

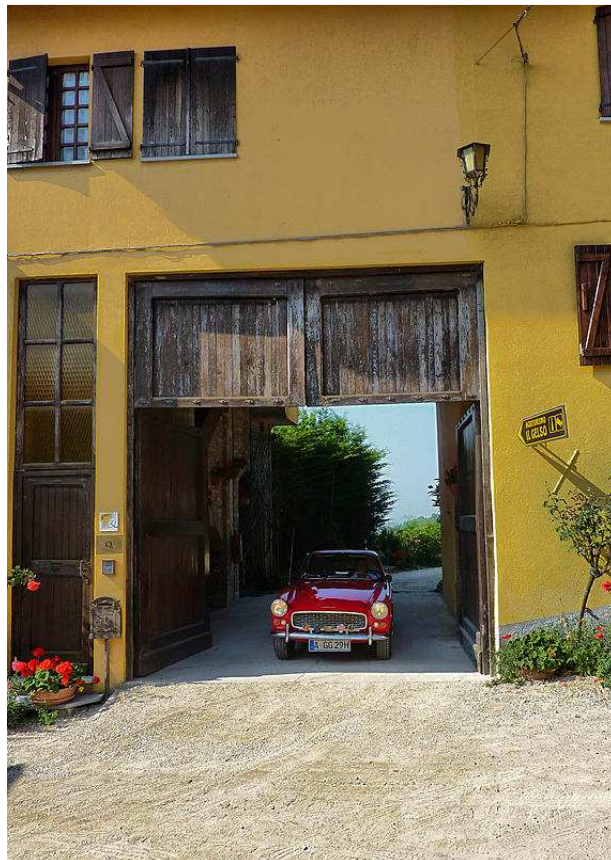
2nd International Triumph Italia Meeting

By Alessandro Maschi (translation by Giovanni Uguccioni)

Spring, for the classic cars enthusiast, is the seasons of meetings that every weekends crowd, from April to October, the roads in Italy. If great events like the Mille Miglia are now a fixed date in the Italian classic cars calendar, 2015 marked a much more exclusive but not less worth of notice one: from May 31st to June 6th, indeed, the second International Triumph Italia 2000 meeting, the first held in Italy, was held between the provinces of Turin and Cuneo. This being an exclusive niche event is implicit in the history of Italia 2000: born out of the enthusiasm of Salvatore Ruffino and of the creative genius of Giovanni Michelotti, between 1959 and 1962 only 329 Triumph Italia were produced, out of which only a bit more than 120 are registered in the International register (triumph-italia.com). Gathering together around 10 after more than 50 years from her presentation is a result worth of notice and a sight worth to be seen.



The crews, coming from all Europe and with a participant from the US, spent the week in Italy equally divided between free time and group excursion aimed to enjoy the local attractions and to discover the origins of the Italian-British coupé, visiting the addresses in Turin of the Carrozzeria Vignale workshops, where all Italias were born. The meeting base was in La Morra, in the very heart of the Langhe region, with the wonderful landscapes of the Piedmont hills that joins with the delightful roads and eno-gastronomic first class offerings.

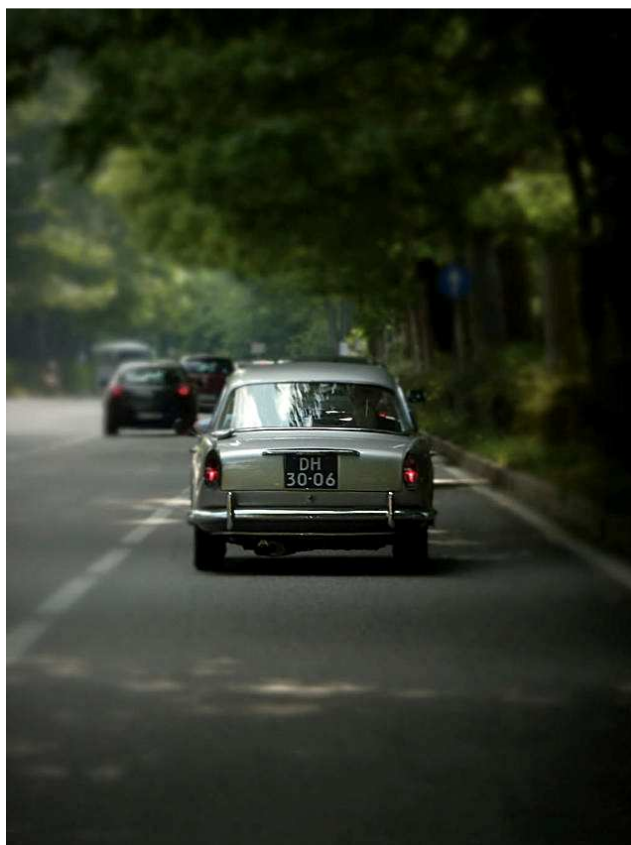


An Italia 2000 meeting is also a place where different countries meet, where the talks are inevitably about cars and where each car is identified by a number, the progressive number that Vignale assigned to each car produced and that, even if not recorded in the official documentation, is printed on a plate inside the engine bay and on various car components. And it is a place where different stories meet, where it is natural to sit near a person that, up to that moment, was a perfect stranger and ask him how the passion for his car was born.



