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Traveller

The Italian Job, Italy

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Little cars and big hearts in Italy

The Italian Job is a truly unique fundraising rally staged annually by passionate Mini enthusiasts, that was originally inspired by the 1969 film of the same name.

And so in late October and early November, and since 1999, the 'Jobbers' as they are called will make their way from the UK, and through France and Germany, to start the run officially in Italy.

The 30th Anniversary, in 2019, saw 64 teams taking part.

While it is the Mini that make up most of *The Italian Job's* fleet, other vehicles that were featured in the original film or their more recent counterparts also qualify for participation.

In addition to providing a wonderful get together for those taking part, *The Italian Job* has raised hundreds of thousands of pounds for charity.

Ashley Gibbins
Commissioning Editor
AllWays traveller





This mini run to Italy is always welcome back

By Ashley Gibbins



The Italian Job annual rally for Mini enthusiasts began life, as these things tend to do, by happenstance.

It was way back in 1999, and Freddie St George and some friends were enjoying a meal in an Italian restaurant while 'chewing the cud'.

The conversation moved along to talk of a participation in the Beaujolais Nouveau Run, the yearly ritual to bring the years first bottles of the French wine back to the UK.

Preferring something a little less obvious, the idea morphed into a Novello Run' for the first Italian wine of the season.

This idea, which would involve driving to Trento and back, led to *The Italian Job* emerging.

It would be a rally geared to anyone with a shared a passion for the Mini, or any classic car which featured in the original Michael Caine film of the same name

It was Freddie's mother Giulia St George who suggested the run be used to raise money for children's charity.

And it is Guila and Freddie who have been responsible for organising the Italian Job annually ever since And this is no mean feat believe me.

A comic crime caper

The Italian Job is a 1969 British comedy caper that has Charlie Croker (Caine), leading a misfit criminal gang to Turin to steal bullion from an armoured security truck.

Having robbed the van the gang manage to get their haul of gold bars through the streets of Turin and away in the boots of three Mini Coopers.

These are painted patriotically red, white and blue with drivers in matching jumpsuits.

An immediate success

Having the theme, route and itinerary, Freddie put the word out about the inaugural run of *The Italian Job* hoping it would attract maybe a handful of Mini Cooper enthusiasts.

Nearly 50 teams applied and similar numbers have taken part every year ever since.



For the 30th Anniversary of the rally, in 2019 there were a record 64 teams.

Cars taking part over the years have ranged from the original 1959 Mini Cooper to new BMW Mini's along with derivatives including the Innocenti, Mini Moke, Mini Marcos and Domino.



Running like clockwork

Although organising an event on this scale must get slightly easier as the years go by, this in no way diminishes the devotion, commitment and staggering number of hours Guila and Freddie put into making each year a success.

It really does run like clockwork.

There is a service vehicle and support crew on hand throughout with the route meticulously planned and executed.

A daily rota of activities

There will be a daily rota time trials, convoy processions, treasure hunt style competitions and ample opportunity for ceremonial welcomes and social gatherings.

Over the years *The Italian Job* rally has taken in exclusive visits to Italian Grand Prix circuits, Italian cities and historic sites and locations in Turin that were featured in the original film.

Also locked are excursions to tourist hotspots in the country.

Wherever they go the Mini's turn heads and garner admiring glances, with the cars and their owners greeted like celebrities at stops on route.

The *Jobbers* taking part are a great bunch with old friends meeting up year after year and newcomers made immediately and equally welcome.

And, of course, with the *Jobbers* devotion and dedication to their beloved vehicles there is much trading of tips and talking shop.

Not just for the fun of it

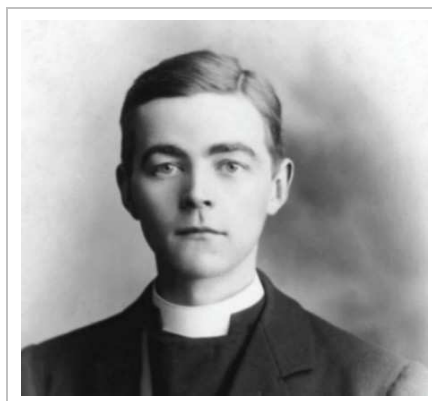
But this is not just an event for the hedonist.

Those taking part pay for the chance to take part in 10 day to two week.

And on top, each team entering has to raise at least £1,500 in sponsorship, with all of this given to a designated charity.

To date, *The Italian Job* has raised over £2.5 million for the organisation's charities.

Buttle UK



The Italian Job's current charity is *Buttle UK*, which provides *Chances for children* through grants to meet critical needs of children whose safety, health or development are at risk.

And this is a story in its own right.

Formerly known as *The Frank Buttle Trust*, it was set up by the Rev Buttle who was a in East London, from 1937 until 1953.



