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ISETTA

GAZETTE

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The Isetta Owners Club of Great Britain Ltd.

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Editors Bit

I've been told by her indoors to remove my ugly mug from the Editors Bit so we might stand a better chance of attracting new members. Although we are not doing too bad, we have 19 new members since the last gazette was published.

We may have a good number of members but unfortunately only one or two contributors to the gazette. For this reason, it has been necessary to reduce the gazette to 12 pages only. Please, if you have any stories to tell, get in touch with me. If I could print the promises of forthcoming articles, I would be able to fill the gazette many times over.

I am a little bit late getting this gazette out due to holidays and other commitments but better late than never.

Last year I bought a new trailer to carry the cars about and it turned out a little bit bigger and heavier than I thought and I am getting too old to risk a hernia pulling and pushing it on my own. I decided a caravan mover would be the way to go but after talking to suppliers it seemed movers are not made to fit my trailer.

Well that was a challenge in itself so I lashed out and bought one. I thought that if I could build a car out of boxes of bits I could certainly fabricate fittings for the mover so that has taken some time to sort out.

I needed to fit a battery onto the trailer to power the mover so decided to build a battery box out of aluminium checker plate until I was quoted £115 for the metal alone. Into the garage I went and pulled out a sheet of steel and with angle grinder and welder I now have a battery box which cost me nothing and a bit more space in the garage.

I knew that steel would come in handy someday I told the other half but she is still convinced I keep a load of old rubbish. With what I've saved I could afford to get her some more rubber gloves for washing up now. (best not let her read this bit methinks).

For me the rally season is just starting although for many of you it hasn't stopped so look out for me and the trailer, it will be the one apparently doing its own thing round the rally fields.

Ian Parris

Chairmans Chat

Not a lot to report this time other than the club is now looking for a spares manager again. Thanks must go to Alan Perrett who has filled this role for the past couple of years. You should already have received a separate mailshot either electronically if we have your e-mail address or by post so that we waste no time in finding a replacement.

No doubt there will be comments on Isettaworld about the state of the club but please be assured all is well and there is no need for alarm. Equally, please don't enter into any debate should it arise.

We still need someone to co-ordinate the cars for the NEC event and the National Microcar Rally in Great Yarmouth. All the paperwork and admin will be done, it's just a case of organising some cars. So if you know some fellow Isetta club members, why not get together for a really enjoyable event or two.

Jeff Todd

MYSTERY PICTURE

Jim Jamieson informed me that the mystery picture at the top of page 7 OF THE Spring Gazette shows "Aidensfield garage" as it is without the TV props. the Isetta is the second one used in "Heartbeat" the first being XAM115, owned at the time by me and now by Jim Hacking. The fictional village of Aidensfield in the programme is the real life North Yorkshire village Goathland, just south of Whitby. Thanks also to all those others who knew more about "Aidensfield" than I did.

A Day Out in the Convent's Isetta

One day Mother Superior and a novice were having a drive in the convent's Isetta when it ran out of petrol. However they managed to coast into a layby. The only container they could find to fetch some petrol with was a chamber pot.

Mother Superior duly despatched the novice to the nearest patrol station with the container. The attendant at the garage enquired what the problem was and where they had broken down. He directed the novice back to the layby via a shortcut through the fields.

Whilst the novice was away a truck had pulled into the layby. The driver watched as the novice emerged from behind some bushes carrying the chamber pot and proceed to pour its contents into the Isetta's tank.

The lorry driver was amazed and shouted "I'm not religious personally but I admire your

The Club is pleased to welcome:-

David High	Leeds
Matthew Bartlett	Swindon
Ronald Spence	Orkney
Achilleus Choursoglou	Athens
Chris Oliver	London
Paul McMaster	Co Durham
Sarah Foulger	Snetterton
Stephen Bramall	Isle of Man
Mikael Tidkvist	Sweden
Bridget Smethurst	Crowborough
Andrew Sneddon	France
Jeff Dowson	Stockton on Tees
Shaun Woodward	Keysoe
Sheamus O'Donovan	Ireland
Joaquim Cavaco	Portugal
Martin Nind	Colchester
Jason Harvey-Wills	
Tim James	Norfolk
Don Macleod	Hayes

New Members since the last Gazette.

