

ISETTA



SPRING EDITION....2025

MAGAZINE OF THE ISETTA OWNERS CLUB OF GREAT BRITAIN

The Isetta Owners Club of Great Britain Ltd.

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Editors Bit

As the years go by the committee members are not getting any younger. It would be good to see some new faces come on board to continue the running of the club.

As you will see, we are holding the 70th Anniversary Celebration of the Isetta and we look forward to your support.

The weekend will be free to all members who register by May 31st. The weekend has a full motorcycle race card to entertain you along with club activities.

Free camping and caravanning will be inside the track perimeter. Don't miss this exciting opportunity to see motorcycling racing at its best.

As usual can I ask you to submit articles for the next gazette please.

See you at Mallory.



Ian Parris

Chairman's Chat

Welcome to 2025. The rallying season is upon us but this year we have a very special event planned to mark the 70th anniversary of the production of our beloved cars. Elsewhere in this Gazette you will find full details of the Mallory Park Bonanza weekend that we have been invited to attend. There will be a unique opportunity to drive your car around the track to display your pride and joy. Please register your interest to enable us to plan how many members and cars to cater for. There will be an opportunity to meet some of the committee who will answer any questions you may have about the Cub and your cars. The committee have spent considerable time and effort planning this event, please make every effort to attend and make it all worthwhile for us all.

Jeff Todd

The Isetta “Rail Taxi”

Dave Watson

Very little is known about the early years of this totally unique Isetta. It is a very early car -first manufactured in Right hand four-wheeler-format - chassis number 10404 and registered in July 1957. Built at the former *LB&SCR* locomotive factory in Brighton - the first registration was UCD 157. CD as many of you may know is a Brighton registration and its build falls right in the middle of the first batch of manufactured cars that went to Canada. In fact, it was number 504 off the production line – so who knows, this may have been used as an early demonstrator?

Fast forward ten years to 1966 and the car is now owned by Richard Morris. Richard is described as an ‘eccentric enthusiast’ who collected narrow gauge railways - especially monorails and built the first (and only) monorail steam locomotive. He was a capable engineer and during his lifetime built up a unique collection of narrow-gauge railway stock.

In 1967 it was moved to the Pages Park Narrow gauge railway for use as an inspection vehicle.

Richard converted the Isetta into a 610 mm gauge, 4-2-0: With a 4-wheel bogie at the front instead of the front axle, a rear axle with large drive wheels, horn and utilising a single Isetta headlight centrally mounted on the front door. The conversion took place over a year in Longfield, Kent where Richard lived. Two characteristics are central to any locomotive design are Mass and torque and are also realised by the Isetta in a remarkable way. So, it made sense to put it on the rails as a locomotive – To Richard anyway!

In 1967 the Isetta was moved to the Pages Park Narrow gauge railway (LBLR) in Leighton Buzzard Bedfordshire for use as an inspection vehicle.

Leighton Buzzard is built on sand The hilly landscape of Bedfordshire consists of thick layers of glacial sand protected by layers of clay. The high-quality sand has been mined

as a material primarily for the building, Glass making and casting industries etc since the beginning of the 19th century.

With the loss of (cheap) European competition during the First World War, extraction was intensified, with transport links carried out via the near by Grand Union Canal and the Euston-Birmingham railway *but* transported locally via roads with carts. A narrow-gauge railway, financed by the two major sand pit owners (Arnold and Garside), was to significantly increase transport capacity. It went into operation in 1919. The *Leighton Buzzard Light Railway Ltd.* used steam locomotives until 1921 (Hudswell Clarke ‘Ganges’), then switched to diesel (‘Simplex’). Maximum sand extraction was reached during the 40s and 50s, with up to twenty trains running a day on the 5.6 km of tracks, but in 1965, the connection to the British railway network was lost.

In 1967, Morris` tried to use the Isetta to create a small rail vehicle for the railway operation of the sand pit, the “Rail Taxi”. The use of the narrow-gauge railway to transport sand ended in 1981; but even today sand is still extracted outside the park – but with modern dump trucks used to transport.



Foto: © Phil Tait/Online Transport Archive (OTA)

Independently of this, enthusiasts also founded the *Iron Horse Restoration Society* on this site in 1967, later renamed the *Leighton Buzzard Narrow Gauge Railway Soc.* and were allowed to use the tracks. They started a regular service, first with diesel, then from 1968 with steam-powered narrow gauge passenger trains, which has

been offered without interruption ever since. If you do a quick search on *YouTube* for "Isetta Rail Taxi" there are some great colour films of its time at Pages Park

Leighton Buzzard today (like many towns) has had thousands of new homes built (mainly on the old sandpits) and has increased in size, but with little new infrastructure – a familiar tale I'm sure throughout the country. With its good transport links to London (Railway to Euston and the M1 motorway close by) it has now become a viable option to live and commute to London or the Midlands.