A financial genius, he set about raising £1 million to create an endowment that would provide financial support to young children annually and in perpetuity.

The reverend was totally devoted to the task with a missionary zeal and complete self-sacrifice.

When he died in 1953, he was just £80,000 short of his financial target.

His endowment, now administered by *Buttle UK* is worth almost £50m and, with the charity covering its own administration costs, 100% of all monies donated go directly to the children it helps.

In 2019 *The Italian Job* raised £** ,000 for *Buttle UK*, which is equivalent to some 70-80 grants, ranging from essentials like children's beds and clothing all the way through to therapy and technical equipment.

In 2018 *The Italian Job* raised over £92,000 for *Buttle UK's Chance for Children Grant* scheme.

www.buttleuk.org

My day out with Les and John the Jobber

By Ann Mealor

Ahh, Roma, the city of culture, history and of course amore. And that was where I fell in love.

Les was cool and chic. He had classic style and although smaller than my usual choice, he was sporty, had charm in abundance and was less than half my age.

He showed me out of the city to places I wouldn't normally have got to see.

We spent a rip-roaring day together and then went our separate ways.

He had to leave for Turin on an Italian job and I caught the plane back to London.

But Les, the 1998 Rover Mini Cooper Sports Limited Edition Special Conversion will always hold a special place in my heart.

While Ashley went out with Julio and Trinal, I spent the day on the road with Les and his owner/driver, mini enthusiast, John Thew as part of the charity rally *The Italian Job*.

John told me every mini has a name and Les's came from the LES of 'Limited Edition Special'.

Built to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Cooper's victory in four Saloon Car Championship races, Les, painted Brooklands Green with a white roof and wing mirrors, is just one of 100 made.

I had never taken part in a rally before or been in a classic mini.

Les, like Dr Who's *tardis*, was small on the outside, yet roomy on the inside. I am tall, 5'10", but found sitting in the front very comfortable.

Although low to the ground, Les had been fitted with fortified shock absorbers which significantly softened the harsh lumps and bumps of the Italian roads.

With his polished walnut dashboard and dark green leather interior, Les kept with tradition, but was also kitted out with a sony stereo with a USB port so John could play his favourite music from his phone throughout the rally.

His green bonnet with its white stripes hid a powerful 1275cc engine.

This proved very useful when Les needed a turn of speed to weave his way past Italian drivers, wend his way up the steep mountain roads or dash out to block the traffic for the mini convoy.

Not surprisingly, all this exertion did take its toll and Les started to stall just before we reached our lunch venue.

Although the 'old fellow' seemed to recover, John said he would ask Gareth to take a look at him. Gareth was the Mini's equivalent of a paramedic.

He drove the Mini ambulance that came equipped with an extensive first aid kit and ensured all the cars on the road and in working order during the 4,000 miles of *The Italian Job*.



My day on the rally began with a speed trial. You have to set off at your exact time.

Les was number 31 and our start time was 9.10.30. I had to count down the seconds to when we had to shoot over the start line and complete a circle in 10 seconds exactly – no more no less - and then make our way to the car park exit.

This was John's 10th Italian Job and it showed, as he carried out this exercise like a true professional and completed the task with ease. It was very exciting and really showed off Les's speed and agility.

We then formed a small mini convoy with John's friends and his sister Annie and family and started our treasure hunt.

I was navigator (but really I just followed the car in front) and our route took us through some stunning Italian countryside with spectacular views of Lake Albano.

Mid-morning we stopped for coffee in a quaint hillside town. As co-pilot, I had the route map and times when we needed to be at check points.

This went well for part of the journey, but went out the window when we had to go 'off route' in search of postcards, stamps and photo opportunities.

But that was all part of the fun, especially when we went through the hillside tunnels and all the Mini drivers beeped their horns.

I did feel as if I was in *The Italian Job* film, zipping along to the drop off point with my haul of gold bullion in the back.

We arrived at our allotted time at our lunch at the Castel Gandolfo, on Rocca di Pappa.



This magnificent palace, parts of it dating back to the thirteenth century, was the former summer residence of the Pope.

The villa was in a stunning location with views across Lake Albano. The weather was gorgeous and the setting superb.

Here the *Jobbers* (the Mini drivers and navigators) relaxed and enjoyed a delicious three course, sit down meal for a couple of hours.

It had been at least four hours since the full English breakfast and after lunch it would be another four hours until the four course dinner back at the hotel.

On *The Italian Job*, no-one goes hungry.

Back in the Minis, we had another time trial to do before we left the car park at Castel Gandolfo.

The Italian job 2020

The Italian Job 2020 starts in Tuscany on 25 October 2020 and finishes in Turin on 2 November in Turin.

www.italianjob.com

A snapshot of Basel



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