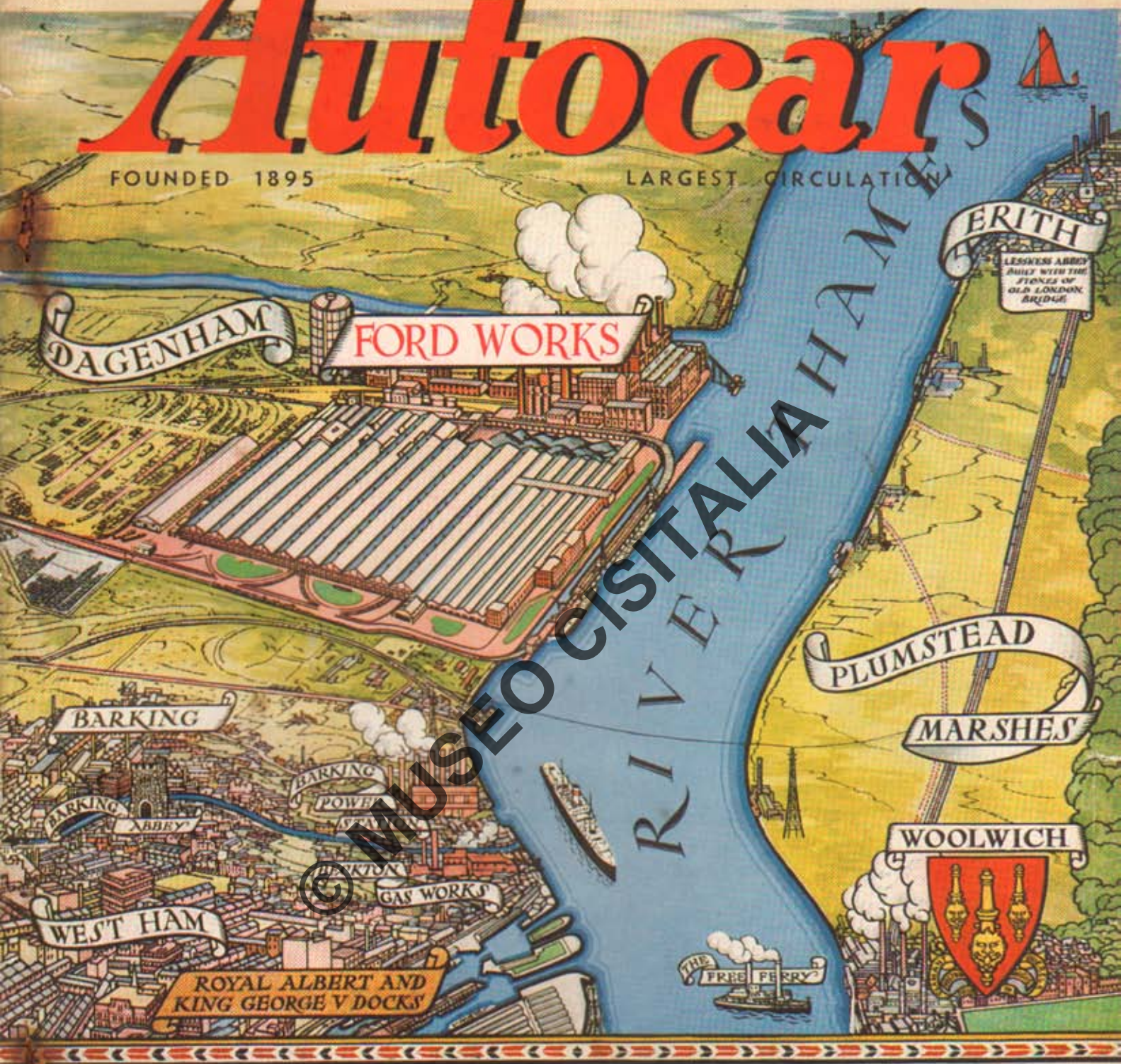


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George Abecassis, who was the first British driver to race a Cisitalia, is here seen in action in Rome.

