



## AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2023

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## President's Report

Hello

I was reflecting on a recent question from a mate: "Why do you just stick with Italian cars?"

I went through a series of reasons, from my introduction to Italian vehicles after an initial stint in British ones, and then my conversion from Japanese motorcycles to Italian. It's hard to adequately describe my blind enthusiasm to those who value other marques..... I pondered.... Why? But..... here it is in a nutshell.....**Crazy for Italian over All Others!**

Auto Italia 2023 was a great event with CIAO joining in the festivities with the Fiat Club in Canberra on drives, pizzas, and display.

A Lago Committee has been established to continue the work from last year.

Mid-week coffee runs continue to be popular and members are stepping up to bring a range of calendar events.

Thank you everyone for your contribution..... may we continue with enthusiasm.

CIAO

Greg

### The CIAO Committee

President:	Greg Crow
Vice President:	Warren Buckingham
Secretary:	Craig Osborne
Treasurer:	Phil Hitchcock
Historic Vehicles Registrar:	Warren Buckingham
Events Registrar:	Laurel Buckingham
Membership Registrar:	Laurel Buckingham
Newsletter Editor:	Keith Mitchell
Committee Member:	Adam Collins
Committee Member:	Mort Shearer



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**YOUR NEXT APPOINTMENT** .....

## A word from the Editor

Welcome to the Autumn edition of the CIAO Newsletter.

There have been some interesting Club Runs recently, obviously AUTO ITALIA being the 'biggest', where over a dozen CIAO members braved the long drive to Canberra. Laurel continues to find great destinations for our Mid-week Coffee runs, and John Leeks, ably assisted by Col Goldie, continues his series of **Meet the Member**. This edition's victim.....I mean, subject....is Robert Booth.



**Lago di Mac** continues to resonate in CIAO, from being a finalist in the Lake Mac Community Awards (Page 4), Louis and Janelle's Lap of the Lake (Page 5) and to the formation of an enthusiastic committee to organise the 2023 iteration of Lago di Mac.



Andrew Horvath continues his story of his DeTomaso Pantera in **A Member's Restoration**. A long and detailed description of the trials and tribulations encountered when restoring a classic car, and it is something probably most owners can identify with.

Finally, there is a new feature. **For the diary**, which by the title is fairly self-explanatory and is included so you can plan ahead.

Thank you to Greg Crow, Warren and Laurel Buckingham, Louis Ippolito, John Leeks, Craig Osborne, Geoff Boog, Mort Shearer, Carlo Rossi and Andrew Horvath for their written and photographic contributions.

KM



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## Lago di Mac: finalist in the 2023 Lake Mac Community Awards.



On Saturday 11 March 2023 at Belmont 16s the Lake Macquarie Council held their Gala night celebrating their awards for 2023.

There were 13 categories including in the fields of Sport, Arts and the Environment. Lago di Mac was one of six finalists in the Community Event of the Year Category.

Geoff Boog, the indefatigable organiser

and driver of this event represented CIAO at the Awards Ceremony and had this to say:

“What a prestigious night! Congratulations to Hunter Opera for earning Community Event of the Year - a team with a rich long history of bringing opera & music to the Hunter for almost 40yrs. It was very humbling to meet so many incredibly passionate people achieving some truly amazing contributions within Lake Mac. Lago di Mac was truly a memorable day. A day that could not be possible without our generous sponsors, amazing stall holders, volunteers, and YOU!”

Well done Geoff, you have created an amazing event and it is exciting that, with your guidance, a new committee of CIAO members has been formed to repeat the event in 2023.

Now, get some sleep, Geoff!

KM

## Forthcoming event: Louis and Janelle's Lap of the Lake: May 7.

Whilst occupied with the actual running of our successful Lago di Mac late last year, many of our members did not get a chance to see our beautiful Lake Macquarie and so Janelle and myself would like to show it off! So yes, we drove around the lake over the last two days and this is what we came up with.....

**Start time:** 8.30 am at the **Pavilion** on Toronto foreshore (corner The Boulevard and Victory Pde). Janelle will be providing the morning tea whilst great Italian coffee can be purchased across the road at Casa Nova. (If the weather is poor, we will try again on the May 21).

Next stop is **Lake Macquarie Museum of Arts and Culture** at Booragul which has secured the 2022 Archibald Exhibition. We have booked a private tour of the display @ \$10/person.

Back in our cars we drive around the northern side of Lake Mac stopping at **Sea Eagle Lookout** at Valentine to take in the view. Heading east, we will be passing through beautiful Belmont and the turn south on Pacific Highway.

We cross the Swansea Bridge (let's hope it's not up letting sail boats through) and continue heading south where we turn left to check out the historic coal miner's village of **Catherine Hill Bay** with its amazing Tasman Ocean views.

Heading further south our drive takes us to Lake Munmorah where Tony's family run a tasty Italian Restaurant called **La Notte Uno** where we can now relax and enjoy a long Italian lunch. (Tony has even promised to sing some Italian songs for us!)

Along the way, car passengers will be trying to spot clues to answer local trivia questions.

### Suggestions for writing a report for the Newsletter

If you are writing a report of a CIAO event, some of the following suggestions I found in Amatori Alfa (the AROCA magazine, who borrowed it from their Victorian counterparts) may help. They have been modified somewhat to suit our events and you don't need to answer all questions. They are suggestions only and don't worry too much about spelling, punctuation or continuity. You have to make the Editor earn his huge salary.....

