

Interesting Chassis Numbers

by Wim Oude Weernink

Apart from the racing Aurelias, quite a few special models were made on this famous Lancia type. As mentioned in *La Lancia*, Pininfarina subcontracted some other coachbuilders (Viotti, Maggiori and even Bertone) to build bodies in white. On one occasion completely different bodies were built on B20 chassis and since factory records do not mention special delivery of bare B20 chassis to coachbuilders it is even likely that standard coupé bodies were removed (!) in order to give place to the special dress. The one definite occasion on which this happened was when Zagato produced three of the mysterious Zagato Aurelias; it was Lorenzo Boscarelli of Milano who found dates and facts on this subject. All three were made in 1953 and had 3rd series specifications. The chassis numbers are already published in Tito Anselmi's splendid new book, called "Aurelia GT", and some more details of the cars are given below.

B20-2328, engine B20-2564, production date 27-5-1953

This car had its first registration VC-30694 (Vercelli), owned by Franco Bocca, and was exported to Switzerland in 1956, where Marcel Willemin raced it in hill-climbs for some time. This car is pictured in LMC Journal 63, page 24 and also page 109 of "Aurelia GT".

B20-2505, engine B20-2812, production date 4-7-1953

Vincenzo Lancia's son-in-law, Ferdinando Gatta, married to Mimi Lancia, was the first owner of this car, which won the 6th Sestrièrè rally of 1955 (25 February - 2 March). His co-driver was Mazzonis. The car was dark red and had Turin registration TO-148904. The winning Sestrièrè Aurelia is pictured in *Automobile Year 1955/1956*, page 141. Later Germano Nataloni owned the car when it had the registration VT-15327.

B20-2518, engine B20-2197, production date 13-7-1953.

The third and last Aurelia Zagato, first registered as FI-65868 (Firenze), was owned by Arturo Luconi of Prato. It is pictured on page 133 of *La Lancia* and page 111 of "Aurelia GT". Similarities in styling between the Aurelia Zagatos and several Zagato-bodied Fiat Otto Vu (V-8) models is evident.

Less is known on the two "Raggio Azzuro" specials, apart from the information given by Brian Long* and Jim Simpson in Lanciana No.2, Summer 1977, page 53. The cars were in fact not Lancias but are credited to Nardi, who had modified the engine of the first extravagant Blue Ray, as the name Raggio Azzuro may be translated. The styling was drawn by Giovanni Michelotti while Alfredo Vignale built them.

Long and Simpson give actual engine numbers, and when I traced them, the corresponding chassis number for Blue Ray I (engine B20-3513) is B20-3003, dated 26-3-1954. Corresponding with the Blue Ray II engine

number B20-4284, is chassis number B20-3553, dated 5-4-1955, but this brings another mystery: Blue Ray II is left hand driven, while B20-3553 has right hand drive according to factory records. But, did both Blue Rays actually use original Aurelia chassis, or were parts of the components used to build these truly special cars? Or is engine B20-4284 a later replacement in chassis B20-3553?

Next comes the Lancia Florida, without doubt the most interesting and important postwar Lancia/Pininfarina exercise. Not only did Pininfarina introduce a completely new pontoon body style that was to influence most of the European middle class cars of the sixties, it also became a turning point for Lancia, since the arrival of the Florida coincided with the change of management from the Lancia family to the Pesenti group of companies, the later Flaminia being the first brand new result. It was still under Gianni Lancia management that Lancia set up a small series of bodiless chassis, which were to be dressed by coachbuilders. They were the B55 (right hand drive) and B55S (*Sinistra* = left hand drive), with B12 specifications (2.2 litre V-6 engine, De Dion rear axle) instead of the B10/21 engineering of the B50/51/52/53. Wheelbase was 2900mm, top speed 150km/h. So far all was clear, but in fact it always was quite unclear what happened with the B55 chassis and how many Floridas were made. While Lancia modified some of the B55's into B56, Pininfarina never knew what chassis numbers their Floridas carried, so there was confusion all the way, including the chassis numbers and specifications given on page 290 of *La Lancia*. Recently, I came across no less than four Floridas still in existence and when I got their respective chassis numbers the story became much clearer. So for this reason I can give the most definite story on the Floridas so far. By the end of 1954/early 1955, the B55 and B55S cars were built at Lancia. In total, six B55 chassis (nos. B55-1001/1006) were made, plus eight B55S (nos. B55S-1001/1008). Below are all the numbers with their specifications.

