

# CLASSIC

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## TRADITIONAL TRs





A bevy of complete Ferrari 250 GTEs lined up by the Maranello production line, with a 250 Spyder California facing

# CASA FERRARI

Since the Fiat takeover, Ferrari manufacture has moved into the modern age of computers and robots, but it wasn't always that way. Doug Nye examines how the Maranello factory has evolved

Comparing today's Ferrari factory at Maranello against the way it used to be 10 or 20 years ago is remarkable. No longer is this an artisan plant handcrafting each year a few hundred rarefied performance cars for the great and famous. Now Fiat-Ferrari's *Reperto Industriale* has one of the most modern motor manufacturing plants in Europe. Its capacity now is up to about 3500 cars a year. Through 1984 it produced 2841 new Ferraris, making extensive use of computer-controlled machine tools and robotics, and although the charisma and appeal of the modern range seem as great as ever you do now feel that they are available off the peg - you're looking now at more of an automotive Harrods than a Saville Row tailor's.

But it's only the old exclusivity which has been diluted by Fiat-Ferrari's own success. Quality has not been compromised.

Enzo Ferrari established his Scuderia Ferrari in the centre of nearby Modena, his home town, in 1930. His fame grew and spread, and then after the war he built cars under his own name at Maranello, which is a 20 mins drive away up the road south-west towards Abetone in the Appennine foothills. As Maserati moved into Modena from Bologna, and other specialist car companies either gravitated to the city or were born there, so in the fifties Modena became motor racing's Mecca. In those days the traffic on the ring road would often scatter as one of the Ferrari drivers rocketed down the centreline in a Le Mans 250TR en route to the *Aerodromo* on test, or Maserati's Guerrino Bertocchi would blast by, pugnaciously flat-capped, testing a 250F or 'Birdcage'.

The city was always full of foreigners, just passing through or stopping by to do business. Many had motor racing business. But then, suddenly, Modena's marques no longer led the world. The specialists there still worked on, as dedicated and committed as ever, but their work lacked the old significance. Apart from Ferrari, out there in the sticks at Maranello, what was done in Modena no longer mattered. Its old appeal burned out as the city grew

and engulfed the *Aerodromo*. Suddenly it was too dangerous to fly 'planes there, and far too dangerous to test cars. At the end of the sixties, Ferrari opened its own test track at Fiorano across the road from the Maranello plant, and no longer were 'serious' cars to be seen in Modena proper.

But still today it is very much the home of the Italian supercar: Maserati are still in the town, Ferrari, Lamborghini, de Tomaso all close by. Although more sophisticated cars have been built in centres like Stuttgart, Coventry, Acton, Surbiton and Cheshunt, not one of those names has ever



Ferrari, surrounded by admirers, in ponderous mood projected the motoring mystique and magic to match Modena's.

In some ways that's strange. Flat and industrialised, hot and dusty in summer, chilled by dense dank mists in winter, Modena is no health spa. But it has its people, willing and industrious and skilled with generations of craftsmanship bred into them.

Modena is one of that long procession of cities spaced along the old Roman Via Emilia which runs north-west to south-east, angling across the 'thigh' of Italy at the foot of the Appennines. It's just over 100 miles south-east of Milan. At Modena the old slow road from Lucca to the Brenner Pass - which actually runs northwards right by Ferrari's front gate

at Maranello and then through the small town of Formigine on its way into Modena - intersects the *Autostrada del Sole* screaming by to the south.

The region is known as Emilia-Romagna. Mr Ferrari has described it as an area of "... small and medium concerns with an incredible variety of activities and products ... the first real workshop I saw emerging in Modena was an ammunition factory in 1914; it was meant to be a cotton mill, but the Great War caused it to become a shell factory. After the war it became *Officina Costruzioni Industriali* with Fiat becoming a partner, and latterly the Fiat tractor plant. This is an exception as large plants have made no headway in Emilia-Romagna, whereas I have seen an enormous vitality in those enterprises which emanate from the family group, later to expand as oil does in water ..."

Describing himself as "an Emilian who loves his land", he describes it accurately as producing "an intelligent, willing, technically prepared workforce, traditionally capable. It is a fact that here in Emilia people have always nourished a love for technical education; in this there is a real tradition.

"Here one does not first build factories and then look for manpower - no, here we first form men by making available the necessary technical know-how and then we erect the factories. A factory is first and foremost made up of people, then of machinery and, lastly, of bricks and mortar ..."

And his particular family factory has certainly expanded as does oil on water ...