- Event name and description (eg Club run, Mid-week coffee run)
- Place, destination (if applicable), date, time and duration of the event
- Weather details
- Food: menu, cuisine eg Italian, seafood, coffee and cake
- Most interesting car/cars (why, model, colour, type, year, features)
- Did anything interesting, funny, noteworthy happen during the event?
- What did you like about the day/event?
- Tell us about your car and the day (the drive there, did you get lost, run late, get booked, company etc)
- Photos: of people (if seated at tables, better with plates of food, rather than the mess of finished meals and drinks)
  - : plates of food only if interesting
  - : menu, the view, the building and external signs
  - : of the cars (very important!)

KM



OFFICIAL CONVERSION CHART	
HOW TO INTERPRET	
* ANTIQUE CAR ADS *	
IF IT SAYS:	IT REALLY MEANS:
Rare model.....	Nobody liked them when new either
Older restoration.....	Can't tell it's been restored
Needs engine work.....	It's been frozen for 30 years
Uses no oil.....	Just throws it out
No rust.....	Body and fenders missing
Rough.....	It's too bad to lie about
One owner.....	Never been able to sell
No time to complete.....	Can't find parts anywhere
Needs interior.....	Seats are gone
Rebuilt engine.....	Has new spark plugs
May run.....	But it never has
Low mileage.....	Third time around
Many new parts.....	Keeps breaking down
29 coats hand-rubbed paint....	Needed that much to cover rust
Clean.....	It sat out in the rain yesterday
Best offer.....	About what I expect to get
Always driven slowly.....	Won't go any faster
Prize winner.....	Hard luck trophy 3 times in a row
Stored 25 years.....	Under a tree
Real show stopper.....	Orange with purple fenders
Easy restoration.....	Parts will come off in your hand
Ready to show.....	Just washed it
Top good.....	Only leaks when it rains
Good investment.....	Can't depreciate any more

*Thank you Mort Shearer for this. We have all seen ads, and cars, described as such.*





## Club Drive No 1: Estuary, Kangaroo Point Brooklyn. February 22



The Estuary Restaurant and Kiosk is situated just on the Sydney side of the Hawkesbury Bridge on the Old Pacific Highway. Like a number of cafés on this and nearby roads (Pie in the Sky, The Old Road Café in Mt White, Corrugated Café in Peats Ridge and Jerry's Café in Kulnura) it attracts social groups, especially car

clubs, in part due to the fun and scenic drive as well as its relative proximity to Sydney, the Central Coast and the Hunter region.

Much of the attraction of the Estuary is not only the food, but the situation on the Hawkesbury River, as it joins Mooney Mooney Creek to form Broken Bay.



Although June wouldn't say it in her report on the day, her meticulous planning ensured it was a great event. Especially good was the table she organised for us on the balcony. The photo above is the view we had from our table, the railway bridge in the distance.

June writes.....a trouble-free run to Brooklyn for lunch. Weather was fine with a cool breeze, good company was assured with Bec &

Phil, Laurel & Warren, Wendy & Carlo, Janelle & Louis, Lynn & Leigh, Keith Mitchell & Col & I along with a variety of cars, Fiats, M.G, Alfetta GTV, Mustang, Renault and Mercedes at The Estuary overlooking the Hawkesbury River with a view to the Rail bridge.







The management set up 14 chairs and tables together for us on the balcony, then served our meal orders. Huge salads & fish servings, almost too much. As the afternoon set in, the cool breeze increased making some reluctant to leave, so farewells were exchanged until next time. CIAO for now.





## Club Drive No 2: Gartelmann Wines, Lovedale. March 12

First up, I had no idea how popular this café was. I suppose I should have guessed when I had to put down a deposit to book a table.

Our members all converged on the carpark at almost the same time. Although we couldn't park as a group, there was plenty of parking. It is a short walk from the carpark to the Café and we were seated at our table with views to a small dam, complete with fountain.

Those attending were, Warren & Laurel, Phil & Beck, John & Una, Greg & Sharon, Brent, Erin & Charlotte.

It was generally agreed that no one would want lunch after our morning tea come brunch.



Dogs are most welcome at the café and in fact they even have a toilet area for them. We finished up about midday and headed home after another enjoyable morning. Thank you to all those that came.

Warren.









## Club Drive No 3: Auto Italia, Canberra.

15 club members in 7 cars journeyed to the ACT at various stages around the weekend of April 1&2 for the 2023 Auto Italia, held at Queanbeyan Park. Laurel and Warren Buckingham organised a busy itinerary with their usual thoroughness to keep CIAO members occupied whilst there.

Below are a short history of the event and three reports from a few of the attendees. Photos courtesy Laurel and Warren, Carlo and some from the Auto Italia Facebook page.

### A Short History

Auto Italia is an annual event that celebrates Italian cars and motorcycles. The event has been held in various locations around Australia since 1985 and has been hosted in the ACT since 2006.

The first Auto Italia event was held in Melbourne in 1985 and was organized by the Maserati Club of Australia. The event was a success and grew in popularity over the years, attracting more Italian car enthusiasts and expanding to other states and territories.

In 2006, Auto Italia came to the ACT, with the Italian Cars Association (ICA) taking over the organization of the event. The inaugural event was held at the Old Parliament House in Canberra and featured over 150 Italian cars and motorcycles.