The narrow-gauge railway now belongs to and forms part of *Pages Park* - a large public area in the town with sports fields and clubhouses.

The Welsh winters must have caused further deterioration of the now frail body shell.

So back to the Isetta rail taxi! – after it was used for a few years at Pages Park for their sand pit operations it then moved and stood in the front garden of its builder Richard Morris in Longfield, Kent, around 1971. It then was transferred to the *Narrow-Gauge Railway Centre* at the *Gloddfa Ganol Museum*, Blaenau Ffestiniog (Wales) in 1978, which then housed large parts of the Morris' collection.



The museum closed unexpectedly in 1997 and most of the exhibits were auctioned off. The Isetta was then listed for the *Country Life Museum* near Barmouth (Wales) but somehow ended up back in *Gloddfa Ganol* until around 2016 at a private address still owned by Richard Morris.

In 2016 The *Tanat Valley Light Railway* in Nantmawr (TVLR) rescued the Morris collection, including all the monorails, at the last minute after an eviction notice had been served. Everything had been stored in the open air next to Morris' property including the Rail Isetta and as you can imagine was now in a poor state of repair – desperately needing restoration / preservation.

Fast forward to today and it is believed the Isetta is in the TVLR workshop awaiting restoration although no recent photographs are available as to its current condition. From 2016 its spent around five or six years stored outside at TVLR with just a cover over it. The Welsh winters must have caused further deterioration of the now frail body shell. The TVLR has limited resources and has in recent years concentrated their efforts to build an accessible monorail track.



I have always had a soft spot for the Isetta rail Taxi. It is a unique creation and deserves to live on. It is no secret that I would love to look after it and have on more than one occasion offered to restore it – the only condition being that I would like it to return to the Pages Park railway for a year where it was first used. This is remarkably close to where I work and live and know would be a great attraction.

I still have my fingers crossed that one day this will happen, and my open offer to TVLR is there, but it would seem they are very reluctant for anyone to help outside of Wales?

The most important thing is its still alive – just! although we must be very close to losing another piece of Isetta History forever?

Original Report by Manfred Heise Isetta Club Germany and then re-written for the IOC UK by Dave Watson.

50th National MicroCar Rally

18 - 21 SEPTEMBER 2025

Camping at Far Peak Camping, Northleach, GL54 3JL
Sunday 21 September 2025 - Cotswold Wildlife Park
Burford where it all started on this day in 1975



**Early arrivals from 17th and
departures until 22nd**
Road runs on Thursday afternoon,
Friday and Saturday



Sunday - Cotswold Wildlife Park, Burford
the traditional show day. 50 years to the day
of the first event. Drivers of microcars/tow
vehicles with microcars free admittance. All
other passengers £13.50 Concessions &
Children £9 which gives full access to the
park and amenities.



Electric Hook Up pitch per night £30 (£25 on Wed & Sunday)
Non-Electric Hook Up pitch per night £22 (£18 On Wed & Sunday)
Rally Entry £10
Autojumble/Club stand Free

BOOK NOW



Advance bookings for pitches can now
be made by contacting Jenny at:
jennydिल्s@hotmail.co.uk or



07954 411756



check regularly for update on:

www.national-microcar-rally.co.uk



Overseas
visitors; Free
Rally Entry



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.

£16,000 ONO

Contact:-

Terry Westbrook

Tel : 07791287503

Email:

Twest4380@aol.com



1962 ISETTA 300.

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. or good offer.
Contact Keith on 07941508749.



1960 Berkeley T60 3 wheeler.



Re-built engine not yet run in. New side screens and hood. Full LED conversion. £6000
Contact Philip Eastwood 07711 899873 Penzance.

1959 Isetta 300



Original UK RHD (Brighton) four wheeler. Owned since 2012 with full restoration in 2013/14 including full respray and new interior etc. Large history file. Very little used due to living in Channel Islands and hence reason for sale. Needs new CV joint (Doughnut) fitting which I have. £16250.00 Contact:- Simon Couldridge Tel: 07781 132260 Email: saca@cwgsy.net Car near Cheddar, Somerset.

For Sale

1959 Isetta 300 LHD. Fully restored with all parts from the Isetta Club.

Please call for information during the day.
07967722240

Looking for £15000

Bob Doubleday



Refurbishing an Isetta 300 worn Rotor commutator.