Modena was a far smaller provincial town when he was born on its outskirts 87 years ago, on February 18, 1898. Father Alfredo Ferrari came from Carpi nearby. Grandfather had been a *salumiere*, in the delicatessen trade, while Alfredo Ferrari had been employed by the Modena railway works, before founding his own workshop making metal railway fabrications. Mother Adalgisa, *née* Bisdini, came from Forlì down the road beyond Bologna.

The Ferrari autobiography *Le Mie Gioie Terribili - My Terrible Joys* which with some reason has not escaped being lampooned as 'My Terrible Book' -





Not only did the Germans requisition, but they bombed Maranello in November 1944



Maranello factory, pictured in the late fifties, is little changed externally today



Timeless classic - GTO under exact construction

explains how Enzo's elder brother Alfredo died in the Great War, how he himself has suffered chronic poor health, and how in the twenties he worked for Alfa Romeo of Portello, Milan.

He almost became a Grand Prix driver with the Alfa P2s at Lyons in 1924, but has since talked of suffering a nervous collapse of some kind there. He had already proved more valuable to Alfa Romeo as the go-between responsible for head-hunting Fiat's top racing engineers from Turin.

That was in 1923; he was only 25, tall, friendly, widely known within the racing fraternity and clearly an immensely persuasive man. The late twenties found him dividing his time between Milan and Bologna, where he was Alfa's agent for Emilia-Romagna and the Marche.

In late September 1929 Borzacchini broke the world's 10kms speed record at Cremona in the 16-cylinder Maserati. The Bologna Automobile Club threw a celebration dinner. Ferrari found himself seated between a customer of his from Ferrara named Alfredo Caniato - who was a wealthy young hump and textile merchant - and the Bologna-based gentleman racer from Bergamo, Mario Tadini.

He expounded his ideas on the best way for a group of amateurs to go racing. They should combine to form a professionally-staffed Scuderia which he would manage on their behalf. It would supply and prepare cars for them, so they could merely appear at the right place at the right time and drive. He would handle the commercial side, and who knows, they might even be able to make their sport pay for itself? So on December 1, 1929 the *Società Anonima Scuderia Ferrari* was legally founded.

It would survive for eight action-packed seasons, maturing from an umbrella organisation for a rather dilletante band of wealthy amateurs into Alfa Romeo's trusted quasi-works Grand Prix team. It accumulated enormous success, until the German teams came on song around 1935. Then, as prize money thinned, the Scuderia built its first Alfa Romeo cars...

Upon its inception in that winter of 1929-30, Mr Ferrari had returned to Modena to set up its HQ in a garage building at No 11 Viale Trento Trieste. This broad thoroughfare is in the south-east of the city, where it leads off the south-western corner of the rectangular Largo Garibaldi whose narrow central gardens and large monumental fountain today relieve the Via Emilia as it heads off towards Bologna.

According to Italian historian Luigi Orsini, the new Scuderia was set up in what had been the Gatti workshops there. But according to Ferrari's own account, Corrado Gatti enters the story later. Unless there were two Gattis, I haven't yet got to



Double act - Jayne Mansfield and Ferrari 250LM

the bottom of this ...

Irrespective, early in 1930 the *Soc. An. Scuderia Ferrari* was established in No 11 which was a compact but quite elegant two-storey ochre building, behind a triple-bay Liberty-style facade. Inside was a small but well-equipped machine shop, showroom space for the Alfa agency which Ferrari still operated energetically, and single-storey service bays out the back. Ferrari had a dozen or so staff.

The advertisement-festooned Scuderia HQ was extended in 1932 with an adjoining block built to its right as one faced it, and a canopy supported on tall square columns now shielded the two Shell petrol pumps on its narrow forecourt. The Scuderia's heyday years were centred here, and in 1935 Mr Ferrari turned to *Libre* racing to generate some extra revenue and his old friend Luigi Bazzi worked with Arnaldo Roselli to build him the two famous *Bimotore* Alfa Romeo specials.

By 1937 the Scuderia's usefulness to Alfa Romeo was waning. In March, Alfa Romeo acquired 80 per cent of SA Scuderia Ferrari's share capital though Mr Ferrari was still to manage the concern independently and would still race and sell Alfa competition



Ferrari charisma - Peter Sellers and Britt Ekland

cars. But Alfa were taking a closer corporate interest in the activities of what was now their quasi-autonomous Modena division.

