

## Cars to keep ● Alfa Romeo 2000 GTV



# VIVACE VELOCE!

**Alfa Romeo's GTV coupes have always been true enthusiast's cars with a fine sporting pedigree. The 2000GTV is the most refined and arguably the most desirable of them all**

IF YOU get a little confused, as well as perhaps a sense of excitement, when the talk is of Giulias, you are not alone. Alfa Romeo lore, which has yet to be decently documented in an orderly way (Osprey's recent *Alfissimo*, by David Owen, unfortunately falls short of the mark) is for *afficianados*, not laymen. Giulia what? TI, TI Super, 1600 Sprint, Spider, SS, TZ? And they were just variations of the 1963 theme, which is where this particular story starts. Within the next three years, there

were GTC, 1300 Berlina Spider Veloce, Spider 1600, Super, GTA, GTV and 1300GT variants to add to the list too. So forget the names for a moment and focus your attention on a shape, the familiar high-waisted, Bertone-styled two-plus-two coupe that made its debut at the Frankfurt Show in 1963 and remained in production in one form or another as Alfa's sporting mainstay for the next decade until largely displaced in 1974 — yes, as long ago as that — by the current

Alfetta coupes, though production of the older car did not finally cease until as recently as 1977.

Just to confuse the issue, the first of the line, the Giulia Sprint GT, closely resembled in style the 1960 Sprint 2000, which was made in limited numbers by Bertone themselves. And it also overlapped the beautiful 1600 Sprint Coupe, resurrected in 1964/65 as the 1300 Sprint — see how confusing it all gets? — which was a development of an earlier Bertone-styled gem, the slippery little Giulietta coupe first seen a decade before. And little is the word. It was the need for a four seater, or at least a generous two plus two, and the demand for a lot more of them than Bertone could make, that led to the Giulia Sprint GT, assembled at Alfa's own Arese plant in much larger numbers. In 1964, the first full year of production, 10,839 left the Milan factory, making it Alfa's number three car in terms of output, just behind the Giulia 1300 Berlina, which was a distant second to the Giulia TI saloon.

In its original form, the Sprint GT had a 1570cc version of the evergreen twin cam four, the basic design of which could (and

**The classic Bertone shape, the hallmark of a large family of exciting Alfas**



still can!) be traced back to the first post-war 1900. Later cars had 1290cc, 1779cc and, from 1971 to '77 when production ceased, 1962cc engines. But though these basic variants were the mainstay of the series, the car's long development history cannot be dismissed that simply. Based on the shortened floorpan of the Giulia TI saloon, the '63 Sprint GT had coil and wishbone front suspension, and a live coil-sprung rear axle located by lower trailing arms and an upper T-bar trunnion for lateral location, pivoted to the diff housing. Drive from the 1570cc alloy-block engine was through a five-speed box mated to it, and disc brakes were fitted all round. In 14 years, that basic layout remained fundamentally unchanged.

In 1965, the Sprint GT was supplemented by the short-lived GTC – an open soft-top Cabriolet by Touring, and now very rare as only 894 of them were ever made – and superseded in 1966 by the 1600 Sprint GT Veloce (GTV) with better breathing giving 112bhp and more performance, as well as better seats and brakes. It was in 1966 that the range was broadened with a GT Junior version, produced until 1972, using a twin-carb 89bhp version of the old Giulietta engine, as well as by the 1600 Spider, the Pininfarina-styled open car originally known as the Duetto and which, 14 years later, is still in production as the shapely 2000 Spider.

The 1600 GTV was displaced in 1967 by the higher geared, less fussy 1750 GTV, though the nomenclature, which called to mind a famous sporting Alfa of an earlier era, was a little misleading as the engine, bigger in bore and stroke, was actually of 1779cc.

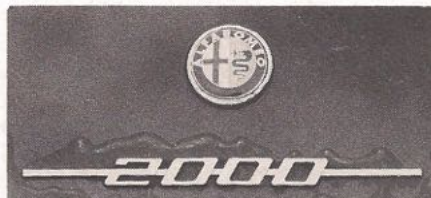
Many Alfa buffs still regard the 116bhp 1750 GTV as the best of the series as it comfortably outpaced the 1600, with a top speed of 115mph and 0-60mph acceleration well inside the 10sec barrier. And that's quick. The 132bhp 2000 GTV that superseded it in 1971, had even better acceleration through the gears (0-60mph in under 9sec) and a stronger pull from low engine speed thanks to better torque, but its big-bore long-stroke engine was not so smooth and its rev limit was a modest 5700rpm. It was much more of a gutsy slogger than a high-speed revver like the 1600 – which was re-introduced, incidentally, as a down market alternative in 1972.