Since then, the event has been held annually in the ACT and has grown in size and popularity, with the 2019 event attracting over 400 Italian cars and thousands of spectators. KM



### My AUTO ITALIA – Queanbeyan 2023: Warren Buckingham

Laurel and I drove down on Thursday afternoon so we could meet up with members of the Fiat 2300 Register. We arrived about 5.30pm and after booking into our motel, joined members of our group at the Queanbeyan Hotel which was conveniently opposite the motel. We spent too much time talking about our cars and got to bed later than we should have.

Friday morning came around far too quickly but we still left for today's drive to Gundagai on time at 9.00am. Our first stop for morning tea was at The Long Track Pantry, Jugiong. Along the way we met up with Geoff Hall in his Fiat 1500.





When we arrived at the café, we found Norm and Inez Mitchell (sedan), Kevin and Vicki Lemm (sedan), Howard and Kathy Contrell (sedan), Lawrie and Vergie Hocking (Fiat 128SL). This café not only sells delicious coffee and cakes but also has a vast array of unusual items for sale. Well worth a look if passing by. We now had 10 cars in our group, and it was decided we should take a panoramic photo in the local park. Thanks Deana

From here we motored onto Gundagai for lunch at the Gundagai Services Club. After lunch we spent an hour looking through the town. We found three pups from the dog that sits on the tucker box scattered throughout the town. See if you can find them on your next visit. Of course, no visit to Gundagai is complete without a visit to the statue of the Dog



Sitting on the Tucker Box. Then it was back to



our accommodation in Queanbeyan. Once again, we had dinner at the Queanbeyan Hotel.

Saturday morning, we joined the ACT Fiat Car Club for a morning run to Tidbinbilla Deep Space Centre. Greg and Sharon Crow from the CIAO Club also joined us. First, we met the ACT Fiat Club at the Morning Dew Café located in Denman Prospect for morning tea before heading off to the Space Centre. The road in is twisty and certainly builds your arm muscles in a Fiat 2300, with its heavy steering.

Unfortunately, the Visitor Centre was closed, but still an interesting place to visit. The road back was much easier, except for a moron in a hotted up falcon who overtook each car on double lines or blind corners or hills. We got back to our accommodation in time to have lunch and wash and polish our cars for Sunday.





Saturday afternoon proved interesting, a Lancia would start but that was all, with no power. The condenser proved to be the problem. Luckily someone had a similar condenser, and it was back to full power. The boot lock on my Granluce broke, which required pulling out the back seat to fix. Another fun afternoon!

Saturday night, tonight we were having dinner with the ACT Fiat Club, at the Gryphons Café Bar. Between the ACT Fiat Club, Victorian Clubs, CIAO and the 2300 Register group there was approximately 40 people who all enjoyed the night.

Sunday morning, Auto Italia: the reason we were all there. Just after 8.00am we all left in convoy to Queanbeyan Park, the location of the Auto Italia display. Although we were only a few minutes away the park was filling up fast when we arrived.

The cars are parked in Marque groups for the display. I spent too much time talking to others and



perhaps didn't see as much as I should have of all the cars there. I know I'm biased, but I do think all the Fiat 2300's lined up looked great....9 sedans and 2 coupes.

The winner was a Ferrari, \$200,000 spent on its restoration. He even had a car detailer there in the morning to make it shine. By 3pm the park is empty of cars with people heading home or back to their accommodation for the night.

A combination of CIAO and 2300 people met at the Queanbeyan Hotel for a farewell dinner. It was an enjoyable night with much banter and laughter as we recalled the weekend's events.

Monday morning, time to go home, but first breakfast at the CIAO Café in Queanbeyan before sadly heading home.





## CIAO at AUTO ITALIA - Queanbeyan 2023



For most of the CIAO members who attended the Auto Italia weekend in Queanbeyan it started on Saturday, except for Keith, who ended up in Canberra Hospital for the weekend.

Unfortunately, the normal drive that the ACT Fiat Club organise for Saturday this year was on Saturday morning. A drive to Tidbinbilla Deep Space Tracking Centre. Greg and Sharon who came down on

Friday were able to make it. The first stop was at the Morning Dew Café at Denman Prospect.

Then to Tidbinbilla for a short stop before heading back to our accommodation. Fortunately, most of the club members had arrived in time to attend the Saturday Night dinner hosted by the ACT Fiat Club at



Gryphons Café Bar. Close to 40 people arrived for the dinner, from Victoria, NSW, Queensland and of course the ACT. Our members were Phil and Beck, Louis and son

Raymond, Lou and Robyn, Mort, Warren and Laurel and Greg and Sharon.



Sunday morning arrived bright and sunny, and we all made our way to Queanbeyan Park for the Auto Italia. Entry seemed a lot easier this year, maybe we were earlier. At the entry you

are separated into your marques or special classes for this year. Carlo and Wendy were spotted waiting for their son Sebastian who was dressed in period clothing and looked very classy to be judged for best dressed. Sebastian came second.





## My AUTO ITALIA - Queanbeyan 2023: Louis Ippolito



A little insight into my participation of this year's Auto Italia.

This time it was my fourth visit to Auto Italia and each year I take one of my sons as co-driver and mainly to educate them in Italian motoring history.

Our trip down south (after 2 hours crossing through Sydney in Saturday traffic) was smooth and fast in the Alfa 159 (a red one of course) and surprisingly, Italian cars were few and far between.