Three in a Bed and None in a Shed

My wife and I just happened to be passing Brafield Stock Car Stadium near Northampton when we met a bed, headlights blazing. I quickly spun around only to see it disappearing into the stadium.

I couldn't resist, I turned 'Bessie' round and entered the stadium unannounced and parked next to the bed.



Glancing to my right I noticed a garden shed, I didn't think anything of it until I got out of 'Bessie' and heard an engine running. The noise was coming from the shed!

It was merrily ticking over. It turned out to be the fastest shed in the world.

The driver of the bed was a little put out at first as he thought I had 'stolen his thunder' as he put it but then seemed quite pleased as we showed off together, so much so he invited the wife and me to get into bed for a threesome. Well, we couldn't pass up an offer like that so in we got.



Apparently, the vehicles were on hire from Ed China of television fame along with a motorised bathroom, office and sofa.

The bathroom consists of a toilet for a seat, a wash basin for a steering wheel and a full size bath alongside and the office is a desk with all the expectations of an office desk on board.

The bed is a six seater or should I say six berth, as in front of the driver there are another 3 seats under the duvet. It was hilarious seeing a bed driving out of the stadium with 6 people on board but I guess the heating was better in the bed than in 'Bessie', after all the duvet was a 13 tog rating. Still 'Bessie' was better than the shed, that had no windows and the back door was open although the daffodils in the window boxes at the front didn't seem to be wilting too much.

I am told the shed is going to be converted into a greenhouse this year with perspex all round so that should be something to see, or not as the case may be. Keep your eyes open, you never know what you could meet on the roads today.....

Ian Parris

Knoxville, The Spring of 1962 by John Jensen

In January of 1962, I drove my Isetta back home from Chicago to Council Bluffs, Iowa, having graduated with a basic architectural/engineering degree to get me started in life. But, America was still drafting young men of my age into military service, a continuation from WW2 and the Korean War. Within a few weeks at home with my grandparents, brother and sister, I received my notice to report to the Army in Omaha. I made no effort to dodge conscription, never much thought about it, but I knew it was coming up.

I ended up at Ft. Ord, California, just north of beautiful Monterey and Carmel with target ranges on the dunes at the beach overlooking the Pacific. It was a wonderful place to be on vacation, but I was there honing my shooting skills with an M-1 rifle. It was mere luck that mine was zeroed in perfectly. I rated "expert marksman". In three months I gained 25lbs and was back in Council Bluffs preparing my Isetta for a trip to my new duty assignment at 12th Corps Army Reserve HQ in Atlanta, Georgia. I had declined officer candidate school; that meant 3-years, not two.

I was about to drive 1400 miles in my Isetta, my duffel bag to my right, heading East to Chicago once more. By day four I was driving south to Knoxville, Tennessee to stay overnight in some motel, then drive into Atlanta to report for duty on Sunday. My Isetta only had a few thousand miles on it. My late '58 slider had the new heater system, still only barely heating the interior in sub-freezing weather, but in April the weather was lovely. By early Saturday afternoon I crossed from Kentucky into Tennessee on my first trip into the South.

President Kennedy was pushing for school integration in America; not so easy to achieve, since many existing schools reflected the racial dominance of each neighbourhood. In the north there was already a certain amount of integration, but it was more of an issue in the South, a blanket opposition to racial mixing on almost every level. My Iowa plates spoke of The North. What saved me from harassment was my Army duffel bag and my dress hat on the parcel shelf. There was a real respect for the military, perhaps from the Civil War.

I recall pulling in at a small gas station with a porch in the front for neighbours to sit and chat about life, while the station owner tended to filling the fuel tank and cleaning the windshield, still a courtesy at the time. I got out to check the oil and tire pressure while the man filled my tank. They laughed at the 3.2 gal limit. The Isetta invited humour, and that was good. Mind you, most had never seen such a little car on the highway.