Chassis	Engine Date	Built
B55-1001	B12-2441	05-02-1955
B55-1002	B12-2527	25-01-1955
B55-1003	B12-2179	25-01-1955
B55-1004	B12-2455	12-05-1955
B55-1005	B12-2596	26-01-1955
B55-1006	B12-2585	28-01-1955
B55S-1001	B12-2624	09-02-1955
B55S-1002	B12-2661	07-02-1955
B55S-1003	B12-2708	20-07-1955
B55S-1004	B12-2734	08-04-1955
B55S-1005	B12-2727	09-02-1955
B55S-1006	B12-2764	12-02-1955
B55S-1007	B12-3377	11-04-1956
B55S-1008	B12-3096	28-05-1956

Of these cars, B55-1002, 1003, 1005 plus B55S-1005 and 1006 were sent to Pininfarina to be dressed with a Florida body, although the other B55S chassis went to the Corso Trapani only to be bodied with different Pininfarina coachwork. Before describing the five

*Note: This is the Australian Brian Long not the Journal Editor.

Florida Aurelias, let me first explain the role of the B56 and B56S chassis, to prevent further confusion. After the Floridas were finished at Pininfarina, it was found that for several reasons the cars had to be modified, mostly because the heavy bodywork made the cars weigh about 1350-1400kg. So all five B55 or B55S Florida-chassis mentioned above were sent back to Lancia (with their bodies fitted) to receive heavier rear springs of B56 brand rather than B12 springs, B50 front springs instead of B12 springs, shorter axle ratios (9/46 instead of the B55-S 11/49) and 185-400 tyres rather than the normal 165-400 Michelins. For these reasons Lancia found it necessary to change the respective chassis identification from B55 into B56 and B55S into B56S. Confusion usually arises because nearly all five cars went to motor shows with B55 and B55S chassis-numbering, but later became B56 and B56S as a result of the modifications.

In figures this reads as follows:

Chassis	Modification/Release Date
	new type and number
B56-1002 (ex-B55-1002)	17-06-1955/20-06-1955
B56-1003 (ex-B55-1003)	18-01-1956/19-01-1956
B56-1005 (ex-B55-1005)	29-02-1956/01-03-1956
B56S-1005 (ex-B55S-1005)	04-04-1956/05-04-1956
B56S-1006 (ex-B55S-1006)	05-06-1956/06-06-1956

As far as is known, the cars still in existence are:

Car	Current Owners
B56-1002 1955 Turin Motor Show (2-door, blue)	Lorenzo Boscarelli, Milano
B56-1003 1955 Paris Motor Show (4-door, white)	Rino Botteon, Bern
B56-1005 1956 Geneva Motor Show (4-door, grey met.)	Christian Mannes, Brussels
B56S-1005 1956 Turin Motor Show (?) (4-door, Flaminia prototype?)	(?)
B56S-1006 (4-door, blue lhd.)	Richard Day, California U.S.A.

We can now make some notes on the individual cars. B56-1002 is the most famous of all Floridas; it was the first made and therefore Pininfarina gained most laurels with its first presentation at the 1955 Turin Motor Show.

