

Austin Times

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Issue 2

A NEWSLETTER FOR ENTHUSIASTS OF AUSTIN PRE-1955

IN THIS ISSUE

We take a look at some of the unusual applications for Austin power - from railway 'locomotive' to motorcycle.

...And there's news about a fun booklet of cigarette cards that feature the Seven

Not to mention some places to go with your Austin of any size during the months ahead.

COMING SOON

Thought the BS1 Sixteen was a post-war model? Well it was and it wasn't. Surprising revelations that are not quite what you're thinking!

And what do the Beatles and 'Heavy Twelves' have in common. It's certain there's only one place to find out...

**IN THE ONLY
NEWSLETTER
THAT COVERS
ALL PRE 1955
LONGBRIDGE
TOPICS**

New age traveller



The last years of peace were the most dynamic at Longbridge since Herbert Austin designed and launched the Austin Seven.

Leonard Lord was at the helm and amongst his ambitions was the complete rejuvenation of the car range. It is perhaps fitting the outcome has been dubbed the 'Lord Look', most notably typified by alligator bonnets and a chrome grille that was pure Buick.

Initially there were to be just four base models. For the first time since the early years of the decade, un-named and known simply by their RAC horse-power ratings, plus the prosaic code that would not have been familiar to many outside the industry and trade – Eight (AR1 and variants), Ten (GR1 similarly), Twelve (HR1) and Sixteen.

The Eight and Ten made it comfortably to the showrooms before war was declared, the Twelve just squeaked in, and the Sixteen didn't happen until after the armistice when it was coded BS1.



Eights receiving their finishing touches at Longbridge in the last months before the outbreak of World War II.

Most would agree that of the quartet there were two stars and two 'also rans'. The Austin Ten was hugely successful and the Sixteen was an outstanding family car giving high performance and exceptional value for money.

The Twelve was a whim – fine if you didn't want to go very far, very fast – and the Eight has been overshadowed by almost everything.

Yet, in this latter case, such a judgement is not really fair. The AR1 Eight – AS1 when it was reintroduced post-war - was the car that revolutionized the little Austin, and although it was superseded, after a relatively short time, by the overhead valve A40 (1947), and the rather more comparable A30 (1951), it was the model that brought Longbridge's small car thinking up to date.

The significance of this should not be underestimated. By 1939, the year the Eight was launched that February, the Austin Seven was hopelessly out-dated, out-classed on almost every count by the Morris Eight, and trading on its reputation some mechanical elements of which dated back to WWI!

Certainly, the Big Seven moved the game forward. Whether or not this vastly under-rated, but short-lived model (1937-9) was ultimately intended as a replacement for the Ruby Seven is a matter for conjecture. The reality is the two cars were marketed and promoted as complimentary.

The Big Seven used the 'ordinary' Seven's chassis and suspension layout and had its semi-Girling braking arrangements. But there was an entirely different engine in Austin's, and the volume production industry's mode of the day – combined cast iron monobloc and crankcase with a pressure fed crankshaft

mounted in three shell bearings, driving the camshaft by chain and sprocket at one end and a flange mounted flywheel carrying a conventional clutch at the other.

But it is a vast, yet often quoted, misconception, that the Austin Eight adopted the Big Seven engine. As has been explained in these columns the latter's engine is markedly different yet a step forward from the Seven in the modernization process.

Without repeating what has been said before, the Austin Eight has a different crankshaft and connecting rods, the entire lubrication system from sump pan to pump is different and the detailing of the valve gear has also been altered as has the manifolding, cooling and even the components for mounting the unit.

That said, the Eight does have a 900 cc (56.77 x 89 mm) side valve engine (the Big Seven's stroke is 0.1 mm shorter because of a smaller diameter for the big end journals).

The power output is a tad mysterious though. When the early literature was published, 27 bhp at 4,400 rpm was quoted which was a slight improvement over the Big Seven's 25. Indeed the valve events had been changed to allow the Eight's inlet to open five degrees before top dead centre as opposed to tdc for its predecessor.

However, one suspects some massaging of the figures as that quoted for the Eight soon settles at 24 bhp for the same revs! The mystery is further compounded by the earliest literature quoting the Big Seven's fractionally smaller dimensions and showing an amalgam of engine features. For instance, the Eight's hollow, barrel, tappets as opposed to the solid type fitted to Big Seven's, but the latter's elegant aluminium fan as distinct from the composite steel affair



There was a brand new 'alligator' bonnet and detachable side panels to facilitate access to the engine.

Eights sport, and the drum pattern AC oil wetted air cleaner of the 'Seven' as opposed to the horizontal, cylindrical type, mounted at an angle across the engine bay's left side and usually fitted to the Eight.

So perhaps there were pre-production, or even very early customers' cars that ran on partially converted Big Seven engines. Certainly items like the tappet barrels could have been changed very simply by removing the bronze guide for the Big Seven's (and Seven's) solid type.

But of rather more interest than this wholly conventional engine is the 'chassis'. Austin made their first move toward monocoque and adopted the same principles for the GR1 Ten introduced in May. The Twelve would retain a traditional cross-braced girder frame that after the war would be adopted by the Sixteen.

The Eight broke new ground though with a steel platform that had box section side members open on the outward facing side so that when the body, which could still be detached, was fitted, it formed box sections. There were also transverse, boxed cross members - at the front and a little, further back to support the rear of the engine, two more, integral with the floor 'pan' beneath the front seat runners and another substantial one at the rear of the platform.