But Italy could not afford a competitive Grand Prix car. Mr Ferrari had already faced that fact and was keen to build a 1500cc voiturette - or *vetturetta* - instead. Alfa's board agreed, and the Trento Trieste offices became home to Gioacchino Colombo, working with Bazzi (of course), Angelo Nasi, Federico Giberti and Alberto Massimino.

There they designed and began assembly of the first Alfa Romeo 158 *Alfetta* cars which would dominate their class before and after the Second World War, but not in Ferrari's hands. For 1938,



Homologation requirement - 25 512 prototype racers

Alfa Romeo President Ugo Gobbato set up Alfa Corse as the factory team at Portello, and appointed Ferrari himself manager there. The Scuderia as a joint-stock company was liquidated; Ferrari, most of his people, the machine tools, the old cars, the four brand-new 158s, plus all spares went to Portello.

All that remained at Viale Trento Trieste was the Alfa dealership. Ferrari's new deal with Alfa included a contractual undertaking that should he for any reason leave their employ he would not have anything to do with any other team or manufacturer for at least four years, nor would his name be attached to a rival car.

He was 39, rising 40, and he soon found he couldn't stand working for somebody else. He was dismissed with a golden handshake after a fraught first few months. He had money from the Scuderia's liquidation, and was able to return to Modena and set up a company called *Auto-Avio-Costruzioni* in the Trento Trieste premises, which were then and would be even into the seventies, if not the eighties, still referred to locally as *La Scuderia*.

Massimino came with him from Portello and designed two straight-eight 1500cc sports cars for the 1940 Mille Miglia outside Brescia. They were called simply the '815s', used many Fiat parts and practice, were *Superleggera*-bodied and built in conjunction with Enrico Nardi. They were the first Ferrari cars, but under the terms of his Alfa Corse severance he could not use his name on them.

Then Mussolini ill-advisedly took Italy into World War II. Initially Mr Ferrari got a job with the *Compagnia Nazionale Aeronautica* in Rome, and he says it was there that Nardi introduced him to Corrado Gatti from Turin, who ran a machine tool business. Gatti suggested Ferrari should do the same, making German-designed hydraulic grinding machines for ball bearing production. Ferrari applied for a licence but was turned down - they couldn't spare capacity to inspect his work. But there was nothing in Italian law to stop him copying the machines, so he took on 40 or so staff in Modena and began production regardless.

His machines worked well and built a fine reputation. By late 1943 he had around 150 staff when an edict on industrial decentralisation forced a move from the cramped Modena premises. He already owned a small villa and tract of land at Maranello, out towards what was then the 'Gothic Line' of German defences against the Allied thrust from the south, and he set up his machine tool factory there, perhaps anticipating early liberation?

After the Fascists' fall, the German *Wehrmacht* took control. On October 8, 1944, German officers visited Maranello, took an inventory and requisitioned



tioned everything Ferrari could make. Mr Ferrari observed acidly, "The fact that I had been denied a manufacturing licence, drawings and technical advice had evidently not prevented me from turning out machines that had already earned a name for themselves even over the border ..."

On November 4, 1944, his plant was bombed, and again in February 1945. There's a lovely story that in recent years, just after Harvey Postlethwaite had joined the racing department, builders repairing a roof in the old buildings discovered some expended cannon or machine gun rounds, evidently inserted by some strafing British aircraft. The 'Old Man' summoned Harvey, showed him the evidence and said with a broad grin "I believe these are yours ..."

He had evidently played a brilliant political game during the war years, teeing-up progress and survival for the time when it would all be over. He had kept the support and deep respect of the Emilian people. They had cheered for his team and his drivers in the thirties, and while the *Fascisti* in Rome perhaps thought he was racing for the greater glory of their system, he was perceived more as racing for *la Patria* - for his country.

The communist partisans were especially strong around there, hiding in the Apennines, Sergio Scaglietti (who would build Ferrari bodies) prominent among them. Talking to a veteran Modenese publisher recently about those years, his man-in-the-street opinion was emphatic: "Ferrari was anti-Fascista - maybe anti-communismo too, but always for *l'Italia*, maybe Emilia and *num' er one*, for Ferrari! I tell you, seriously, the people were for him. He would have no trouble after the war ..."

And it seems he did not. The damaged Maranello factory was rebuilt and slightly enlarged in 1946, and has been extended at regular intervals ever since.

Colombo produced the first Ferrari V12 engine design that year, the prototype Ferrari car emerging in 1947. Automobili Ferrari grew with its own foundry in the old sawtooth-roofed ochre buildings at Maranello, drew in the best artisans from that rich region and Mr Ferrari built his legend as the far-sighted and semi-benevolent despot ...

