

Alfa Romeo Owners Club COTSWOLD SECTION NEWSLETTER



September 2013

John Mills reports on the Oxfordshire Classic Vehicle Show at Blenheim Palace

Bank Holiday Monday and a promise of sunshine with no rain all day! Dare I take out my yellow Bertie and battle with the masses, the traffic queues, the possibility of stretches of newly resurfaced roads which like to pop up with too much frequency at this time of year to sprinkle my pride and joy with tar and chips!? We-ell, we had never been to the Blenheim Festival of Transport, but earlier this year we swapped our day ticket at Blenheim for a free all year pass to the palace and grounds and this gave us free entry to the show.

We set off early and had the road to ourselves, sailing into the grounds at 10.00 just as everything was beginning. This was actually Day 2 which included not only a spectacular gathering of classic and vintage cars but



The yellow peril out-shining the other 1970's cars

also kit and custom cars and bikes.

It was all well organised and we were directed to bays relating to the decade of manufacture. So we shared a row with a Lancia, a Lotus, Triumph, MG, plus at our rear, a VW camper

and Morris Minor! The variety was amazing with many more cars rolling in throughout the day. Some of the clubs were present including the Ford RSOC, Sunbeam Alpine Club, Classic Z Register, TVR Car Club and MCR Oxford Register, a host of camper vans and many more.

In a small arena, flanked by trade stands, drivers were invited to parade their vehicles and chat over the tannoy. Sectors of cars were chosen either by decade or marque. For each sector there was a prize for winner and runner up, from which the 'best in show' was later chosen. For good or bad – the sector which could have been 'Alfa Romeo' or even 'Italian cars' would have had the odds stacked in favour of the entrants. While we were there, we were one of only two Alfa's (the other being a 155), although we did see some really interesting Lancias and Fiats including a diminutive Fiat 500..... Maybe next year Cotswold members can swell the numbers?

I resisted the pot pourri of the AutoGlym stand as I had stocked up at Prescott, but spent some time looking at the autojumble and memorabilia stalls. Although we had followed tradition and set up a picnic – there would have been no need as we had a pick of show catering from Pimms to cakes to bacon rolls – even Thai food (as well as the superb fare in the palace itself).

Visitors were slowly driving into Blenheim all morning – some obviously additional entrants and others bringing many spectators to the event. Beaten by the afternoon heat, we later quietly packed up and drove home avoiding the crowds, enjoying the sunshine and planning to go again next year – maybe with a convoy of Cotswoldisti ...!



Another (paler) yellow car - this time a Fiat 500 Giardiniera

EVENTS

October

Wednesday 16th. Regular monthly meeting.

Saturday 19th. Visit to North Cotswold Brewery, followed by pub lunch. PTO for details.

November

Sunday 10th. Autumn Walk. PTO for details.

Wednesday 20th. Regular monthly meeting.

December

Saturday 7th. Christmas Lunch at Three Ways Hotel, Mickleton.

Fun CONCOURS

This year's Fun Concours, held during our August gathering, saw a few changes to the categories and some new winners toppling the prize-polishers of the last few years. Although we had a few passing showers we did get a chance to poke around under bonnets and mill around to take a vote for those that turned up to take part.

Although a few of the regulars brought the wrong car and we ended up with a Fiat contingent with 500 Arbarth, Twinair, Panda and Coupe you could have been forgiven for thinking it was a Fiat Forum gathering !! Perhaps next year a Best Fiat category?

However we did have a good turn out of Alfas with a couple of 105 series Spiders doing battle with a lovely 1750 Bertone Coupe for Classic Alfa of the evening. 159, 156, GT and 916 GTVs and Spiders made up the remainder of the group with some very close voting in a number of the categories.



Tim Roberts (right) picked up the Must Try Harder award from section Chairman Mark Grimshaw

The votes were duly counted and the prizes went to the following :

<i>Best Classic Alfa</i>	<i>1750 Bertone Coupe</i>	<i>Clive Barnett</i>
<i>Best Modern Alfa</i>	<i>156 GTA</i>	<i>Jason Wetherill</i>
<i>Tidiest Engine Bay</i>	<i>916 GTV</i>	<i>Mark Byatt</i>
<i>Cleanest Wheels</i>	<i>105 series Spider</i>	<i>Mark Grimshaw</i>
<i>Most Bug Splats</i>	<i>156 Sportwagon</i>	<i>Alex Graham</i>
<i>Must Try Harder</i>	<i>156 Sportwagon</i>	<i>Tim Roberts</i>

Various cleaning products went to the winners along with a brilliant certificate to signify the prestigious awards.

Thanks to everyone that came along and had a bit of fun on the evening. Let's hope for a stunning late summer evening for next year's event. - MB

Richard M takes a personal (and slightly) rambling view of the

DONINGTON GRAND PRIX COLLECTION

On Saturday 31st August a party of Cotswolders made the trip up to Leicestershire. Most of us met near the NEC and then convoyed up the M42 and A42 arriving at Donington at 10am. There were several other members waiting to greet us which swelled our number up to about 25. The entrance hall of the collection houses a line-up of German WWII Kubelwagens, including a rare war-time Beetle, all of which look a little incongruous sat alongside the high-gloss high-tech lines of David Coulthard's 2008 Red Bull RB4-4.