After a lot of effort, soaking in penetrating oil and persistence with an impact gun, I was finally able to remove a very worn, old Dynastart, Rotor from a 'pond' found engine.

Looking over the rotor, it appeared in great condition, except the central brush contact point, the 'commutator' was very worn, having deep ridges all the way around.

I decided to have a go at re commissioning it.



Using small power tool, I simply cut into the top of the commutator and ground the high points of the ridges away. After the initial grinding, I used less abrasive wheels to clean up the surface until it was quite smooth.



The final stage was to 'cut' or clear-out the many commutator segment gaps using a broken junior hack-saw blade.

To test the rotor, I fitted it and a stator, (together these two parts make up the Dynastart), to an engine. I then jumped the stator post (+) and the engine case (-) to a 12 v car battery.

Wow, did it spark at first, a mini firework show. Then after a short time, the brushes got worn to a better match to the reshaped commutator, the sparks subsided and all was well.

I may need to change the brushes earlier than normal, but given the cost of a rotor now, I am happy with the result. Enjoy.

Chess Ferrier

600 Restoration by Tony Shepherd

The BMW 600 was purchased directly from BMW by a chap called Graham Prosser, he worked for BMW and the 600 was put away in stores and forgotten about until he asked

about it and was allowed to buy it. He purchased it in July 1979, was originally registered in 1959. He took it apart and restored it, it was solid but a bit tatty, it had been used as a test mule or development car, no idea for what. The body was taken off the chassis, the chassis was stripped down and repainted. The car had had a lot of use, additional lights had been fitted at the rear by BMW, these were taken off so the car was returned to original spec. The car was resprayed and back on the road for his own use, he lived on the Isle of Man.



The car stood for many years in a lean-to before the second owner got it. It was stripped completely, had the body shot blasted and primed, the only work needed to the body was a small patch repair in the rear passenger floor and a small hole in the front passenger floor, the rest of the body was excellent. The chassis was shot blasted along with all components, all were repainted and the rolling chassis was put together with new brake lines, wheel bearings, and bushes and new brake shoes. All ancillary parts were repainted, master cylinder was refurbished, steering column, gear stick and linkage, pedals, grab handle, petrol tank hand brake etc etc. Engine was

checked over and all was well, same for the gearbox, these were re-fitted. There was nothing missing from the car, it was 100% complete.

The project was not completed and was sold onto another 2 owners still in pieces, the last owner had the body painted and was then stored in a carcoon for 10 years or so which didn't do the paint much good and resulted in blistering in several places.

I bought the in May 2024 car along with all of the parts in boxes that had not seen the light of day in many years, I put the car in storage and made a start in December 2024.

I took the body off to find the chassis and components solid but rusting so I decided to strip and start again, powder coated the chassis, new bearing, brakes, tyres, seals, cables etc.

Now the chassis is rolling I will make a start on the engine.



ISETTA AND CHIPS!

Well, there I was, making one of my regular trips to our local chip shop when I just stopped in amazement: outside the shop, on the pavement, was a Microlino, with someone taking a picture of it!

I couldn't imagine who would park right outside the shop like that, so had a quick look at it on my way out and went on my way. But the next time I was after some chips, it was still there and now had adverts for the shop all over it. I asked inside who the owner was and was told that the family who run the shop had bought it as a city runabout and mobile advert.

I obviously said I'd got the original but nobody behind the counter had ever heard of Isettas, or realised that their pride and joy was an updated version of something else. So, next time, I took in a photo and they were all amazed at the resemblance. An exchange of email addresses took place and I sent them some info about Isettas, leading to a meet-up where we and the cars could get better acquainted.

And that's how I've now had a ride in a Microlino and given its owner a taste of Brighton's best. What did I think? The similarities are incredibly marked, despite the Micro being electric and 63 years younger. As you'd expect, it's a lot quieter than mine but astonishingly, its recommended top speed is pretty similar – though acceleration is rather better! Overall, I was unimpressed – its performance is apparently seriously affected by having a passenger and it was no more comfortable than mine.

On the other hand, the man from the chip shop was VERY impressed! He couldn't believe how good my Isetta looked or that I'd restored it from scratch – it sounded like he thought he should have bought an Isetta instead!

Perhaps BMW didn't get it too wrong all those years ago, despite the little problem with the RHD gear linkages and the difficulty holding a conversation as you're going along? It seems unlikely that the Microlino will catch on in a big way, especially once the next generation of cheaper electric cars goes on sale.

But it was an interesting experience – and if you happen to be in Nottingham, I can thoroughly recommend the chip shop!

