 74 mph) and a further 11 records being taken between 30 September 1957 and 10 January 1958.

Proud of their achievements, Velam exhibited its record car at the Paris Motor Show in October 1957 and other International shows.

Sadly, though, the factory doors were closed when production ended in January 1958 with 7115 cars produced. The company could not survive - ... but the Record Breaker did ! The son of a Velam Director kept it in his garage until 2013 when it was sold to Michel Hommel's Museum at Loheac. A year later, in 2014, The Monthéry Autodrome held a Festival honouring "Speed Record cars" so the Velam was brought out of retirement, the motor was persuaded to start, and it returned to the scene of its successes.

Here Jean-Do consults with the driver about to return to lap the circuit. Sadly, it encountered ignition problems on it's 3rd lap.

It is now back in the museum where it can rest with honour until called again.

Terry Parkin

Isetta

www.facebook.com/groups/267159327250111/

World





Official Notification of Velam World Records 1957.

RECORDS INTERNATIONAUX CLASSE "K"
 =====

Battus le 30 Juillet 1957 sur l'autoдрome de Linas-Montlhéry(France)

Engagé : Jean BIANCHI
 Conducteurs : Jean BIANCHI
 Claude PESLIER
 Marque : ISETTA-VELAM

Alésage : 48 mm
 Course : 62 mm
 Nbre de cylindres : 1
 Cylindrée totale : 224 cm³

<u>Records</u>	<u>Départ</u>	<u>Temps ou distance</u>	<u>Vit.Moy.en Kms</u>	<u>Vit.Moy.en M.</u>
50 Kms	Arr.	27'53"44	107K.56	66M.83
50 Milles	"	44'46"53	107K.83	67M.00
100 Kms	"	55'37"23	107K.87	67M.03
100 Milles	"	1h29'55"21	107K.39	66M.73
200 Kms	"	1h50'04"15	109K.02	67M.74
200 Milles	"	2h52'56"48	111K.67	69M.39
1 heure	"	107K.877	107K.88	67M.03
3 heures	"	335K.535	111K.85	69M.50

. . .

2 4 H o u r s

30. 9. Jean Bianchi, Pierre Avenel, L.-Mont- 2 631.899 109.662
 René Berra, F, Isetta-Velam 16ry

*Du bist nicht mehr da, wo Du warst,
aber Du bist überall, wo wir sind.*
Victor Hugo

Störy, den 11. Januar 2022



Otto Künnecke

* 25. Mai 1946 † 11. Januar 2022

In Liebe und Dankbarkeit nehmen wir Abschied.

In stiller Trauer

Marianne Künnecke

**Christian und Nadine Künnecke
mit Marius und Sophie**

Carolin und Markus Schlange mit Lisa

Die Trauerfeier findet im engsten Familienkreis statt.

Anstatt freundlich zugedachter Kranz- und Blumenspenden bitten wir im Sinne des Verstorbenen um eine Spende zugunsten der Stiftung Deutsche Krebshilfe mit der IBAN: DE65 3705 0299 0000 9191 91 und dem Kennwort ‚Trauerfall Otto Künnecke‘.

Bestattungshaus roland ihme e. K., Bockenem

Sad news reached us recently when we learned of the passing of Otto Künnecke.

Otto was our host for many years at the Story Kleinwagen-treffen (International Microcar rallies) held at his farm in the village of Story, near Bockenem in Germany.

It was on that farm that Otto built his Kleinwagen Museum which was to become the World's largest Microcar Museum as his growing collection of exhibits expanded and he added extensions and upper

floors to accommodate the cars and memorabilia.

On the early Rallies the entrants camped in Otto's orchard, but as the Rallies grew in importance and attendance the orchard became too small so Otto cleared two fields opposite his museum and kept them grassy and mown specifically for the Rallies, which although held bi-annually became the Largest Microcar event in the World, supported and Marshalled by the Isetta Club of Germany.

I often said that Otto's International Rallies, which attracted visitors from as far as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Scandinavia and North- and South- America, did more good for International relations than any Politician ever did.