# THE CISITALIA at First Hand

*George Abecassis Describes the  
Handling of this Much-discussed  
Car in an Italian Race*

SO much has been heard of the unsupercharged 1,100 c.c. Cisitalia that experiences in the Circuit of Caracella race, near Rome, in June, may be interesting. First of all, of the five or six cars offered me, only one which had been modified was really comfortable for a man of my size. And the explanations of what it was all about, and how it worked, were numerous and fluent.

The chief thing that strikes me about the Cisitalia is its unusual gear control. On the steering column there is a lever which is pushed down for first, up for reverse, towards you for neutral. Once you have selected first, the gear comes into operation only when the clutch pedal has been pushed right forward and released, but after that the clutch pedal movement brings in second and top successively; meantime the lever returns to its original position, so that all clutch pedal movements bring in either top or second. It takes time to become accustomed to all this, apart from the fact that I was warned not to use the clutch fiercely, as it was liable to give trouble.

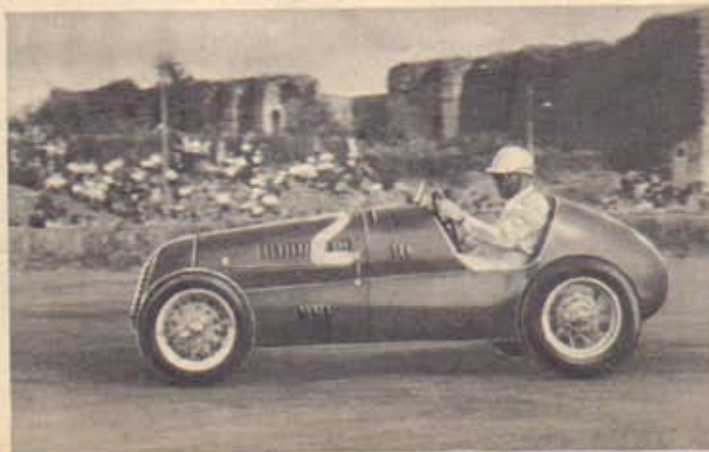
Otherwise there is nothing very unusual in the machine. Its power of holding the road is exceptional. The driver sits well in the car, and the steering is light and very positive, so that you can steer over the proverbial sixpence on any turn. First and last, it is the cornering which is exceptional. Much depends on the damper adjustment, which can be altered to suit each individual driver. The brakes are very powerful. In point of fact the only trouble I had with my car was with the clutch during practice, and in getting away from rest at that, with the result that I had to be so careful on the day of the race that I was immediately passed by most of the field.

The normal rev limit is 5,500, marked by the usual red line on the rev counter, and the speed about 105 m.p.h., but I must confess that several times I went up to 6,000 without the engine showing signs of distress. Towards the end of the race, the engine was running out of

oil—it was said, curiously enough, because the oil tank was designed to operate best on clockwise circuits, and this one happened to be anti-clockwise.

Maximum speed is good, but in no way surprising, for again, the pull the Cisitalia has is very much a question of cornering and acceleration, with the result that on a winding course it can match and even beat very much more powerful cars. There was a good deal of difference between the various machines, particularly in axle ratios, though broadly there appear to be a high gear and a low gear model.

The Italian technique, as ever, was rather different from ours. The best drivers neither smoked nor drank, either before or after the race. On the other hand, one driver had a good hearty swig of cognac immediately before the start. In practice the aim and object of everybody is to put in a really fast lap, which seems far more important than keeping the car in a condition to last through the race. I found at the end of practice that my time was not as good as it might have been, but succeeded, after a lot of argument, in obtaining another car for practice, and with that machine I made fourth fastest time, which counted as regards the starting positions.



Winner of the Circuit of Caracella was veteran Pietro Taruffi. The Cisitalia has been driven by many of the top flight Italian racing drivers, including Nuvolari.