Mike Scott



Isetta World

We all must have at some time wondered "How well would an Isetta go with a bigger engine?"

The same thought occurred about
Several years ago to microcar

enthusiast David Brower ("Rimspoke" to those who know him), an exceptionally talented engineer and machinist from Wake Forest, North Carolina when he found a 700 badge which he thought matched the script of his Isetta's badge (well, you've got to start somewhere ...). He also felt the influence of the Hoffman twin cylinder design layout and soon a BMW 700 twin-carb motor was sourced from New Jersey based "Isetta John" Wetzel and a donor Isetta Bubble-window shell without power-train was found in San Antonio, Texas, where it had sat in someone's back yard for 25 years.



David writes " I wanted to make a car that BMW could have produced if they had wanted. The Isetta I have built is powered by a 1962 BMW700 Sport engine. There is no drive chain. The mechanical layout requires it to be a convertible so the engine can be removed straight through the body. It has a large hatch in the rear deck with the spare wheel bolted to the underside. It has an engine cover on both sides of the car and behind each is a head and a carburettor . There is an exhaust each side, too."

"All of this fits within the confines of the original body although the wheelbase is about 1 inch longer. This car has been "on the drawing board" for about 20 years. Numerous people have told me it could not be done, but I did it anyway. It just took longer than I had expected."

David made an adaptor plate to mate the 700 motor to the Isetta gearbox, and modified an Isetta rear axle to include a centre section

with spiral bevel ring and pinion gears, thereby eliminating the chain drive.





The motor was mounted without moving the seat forward.

David decided to finish the car body with a completely open top, and says “ driving a completely open Isetta is a unique experience, especially as it can now top 80mph while still handling well. The roll-up side curtains can be removed and stowed.”



DAVID "RIMPOKE" BROWER and WIFE TINA



Apart from the 1962 BMW 700cc Sport engine, its specification includes ...

Engine covers BOTH sides – RH one hand-made by David himself - Rolled to the shape of the Isetta body with Isetta louvres grafted on – the covers are detachable via pull-cables.

Behind each cover is a cylinder head, a carburettor and an air cleaner.

Cooling air is drawn in from both sides PLUS under-seat ducting .



Provision for tool storage has been built behind the seat.

4 dashboard lights (the extra one is for oil pressure of the 700cc motor)

The car can use ALL of its 80mph Speedometer.

The spare wheel has been relocated to over the engine.

Engine access and removal is from above – the parcel shelf has been made removable and the firewall has been altered to feed cold air to the motor.

The car is wholly convertible – its fabric roof reaches right to the front of the car.

Top frame modifications and all other fabrications were done by David himself.

The car was completed and used to attend car shows a few years ago and then consigned to the back of David's garage to make room for other projects. But ... David is currently in the process of recommissioning the mechanical elements to return it to the roads for 2025.



I wonder- did BMW try a similar arrangement before they realised the extra power would easily power a 4-seater - and did that pave the way for the BMW600 ?

Terry Parkin
Isetta World

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

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Isetta 70th Anniversary Celebrations

To be held on July 11th 12th & 13th 2025 at Mallory Park in conjunction with their big motorcycle racing event of the year.

Weekend visitors can arrive on Friday with a buffet, quiz and social in the evening.

Saturday will hold a Technical Forum, Track Runs and Barbecue/Slide Show/Social/Music/Drinks in the evening.

Sunday further Technical Forum and Track Runs.

The Club is pleased to welcome:-

Philip Eastwood
Kevin Bayliss
Tony Shepherd
Alan Farquharson
Grant Kearney

Penzance
Fife
Sutton Coldfield
Angus
Kelso

Anthony Wroblewski
Dave Roe
Andrew Dalton
Cedric Smith
Gary Bode

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West Sussex
Kirby Knowle
Stalham
Leek

New Members since the last Gazette

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70th Anniversary



The BMW Isetta will be 70 years old this year and the IOC intends to celebrate this special Birthday with a very special event !!!!!

The celebration will take place at Mallory Park Racing Circuit on July 11th, 12th & 13th 2025 in conjunction with Mallory Park Motorcycle Bonanza Weekend.



The event will be completely free to Isetta Club members whether bringing their cars or not and pre-register by May 31st 2025.

During the weekend there will be opportunities to take your cars round the track.



Mallory Park has full camping and caravanning facilities and these will be available to all Isetta visitors.

We will have access to a 40 ft hospitality trailer with tea/coffee and biscuits over the weekend.

In addition, as a Club, we are intending to have a Club Quiz, a Club BBQ, and bring along some free one-off memorabilia and mementos of the event.