The tube-type Motorola radio, just below my knees, provided country music and news of the day. At the time, Premier Krushchev and President Kennedy were nose to nose. By April of '62, US Jupiter missiles became operational in Turkey, a direct affront to Soviet security. I heard radio reports that the Army Reserves in the southwest might be called up in an invasion of Cuba; to keep Russia out, and prevent the installation of Russian missiles so close to our border, just 90 miles from Florida.

That day, a Saturday, I was headed for Knoxville, Tennessee where America's gold was secured while still on the "gold standard". Meant nothing to me except my last night in a motel before reporting for duty and checking into some Army barracks in Atlanta. I had been driving SE from Cincinnati, Ohio. After refuelling, I was headed up a long stretch through forests at moderate incline. I was capable of 4th gear and 45mph on this grade, but I caught up with a big tractor-trailer truck that could not quite match my speed.

Getting around the truck, starting out in 3rd, shifting to 4th and hoping to pass was about impossible. I tried several times, but lacked a long straight and had to pull back behind the truck. According to my map and my watch, Knoxville should be coming up in 20 miles or so, but my map gave no indication of elevations. The sun had set and darkness was coming. I caught up with the truck again, in 4th gear at a faster speed this time. The trailer was heavily loaded with lumber, and his engine was bellowing, exhaust smoking furiously.

As I drew nearer he down-shifted with a big puff of diesel smoke. The gradient was slightly increasing. I dropped into third gear as I came up close behind him, safe in his slipstream, waiting for an opportunity to pass. The road never seemed to straighten out long enough for



me to make my move. The big rig eventually slowed to about 25 mph, fighting the grade and shifting to yet a lower gear. Soon the road straightened briefly with no oncoming traffic. I pulled out around the big semi, into the wind, dropping into second and revving the BMW single to its limit before shifting into third and remaining there as I eased slowly past the big Kenworth diesel, an old grungy faded tractor that had seen better days. I kept my eyes on the road ahead as I pulled in front of the huge truck, feeling the gaze of the driver on my back, wondering if he was impressed with my little car, or if maybe he was mad that "little me" had passed "big" him.

I glanced back in my rear view mirror, noticing I was pulling well ahead as we continued to ascend the mountain. Soon, I topped the summit. I shifted into fourth as the road levelled, picking up speed on the down-grade. I caught a glimpse of the lights of

Knoxville in near darkness ten miles away, just before noticing the bright lights of the big rig coming over the hill from behind. He was closing on me, and I knew how they don't want to overheat their brakes by having to slow down, especially for a 700lb Isetta. The road was steeper going down this side than it was coming up the other. The big Kenworth kept moving closer as we made turn after turn, winding our way down the mountain. In no time he was on my tail, dangerously close, able to go faster than me for sure, especially with the load he was carrying. My engine was soon maxed-out at nearly 7000 rpm and pegged the speedo at 60. The rugged terrain offered no opportunity to pull off to the side, and it was not possible for him to pass me. The adrenaline began pumping through my veins as I stared into the darkness ahead, high beams on, looking for a fire road or wide spot to pull out of the way of the truck. My engine had reached its limited potential, but I needed more speed.

I figured if the truck could go this fast coasting, maybe I could too. My duffel bag, suitcase and tools must have weighed two or three hundred pounds. I shifted into neutral to see if I could increase my speed by disengaging the engine. If this trick didn't work, I'd be in a worse situation. At first it didn't seem to help, the speedometer was still reading the maximum, but at least I wasn't slowing down. The engine sound disappeared as it dropped to an idle, and I noticed I was slowly pulling away from the lights of the truck. The grade was steep enough that gravity could propel me faster than my engine could. The Isetta quietly increased its speed to maybe 70 or more with only the sound of the wind whistling by as I left the truck well behind in the dark. Maybe he slowed down purposely. I'll never know. Within a few miles at this pace I reached a turnout and pulled safely off the highway among the trees.