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### "Ferrari was anti-Fascista - maybe anti-communismo too, but always for *l'Italia* ..."

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Ferrari road car production was founded alongside the racers, and the buildings were progressively extended and enlarged. In the early fifties the now famous red-brick gatehouse and office block was completed, its arch opening onto the stone-set courtyard with the yellow-washed long hall of the racing department on the left just inside, the production plant beyond, foundry to the right.

Across the road was the *Cavallino Bianco* pub, later *Cavallino Rampante*, a restaurant cum watering hole cum home to favoured customers and works drivers. Recently rebuilt, it's now a very pleasant restaurant, the *Cav'lan'i* to Ferrari's staff.

Down in Modena today is the Ferrari chassis plant and of course *Carozzeria Scaglietti* where for years the aluminium body panels were literally beaten to shape over "a tree stump".

In the Viale Trento Trieste a long low pale brick customer centre, the *Assistenza*, was erected to the left of *La Scuderia*, which became a filling station in different hands and remains so today, still recognisable as home of the legend. Stand outside on a balmy autumn day, narrow your eyes and I swear you can see the shades of those *Alfa Monoposti* and the Mille Miglia cars with their translucent red headlight covers slipping out of that doorway, warming up in the street outside with Ramponi, Ongaro, Mambelli, Lucchi, Jotti and the other mechanics at the controls, names now forgotten ...

There's a flat above the *Assistenza* next door where the Ferrari family once lived. On my first visit when I collected the Donington Ferrari 312B there in the early seventies, my pal Pete Coltrin - who

lived just across the road - quietly showed me a shrouded shape which he said was Dino Ferrari's Fiat, still parked in the *Assistenza* as he left it before his premature death due to muscular dystrophy in 1956.

And other friends who knew Modena during its heyday tell more. Like in 1952-53 when Alf Francis was Stirling Moss's mechanic and Stirl was perhaps better respected in Italy than he was here at home. Alf was driving a Commer van lettered with Stirling's name and given to him as tacit sponsorship by the Rootes Group. Alf did a deal with a back-street Modenese hotelier to stay there half-price as long as he would park the van outside, so everyone would think the great English driver was staying there ...

The most popular hotel in town among the racers and competition customer was the *Reale*, on the north side of the Largo Garibaldi, today a bank. In its heyday its reception desk was inhabited by the mankiest old mongrel dog imaginable. Then the place was bought by the Fini family who moved it up market as the *Hotel Reale Fini*. The first thing they did was remove the dog, and the regulars felt this was the thin end of the wedge. The new Palace Hotel had just opened further up the road, and they moved in there *en masse*. Hans Tanner - whose seminal Ferrari book I have revised twice since his death - was one to make the move, and Pete Coltrin subsequently took over his room after the Swiss-born entrepreneur one day flew the coop ...

From the Palace Hotel you simply crossed the road and turned left into the Trento Trieste, up towards the old *Scuderia* and Ferrari's *Assistenza*, while if you turned right out of the Palace's front door, then right again into the Viale Ciro Menotti, you were on your way to Maserati's.

Customers and enthusiasts were welcome at Maserati's almost any time, but their reception at Ferrari's *Assistenza* was often cooler. There was a line of steel and glass-partitioned waiting rooms in which they could feel marooned and abandoned for hours, but that was nowhere near as bad as the situation at Maranello. To visit the works at all you needed either an appointment or a good contact, and the airless waiting cells there became legendary as the places "... where millionaires and future champions await the pleasure of Ferrari".

Such pleasure almost died in 1969, when Ferrari was virtually on the rocks. A measure of the Old Man's far-sighted talent for self-preservation was that even from the early twenties, when on Alfa's behalf he had plundered Fiat of talent, he had stayed on very good terms with the controlling Agnelli clan, and particularly with their President of the fifties, Professor Valletta. He had known him since 1922 and in August '56 after his son Dino's death he visited Valletta at Fiat's Mirafiore offices. In commiserating with his visitor, Valletta told him "Behind this desk there sits a friend and that friend represents Fiat. You know you may always count on us ..."