On pulling up at the club's preferred Crest Motel we were welcomed by a group of experts trying to figure out how to get a Lancia running again, something to do with the plugs, or maybe the coil, or maybe the rotor cap! Further along was a Fiat -you know the make-**"Fix It Again Tony"** with its bonnet up and having its coil removed to help the Lancia come back to life.



Oh, the joys of Italian motoring!



After checking in to a very basic motel room (looks like it came straight out of the 1950s) we headed off to Gyphons Caffè Bar in Griffith. Same as last year this dinner was



*Sebastian Rossi after being judged runner-up in the Best Dressed: Period award..*

organized and financially supported by the Fiat Club of Canberra and a jolly good time was had by most. Food was Italian (of course) and reminded me of happy times we have experienced in Italy with good food, wine flowing and most importantly, good company. The Canberra mob are a happy lot and over the last few years have shown our club true and genuine comradery.

I understand they are heading up our Lago di Mac this year so I hope our organizers will show them some return hospitality with maybe a drive around the lake followed by a dinner on the Saturday night.

Late Saturday night some of our members were seen at the local car wash preening and polishing their beloved cars, whilst lazy bones (me) left it to the last minute on Sunday morning.



Now for those of you who have not been, Auto Italia is held in the middle of Queanbeyan shopping district in magnificent parkland with a manicured oval as centrepiece. The different makes are allotted a space (mostly under shady trees) and are grouped together by the different models. There is a smorgasbord of makes including Fiat, Ferrari, Maserati, Alfa Romeo, Lancia, De Tomaso, Lamborghini and Abarth. The bikes were also there with Ducati, Moto Guzzi, Aprilia as well as Vespa and Lambretta scooters.

I guess we spent around 6 or so hours looking at, under and over the cars whilst once again the weather was kind to us with a mostly sunny day. My pick and the overall winner was a ground up restoration done on a dark blue Ferrari which the owner claimed had cost a million dollars!



At last around 4pm it was time to say “arrivederci” to our fellow club members, our friends, our new acquaintances and the many car owners who were most happy to show off and chat about their car and its history. Once back into my snug 159 Alfa we hit the highway back to Sydney where I simply dozed off whilst leaving the driving to my #1 son Ramon. (Always prayed that my kids would help me out one day).

Ciao Belle and Belli: your Ciao member Louis

### **My AUTO ITALIA 2023: Keith Mitchell**

Auto Italia 2023 was to be the big holiday for the year: on the Wednesday night, a stop along the way in Mittagong to catch up with ex-colleagues, a beautiful (and extravagant) apartment



for the weekend and plans to join both the CIAO and Italian Made Car Club activities and catch up with friends in Canberra! As they say, the best laid plans.....

The drive started out well, a stop at the Cumberland State Forest for morning coffee at the Café Saligna with an ex-colleague, then the drive to Mittagong. The car was going beautifully and I was loving the feel of the new steering wheel and gear stick. (Thank you Col Goldie).

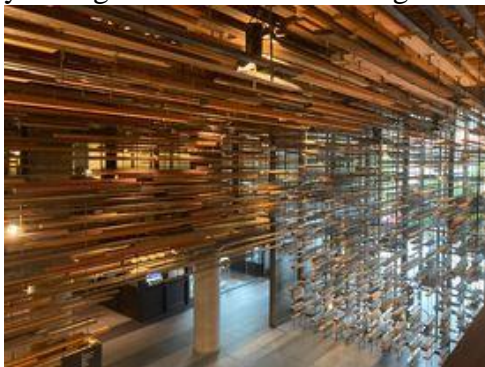


The weather remained dry (just) until the last few



kilometres into Mittagong where I encountered a brief but heavy shower. I was only game to use the wipers for three sweeps, worried that they could tangle, but that was enough to clear the screen. (Phew!)

After arriving at the Motel in Mittagong, the couple in the next room came up to me to ask about the Alfa...they had owned an identical GTJunior of the same colour many years ago and were reminiscing about their adventures.



The next day was a steady drive to Canberra after coffee at Sturt



Gallery with friends and a photo stop at Lake George, only the second time I had seen water in it. Ominously, my right arm was starting to become painful.

After checking-in, Thursday night was dinner with friends and I had decided that on Friday morning I would miss the Gundagai drive and visit the Emergency Ward at Canberra Hospital. That drive was basically all I saw of the city. The diagnosis was cellulitis, possibly from a spider bite and I was immediately admitted. No Auto Italia for me!

I will finish with a comparison of the view on Thursday afternoon from the hotel room, and the view for the remainder of the weekend! Perhaps some day I will laugh over this...just not quite ready for that yet!

KM



## Mid-Week Coffee Run No 1: Lexie's on Stockton Beach. March 1

### The Try Again, Coffee Run

We had tried to have this coffee run in February, but the weather was atrocious on the morning and so at the last minute it was cancelled.

We had decided to try again the following Wednesday and the weather was perfect if not a little warm.



Lexie's is named after the founder, who took over the old surf club, offering locals the best coffee and quality food whilst sitting on the deck, listening to the waves break on the beach and watching the ships come into the Port of Newcastle.



Her dream soon became a reality and with the approval from council Lexie built Lexie's on the Beach. Tragically, just a short time after completion, she was diagnosed with a terminal illness. Though brief, Lexie did see her dream become reality.

