

A PARALLEL UNIVERSE



Alongside the world of conventional cars there has always run another, that of microcars. Being rather interested in anything leftfield -mechanical or otherwise- these have always held a fascination for me, particularly in the way in which designers offered alternative solution to various motoring problems and even to some which did not really seem to exist!



As a microcar is generally classed as having no more than three cylinders and a displacement of not more than 700cc there are a number of Italians which fit the bill, the Fiat 500 and its successor the 126 being the most obvious and recent, although the Isetta bubble car is perhaps the model which is more likely to spring to mind in this context.



Aside from the fact that Iso went on to build cars at the opposite end of the scale in every respect, it is worth remembering that BMW not only carried out a major redesign of the original but that they then went on to produce a number of other, albeit four-wheeled, minicars before also setting their sights a good deal higher. I cannot imagine that they are now too keen on being reminded about this part of their relatively recent history, which is so far from their present mindset.



Anyway, all of these microcar musings were brought about by a visit to the Bath Microcar Rally (in a modern microcar of my own), where a small but diverse group of motoring mavericks were assembled in defiance of conventionality and the passing of time. They made a great contrast to the sorts of vehicles which we get used to seeing at rallies and we can only applaud their owners for refusing to allow some of the dimmer automotive candles to be entirely snuffed out.





Some makes chose to put the single wheel at the front and others at the back. The latter would seem to be preferable given the laws of physics, yet this Bond was a far more popular car than this Noble.



In its three- and four-wheel guises the Messerschmitt was then -as now- seen as the ultimate car of this type.