I opened my door and stepped out for fresh air just as the huge Kenworth rumbled by, the driver giving me a salutary hoot on his air horn before disappearing around the next bend. His engine bellowed as it worked to slow him on his descent into Knoxville.

Soon he was gone. I opened a Coke and stood there in the quiet darkness under the stars for several minutes, letting the adrenaline drain off, and my engine cool down before getting back on the road again. The cool damp mountain air, the fragrance of pine trees and a desire for dinner soon cleared my head. I checked my oil. Still okay.

Sliding over my duffel bag with military precision, I slipped behind the wheel of the little red Isetta, right elbow resting on a suitcase, tool box on the floor, and secured the door. After several days on the road, the driving style seemed easy now. I turned the key, triggering the Bosch dynastart, and the reliable 300cc thumper quietly came to life....."ka-tunk-a-tunk-a-tunk-a-tunk". My radio was playing "Wolverton Mountain" as I pulled out onto the highway, flicking on my high beams and quickly running through the gears on the down-grade. The highway was nearly deserted. I cruised smoothly down the mountain into the outskirts of Knoxville, my faith restored, safe and secure that my Isetta would always get me there.

Somewhere today there's an old trucker having a beer with a friend and telling a much funnier version of this story. Like me, he'll never forget that "little red Isetta".

Elvis had one just like it.

WRD89 300cc YELLOW ISETTA (Brighton built)

I purchased my Isetta from Great Western Motors in Reading in early 1961 for £360.

I had never driven a car before but on seeing this beautiful yellow bubble in the window of their arcade showroom I could not resist going in to have a look. It was great so I paid my deposit and went home to persuade my father to come down and drive it back for me. Dad gave me a few lessons in his Anglia and then feeling confident I entered an all day treasure hunt with the Isetta. With a friend by my side we spent the whole day on the road and although we didn't win I felt that by the end I was able to drive. Later I taught my wife to be to drive in WRD89.

After passing the driving test first time in the bubble fun driving was underway. I used it for work going from and to Aldermaston from Tilehurst every weekday with my wife to be. I remember that with one up I could get up to 53mph, with two up 57mph but with three up we could just about reach 60mph, faster than the Tate and Lyle lorries on the Bath Road.

I can remember coming out of work one day to find that Isetta was missing. It turned out that my workmates had picked it up and hidden it behind the bike sheds. Another time, coming out of the local pub at lunchtime we got into the car and as I put it into gear the lads picked up the back and then dropped it to the ground so that we shot forward at speed.

As I am quite tall I found it was possible to drive with the front door open while standing up leaning against the back of the seat with my head through the roof (off road of course but great fun). Driving in deep snow was fun having to put one front wheel and the back wheel in the same track with the rear wheel driving against the side of the ridge and proceeding crabwise up the road. It was easy to waltz on both icy and flooded roads.



We were made redundant from Aldermaston Court but I managed to get a job in Chislehurst in Kent. I found lodgings in Bromley during the week but at weekends I travelled to Tilehurst and back through central London. On one of these journeys the con-rod from the engine broke loose and the engine case sustained some damage. The only second-hand casing I

was able to find was for a 250cc Isetta. This I purchased and had it bored out at my place of work to suit the head of my 300cc engine. Then the local garage fitted my engine into the 'new' case. After that it was fine. The only other problem I had was that the rubber bellows to the exhaust would not stay in place for very long. Other than that I loved my Isetta as it put the fun into motoring.

There was a lot of comradery with Isetta drivers in those days acknowledging each other on the road. I can remember waiting to join the traffic on the main road through the New Forest when two Isettias, one red and one blue, passed one behind the other and I managed to enter the line two cars behind them. It took a while but eventually my yellow car fell in with three Isettias in line. We were all delighted to show them off.

I sold WRD89 at the end of 1963 to a dealer in Basingstoke in part exchange for a Morris 1000 van so that was the end of fun motoring for me.

I loved my little car and it was a very sad day when it went.