We had a good attendance with members and visitors a total of fifteen people. Members included June & Col Stewart, Carlo & Wendy Rossi, Louis Ippolito, Luciano & Robin Casmiri, Robert Booth, Warren & Laurel Buckingham and Greg Crow

Our visitors were Tony Metcalf, Ray, a friend of Tony and Ray & Judy Borwick, Two of our newest members, Luciano & Robin Casmiri who live down south were luckily staying in the area for a short break and so could also join us. It was nice to

meet you.

I'm glad we tried again!

Warren and Laurel









## Mid-Week Coffee Run No 2: Spoonbill Café, Hunter Wetlands. March 22



Yet another Mid-Week Coffee Run postponed owing to inclement weather. With La Nina about to depart the scene, will we be blaming the hot weather of El Nino for cancellations in future? Let's hope not!

Despite dire warnings of voracious mosquitos, luckily proven inaccurate, a keen number of Ciao members turned up for an excellent morning coffee and cake overlooking the various ponds. Attendees included Warren and Laurel,

Greg Crow, Robert Boot and Andrew Horvath. Luckily the weather remained good, so yet another successful Coffee Run.



*A couple of suspicious looking characters! Trying to break into the X1/9?*





## Mid-Week Coffee Run No 3: Wyee Nursery Cafe. April 19

Great weather greeted us on the morning of our Mid-week Coffee run to the Wyee Nursery Café: mild temperature, clear blue skies and the prospect of driving the interesting Hue Hue Road. As always, Gladys was happy to get into the back of the Alfa. It is hard to imagine anything much bigger fitting there.



We were first to arrive, almost immediately followed by the beautiful Austin Healey of John and Una Grecco. The carpark was pretty full, so I parked a little distance from the nursery, hoping other members would park nearby so we could get a nice line up of cars for photos.



The café had set-up a long table just next to the Koi Pond, giving us also a great view of the nursery. Nervous partners watched intently, seeing what plants were being bought and wondering if they would fit into the cars.







There was a nice selection of cakes, and the lunch menu looked good too. It was great to see two newcomers to the event, Lance and Rocky from the Central Coast, who had attended Lago di Mac last year. Warren was especially pleased to get two more Fiats in the club: Rocky's 124 Spider (see photos) and Lance's 124 Coupe. Great additions to the Club.



After everyone had demolished their cakes there was a great deal of movement and chatting as people circulated, some recounting their (mostly) happy experiences at Auto Italia, the distribution of membership forms and discussions of the busy programme ahead of drives, coffee runs, boat trips and car shows. CIAO seems to be a very busy club these days!



Eventually there was a bit of a split within the attendees, the women spending time looking around the nursery, the men heading out to see the cars...and bike.

Il Presidente Greg Crow moved his Moto Guzzi up next to Rocky's 124 Spider so that we had the vehicles lined up. Warren had his mysterious leather briefcase out again and people enjoyed chatting in the sunshine. My favourite photo is that of the rear view of the cars.







It was a great morning and thanks to Laurel for her tireless effort in finding interesting venues for us. KM

**Laurel is always on the lookout for people to organise events, so please feel free to suggest your favourite café or restaurant for a coffee run or a weekend drive.**

## A Member's Profile: Robert Booth

Interviewed by our intrepid reporter-at-large, **John Leeks** and partner-in-crime, **Col Goldie**.

For a long time this Newsletter has wanted to bring you the story of fellow member, Robert Booth. He lives in the Paterson area, so it was good for me and my assistant, Col Goldie, to make the trip to Paterson.

We were greeted by Robert at his home and as with all things that Robert seems to do, he seems to stamp his own unique technical way on them. Take his house, for instance...it is a big handsome house and a big part of it is made from MUDBRICKS!!! Yes, that's right, 8800 of them ...he completed it himself (and with some help from his family). He started building it in March 1989 and finished in April 1990. He told us that at his peak his family made up to 700 mudbricks a day...And these are big buggers. not the anaemic bricks we find in your average home. Col and I were given a tour of his house and it is a substantial and unique house. As Rob was explaining the building process, I was thinking that this house should have been on Grand Designs and that old Kevin McCloud himself would show up. Oh, and the big swimming pool? Yep, Rob built that himself too!



### His Career

We went to his garage and Rob, a qualified mechanical draftsman from St George Technical College (same place where Col went) who worked as draftsman/designer. This brought tears to young Col's eyes as Rob showed us many engineering production plans that he himself had designed and he drew these very plans more than 30-40 years ago. Rob showed us various plans but the one that drew my attention was the plan for the Sunbeam automatic toaster. You wouldn't believe how complicated these things are. These are top quality design plans and extremely interesting to hear the teamwork that Rob needed to be so successful in his life. He recently was on the Dungog Council despite having a very busy consultant's job at regional coal mines. Whilst there we met his wife, Jan, who was busy doing her nursing studies.



### His Cars

#### **Fiat Bambino 500**

I have done quite a few stories on CIAO members, but without doubt none have been quite as



mechanically innovative as Robert. And he is so amicable about sharing his approach and knowledge. Just prior to this visit he gave a talk to CIAO members about mechanical improvements he made to his FIAT Bambino. I remember the first time I met him at CIAO's Belmont event and he took the time to explain the stories around his Bambino to anyone that was interested. I was really impressed with his explanations and the time he took with me.

The following photos show the body work that Robert intends to do as rust has been active. This will take a little shorter time as Robert tells us that he is now officially retired ...for now.