Apart from all these production road cars, there were a number of competition-orientated versions, some of them highly successful racers, based on the Bertone GT shell. Nearly 1000 GTAs were made from 1965/70 with *alleggrita* aluminium bodywork weighing some 420lb, nearly 4cwt, less than the steel cars. Because of their successful racing history, and their resistance to the dreaded tin worm, bane

of the poorly protected volume production coupes, good GTAs are among the most cherished and best preserved cars of the line, though they were low on creature comforts and high on noise levels with minimal sound insulation to mute the raucous engine, and therefore lacking somewhat in hush and civility. The standard 125mph GTA 1600, with a close-ratio box and a big-valve twin-plug engine, gave 115bhp. Autodelta's full house racers – which won the European manufacturers championship in 1966/67/68 – a great deal more. GT



Above and below: subtle reminders of the 2000GTV's origins together with discreet and attractive badging



From the back, the 2000GTV could be mistaken for an earlier 1750. Distinctive wheels with exposed nuts and a restyled front grille are 2000 characteristics

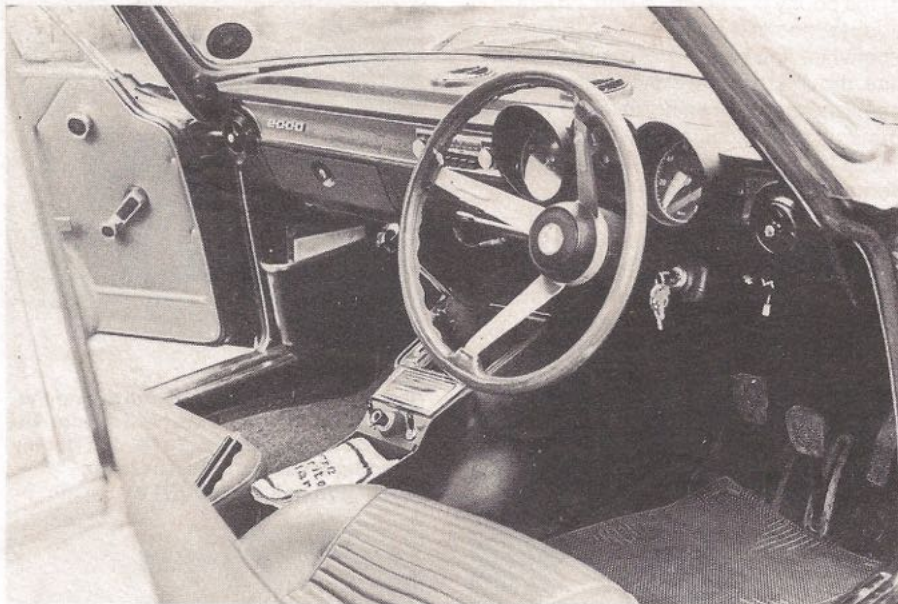


Above: Peter Hilliard in action during the 1974 Tour of Britain with his Squadra Alfa 2000GTV. Below: May 1976, Jon Dooley rounding Thruxton's chicane in his Production Saloon 2000GTV



1300s were formidable contenders in their class too, and the GTAm (1970/71) was the basis of Autodelta's Group 2 racer, built in 1779cc and 2000cc forms, using Spica fuel injection. The most powerful of these highly successful racers, which gave Dutchman Toine Hezemans two European Touring Car titles, developed 210bhp at 7500rpm, enough to give a top speed of over 140mph.

