

3rd Pan European Automotive Historians Conference, Turin, October 14-16 2022.



It was my great pleasure to be back in my beloved Turin for the 3rd PEAHC last month. Even the accommodation had historic links for me as we were housed in the old FIAT Lingotto factory which was built from 1916-21 and includes the famous rooftop test track. Production there ended in 1982 but the building has been converted into a number of commercial spaces, including 2 hotels and a shopping centre, a performing arts complex and

multiple offices, storages and public spaces. The most recent addition is the rooftop Pista 500 roof garden and the Casa 500 museum and cafe which Stellantis (current FIAT corporate incarnation) has installed for the enjoyment of the people of Turin. Many were concerned that the loss of the track integrity on the roof was a retrograde step but seeing the crowds of families coming to learn about the automotive heritage of the city amid 40,000 plants compared to the few lonely car nuts who traversed the broken bitumen as it was I would have to say it is an enormous success. Cars can still circulate the track and a number did so celebrating the centenary of the Lancia Lambda a couple of weeks prior to my visit.



My initial contact with attendees was on the Friday after I had arranged for a number to attend the Stellantis Heritage Hub which is a recent addition to the local auto history scene in Turin. Housed in a 15,000 sq metre decommissioned transmission production plant in the FIAT



Mirafiori it houses some 250 cars from the marque's collection and also a number of display engines, a large range of Lancias and had been used as an internal design resource for the company until the past few years. Interestingly, there is little interpretive signage and I was glad that I had a thorough knowledge of many of the cars prior to attending. The guided tour focuses on

the major exhibits but certainly helps the understanding if you have not spent 50 odd years reading FIAT histories like some of the tragics among us have. The conference proper was hosted by the impressive Museo Nazionale dell'Automobile which was set up relatively early in the scheme of automotive history. Count Carlo Biscaretti di Ruffia, the son of one of the FIAT founders, began collecting cars in the

early 1930s and displaying them shortly thereafter. Mariella Mengozzi, the mercurial director of the Museum described its origins in the opening session of the conference after brief introductions and welcomes by Anders Ditlev Clausager and Thomas Ullrich and a short description of the role of FIVA in such events by Natasa Grom Jerina. Alberto Scuro of the ASI (Automotoclub Storico Italiano) described the coverage and extent of the classic car movement in Italy.

The morning sessions covered a wide range of topics from speculation on the make and model of car which led to the passing of Isadora Duncan through to an exploration of the Soviet car industry and the maintenance of a register of all original Mille Miglia (1927-1957) entrants through research and documentation. A presentation on local Torinese designer Pietro Frua's ability to produce a concept car within 6 weeks was also enlightening.

After a pleasant buffet lunch and discussions with a number of fellow attendees it was back to the grindstone to learn more about world automotive production to 1918, Danish car manufacture and the European World Car project of the 1930s. The follow up by FIVA representative Aleksandar Vidojkovic about utilising a multi-disciplinary

approach to automotive history research definitely prompted discussions among conferees during the tour of the Museums restoration garage and document archive before dinner in the Museums Glass Hall.



Sunday morning dawned bright and with burgeoning contact lists and plenty of chat over breakfast in the hotel the day was off to a wonderful start. The short walk to the Museum necessitated another coffee and so armed we learned more about pre-war sports cars in the US and the car as mechanical mistress, an interesting detour into literary



references and social sciences. A presentation on the history of wheels and tyres rounded out the first session and after a short break it was a dive into lithographic

poster printing in early 20th century Europe then a little on the Hungarian auto industry and a highlight for the conference a short primer on the use of e-fuels to power classic cars and the efforts currently underway in Germany to promote their production. A hopeful note to close on.

The closing statements by the President of FIVA and the conference co-ordinators left us in high spirits with a group photo in front of the Museum and another visit I had a part in organising to the FIAT Centro Storico which houses their archive and details more of the marque's history in fields other than automotive.

I am happy to discuss any of the subjects that were raised in more depth or put interested parties in touch with presenters. My interest certainly leads me to expressing intent to attend the 4th PEAHC in 2024 despite the long flight and jet lag I had a wonderful trip and only partially was it due to the location being my beloved Turin.

Roger Beattie AHA committee President, Fiat Car Club of Victoria