### Fiat X1/9

The photo of his green FIAT X1/9 shows his latest pride and joy. It is in good condition now as he has fixed the rust on sills and doors but Robert will soon put his finishing touches to it and CIAO members would have noticed this car at club Coffee Runs in recent times. He intends to tidy up the interior and do electrical work. He pointed out that at the last outing it developed an electrical problem with Morelli contact points that he could fix on the run and



fix permanently soon after getting home. See, nothing is too hard for Rob!

Car History: what got him started on Italian Cars? Robert's family had a Standard 10 in 1964 and naturally as his dad was a motor mechanic, young Rob learnt a lot from him and started his lifelong interest in engineering. I like to ask our members why they chose Italian cars and Rob says that he admires the engineering design behind them that is often simple, but effective.

He got his first taste of Italian cars when he bought a Fiat 500 from his sister “..for the right price!”. His mother also bought a Fiat 600D. So such a pedigree meant that when he worked in the UK he bought a Fiat 500D and he and Jan drove around Europe in this car for 2 years. He told us that in the 1970s when he ended up in Soviet Union that the border guards there had difficulty believing that this little car could make it thousands of kilometres. And he made it back too without any mechanical issues. Try doing that in most other cars from that era.



I always like to hear the answer to this question ‘What is the worst car you have owned?’ Robert says without a doubt the worst car ever had to be a Wolseley 6/80. He said it reeked of ‘engineering martyrdom’. I think I heard him say that it was a “Mastodon of a car....big and heavy”, and with a hopeless 1500cc engine, it was just hard work. He wasn’t all that complementary about the Ford Cortina that he briefly owned. He told us about the hopeless fan design that ended up poking through the cars bonnet. He simply redesigned it to make it safe, it but really was so dangerous.

His Dream Car? This next question always has me wondering about people and he tells me he likes the Fiat 2300S. Well, that’s good taste for you!



"Okay. Now, try to parallel park while talking on your cell phone and changing songs on your iPod."



## A Member's Restoration Part 2: Andrew Horvath



DeTomaso Pantera ..... A Great Pretender? Part 2 by Andrew Horvath

Being a Corvette owner for many years, I was intending to upgrade to the same year model as the one I owned only with a bigger motor. Upon talking to one of the founding members of the Sydney Corvette Car Club, he made me aware of a possible sale of a vehicle that was restored back in 1990. This prompted me to investigate and though I loved the vehicle, it fell short of what I thought I was going to upgrade to. Doing some research as well as going through some old photos, I came across one photo when I was around 20 years of age of a Pantera in Hamilton. (photo on left) It inspired me to be a little inquisitive to what has happened to these cars over the last few decades.



Internet searching brought me to a website called [australianpanteras.com.au](http://australianpanteras.com.au) which led me to a fellow called Joe in Sydney. He invited me down to his home on the harbour telling me that he has 8 Panteras in his garage to see which setup best suited me. Feeling slightly intimidated by the wealth, I washed the Corolla and my wife and I groomed ourselves for the meeting. Sure enough, driving through Putney we were surrounded by very elegant homes until suddenly the geography changed. Feeling that I missed a street, I phoned him and he confirmed that I was right in front of his place. Looking into his yard, grass three feet tall, junk sprawled all over the place, the home was big but looking pretty average and I was met with a very kind and hospitable fellow wearing some work stubbies, T-shirt and thongs. I shouldn't have bothered to wash the Corolla! Upon entry, I couldn't help noticing car parts also sprawled throughout some rooms and as far as his cars were concerned, 2 of them were complete and the other 6 were in various stages of repair. A one hour visit ended up being a six hour stay.

From this point I was hooked and the upgraded Corvette was a distant memory. The search took me all over the world (back in 2014) until I narrowed one down in the United States for US\$57,000. This was when the AUD and USD were on par. Still with all calculations, it was going to cost me AUD\$95,000 to land it in my garage. And it still was in LHD form. (see

photos below). Trying to decide on completing a purchase so far away was difficult and I stewed for a week to sort something out or come to my senses to buy this unit unseen.



During my decision making, Joe (in Sydney) came to the rescue and gave me another option: a family guy who was ready to let go of his car due to the fact he had two sons and with his wife, they all couldn't fit into a two seater car. So my wife and I travelled to Melbourne and again, what was meant to be a one hour inspection ended up staying for around six hours. We made good friends with this sale and we are still in regular contact with the previous owners.

As much as I wanted to drive it back to Newcastle, Joe told me to truck it back "because you don't know the car and something could happen on the way back". So I took his advice and just as well I did. These photos amuse me as at this stage not knowing about the "misery



highway" that was about to happen.

Though the car was generally restored, it didn't really brake well. The previous owner said it was just the characteristic of this car. It had new discs and pads with overhauled callipers, but I wasn't secure in an emergency stop. The mechanic thought the camshaft was too big and not creating enough vacuum for the brake booster. A vacuum pump was installed and connected to the booster. The result was that it wasn't much better than before. Still not being satisfied, the mechanic went through the vacuum lines again, checking everything. He discovered a one-way valve was put in back to front, therefore not supplying the booster any vacuum. Once corrected, wheel lock-up was easy to do. I cannot believe that the previous owner had the car for 20 years and none of his mechanics picked up this problem.





While at the mechanics, the engine was running too rich. It was fouling the spark plugs every 300 kms. I went back to sort out this issue. They had difficulty in tuning it, changing jet sizes etc. and convinced me to change the carburettor to one that handles big camshafts. The change gave me more power but you could still “smell” that it was running somewhat rich.

