

NOW YOU SEE THEM...



It's one of those strange contradictions, but the more popular that a car is the less likely it is to survive in any great numbers. One of the reasons for this may be that their very popularity means that no-one finds them particularly interesting, but it is strange just how you suddenly realise that you have not seen an example of a particular model for a while when they were formally so numerous. Familiarity, as they say, breeds contempt.



Another side of this coin is that cars which are rare when new often have a very high survival rate, so while the popular British cars of thirty years ago may now only exist in fractions of a percentage of their original numbers, something like 80% of all the Bugattis or Porsches ever made are still around.



While some Italian cars have sold reasonably well, none can ever be described as true volume sellers in the UK. That said, many models have been quite a familiar sight on British roads during their production runs and if you can think back to the 1970s or 1980s cars like the Fiat 127, 128 and Uno were certainly not uncommon. As with many cars from those decades, corrosion and rock-bottom values no doubt played a big part in their speedy decline and it is probably the latter factor which has also decimated more recent Fiats, such as the Marea and now even the Stilo.



It was seeing some erstwhile popular cars on the recent IAMC visit to the Gloucester Warwickshire Railway that set me thinking on these lines (if you'll forgive the pun!), so let's take a look at the surviving proportion of some of the models which we saw there at their vehicle rally. Although four were present on that occasion, the ranks of the Austin Allegro have been some of the most heavily culled with only .05% of those made surviving (that's less than 300 from 640,000!) and there were also examples of the Rover SD1 (.1% remaining), the Hillman Avenger (.06%) and the Hillman Imp (.2%).



The figures for licensed/SORN'd numbers of Italian cars over a ten year period from 2003 to 2012 make interesting reading too. The Lancia Dedra IE was once a Fiat Auto UK fleet car, but it has declined from 751 to 23 during this period and the Fiat Tipo SX IE from 1119 to 26. The Alfa Romeo 145 Cloverleaf went from 1807 to 343 over those ten years and even if you look at the combined all-model figures they are equally alarming, the Alfa Romeo 33 dropping from 1448 to just 67!



So, it would appear that if you have a good example of an 'ordinary' car it is worth cherishing it, as over time it will likely become rarer than almost any Ferrari!

MJB