B56-1003 was the first four door version, most probably painted white and first exhibited at Paris 1955. Almost similar to B56-1003 is B56-1005, grey (with a shade of bronze) metallic, and first exhibited at the 1956 Geneva Motor Show for sure, but even before at the Brussels Motor Show of January 1956 since Pininfarina used to have a stand there by tradition. B56S-1006 (white) is the one and only Florida in the current series with left hand drive. So far it seems it was never at a major Motor Show. Rumours say it is for sale now. All these cars had typical red-orange leather upholstery. Finally B56S-1005, the mystery in my opinion. At the 1956 Turin Show the Lancia Flaminia prototype was shown on the Lancia stand. But... the car was built at Pininfarina (although it did not feature Pininfarina badges), while some details suggest this must be an Aurelia. Take the pillarless door construction for instance, and the Aurelia 6th series hub caps. If it is logical to assume that the modification from B55/S into B56/S was exclusive to the Florida cars, I would assume also that the Flaminia prototype must be ranked amongst the Florida-series. It would be



Florida I - no. B56-1002, 1955 Turin show car



Florida I - no. B56-1003, 1955 Paris show car



Florida I - no. B56-1005, 1956 Brussels and Geneva show car

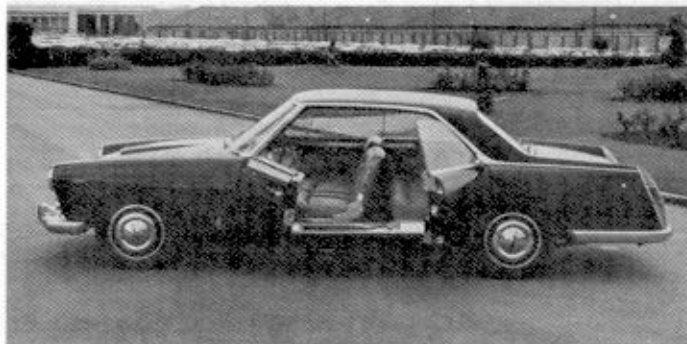


Flaminia Prototype, Turin 1956. Was it an Aurelia B56S-based car?

nice to hear from anybody about this actual car.

So far, we have been concerned only with the Aurelia-engined Florida cars, but every *Lancisto* knows about that beautiful dark-blue Lancia Florida which used to be Battista Pininfarina's personal car. The official name of this one is Florida II and it started life as a two-door hardtop four seater, with special Flaminia chassis number 813.50-0001, built in 1959. Later, when Maestro Pininfarina's health was getting worse, he wanted less obstructive entrance and he had the Florida II modified into its current state, with two extra rear doors, almost invisible, incorporated in the sidepanels. The most beautiful Pininfarina design in his own opinion. This car, which now is the heart of the Pininfarina collection of cars, is a monument to the old master.

The Floridas were the start of the Flaminia range, that is clear, but Pininfarina also made some specials of a quite different brand. These were the Presidenziales, of which four were made in all. Strangely enough, these four do not occur at all in the official Lancia chassis number lists, which are so complete for all other Flaminia variants. Again these phrases should be read as addition and corrections to what is written in *La Lancia*. It was Italian journalist Fabrizio Castellani, who wrote an article for the magazine *Autocapital*, who did the research which gave the following facts. The cars were ordered in March 1960 and were used for the first time during Queen Elizabeth's visit to Italy the following year. The cars featured a 50cm. longer



Florida II - Pininfarina's personal car, showing the "extra" rear doors

wheelbase, shorter 10/47 final drive, only 120km/h top speed. All the cars bore the names of Italian breeds of horses.

Belfiore	no.813.99-1001	registration Roma 454308
Belmonte	no.813.99-1002	registration Roma 545306
Belvedere	no.813.99-1003	registration Roma 545307
Belsito	no.813.99-1004	registration Roma 545229

Sometimes it has been suggested that the Vatican had one of them too, but this has never been confirmed. The Presidenziales differed in some ways one to the other, with a removable transparent hardtop for one or two of them, the others having a soft top. It seems that these Flaminias are still on duty today, if not so frequently as during the sixties. ■