By far the fastest GTA, though, if not the most successful, was the 1967 SA – a blown 1600 with a most unusual layout of twin superchargers operated by a hydraulic turbine powered by a pump chain driven from the engine. With

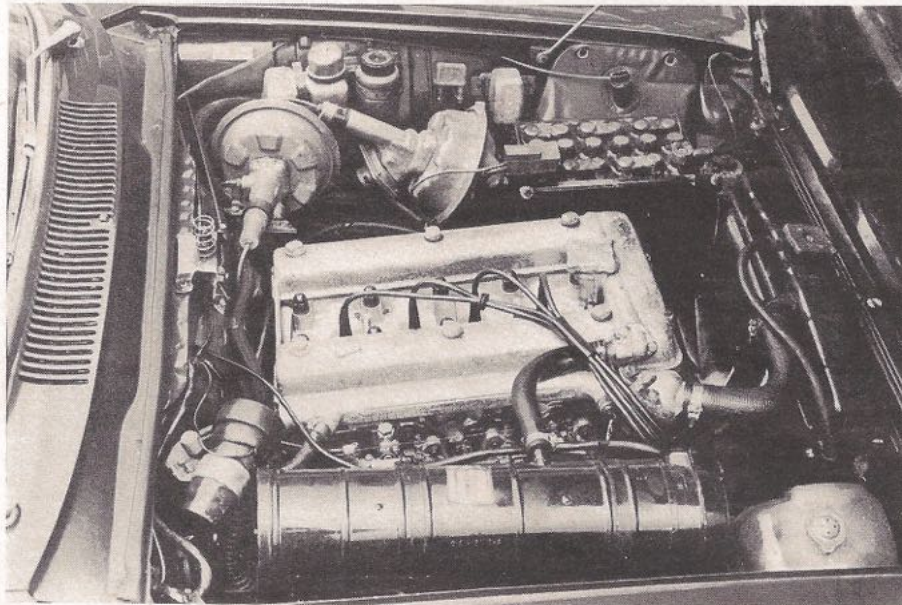


**A revised fascia with improved seats combine to make the GTV's interior comfortable and luxurious. Note the awkward clutch and brake pedals**

220bhp, this formidable Group 5 racer was capable of 155mph, but although it did win some races, little was subsequently heard of it.

Success on the track helped to underline the GTV's sporting pedigree and its strong sense of history – two valuable ingredients for classic status. And despite the car's notorious rust problem, which has drastically eroded the numbers over the years and made the sound survivors all the more attractive as keepsakes, this Alfa is a classic with many endearing qualities. Apart from the increase in performance as the engine size went up, 14 years of evolutionary development inevitably saw many detail improvements that to some extent changed the car's character, if not its concept, which remained throughout a marginal four seater with limited luggage

**The classic Alfa twin cam engine started life at 1570cc but was 'stretched' to 1962cc for the 2000 range. But if the engine has been misused in any way – beware!**



accommodation that barely qualified as family transport. Even so many a family man clung on to his pride and joy Alfa long after his offspring had outgrown the cramped back seat. But if the 2000 GTV, last of the line, was no roomier than the original Sprint GT, it was a lot more habitable with all the trappings of a luxury grand tourer – plush furnishings, fancy cloth-upholstered seats, good equipment and trim, and respectable heating and ventilation.

Over 37,000 2000 GTVs were made before production ceased three years ago, so there's quite a lot of them about. Choose with care. Long in the tooth the engine might be, but it has a lot of guts, pulling with great vigour and that characteristic guttural growl from 1500rpm upwards. Strong mid-range

torque gives it significantly better fourth and fifth gear flexibility and acceleration than the 1750 – par time for 70 to 90mph in top is about 13sec – and the maximum speed should be around 120mph, which is cracking on for a 2 litre. There's not much around even now that can beat it, though BMW's 2002 Tii gave the Alfas a rough time in Group 1 racing in Britain, if not on the Continent where the Autodelta cars ruled supreme. More to the point, high gearing (22mph/1000rpm) gives easy 100mph cruising (4500rpm), though economy takes a tumble when the car's extended in the manner intended and encouraged. Even so, up to 30mpg is within reach of the restrained driver.

Many enthusiasts rue the day that Alfa transferred their lovely five-speed gearbox to the back of the replacement Alfetta in the dubious interests of a balanced weight distribution. The loss of gearchange precision caused by the remote, contorted linkage was a retrogressive move that any Alfetta owner would instantly acknowledge at the wheel of a 2000 GTV which has a stout, direct-acting, knife-through-butter change that adds enormously to the car's appeal. More than anything else it's the drivetrain – a potent, willing engine mated to a superb manual box – that makes the 2000 GTV such a rewarding driving machine, a real fun car. Not that it's lacking in the handling department. The steering, strong on castor so full of feel but far from light, is sharp and responsive, and the grip on standard wear 165 section radials secure enough, if nothing special by today's standards. It is open to argument whether the better balanced Alfetta GTV has superior handling to the car it displaced, though there's not much doubt it will out corner it, as it should, with larger tyres.