Highlights of Otto's events were free entry as many times as you wanted into the Museum, and the variety of vehicles, and the busy parts Mart , and the road runs to places of interest. The convoy of Microcars would stretch for over a kilometre and outriders held up the traffic at junctions to avoid the peleton becoming fragmented.

The many Isetta Owners Club Members and Committee Members who were privileged to attend Otto's Rallies will remember him as always enthusiastic, cheerful and swift to offer help, and many of the Brits who attended will remember his generous after-rally barbecues. He would set up trestles and benches in the Museum aisles where we would sit and enjoy the wine and food provided by Otto's wife Marianne, surrounded by Microcar history.

At one event, he was visited by journalists from the Japanese TV magazine "Car Classic" and the TWO resultant TV shows can be viewed at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fENCzOi5VKs&t=532s>.

He will be remembered fondly by all who knew him, especially for his bright "Hawaiian" shirts which he always wore. It was a shock to everyone at the end of the last Rally when Otto announced that it would be the final Story Kleinwagen-treffen, but recently his vast collection was transferred to the Museum at PS Speicher where it will be available for the public to marvel at.

Our sincere condolences go to Otto's family.



Let the Fun Begin

It was back at the beginning of this year that Chris, pictured below, asked if I would be interested in working on a full restoration on a Bubble car following a successful re-commissioning of a Vanden Plas Princess 4ltr that we had worked on a few months before. Having never stood next to an Isetta, let alone ever worked on one meant that it was going to be a hell of a challenge to say the least, but I was hooked at first site, not mention the fact that the car had been born in the same year as me, being 1960.

The first thing to do was to lay all the existing parts out on the floor to try and work out what we had, and more importantly, what was missing. Having no more than a repair manual and pictures from the net clearly proved that many parts were indeed absent. What was left was either too far gone to be repaired, or in desperate need of refurbishing. This was not going to be a case of a few weekends and a bit of slap and tickle, but rather a steep learning curve up a very tall mountain.

My first move was to join the Isetta club that not only gave me access to a good range of either new or second hand parts, but also allowed me the chance to speak to club members that have an incredible amount of technical knowledge and experience.

So lets call this stage one of many chapters to follow with the main body being sent off to be re-sprayed in its original green colour.

A few hours were spent painting the engine bay and underbody with an industrial metal finish paint. The running gear was also subject to a good cleaning down and painting with an anti rust paint. New brake master and slave cylinder rubbers were fitted together with brake shoes being cleaned and de-greased so that all was set for the body to be refitted prior to being transported to the body shop.

The seat has been refurbished with a club supplied seat cover and many other parts have now been



purchased from the club and David at The Bromley Bubble Company. Sadly the engine has suffered long term water ingress damage of which has yet to be resolved, but is already under way with it being repaired and restored.

The stage is now set, and with having gathered a vast amount of knowledge from both members and David from Bromley Bubble we are all set to go. I hope to bring our progress to the club magazine as this project pans out and will undoubtedly be hitting the phone for more technical support, and more importantly for mental support as I can only imagine how this little car is going to want for a large amount of patience. Sadly, the club does not sell this much needed attribute.

Thank you to all that have given their support, knowledge and encouragement to date, and I look forward to keeping you posted to our progress over the forthcoming months. Watch this space!

Nev Pooley.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

National Microcar Rally 2022

The NMCR Administrators are delighted to announce that the 2022 NMCR will be organised by Ray Glendinning and will be based at Woodhouse Farm holiday park, Winksley, Ripon, HG4 3PG, <https://www.woodhousewinksley.com/> Tel 01765 658309

This new venue will offer us brilliant facilities including, a bar, restaurant, on site shop, exclusive use of club house on Friday and Saturday evening and dedicated camping and show area for our use only. The event will formally start on Thursday 1st September through until Show day on Sunday 4th. However early arrivals and later departures are welcomed.

Please be aware that this year bookings must be made direct with Woodhouse farm (who will automatically inform Ray) quoting 'National MicroCar Rally' in order to get our preferential rates. These will apply to early arrivals and late departures as well. Ray has secured a high number of pitches in a dedicated area for the NMCR and these will be held until 30th June. Thereafter any that are not booked will be offered to other customers. We urge you to book in advance as soon as possible as there is no guarantee of pitches being available if you just turn up in September. Please be aware that Woodhouse farm will require a £30 deposit to be paid when booking and the balance a week before the rally, details will be sent out as part of your confirmation and it's your responsibility to ensure this is paid on time.

