

Press Release

MERCANTEINAUTO AS A DETECTIVE STORY ON DISPLAY EDNA HILL'S "FIAT 1100 OF SECRETS"

Running concurrently with the Fiere di Parma exhibition dedicated to classic cars will be the rally and elegance competition of Vespas 400, the city-car that was Piaggio's dream

(Parma, 15 June 2018) Officially she was a respected diplomat at the English Consulate in Bavaria. But the suspicion is that **Edna Hill**, at the time - in the early 1950s - just over 30 years old, was in reality a secret agent, very skilled at exploiting her social position to escape custom controls.

In support of this hypothesis are two hidden compartments which, as any secret agent worthy of their name would do, Mrs Hill included in the car she herself designed and had built by Wendler in Reutingen (Germany), on a **Fiat 1100/103** model brought in directly from the Turin headquarters of the historic car company. Seen through the lens of its hidden secrets, the endless correspondence, sketches and owner's requests for quotes from Pininfarina and Zagato for a one-off Coupe body, the car seems almost to be at the centre of the plot of a suspenseful detective story.

Edna Hill's Fiat, part of **Stefano and Claudio Baroni's Old Cars Collection**, is the star of Mercanteinauto (Pav. 2), the Fiere di Parma event for car enthusiasts that will take place on the opening weekend (**29-30 September**) of Mercanteinfiera, the prestigious international exhibition dedicated to antiques, modern antiques and vintage collectibles (**29 September - 7 October**).

At Fiere di Parma, it will be possible to picture Edna Hill at the wheel, breezily confident, speeding with her inseparable dachshund hound along the roads of Europe, to carry out her diplomatic duties or, as some claim, to become involved in mysterious international intrigues as a secret agent. The car was equipped with two secret compartments. One can be accessed by removing the grille and pressing the Fiat logo downwards, while the other is hidden under the back seat, protected by an invisible false bottom.

The equipment was also original and unconventional (for those times). The reclining fake leather seats, the sliding canvas roof, car radio and sporty dashboard speak of a strong, determined, mysterious and petulant woman who, with all her requests, literally drove Fiat workers and Antonio Casalis of the Monviso Body Shop crazy: a larger windshield, more curved windows, a lower real window, a thermometer and ammeter included in the instrument panel.

The car remained in the hands of the British official until 2005, when she stopped driving and moved into a retirement home. In 2013 this unique "1100" model was spotted by chance on a British government website, among cars of former servicepeople, officials and ambassadors that were up for auction. It was bought and it arrived in Italy in perfect condition, despite the 200,000 miles it had driven.

The Mercanteinauto format has always highlighted *design* and the *history of fashions*. It is not by chance, therefore, that Edna Hill's Fiat 1100 will be displayed alongside other Fiat 1100 models. **The 1937 508C, the 1955 1100 TV Fisswore, the 1100 Musone**, altogether about ten vehicles that have made the history of Italy's car industry: designed in the post-war years they had to please drivers who were beginning to wish for better performances than those provided by small economy cars. The cars on display come from the Baroni's private Collection.

Ruote a Raggi, on the other hand, are bringing to the exhibition the timeless **Spiders** by **Fiat**, **Lancia** and **Alfa Romeo**, which combine history, success and Italian tradition.

The **7th** edition of *Mercanteinauto* will also include a **Vespas 400 Rally (28-29-30 September) and Elegance competition**, the microcar designed by Piaggio and built in France between 1957 and 1961. In this case, too, there is an interesting story to tell. The "*pioneer city car*" was tested by Piaggio in great secrecy, on the nights between 10 and 17 August, 1953: they were driven more than 200 kilometres a night along paved and dirt roads, from Pontedera to the province of Siena. But the car in the end was presented at the Paris Motor Show in 1957, and was never produced in Italy. Many people thought that Agnelli had a hand in this decision.

Many cars from all over Europe will take part in the rally - organized by the **Vespa Historical Register** -, driving through the ancient medieval villages of the Emilia hills during the weekend.

The seductive world of cars is also a protagonist at Mercanteinfiera, with a collateral show that celebrates the genius of **Sergio Scaglietti**, the icon of Italian car design who was discovered by Enzo Ferrari and designed for the house of the Prancing Horse some models that are symbols of the 1960s: the 250 Testarossa, the 250 GT California and the 375 MM, made for Roberto Rossellini and Ingrid Bergman.

The collateral show, entitled "From sheet metal to design: Sergio Scaglietti's maieutics", is organized by Oscar Scaglietti and Davide Toni of Toni Auto, the Maranello workshop specialized in the restoration of the "iconic reds".

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