If anything mars the 2000 GTV's appeal it is the familiar 'Latin Ape' driving position, exacerbated on right-hand drive cars by clutch and brake pedals that sprout from the floor at an awkward angle, enforcing a splayed-leg stance which takes some getting used to. What's more, the hanging throttle is poorly aligned so you can't heel and toe very easily. But the seats are excellent and the thick wooden-rimmed steering wheel was a pleasing Alfa speciality of the day.

A car of style and character, to be sure, not to say a quick and agile one too, that still gets a high rating for entertainment value. But it's also a car with one major innate problem: rust. Mechanically, the 2000 GTV, like its lesser predecessors, is quite a simple machine and, according to one specialist we spoke to, easy to work on. Spares are not too much of a worry either. But if the body's on the way out, or appears to have been botched with a superficial respray, the message from all the experts is loud and clear: leave well alone.

**Roger Bell**



Alfa Romeo Owners Club GTV line up with an unusual 2000 coupe on the right

#### Brief specification

Engine	In-line 'four'
Capacity	1962cc
Bore/stroke	84mm x 88.5mm
Valves	Twin ohc
Compression	9:1
Power	132bhp (DIN) at 5500rpm
Torque	134lb.ft (DIN) at 3000rpm
Transmission	5-speed manual
Top gear	21.9mph per 1000rpm
Brakes	Disc/drum with servo
Front sus	Ind by coils, wishbones, anti-roll bar
Rear sus	Live axle, coils, wishbones, anti-roll bar
Steering	Cam & peg or recirculating ball
Tyres	165 - 14
Length	13ft 5½in
Width	5ft 2in
Weight	20.6cwt

#### Performance

Max speed	118mph
0-60mph	8.9sec
30-50 in top	10.8sec
50-70 in top	9.8sec
Fuel con	21/25mpg

#### Production history

Announced in Italy in the summer of 1971, the 2000 GTV coupe did not reach these shores until October of that year. On its UK introduction, the list price of a GTV coupe was £2439 – the same price as its 2000 Spider relation (the UK list prices of the two cars would be closely matched throughout the GTV's lifespan). Nevertheless, a limited slip diff, a new radiator grille, tungsten-halogen headlamps plus a revised interior and fascia were all standard items for the new GTV coupe as were newly designed road wheels.

In May 1974, a limited production, special equipment version of the GTV coupe was announced. The changes were mainly cosmetic and consisted of tinted glass, rear fog lamps, alloy wheels, vinyl roof and new side mouldings.

The last 2000 GTV coupe was imported in July 1975 – its last list price being £2999 (the SE version was an alarming £3249). In all 37,459 2000 GTV coupes were manufactured worldwide up to 1977.

#### Clubs, specialists and books

For a 2000 GTV owner or any post war Alfa enthusiast for that matter, there is only one club and that's the 1350-strong Alfa Romeo Owners Club. The membership secretary is Ms Jill Maxted and her address is 'Stones,' Glayshers Hill, Headley, Hants. Several AROC members race their Alfas successfully around the circuits and the club's high quality glossy magazine makes a point of chronicling these happenings each month. In fact there is quite a strong bias within the club towards motor racing but the club *does* organise social events as well and holds quite a few pub meetings each month. This year's national day was held at Knebworth Park, Herts.

It is still possible to have a 2000 GTV serviced and maintained by your local Alfa dealer but notable Alfa specialists include Brookside Garage who look after the restoration of older GTVs, Spiders, GTs and so on and Richard Banks who makes a living out of selling GTVs and other Alfas. Most kinds of specialist Alfa work can be taken on by John Goodchild of Serpent Racing fame while Alfacentre of Basingstoke and EB Spares of Westbury, Wilts, are also useful people to know.