Reduced NMCR costs are:

£12.00 per adult, per night

£1.50 per dog, per night

£5.00 for electric per night

£30.00 per night Camping Pods (minimum of 3 nights) sleeps 2 adults and 2 children

Sunday day visitors £3 per head (no need to prior book)

Children and awnings will be accepted at no extra charge

All those attending the NMCR do not have to vacate their camping pitch until the rally is over on the Sunday evening.

Rally entry fee £7 per unit to be paid to Ray on arrival.

All rally specific enquires to Ray who is currently working on the road runs and rally planning. Regular updates will be made on the NMCR website and on the NMCR Facebook page. Ray can be contacted at: bubblecarraly@gmail.com or via messenger at the NMCR FB page or Tel 01274 218455 mobile 07977 445694

Seven months to fix an indicator problem by John Broadbent

February 2021, I noticed an intermittent problem with my left turn indicator. Initial investigation pointed to a wiring issue behind the left hand side panel.

Now I am fully aware that out there in Isetta land there will be a number of double jointed, Ninja, origami, necromancers who can remove and refit the side panel in a heartbeat.

Not being one of these gifted people I gave in before I totally destroyed the panel.

Looking at all of the things going on behind the gear change panel I concluded that it was very likely I would need to get behind this panel in the future and I decided to make quick (or at least quicker) release panels.



In the building of the panels I did use the originals as templates but plumped for 4mm marine plywood for the new panels. So I do have a set of spare panels.

Isetta left the bottom edge of the panel flapping around I wanted the bottom edge of the panel to be securely located and so I fixed an aluminium "U" section to the floor, running between the back of the wheel arch and the bulkhead on both the left and right sides (See image 1).

This was painted body colour in my case pale blue.

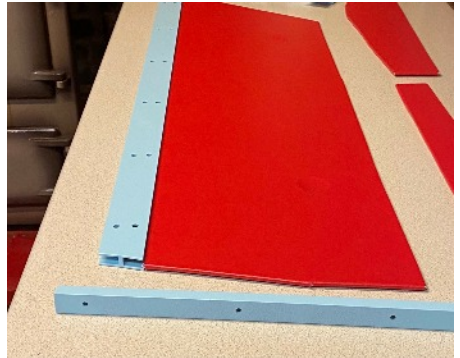
Now the technical bit, in order to make the panels easier to remove why not make them in sections, easier to handle and no need to fight one end against the other.

The next step was to select a split line, this selected line was just above the height of the wheel arches (see image 1).

The upper and lower halves are connected together by means of a "H" section aluminium

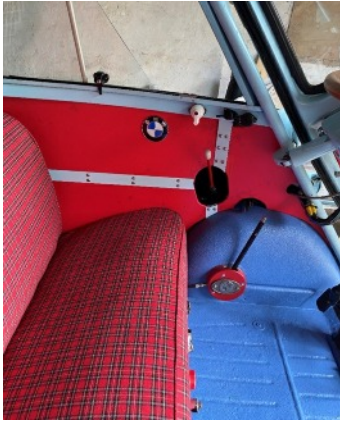
extrusion also ultimately painted in body colour blue (see image 2) it was important that the dimensions of the "H" section be small enough so that the upper panel when pushed hard upwards can clear the H and swing into the car to be removed.

When it came to my first quick release trial, on the passenger side panel (no gear stick) after I had removed the bolts in the "H" section it was difficult to lift the panel to remove, this was solved by adding some little finger recesses (see image 3) and a BMW logo for good means



The driver's side panel is made in three sections, no need to get behind the forward section so often unless you want to get to the ridiculously located bull bar retention bolt. On this side of the car once the bolts are removed from the "H" section the upper half can be easily lifted out by gripping inside the gear lever cut out (see image 4).

To complete overall interior look, the parcel shelf was also covered and fitted with Pale blue features on the corners and the door panel was covered and had a dummy break line again painted pale blue



(See image 5 & 6).

