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**Full yearly Membership fees:**

1 January to 31 December  
Social \$45  
Motorsport/Competition \$65  
Family \$90  
(2 adults + kids under 18 - Family rate allows up to two competition members.)  
Note: Applicants who wish to join part-way through the year will be charged a pro-rata membership fee based on the number of months left in the membership year. See the application form for details.

**Meetings**

Southern members meet on the final Tuesday of each month, January through to November, at the Civic Club, 134 Davey Street, Hobart.

The committee meeting is held between 6.30-8.00 pm. Drop in any night.

CMI's AGM is generally held at 7 pm on the last Tuesday of November at the Civic Club, Hobart.

All contributions to Veloce Nota are welcome and when published earn points towards the Clubman of the Year Award.

Please send all letters and contributions to The Editor: [pblake@ozemail.com.au](mailto:pblake@ozemail.com.au)

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**CMI Life members:**

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Graham Mitchell  
David Mitchell  
Steve Caplice  
Rob Madigan  
Tristan Roberts  
Dave Button  
Peter Lowe  
Philip Blake  
Allan Van Dulleman



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## Blakey's Bit

As the President says below, a quiet time.

But Graham's annual breakfast barbecue at the Springs went some way to filling up the void that is January, and was followed by a run organised by the President.

They ended up with three finish destinations: Peppermint Bay was full, Kettering Hotel's kitchen was closed, and the Margate Train welcomed them with open pancakes.

The President informs me that due to blinding rain the Alfasud lay down and drowned, with the result that they had to finish the event in Austen's Saab and go back to retrieve the Sud later.



## Presidential Patter

It's been a quiet month for the club. Despite that, club members were busy participating in other events. There was a good showing of Italian cars displayed at Festa Italia, as well as some racing at Symmons Plains for round 1 of TCRC that kept people busy!

I'm currently dealing with another dead Alfasud. The green Sud's brand new race motor had a big end bearing lose the will to live 4 laps into qualifying (a story will come another time). However, I did get to race a 33 wagon in the 500 Car Club's Khanacross series, so it's not all bad news in the Alfasud camp!



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### **Alfa Club Victoria 10 hour relay 2024** at Winton Raceway

Just as CMI events seem to attract us annoying MX-5 owners like moths to the flame, the recent Alfa Club 10-hour regularity event held at Winton Raceway in northern Victoria experienced the same phenomenon with MX-5s making up over 30% of the 26 team entries. One of the Victorian MX-5 four-man teams put out a call for help for a Team Manager and a volunteer, so Ian

Wheeler and I put up our hands. The event is a two-day Regularity Trial where teams aim to achieve the highest percentage of laps completed relative to their 'Goal Laps,' which are based on completed laps and Bonus Laps determined by the scoring system using Dorians. Each team has a Race Sash that must be carried by the car currently on the track and passed to the next team car. Drivers aim to

match their nominated lap times as closely as possible to earn Base and Bonus Laps for their team. The team with the highest percentage of achieved laps compared to their Goal Laps wins the event.

Despite an unexpected (although scheduled) power outage that shut down the event until Gavin from Deniliquin turned up with a generator on the back of his ute, and a number of dead Dorians which





someone forgot to recharge properly, the two-day event was a great success.

The winner was (you guessed it) an MX-5 team (not ours) with second place going to another MX-5 team (not ours) and most importantly, third place went to team 'Maschi Di Alfa' which included an Alfa 156 GTA, two Alfa GTVs and an Alfa Giulietta.