Next on the list was to change the front tyres and wheel alignment. As I went to do that, the starter motor started to play up making an ungodly noise. I managed to start the car and headed to my mechanic and at this point the failure was complete. I had to leave the car there and catch the train home. A new starter was purchased for the Ford motor and fitted to find out that the starter pinion was missing the ring gear on the flywheel.



Long story short, someone else has fitted a non-Ford starter to this motor and modified the housing to suit. Further modifications were needed to place the new starter motor back to the original position so that the pinion would engage with the ring gear.

It was noticed on pickup that I had a small leak in the radiator. I had to return the car and get a new radiator. Soon after installing the new radiator and new thermo fans, a hydraulic lifter noise intermittently started and soon after totally failed. It was like a sledgehammer smacking the car with every stroke of the piston. Back to the mechanics on the back of a tray truck. We found that a hydraulic roller-cam lifter had snapped off. Also, a couple of cam lobes were worn off. Normal cam lobes (above right), my worn down lobes (below right). A big expensive repair including removing all the metal pieces that had found their way into the sump.



Back on the road again and within a week the speedo cable broke and on the way to the mechanic, a muffler fell off. He removed the speedo cable to repair, fixed the muffler and then he noticed a small leak in the bottom of the petrol tank. Since the motor and gearbox have to come out to pull out the petrol tank, we decided to putty the bottom of the tank as a temporary repair. I had a few months reprieve from mechanical failures, went to Auto Italia in Canberra, and in the following month went to the Hunter Valley vineyards. On the way back, the hydraulic lifter noise returned. By this stage, I'd had a gutful. I decided to bite the bullet, and rip everything out, and when I said everything, I MEANT EVERYTHING.

So back on the truck it went. I decided to replace everything except the engine block, install new heads and a brand-new stainless-steel fuel tank. I replaced the whole fuel, ignition, and cooling systems as well (see below for before and after).

Since the car was already at the mechanics, my front end was wanting a little tidy up. Bushes, ball joints and an overhauled steering rack were installed. Now that I had scraped the bottom of the financial barrel, I had to stop. It was great to once again enjoy the throbbing sensation of this dragster. In the back of my mind, I wanted this vehicle to be functional and reliable. There are



some more final steps to be done to complete this project. This includes re-installation of a modern air-conditioning system (the car did come with air-con from factory) and attention to some electrical work including new gauges (see below). About 2 years would lapse before being ready to tackle this last phase of work.



In April 2021, I got the call for the last part of this project. The entire interior was gutted and although it looked good when it was in the car, once taken out, it didn't look fresh enough against the new gauges and switches so the decision was made to reupholster the whole interior. There was also some custom work I wanted to do to the dashboard which the repairer left in my hands to chase up. And this is where my nightmare really started!





Within the dashboard, there is a section where a wooden panel or print can be inserted to give a more elegant look. Some reputable places already had work for the next 12 months. I tried some other engineering places that weren't that interested because doing my type of request wasn't their source of bread and butter. Finally, one place accepted the work and said it'll take a few days to cut the panel. To help them out, I gave them a template as a guide but instructed them that the speedo/tacho holes had to be slightly smaller for the new gauges to fit. I even gave them the gauges. Six weeks later, I get the call that the panel is ready. Getting there at closing time, I picked the lot up and went home. I attempted to fit the speedo into the hole, and the gauge fell straight through. They cut the same diameter hole as the template, why did I ever leave my gauges there?

Going back and explaining, they said they'll have it ready in a couple of days. Three weeks later I got my panel back. Now, my panel is made of metal and it needs to be shaped in one area. "Oh no, we don't do that" was the response. Now, I had to find another engineering firm to do this shaping. After finding one, the response was this will take five minutes to do. Three weeks later I got my panel back. One thing to understand is when you bend a panel, the gauge centres can be out a little. So back to the first shop to recut another panel with the adjusted centres. Again, they already had the design in their computers, all they had to do was move the centres a few millimetres. Four weeks later I get my panel back. Back to the second shop for shaping: a five minute job blows out to four weeks. Measuring up, just a little out, back to the first shop and then to the second. Sparing you the details, for the panel to be right and painted (hydro-dipped), it took five months. Unbelievable!

During this time, we found a leak of water through the front windscreen, a job that should have been noticed when the previous owner had the windscreen fitted. During that time, surface rust had begun to develop on the firewall and rust bubbles had started on the floor pan. OK, just keep printing out that money and off to the panel beaters. (see photos at the end of the article). Finally, I repolished the wheels that were painted by the previous owner.



This takes us now back to the repairer who first took on the job. Having worked on a couple of these cars before, he prided himself on the fact that had good knowledge in electronics and the ability to engineer parts. But in the process of customising my interior, it took six months to get some of the interior parts back to him. During this time, he had lost the only 2 staff he had due to COVID 19. Therefore, I was told that he couldn't work on my car because he had to do the usual repairs and servicing on the daily drivers. Furthermore, he said to me that he had to remove my car from his garage because he and his car buddies were preparing for a car show

in February 2022. My car had now been off the road for 10 months and I said that I was afraid that if my car was taken out of there, he wouldn't call to have it back for a very long time. So again, my car was trailered back to my place. March 2022 came and went and he still hadn't called for it back after swearing that he would. I kept in touch every few weeks to see if things improved for him but by July 2022 he said to me to "forget it" if I expect the car to be finished by the end of the year. He also said he'll start an apprentice soon but he won't be good for another two years.