I have looked enviously at some of the beautifully restored cars out there and I find that the area under the seat is often what lets the interior down. I used this space to mount a fire extinguisher, wheel nut socket, a battery cut off switch and a period tool kit that includes: spare spark plug, spark plug spanner, spark plug gap tool, a 1960's adjustable spanner and a 1960's multi-tool, not quite up to the standard of the Leatherman wave.

Living at the bottom of a steep hill and not being able to reach the UK fitted floor mount Handbrake

I re mortgaged the house and fitted an Isetta handbrake mounted on the wheel arch. Even at the price I paid for the unit it arrived with a huge dent in the outer housing...a quick trip

into eBay land I found an old BMW belt buckle and repurposed it as a dent hider.

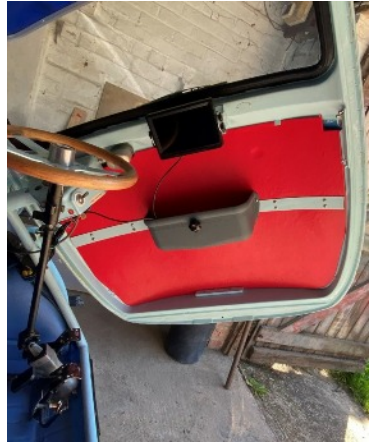
I finished the floor with practical coin pattern rubber matting (see image 7 & 8)

Whilst I was searching the internet for the period tools I stumbled across an amazing 1960's gadget, it's a device that allows the removal and tightening of wheel nuts with a tiny tommy bar. I thought it would make a

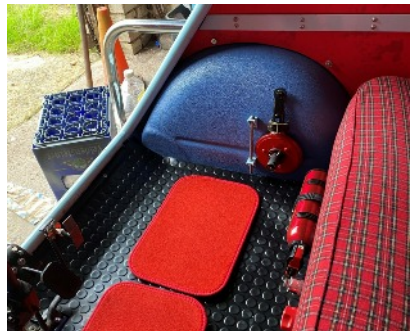
good conversation piece so mounted it opposite the handbrake

on the passenger wheel

arch (see image 9) all I need to do now is remount my nice new chassis VIN plate and its done.....Oh yes and after all of this the indicator does now work.



The floor and wheel arches are painted with Upol Raptor® an amazing product usually used to paint the load bays in pickup trucks amazingly tough.



Echoes of history.

I've been doing quite a bit of reading during the Lockdown. One of the latest books to read was one called "Winged Victory", by V.M.Yeates. It's about a Sopwith Camel pilot in 1918 on the Western Front. A sort of Biggles but with the added disillusionment.

There was one bit, where they are preparing "the machines" for the dawn patrol. It's a foggy morning, and the "ack emmas" (air mechanics) are pushing the machines of C flight out of their hangar and preparing them for the job in hand. Making sure that they will fly safely and surely.



And it was that bit that got me thinking. We've all been there! Pushing our "machine" out of its hangar (the garage), maybe on a foggy morning, preparing it for the job in hand (the rally, the trip, etc). Making sure that it too will run safely and surely.

Then Yeates goes on to talk about the endurance of 'his' machine. How it can fly for about two hours before running out of fuel. Of how when it does get low on fuel and the engine

starts spluttering, he can switch over to the reserve 'gravity' tank which gives him another 40 minutes flying time. Of how it's not the fastest aircraft in the air in 1918.

Still sounds rather like an Isetta, though, doesn't it? Our fuel endurance is about 2-3 hours, and we switch over to reserve when the engine starts spluttering too. And we definitely aren't the fastest vehicles on the road.

He writes about Richthofen's squadron, and the brightly painted planes of that flying circus, painted in all the colours of the rainbow.

You ever seen a convoy of micro cars? They may not be a "flying" circus, but certainly they look like their earthbound incarnation in their brightly coloured paintwork.

So, Isetta's and Sopwith Camels, and their comparison therein. It set me thinking about other comparisons.