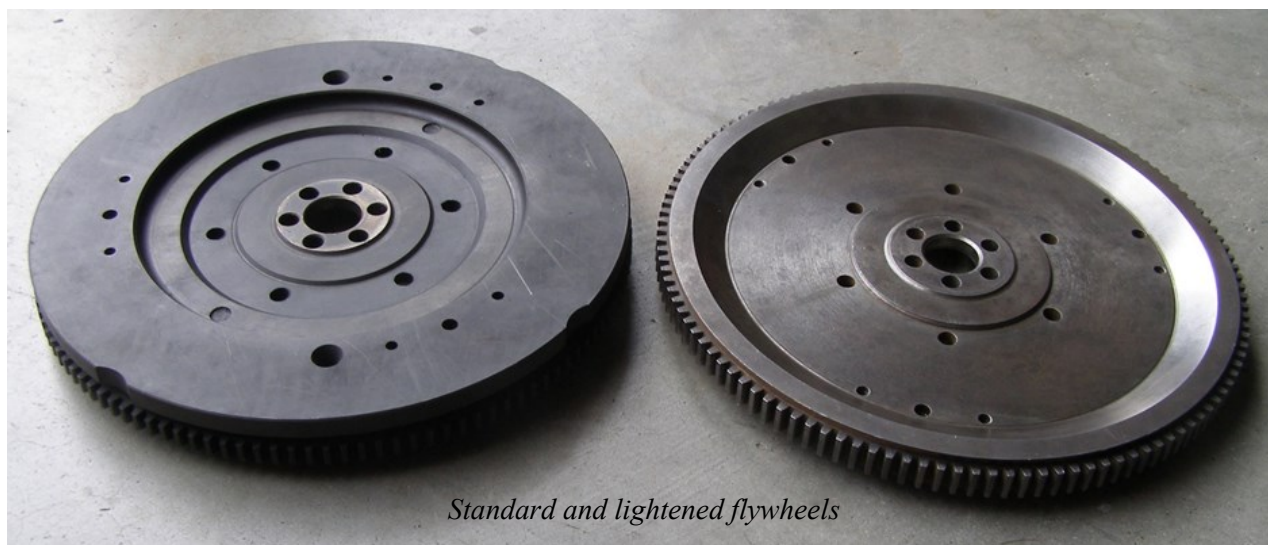
Other Italian car entries included lots of Fiat 500s, Fiat 500 Abarths, Alfa Romeo 147s, a Fiat Abarth 124, a standard Fiat Abarth 695 and, my favourite of the event, a Fiat Abarth 695 Assetto Corse which made more noise than seemed possible. My favourite team name was 'We Identify as FIATs'.



A great event with promises made to return next year, but with a couple more of those pesky MX-5s!

*(Warrick will no doubt bring us up to date on this year's relay, in which I believe he is competing. Ed)*





*Standard and lightened flywheels*

A good load of spares came with the car and these included a Nanni Ricambi modified timing cover to fit an oil cooler and remote full-flow oil filter. The Fiat 500 engine was designed to only have an oil slinger on the end of the crankshaft (incorporated into the fan belt drive pulley), which was not the best oil filtration solution. It only received some of the circulated oil and removed particles from it by centrifugal force slinging them into the textured surface of the pulley cover and hoping that they would stick there.

Finally getting my licence

### *Things to fix*

When I finally got to drive the car, two things disappointed me. The first was the brakes. In spite of having discs up front, the braking power was not the best. It turned out that the Abarth Girling callipers needed overhauling which sounds simple, but having oddball callipers in Brisbane in the 1980s meant that it was not possible to get kits.

John McLean Motors had contacts in the USA for Abarth parts and faxed off a request for

a pair of calliper rebuild kits. The good folk in the USA had them but the price delivered to Australia was prohibitive for an impoverished uni student – as I was at the time. So we started thinking about alternatives. John had heard that people in England worked out that the callipers from a Ford Fiesta Mk 3 would work perfectly as a substitute and just required new fabricated mounting brackets.

My uncle lived in Manchester at the time and he sent over a pair of callipers. McLean Motors designed and fabricated the mounting brackets, popped on the Ford callipers and wow, the brakes were then so good. I foolishly threw out the original Girling callipers as at the time they were useless to me. They are now rare and sought-after items by owners of genuine Abarths ...

The second thing was a horrendous clutch judder when taking off in first. You could see not just me but my friends wince a bit every time I would go to do it. They would tense up and slightly screw up their face in preparation for the earthquake-like noise that would come from

the rear of the car. It was like a jack hammer being let loose on the firewall. Then silence and we were moving.