From the ceding of Lancia material late in 1955, Fiat had assisted Ferrari financially to keep them racing for *la Patria*. The assistance had not been great, but it was valuable. Then on June 18, 1969, Ferrari met Gianni Agnelli at his Fiat office in Turin, at Corso Marconi 10. Twenty years Ferrari's junior, Agnelli had been a playboy who inherited control of Fiat and proved himself multi-talented as the most powerful industrialist in Italy. That private meeting resulted in Fiat acquiring 50 per cent of Ferrari's company. Mr Ferrari remained President, backed by two Fiat executives. He remained head of the *Reparto Corse* - racing department - while Fiat assumed responsibility for the *Reparto Industriale*.

The deal was done in *vitalizio* - Fiat in effect renting their share annually from Mr Ferrari until his death whereupon ownership would pass to them. If he had survived just a couple of years - he was then already 71 - Fiat would have bought their share cheap. As it is, happily, the Old Man goes rolling on.

But Agnelli rescued the marque, that much seems certain, and under Fiat's aegis the Maranello plant has grown in all directions. Today, under that famous red brick arch, the old racing department hall

on the left has been partly demolished, making a parking area where visiting customers can take personal delivery of their new cars. The courtyard now has a sinister-looking modern rotunda building standing in its centre, including a bank where customers can exchange currency or cash cheques.

Beyond are the old machine shops and production halls, and the back walls of the old buildings have been knocked out and more modern production halls added which stretch back towards the rear of the plot. A tall concrete wall surrounds it all with barbed wire on top - nothing unchecked comes in or out.

The 1700 labour force now contains a high percentage of women, something the Old Man would never brook in the old days, save for wartime, as he considered them a disruptive influence "unless in large numbers ..."

Ultra-modern and costly machine tools whirr and chatter, spinning out glittering streams of swarf. Sparkling new crankshafts, heads and blocks stack the shelves, bins and trolleys crammed with exotic components are everywhere. Rows of sparkling new V8 and flat-12 engines sit ready for the lines on castored trolleys. Testa Rossas, GTOs, work centres ablaze with flashing lights and green or amber digital read-outs.

And out across the main road, down past the *Cav'lan'i*, through the old car park and into the modern industrial estate which lies beyond, you come to the Via Alberto Ascari, and the red gates of the vast and gleaming new *Gestione Sportiva*. Round a corner there's Via Gilles Villeneuve, and more red gates leading into the Fiorano test track.

The whole area is strongly socialist - they call it communism but it's a very benign form which simple Americans especially cannot grasp - and co-operatives abound. The Old Man approves, so long as they don't try it on in his factory.

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### "Despite his great age," they say, "he's still incredibly open minded and utterly receptive to new ideas"

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"In the co-operatives," he has written, "... there is real discipline ... there is no room for absenteeism, pretended illness, and strikes are rare indeed. I gave the contract for the construction of the new *Gestione Sportiva* Ferrari factory to a co-operative, spending 27 per cent less than I was asked by other firms - and it was finished four months earlier ...!"

When Postlethwaite introduced Ferrari to carbon-composite materials and needed an autoclave pressure oven for the plant, the Old Man's foresight immediately demanded one "big enough to hold a 400". The quotes for such an autoclave from established manufacturers were horrendous. But it's only a well-controlled heated pressure vessel after all, so Ferrari contacted old man Pannini round the corner in the Fiorano estate who made pressure vessels and heating plant. And he promptly ran up an autoclave for Ferrari which undercut the specialists and has performed faultlessly ever since.

That's the measure of Emilia. Whatever you want, there's probably some family business nearby both willing and able to do it.

The Old Man never forgets these people, yet perhaps his own strength stems from his professional *disinterest* in the past. Tomorrow is all, yesterday is irrelevant as anything more than experience of mistakes not to be repeated. Occasionally one creeps through, but friends and employees alike at Maranello unstintingly praise his approach.

"Despite his great age," they say, "he's still incredibly open-minded and utterly receptive to new ideas. He's always thinking of tomorrow. Today is just a stepping stone towards that future, while yesterday is gone - forget it."

"Frankly he thinks all of you people who are mad about his old cars are - well, just completely out of your tree! 'Old Ferraris? Why are they interested in them? They are *out of date* ...' and that's the worst sin you can perpetuate, to be off the pace." 





*From Graham Gauld's extensive collection of shots of the Ferrari factory comes this general view of the repair shop at the Scaglietti works where many bodies were made*



*Quality control queue headed by 308GTB at today's thoroughly modern Maranello factory*



*At Scaglietti in 1963 a final polishing job is carried out on a GT*



*The Ferrari scrapyards in 1957 - on the right is the 'Monzaopolis' car built for Luigi Musso*