I collected some of these stories, when the difference in language was not an obstacle and as far as allowed by the short time spent with the “Italia guys”

It is inevitable to start from Leo Ranner, the organizer of this meeting and of the first one, held in 2012 in Lindau (Germany). Leo discovered the Italia forty years ago reading a magazine, but took him more than ten years to have one parked in his garage. Since then, he owned more but today his attentions are all for the prototype number 2, bought from a Museum, that he is slowly bringing back to life with a meticulous restoration. The fact that he fluently speaks three languages makes him the pivot and the translator among the other participants.



Paul Harvey is the other European reference person for Italia owners: British, owner of a Triumph TR4 since his University times, he found his #215 in Italy in exceptional conditions of conservation and originality. The history of this finding was the subject of an article in *Triumph in Italy*. He arrived together with his friend Graham Andrews with #215 on a trailer, towed by their big SUV; or at least it was like that up to the arrival near the Italian border, when the temptation to drive the Triumph on the Alpine passes became irresistible. A small vintage convoy made of the Paul's “Verde Palladio” #215, the silver #244 owned by Guy Viel from France – who unfortunately had to leave the meeting beforehand – and the Paul's TR4A driven by Adrian Sinnott and his wife Patricia from the US crossed the passes and the small mountain villages, climbing on the French side to descend on the Italian side.





TR4 is not new to Adrian, an American cartoonist owner of a TR4 that, during the years, has had many aesthetic and mechanical modifications. In a typical US style he turned a blind eye on originality, privileging comfort and performances. His presence in La Morra is due to him being also owner of the Italia #311, bought in 1992 with the settlement of a previous job and found in “far from perfect” conditions. Restored to the glory she deserves, he is today sharing the garage with the Italia #3 – the last of the three motor show prototypes. A very respectable garage, as it should be from the creator of triumph-italia.com.



Graham Andrews, Paul’s travel mate, claims an enviable collection of TRs: starting from TR3A “2 SMC”, a show model as witnessed by the plate “SMC” that means “Standard Motor Company”, the first owner of the car. This very car in 1959 made a promotional tour all over Europe, whose photographs were published in almost all car magazines in the continent. Among some TR4s, it is worth noting the “TGN241F” which has a fairly good racing history and which Graham thoroughly restored. As a result, “TGN241F” won the category prize and the First prize at the Harrogate concourse of the British TR Register in 2014. The family ends with a TR6, but recently a most valuable “cousin”, the Italia #82, was added. Found in very bad conditions, with parts coming from different Italias, it is now subject to one of the most radical restoration I ever met, with the missing parts

rebuilt by hand by a specialist steel worker. With no doubts, at the end of this restoration Graham's garage will host another concours car!

Willem and Jan Hoitink, father and son, came from the Netherlands with a modern car being their Italia #235 still undergoing a long, long restoration. Willem, classic car enthusiast and owner of a Renault Fregate Grand Pavois, found his Italia almost 20 years ago half-hidden in a stock of Jaguars and decided to give it as a present to his son, hoping to instill in him his same passion. His attempt was fully successful, considering that Jan was only 12 at the time and today is a mechanic specialized in vintage Porsches, so much to follow the teams taking part in competitions like the Panamericana and the Mille Miglia. Looking for Jan's free time between the races, #235 waits to be on the road again.

Other participants were Joop Nordijk and his #2; Werner Bartschi coming from Switzerland with his wife and their dog on the TR5 Ginevra, a one-off prototype; Dieter and Margaretha Kramer that choosed to leave their Italia at home to enjoy the Italian sun driving a wonderful Swallow Doretti; Riccardo Paruzza (#85) and Massimo Maccaferri (#163), the only Italian representatives.

And, of course, all the other teams came to Piedmont to celebrate the happy union between Italian style and British technology (*"Italian bodywork at its best, British tradition in sports car engineering as its finest"*, as was the slogan in the sales brochure) which originally did not had the success it deserved, but that today has a niche of prestige in the crowded world of the classic cars.



CREDITS

Photos by Vasileios Papaidis. The full photo album of the International meeting can be found at: <http://tw.gs/36R6gw>.