I replaced the clutch and throw-out bearing, but still earthquake. I swapped to a Fiat 850 sprung friction plate instead of the solid 500 one, still earthquake. I had the flywheel refaced, still earthquake. I swapped to a standard heavy flywheel, still earthquake. I swapped back to the light flywheel, (not surprisingly) still earthquake. I replaced the bush in the bellhousing for the clutch release lever, still earthquake. Replaced the input shaft spigot bearing that is pressed into the end of the crankshaft and still earthquake. I replaced the flex couplings between axle and stub axle, surprise, surprise still earthquake. I stiffened the rear engine mount to no avail, then gave up and started to take off in second whenever I could because if I did there was silence.

I lived with that judder for decades until I was talking to an old friend and Fiat mechanic who asked how the Bambino was going and I told him it was fine apart from the judder that it has had for the last 30-odd years. He



asked if I had replaced the clutch cable – and I had not. I had cleaned it and lubricated it, but not replaced it. He insisted that the cable was the problem as he had been down the rabbit hole of fixing Fiat 500 clutch judder many times and half of the time it was the cable. Even though there was no visible sign of anything wrong with the cable, for him, replacing the cable had fixed the problem.

I replaced the cable and SILENCE. Just a smooth take off. AAAAAHHHH! How? Why? Why didn't I try replacing the cable so many years earlier?

#### *Great Dane*

My family owned Great Danes and there were numerous times when I would take our Dane with me in the Bambino. To fit, he had to sit in the back seat with the front passenger seat tilted forwards. His favourite thing was when I opened the sunroof so he could stick his head out as we drove along. I can vividly remember being stopped at a Random Breath Test and as the officer came up to the car my Great Dane appeared through the sunroof with a very deep growl and loud bark. The poor man nearly fell over backwards with the fright. Once he regained his composure and I quietened down the dog, he remarked that nobody would steal the Bambino while the Great Dane was in there and how he was far better than any car alarm! There are still small tears caused by his toe nails in the original vinyl upholstery on the back seat.

#### *University of Queensland car park*

I used the Bambino as my everyday commuter while studying at university. I would drive from the outer northern suburbs of

Brisbane to the University of Queensland at St Lucia. My favoured parking spot was in the 'dustbowl' carpark – a gravel and dirt parking area where parking was free. The carpark was delineated by low wooden barriers to stop encroaching on the lawns and there was a formed path from the carpark up to the university main building complex that had a pair of large steel bollards to prevent vehicle access.

On numerous occasions at the end of the day walking down the path to the dustbowl I would be greeted by the Bambino but not where I had left it. Instead, it would be sitting between the bollards blocking the path. There were maybe 5 cm clearance either side of the car and it was invariably positioned with the bollards right at the doors. I would have to wait and ask random people if they would help me move my car by literally picking up a corner and dragging it away from the bollards. There were upsides and downsides to it weighing barely more than 400 kg!

I never found out who was moving it. This prank was very annoying at the time but always made me smile after a bit of reflection. The main thing was that the Bambino never got a scratch. My friends all did a very convincing job of denying any involvement and still plead their innocence.

I displayed the Bambino at a Brisbane Italian car festival some time in the mid-1990s. It attracted more attention than the new Ferrari that it was parked next to. Most people wanted to know what it was or was it smaller than a mini or talk about how their relative in Italy had

one of them. A few were interested in the mechanicals. But there was one gentleman who came over with a huge smile on his face. He had worked in a Fiat dealership for decades until new Fiats stopped being sold in Australia in 1989-90. He wanted to know from where I got the wheels. The Fiat 500 has a very strange wheel stud pattern with 4 bolts in a pitch circle diameter of 190 mm (PCD 4x190). There were basically no options other than the factory steel wheels.

The Bambino has Cromodora CD25 magnesium alloy wheels. The gentleman commented that they were an option that could be ordered yet his dealership never sold a set of those wheels. I asked him why none had been sold and he remarked that a set of four wheels cost more than the car!

Cromodora CD25s seem to have always been very rare. I had 8 of them and unfortunately 3 got destroyed in a bush fire that partially burned my parents property including a shed where the three ill-fated wheels lived.