So politely I asked if he'd mind if I tried to find someone else to finish the job, and I got his blessing. A bit of mucking around, but due to a good friend's recommendation, I managed to find a couple of "old school" brothers that have many decades in custom work. They saw the car back in the beginning of August 2022 and gave me some false hope to think they would take it on by the end of September but with little occasional "where are you up to?" it has dragged on until now.

I have now been officially booked in for the 29th April 2023 where they'll commence the assembly of what is required. If you feel that that was enough drama for one car, I must disappoint you with another tangible universe of problems and issues associated with this demon of a car. I finger point now to the upholsterer!

**To be continued.....**





## For the diary.....



### Louis and Janelle's Lap of the Lake Sunday May 7

8.30am: morning tea provided at the **Pavilion** on Toronto foreshore

**Lake Macquarie Museum of Arts and Culture**  
for a tour of the 2022 Archibald Exhibition

Stop at Sea Eagle Lookout and Catherine Hill Bay  
Lunch at **La Notte Uno La Notte Uno**

VINTAGE, CLASSIC & CUSTOM CARS,  
MUSCLE CARS, MOTORBIKES & MORE!

### TILLIGERRY Motorama



**SUNDAY, MAY 21 2023**

RSL Grounds, Lemon Tree Passage Rd, Tanilba Bay

**ENTRANCE FEES** – Exhibitors: \$10 per vehicle. Public: \$2 per person.

**GATES OPEN** 7am. **JUDGING & TROPHY PRESENTATION** 1pm.

**RAFFLE DRAWS** 1.15pm. NB no exit until after Trophy Presentation.

For more information please email: [events@tilligerryautoclubinc.com](mailto:events@tilligerryautoclubinc.com)

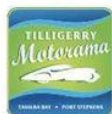
#### ON THE DAY...

Music provided by 100.9 Port Stephens FM.  
Great food, coffee and beverages. Rights reserved.

#### RAFFLE WITH FANTASTIC PRIZES...

Fuel cards (3 individual prizes) to the value  
of \$1,250, \$750 and \$500 to be won!

#### THANKS TO ALL OF OUR GENEROUS SPONSORS



**PASSION FOR CHARITY**

## Euro Motorfest 2023

### Sunday 18th June

From 8.30am to 1.30pm  
Display Vehicle entry fee \$10.00

More details to come

Food & Drinks available  
For more info call Andrew Gowans 0425 204 762

**All European Marques Welcome!**

Please register your club's attendance by  
emailing [public\\_relations@huntermg.com](mailto:public_relations@huntermg.com)

In the event of wet weather the alternative date is Sunday 25th June

Presented by MGCC Hunter Region  
Donating to  
Variety the Children's Charity &  
John Hunter Children's Hospital

# LAGO DI MAC

## *All Italian Festival*

On the beautiful  
foreshore at Lake Macquarie  
Thomas H Halton Park Eleebana

*Sunday, 3rd December 2023*

*Italian car & bike display*

*Italian Food & Wine*

*Entertainment*

*For more information or to register your  
interest contact Carlo at [info@gdp.net.au](mailto:info@gdp.net.au) or  
phone 0412 494 094*

*Event sponsor*

*C.I.A. Combined Italian Auto Organisation*





## Classifieds



November 1983 built GTV with approx. 267,000km from new and under 20,000 since rebuilt some 7 years ago. This wonderful example of a GTV is quite special as it was purchased late 2014 from (Il Presidente) Greg's brother at a car show at Tomago. It has all receipts and original manuals and handbooks and all services from new and lived most of its life in a garage in Armidale. It is one of the first models with the hot dip gal process and consequently has NEVER had rust. Fully restored by Murray and his daughter, the only upgrades I have made is to the motor which appears as original but has been brought up to Autodelta specification for a Group 1 Touring Car. This includes Autodelta camshafts 10.92mm lift and increased duration, 9.7:1 compression and carburettors reworked and sized utilizing the 40mm originals as per Autodelta spec (not 45mm which are Group 2). I think this is how they all should be and uses less fuel on highway, believe it or not. This brings the car up to a much more lively 160hp @6250 rpm and still keeping it virtually identical in nature to original idle and smoothness. Also, with great appreciation to Warren, we rebuilt the tailshaft with new rubbers the lot ...smooth. Comes with spares, original wheels and has new Gearbox mounts and new master and slave cylinders.

Regretful sale at \$25,000. Ring Carlo Rossi on 0412 494 094

## Coda

### Readers' Suggestions.

I hope you have enjoyed reading our Autumn edition of the CIAO Newsletter. Hopefully there was enough content therein for you to enjoy and reflect on the activities of what is a busy and active club. And perhaps occasionally, to make you smile.

To help make the Newsletter's content more in line with our members' interests, I am asking for suggestions for the type of material that isn't included in the Newsletter but perhaps should be.

If you have things you would like considered for inclusion, please send suggestions to [keithrmitchell@yahoo.com](mailto:keithrmitchell@yahoo.com). If there are things you don't like reading about, by all means mention this as well. Obviously not all suggestions can be actioned upon, but some new ideas may come from this, and that is a positive.

If you wish to present your ideas anonymously, you can post them (snail mail!) to me at 125 Berrys Head Road, Narara. 2250

Regards,

Keith Mitchell