Take your humble home computer. In the early 1980's we had all sorts of different computers, all with their own operating systems and equipment. The BBC, the Acorn, the Spectrum, the Dragon, the Atari, the Amstrad, the Apple, the Commodore, their names an echo in our memory. And what happened to them? Wiped out by the PC, beginning with the 286, and then the more powerful 386, 486, and finally, the Pentium. The computer that set the standard.



Back in the 1950's you also had names of machines that had their own features and equipment. Only these 'machines' had names like Bond, Berkeley, Heinkel, Hunslet, Messerschmitt, Isetta, Goggomobil. What happened to them? Wiped out by the BMC Mini. A vehicle that set the standard on the road just as much as the PC did 20 years later in computing.

When I think about it, it's strange how history repeats itself time and time again.



Richard Jones

Metamorphosis by James Orcutt

I would like to start by offering my sincere thanks for the help from the UK Isetta Club, especially Lee Turnham, Bob Fry, Michael Ayriss and Ian Parris. Your mechanical expertise, encouragement and spare parts offerings were extremely helpful in completing my Isetta project. With all this help, I thought the club might enjoy seeing and hearing the transition of this project.

The story begins in 2005 when an Isetta project became available in Canada. I live just south of the Canadian border in Washington state, now residing on a small island within a stone's throw of British Columbia. I purchased the Isetta, but the car was in Canada so importing was a potential problem, however, went very smoothly. The car was of UK manufacture and imported into Canada in 1957. Somewhere along the line, the car was purchased by someone who painted the car to look like a bumble bee, even



Original "Bumble Bee" project.

to the point of putting two antennae on the top of the door to look like feelers. There was some lettering on the side but had been removed. It looked like the car was probably used as a clown car. History was the car had thrown a rod and a second



Finished restoration.

engine was installed. Interestingly, the engine number in the car matched, but there was a second engine included. The car was relatively complete, including all the window glass, but there was quite significant rust. While of Brighton UK manufacturer, the Canadian car had some differences from a standard UK car. Like UK cars, the wiring was Lucas and the brakes Girling. However, the turn signals were different, being in individual pods mounted higher on the front and rear. The rear bumper had over-rider bars which went from the bumper to the holes where the UK lights would have been installed. The front had only cow

catchers, and no bumper below.

I brought the car to the US and then stored it for about 12 years until retirement and time to work on the car. The body was removed, and patch panels purchased to replace areas of significant rust. A friend in Oregon helped with the body work and painting. I overhauled the engine with a first over bore, new bearings and seals, new

valves and guides and carb rebuild. The transmission was rebuilt with most of the gears replaced. The rear chain drive was also rebuilt with new internal parts as well as moving the rear springs forward one inch to better align the rubber U joint. The frame was stripped of all parts and powder coated. The front shocks were rebuilt, and the rear shocks replaced. All cables were replaced, and a new exhaust installed. New tires, rubber pieces, window channel and top were installed. Fortunately, while

on a trip to the UK in preCovid times, I found a remnant of wool cloth in our family tartan and purchased at the Cotswold Woolen Mill. The seat was upholstered with this plaid cloth.



Interior showing the Urquhardt plaid upholstery.

The wiring was replaced with a loom from the UK Isetta Club, requiring some modification to fit the Canadian turn signals. The same with the brakes placing new brake lines, wheel cylinders and master cylinder.

All this came together earlier this year to complete the Isetta. It started and ran well, until about 15 miles later when it stopped running and would not start. Unsure of the cause I did diagnostics

which showed low compression and a bad leak down test. Removing the engine, it was discovered the head gasket was blown, between the cylinder and the port where the exhaust pushrod runs. The exhaust pushrod was bent into a S shape and the exhaust valve guide was enlarged, even though it was new when the engine was rebuilt. It was likely the head was not torqued adequately when the engine was reassembled leading to the blown head gasket, my fault. Hot gases then exited thru the space in the gasket to surround the exhaust pushrod which was heated enough that it bent. A new pushrod, exhaust valve and guide and head gasket were installed, being sure of the torque. Started instantly and has run without any problem since.

This has been an exciting project, and the car raises a lot of interest and questions at car shows. Again, I want to thank everyone who has provided advice and help during the metamorphosis from a Bee to an Isetta.

The bent pushrod resulting from a blown head gasket.