There's more military hardware in the first hall, including a massive 'Famo' half-track. It's quite a shock to see such brutal machinery when you've been expecting to marvel at the sleek lines of racing cars.

The rest of the museum is given over to racing cars, with the emphasis on the post-war 'Formula' period. Most of the famous marques are represented with McLaren and Williams each having a hall to themselves, while another features Vanwalls and BRMs. However none of the halls sticks strictly to its theme and the odd interloper creeps in. In the Williams hall there were several cars from the 1990s, a very successful period for Williams, and it was interesting to see the evolution of the cars across the seasons. Star of the hall for me was Nigel Mansell's 1992 FW14B, in its blue, yellow and white livery complete with Mansell's red no. 5, as I felt a (vague) connection with it. The only time I've ever been to a Grand Prix was the British Grand Prix at Silverstone in 1992 which Mansell won in this very car. As Mansell performed his victory lap the crowd invaded the track and Mansell was brought to a halt between Club and Abbey. Lisa and I were there and as Mansell's car rolled to a stop I lent on the front tyre. A blob of warm soft rubber stuck to my fingers and I kept the little splodge of black goo as a souvenir. I think I still have it somewhere!

In one hall there are cars from the 1950s and '60s. Among the '50s cars are Alberto Ascari's championship winning Ferrari 500 from 1952 and a gorgeous Maserati 250F. The '50s cars are beautiful but to my mind the '60s cars look the business. With their exposed rear engines, narrow tyres and lack of aerodynamics they look like proper racing cars. They're low, sleek, fragile and functional. They seem to be pure and purposeful undiluted racing machines.

In the corridors between the halls fascinating collections of automobilia and motorsport art and photography are displayed and the windows are decorated with plans of circuits from around the world.

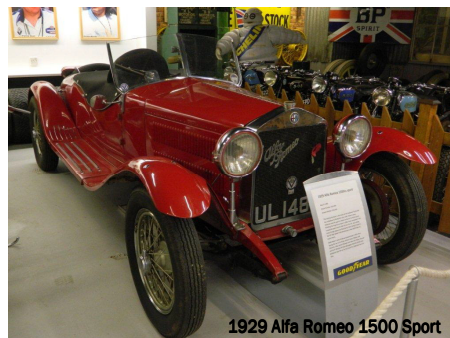
At the end of one hall there is a recreation of a period garage. Parked next to it is a lovely 1929 Alfa Romeo 1500 Sport which took local man Robert Anderson 41 years to restore!

Another Alfa is the Marlboro liveried Tipo 179 driven by Andrea de Cesaris at the Canadian and US Grand Prixes in 1980. The car failed to finish both races, retiring after eight laps with engine failure in Montreal, and then crashing out after just two laps at Watkins Glen.

All the cars in the collection are maintained in working order and given regular run-outs at events around the world. Unfortunately on the day of our visit the 1935 Alfa Romeo Bimotore and the 1974 JPS Lotus 72 were both absent.

The Donington Grand Prix Collection is a 'must see' for any fan of motorsport. The range of cars is wonderful and if you're a real enthusiast you'll enjoy reading all the information panels and examining the cars in minute detail. For your regular visitor with just a passing interest in motorsport, and I count myself in that category, the Collection could be considered a bit dry. Little imagination has been used in presenting the cars, which seems a shame. One more criticism, the Collection's shop was very poor. I was expecting to be tempted with great books, DVDs, and models but the stock was very limited. And I certainly don't require a poster of Justin Bieber?

One thing that doesn't need improving is the café which I'm happy to say serves a smashing bacon roll!

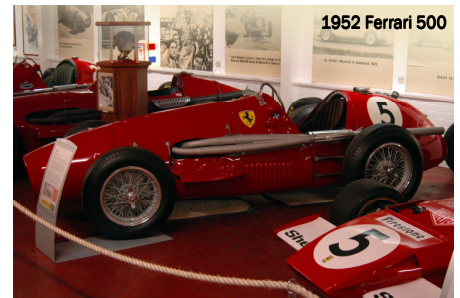


1929 Alfa Romeo 1500 Sport

Places on our tour of North Cotswold Brewery are still available. The tour takes place on Saturday October 19th and starts at 11.30. It lasts approximately 1½ hours and costs £10 per person.

After the brewery tour we are lunching at The Halford on the Fosse Way about 5 miles north of the brewery.

If you'd like to join us for the brewery tour and lunch, or just one or the other, please let us know. Speak to any committee member or email us at arocccotswolds@933.me.uk



1952 Ferrari 500



1967 Brabham BT24



Mansell's 1992 Williams FW14B



Sd.Kfz. 9
'Famo' half track



1980 Alfa Romeo Tipo 179

AUTUMN WALK

Our Autumn walk will take place on Sunday November 10th. The start point is a car park on Critchford Lane near Kington, Gloucestershire. Grid reference SP 08436 225890, Lat 51.931 - Long -1.878. Meet there at 11am. The walk is around 4 miles in length and takes in woodland and open countryside and the valley of the River Windrush. It will also take in the Halfway House (a pub) in Kington. Fingers crossed for the weather.