#### *Removalists*

I was moving house and had removalists booked to tackle the large, awkward and heavy items





of furniture. They were making light **work** of the load and I ducked under the high-set house (Queenslander) to grab out a couple of bicycles to go into the removalist truck. It almost didn't register but as I wheeled the bikes out onto the driveway I dropped them, did a double take and headed back under the house. I usually had my Lancia  $\beta$  coupe parked in front and behind it was where the Bambino



*My much-loved  
1974 Lancia  $\beta$  1800  
coupe*

lived. To get the Bambino out, the Lancia had to be moved.

I was staring at the blank spot behind the Lancia where the Bambino should be. The Lancia was still in its place. Just as ideas of theft started creeping up and consuming my thoughts they were broken by one of the removalists shouting out 'Hey, do you want us to pack this in

the van as well?' I turned around expecting to see them holding up a bike and was greatly surprised to see the two men up the ramp at the back of the truck carrying the Bambino on a couple of piano straps. They thought it was hilarious that they had found a way to sneak it out from behind the Lancia without me knowing.



*And another Bambino—the Lego model the Editor was building  
when the last issue came out*



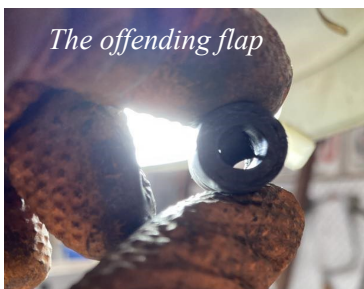
. After a disastrous Baskerville Historics in the OT1600, with a collision and three DNFs in four events, things could only get better – or so I thought.

When I started to fix the damage to the flares, I realised that this was a good opportunity to change something cosmetic that had always bugged me a little – the space between the rear wheels and the guards.

So I bought three metres of 40-mm aluminium angle, a couple of tubes of Liquid Nails, some fiberglass cloth and resin, a few sheets of balsa wood and a pack of plasterboard screws, and prepared to wade in.

At the same time I poked around under the dash to investigate what had happened to the rev counter – which killed the engine every time I connected it up. I diagnosed that it was fried internally and sent it off to Howard Instruments in Heidelberg for repair.

And while I was at it I addressed the elephant in the room – the fuel supply problem that had stopped me every time I gave it the beans at Baskerville. I finally worked out that it was a little flap in the neoprene fuel line between tank and filter. It would let fuel through to fill the carbies, but when I applied the welly the flap would close and the car would lose power immediately.



*The offending flap*

So the new electric fuel pump I had bought was redundant. I fitted it anyway, and I intend to put another one in as a fail-safe.

During all this mechanical stuff the modified rear flares were taking shape. I cut kerfs in the aluminium every 40 mm, drilled large holes in it and bent it into a curve, which I then screwed and glued inside the flares. I followed this up by glassing the aluminium to the underside of the flares, the holes in it being keys for the fibreglass.



*Aluminium 'baseplate'*

Once this had set I did much the same thing with a couple of lengths of 15-mm thick balsa,



*Balsa former*



*Shape and partly glassed*

and stuck it on the outside of the aluminium. More fiberglass followed, and then I sanded it to shape and glassed the whole assembly.

It looked terrible. The gap to the wheel was OK but the surface was very rough, and the Historic Sprints at Symmons Plains were coming up fast.

So I wrapped both flares in yellow duct tape. It still looked terrible, but at least it was uniformly terrible. There was also the matter of a smell of rubber in the car under certain conditions of wheel movement—rotation, for example. It was rubbing.



*Looks uniformly terrible*

Not that it mattered: When I came in after my first run, thinking I could probably go five seconds faster next time, and well pleased with my 165-plus down the straight, somebody asked whether it always leaked water – which it was doing in a puddle on the garage floor.

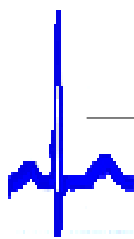
It turned out to be a tiny pinhole in a Welch plug, which we sealed with a self-tapper and a great wad of Knead-it, plus some goop in the coolant to seal any remaining leaks.

I missed one run, but with the help of Dave, Franklin and Hamish in the garage I was soon on the way to the start line again.

I dialled in a large number of revs (no rev-counter) and dropped the hammer. The ‘hammer’ then appeared to attack the rear underside of the car, with the result that I leapt off the line like a big roo and suddenly had no drive.

DNF, followed by DNS. A broken diff, I believe.

More next time. I hope.



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