Michael Ford

MY NEXT PROJECT by Ian Parris

Having completed my Berkeley T60 I had to decide which car would be the next to restore. Two Isettas and a Zundapp Janus were sitting in the queue waiting for their turn to feel the tarmac under their wheels. Decisions, decisions!

Initially, it was going to be the Zundapp but this would take the most effort and probably would not see the road for many years and I desperately need the room so it had to be an easier restoration.

One of my Isettas is definitely a keeper so on that basis I had to restore the other one to sell.

Not only that but not having restored an Isetta from the ground up I decided to use the first one to learn on. This should enable me to incorporate anything I miss in the keeper.

The decision to keep this particular one is that apart from a repaint it is almost original with no work having been carried out.

The lady I got it from had had it in the family for 47 years and knew the details of the first 2 owners. She also wrote me a short history of its life.

It comes with its original registration and first buff logbook. Apparently the second owner rolled it and refused to drive it anymore so her father bought it. Some years later this lady then a teenage schoolgirl took it over as her school transport much to the amusement of her school friends and staff.

The car was used until 2001 when it was felt it need an overhaul and like many cars it was garaged waiting for the moment which never came. Eventually the owner decided to move house and the Isetta couldn't be taken to the new place, this is where I stepped in and promised the lady I would give it a good home and not try to offload it for profit, so the decision was made.



ZUNDAPP JANUS



So, back to the project car. I set about stripping it down to the bare body shell and thought I would get someone to take on the bodywork and re-spray, but the chap who did my T60 is unreliable and another chap recommended to me had a look at the car but then cried off so I have decided to do it myself.

I have bought myself a shot blaster and have had a go at a panel on the underside. When I get down to clean metal I will then be in a position to repair the rusty areas.

I know this will be a much longer job but at least I will have had the satisfaction of doing the work myself and saving a lot of money.

I have propped up the shell so that I can get underneath it, unfortunately my garage isn't high enough to stand it fully upright. I have used my £20 panel beating set to straighten out a crease near the engine cover and that was simple enough so now I need to perfect my MIG welding skills ready for the repairs to the floor areas and the battery box.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

June 28th – July 1st - Ray's NOTBAR rally - to be held at High Lanning Camp Site in the lovely village of Dent in the very West of Yorkshire.

The Bristol Microcar Club

are presenting their 27th Microcar Rally on 6th to 8th July 2012. Bring your Microcar. Friday afternoon is arrival and camping set up. Saturday has a Road Run to a local place of Interest. A Barbecue in the evening.

The main RALLY is on Sunday with displays of Cars , Awards , Auto Jumble.
KEYNSHAM RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB, CROWN FIELDS, BRISTOL ROAD, KEYNSHAM, BS31 2BE

July 12th - 15th MOC International Messerschmitt Rally, Lickhill Manor Caravan Park, Stour on Severn. www.messerschmitt.co.uk

July 13th – 15th - Jim Hacking's Rally - venue to be confirmed. Date firm so that those needing to book holidays can do so.

July 27th - 29th Loxwood Rally Contact Les & Sue Gore on 01293 426954 or lesliebondbug@blueyonder.co.uk (Multi-marque)

Mid August - Tan Hill Rally - dates to be finalised but will be a 4 day rally based on top of the world. Cheap camping, on site food and drink - challenging drives across some of the wildest countryside in Britain.

19th August Grand Classic Vehicle Display and autojumble at the Mid Suffolk showground Stoneham Barns. Contact Martin Galea for entry form. (Closing date 31st August)

August 20th - 30th Bonds Abroad to Isle of Wight. Contact June Day on 01256 842797 or june.day@virginmedia.com

August 24th - 27th Cheshire Rally at Soss Moss, Nether Alderley, Cheshire. Contact Dave & Marie Pickering on 01617 751595 or m.pickering52@yahoo.com (multi-marque)

September 6th – 9th National Microcar Rally - this year at Rose farm touring park, Stepshort, Great Yarmouth - hosted by the East Anglian Microcar club. Contact Tony Pettingill on 07780 576663 or Martin Galea on 07777 636829

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