



EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

On most August Bank Holiday Saturdays we travel to a small airfield on the Somerset/Dorset border to witness a fly-in by various aircraft. The mixture of ages and makes of aircraft differs from year to year and this is what makes repeated trips to this same location interesting, coupled with the fact that the whole event is just so friendly. Now in its 10th year, a display of vehicles also takes place and this is equally mixed and unpredictable, although every year it increases in size and scope.

This year I was surprised that one of the first cars to attract my attention was a pre-war Alfa. Alfas from this era are not often seen - even at Alfa meetings- so this was certainly something unusual and a very welcome find with its sporting coachwork.



Although the next Italian car which I stumbled across was about



half the Alfa's age, it is in many respects almost as rare. The Fiat 850 Coupe was something of an anomaly as the 850 saloon was something of a coupe itself, but in giving this car a completely different body Fiat came up with this minor classic. Not only is it well-proportioned but it embodies many pleasing details and even with its small engine it provided surprising performance and handling characteristics. Sadly, although quite popular, Fiats of this period were not known for their durability with the result that survivors are few, especially in this condition.

A couple of rows on and I was able to complete the Fiat group triumvirate with a spectacularly fine Lancia Fulvia saloon. Again blessed with coachwork which always seemed to lose out to the British climate pretty quickly, these cars were anyway never popular when new and were an amazing contrast to their various coupe siblings. Although the styling is very much love-it-or-hate-it, these cars always exuded a quality that was unusual for a saloon of these small dimensions and this still shines through to-day.



Well that's it, I thought, but no: Among the motorcycles lurked another Italian rarity, this fine 1952 Moto Guzzi (and that is an



MZ next to it and that is another story entirely). I suppose that there might have been one or two of these in that sea of two-wheelers at BIAMF, but this is certainly not a normal rally find.

So, back to the aeroplanes - but what's this? The ivory Alfa has vanished but another of a similar vintage has appeared. This time



in red with a more formal style of open coachwork, it is a well-used example in tidy but far from perfect condition, having the appearance of having been enjoyed for many years rather than hidden away, as so many of these now absurdly-valuable cars are.

Having gone to look at aeroplanes it was strange to find five rare Italian machines in the same -unlikely- place on one day, but then it pays to keep your eyes open and to expect the unexpected - wherever you are. We stopped at Sherborne Abbey on the way home and found the carving reproduced at the head of this piece, so you can see just what I mean!

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