

PASQUINO'S LITTLE GEMS



Above: Another view of Ermini's last project (see photograph on previous page)

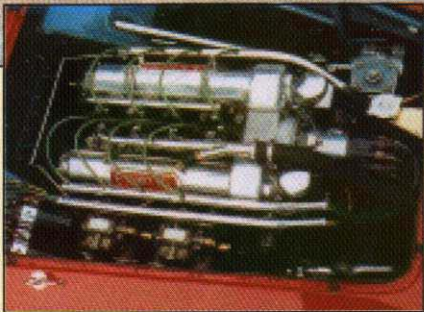
Right: The last 1500cc engine, designed shortly before Ermini's death

In August, 1949, Ugo Bormioli from Padua, at the wheel of an Ermini with a Fiat-derived chassis, came first overall in the Coppa della Toscana — a sort of Tuscan counterpart of the Mille Miglia — beating Colletti's Lancia and Benedetti's Alfa Romeo. The Coppa della Toscana was one of the most important road races of the postwar period. Inaugurated that year as a Florentine reaction to the failure of the Mille Miglia to pass through Florence, the event survived till 1954. It was held over a single 375-mile circuit (later lengthened to 422 miles) touching on Livorno, Pisa, Lucca, Florence, Siena, Viterbo and Grosseto.

The real defect of Ermini's cars continued to be the weakness of certain mechanical parts. Because of the artisan methods of production employed, they were all too often unable to stand the strain of long distance races such as the Mille Miglia, the Giro di Sicilia or the Targa Florio. In the early days the castings were made in an art foundry in Via degli Artisti that specialised in statues and lamp-posts. But certain parts, such as the camshafts, were expertly machined by such artists as Vacondi and Niccolai in the famous Via Orsini workshop.

At the beginning of the '50s Ermini scored further major successes. The 1100cc class in the Italian sports car championship was won by the Florentine driver Piero Scotti. Scotti's Ermini, fitted with a five speed gearbox and Rocco Motto bodywork, would prove to be an enduring contender that would be raced in the years to come by Spartaco Grazianni and Astolfo Bertolucci.

In the winter of 1951 the first dohc engine



designed entirely by Ermini was completed, with the help of advice from engineer Massimino. The head was redesigned to accommodate horizontal carburetors. In 1952 the same engine, a single ignition four, was to be fitted with a twin ignition system in an attempt to challenge the Oscas. During the winter of 1953 Ermini came up with another 1100cc engine based on a Fiat-derived crankcase fitted with a sohc head.

Two years later, in 1955, Ermini unveiled his new sports car, available with a choice of two dohc engines with a twin ignition system, the larger displacing 1431cc (120bhp) and the smaller 1094cc (90bhp). The 1500cc unit — of which only one example was built — was installed from time to time in the car of Libero Bindi, a promising young driver from Montevarchi, home town of the famous Count Brilli-Peri. Otello Biagiotti didn't perform very well in the Gran Premio Supercortemaggiore with the 1500cc engine, but

the 1094cc Erminis proved to be quite a match for the Oscas, winning the 1100 class with Azzurro Manzini at the Corsi sulle Torricelle and the Trapani - Monte Erice hillclimbs, while Libero Bindi won the 751-1500cc class at Parma - Poggio di Bereto.

That year Pasquino Ermini enjoyed another moment of immense satisfaction at the revived Mugello road race on 5th June: on that memorable day the Oscas and the Stanguellinis, present in force at the Tuscan race, were overshadowed by an extraordinary performance by Pagliai, who won with a lead of nearly two minutes at the wheel of chassis number 1455.

In all, five twin-ignition engine cars were built in 1955, bearing chassis numbers 1155, 1255, 1455, 1555 and 1855. The 1500cc engine and Manzini's car (chassis number 1155) were sold in 1956 to Bill Devin (USA), who used the bodywork to make copies for his own range of racing cars.