Reading material isn't much of a problem. Autobooks publish a useful workshop manual which covers the GTV and happily the official factory manual is still available. A comprehensive parts book and the original owners handbook are still obtainable – but only from the owners club. As for general reading matter, *Alfa Romeo* by Fuisi (published in Italian and English) takes some beating while *Alfissimo* by David Owen isn't quite the definitive 'bible.' Our thanks to Jon Dooley and to Michael Lindsay of the Alfa Romeo Owners Club for their help in compiling this survey.

#### Buyers spot check

When looking at a 2000 GTV coupe, it's well worthwhile remembering these elementary ground rules. First: many GTV owners enjoy driving their steeds hard and fast over high mileages. Second: unless you find a cossetted example, you are probably

going to have to spend time and money to make it presentable. Third: it's quite rare to find a respectable GTV that's done less than 60,000 miles. Fourth and this is the cruncher: relatively few people know how to look after a GTV properly and unfortunately far too many examples have suffered misuse which, along with the dreaded tin worm, is the GTV's greatest *malaise*.

Assuming, then, that your GTV coupe is looking reasonably sound, examine first the front and back ends of the sidemember box sections (polyurethane foam is a good rust deterrent here). Check also the door bottoms, floor pan, rear wheel arches, front and rear aprons and the front crossmember beneath the radiator (an important check, since it carries the anti-roll bar mountings). Look next for any signs of bulging over the rear wheel arches as this would indicate that the car had had a fairly major rear end shunt. Watch out too for the door handles since these have a habit of breaking off.

GTV engines, maintained and driven sensibly, have a very good record for reliability. Engines that are neglected or mistreated will produce only trouble, and expensive trouble at that. Normally pistons and liners begin to lose their edge at 50,000 miles and require renewal at around the 80,000/100,000 mark. If you *do* decide to rebuild the engine, it is advisable to change the bottom (non-adjustable) timing chain and its drive gear as a matter of course. These have an annoying habit of rattling at about 40,000 miles but this condition isn't serious.

The clutch is perhaps the weak link in the GTV's driveline; if overheated or misused (easily done by the inexperienced) small surface cracks in the flywheel can result. The 5-speed gearbox is generally strong and reliable but two problems can occur – 2nd gear synchro wear and jumping out of reverse. A bent reverse fork is the usual cause for this latter affliction. When testing the gearbox, check that the rubber doughnut at the back is in good condition. The rest of the driveline is straightforward, propshaft UJs still being available and easily fitted. The ZF differential is generally reckoned to be trouble-free.

If incorrectly aligned, the brake master cylinder barrel can distort and the car's metal brake piping can be rather dodgy around the rear axle area. Front suspension wear points include the front outer lower wishbone ball joints and the inner wishbone bottom bushes. If these bushes seize you could well be faced with the unpleasant alternative of replacing either the crossmember or effecting some

kind of repair to the mountings. Nasty! Besides sagging springs, wear in the rear suspension is mainly confined to deteriorating trailing arm bushes and to worn T arm/diff bushes.

#### Rivals then and now

Probably the biggest rival to the 2000 GTV coupe during its production run was the hotshot BMW 2002tii, these two cars being pitched very closely on specification, performance and price. Of the Alfa's homeland *fratelli*, the various Lancia coupes such as the Fulvias and the Beta coupes should be considered along with the Fiat 124 coupe but Germanic fastbacks of the Audi 100S and Opel Monza kind were not really in the Alfa's high performance sporting league, they being more at home on the autobahn. AROC members probably won't agree but the 2000 GTV's UK competitors were for the most part a motley bunch and the Ford Capri 2000, Lotus plus 2S 130 and the Ginetta G21 could be termed among the front runners.

#### Owner view

What do the Bostocks like most about their 2000 GTV coupe? Mr Bostock: "Well for a start, *it goes* – it also handles well, corners safely and is lots of fun to drive. But it's not really my car. I bought it for my wife, below, who wanted a VW Scirocco until I persuaded her otherwise."

Mr Bostock's Alfa is an Alfetta, Mrs Bostock's a green '72 2000 GTV coupe that's done 50,000 miles, some 10,000 of them within the last two years. The car has been well cared for and has caused no major problems; the bodywork has needed only minimal attention. The prices of these Italian thoroughbred cars are low at the moment so perhaps now would be the time to start thinking about a pristine GTV coupe, like that of the Bostocks.

#### Mrs Bostock with her immaculate Alfa