In addition the side members formed 'arms' or 'pontoons' extending ahead of the interior platform, met up with the front cross piece, and added further rigidity to the structure.

As the brochures said of this 'outstanding investment' the 'special chassis and floor is a complete welded unit giving diagonal stiffness, and the body sill is bolted to the frame at numerous points, forming a box section... The front portion of the frame and the cross members are completely boxed and the front portion is also diagonally braced. Its lateral and diagonal rigidity and great strength play an important part in providing good road-holding; the centre of gravity is low and yet there is good ground clearance.'

It is interesting the writers are loath to depart

from traditional terms with which the Austin customer would be familiar – chassis, frame, diagonal bracing. None of which was really there yet the impression was there was nothing new fangled or 'Continental'; viz-a-viz Citroën, perhaps!

The road holding was enhanced by a normal suspension 'package'. Gone were the Seven and Big Seven's archaic transverse front spring and quarter elliptic rears in favour of semi elliptics all round. These were nearly 40 ins long at the back and underslung and nearly 29 ins in length at the front.

Either Luvax or Armstrong double acting hydraulic shock dampers were used all round but at the front they were mounted transversely so the arms were parallel to the axle beam.

The links changed subtly over the years. Very early output having ends curving through the bushes and later production a spherical attachment.

The transverse 'damper' layout was intended to act as an anti-roll device and the Twelve and Sixteen actually did have anti-roll bars.

Steering was, at first by 'hour glass' worm, and sector, with the gearbox ahead of the radiator and the side tube working back to a track rod mounted in front of the axle.

Later cars had a Bishop cam T Type system with the commendable feature of a variable ratio to reduce driver effort for close range manoeuvring.

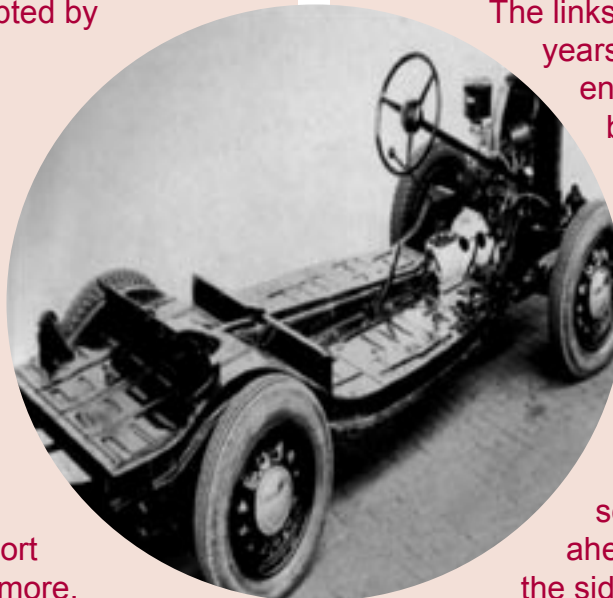
Other modernities were the use of Silentbloc bushes where appropriate.

Longbridge were obviously proud of the car's handling as one of their delightful publicity films features an Eight exclusively, storming successive passes during a day in the English Lake District.

The model copes well, of course, but on celluloid has a tendency to look like a mouse on a hotplate!

The Eight had a four speed gearbox with synchromesh on second, third and fourth. Overall ratios were 21.88:1 on first then 13.22, 8.31 and 5.43:1 respectively.

The A30 eventually inherited a version of this





The interior was light and modern and followed the style of the larger models that were to follow.

'box, and when so applied it proved one of the 'New Austin Seven's' weakest features!

There was a dry single plate clutch that removed the fierceness for which, depending on your view, the original Seven, and to some extent the later models and Big Seven, were either famed or notorious.

The old torque tube transmission went, in favour of a totally conventional open shaft with universal joints at each end and lifted straight off the shelf at Hardy Spicer's in Birch Road, Whitton.

The rear axle was a three-quarter floating design of the 'banjo' type unlike the three piece unit of early Sevens and the 'D' pattern of later cars and the Big Seven. Used now with splined axle shafts this meant the crown wheel and differential gearing could be removed as a unit facilitating adjustment or repair.

Like the exterior of the car the interior was modern and pleasing to the eye. The instrument board was that of the Sixlite Big Seven (the two-door Forlite had a different layout altogether) and all other Austin models of the day. It incorporated a Smiths speedometer with dark brown letters on a cream chapter ring and a matching dial with a cluster of gauges (ammeter, fuel and oil pressure clockwise from the top) was placed directly in front of the driver.

The dashboard itself was a pressed steel fitting with a mock wood grain effect.

The steering wheel was steeply raked but gave a comfortable and purposeful driving position. Most factory illustrations show the wheel with three solid spokes but most if not all production model had a sprung wheel à la the rest of the range.

There were carpets front and rear but as on the Ten these were not fitted over the gearbox which was concealed by a rubber moulding with the gear positions in relief.

On the 'sunshine saloons' there was leather upholstery for the seats.

Pre-war the driver's had a trigger adjustment and the front passenger's could be relocated by fiddling with clips underneath the tubular frame. Post-war car's had proper adjustment for both seats. They also had a rear window blind controlled by ring and string pull from the command module and a sun visor which you didn't get pre-war unless you chose the model with the sliding roof. You did get an interior roof-light however.

Outside there were self-cancelling trafficators running off the six volt electrics and chrome bumpers, but no over-riders, which is an easy and quick way to tell an Eight from a Ten from the front! Indeed at the back the bumper only protected the quarters and another dead giveaway when viewed from the rear is the Eight's single pane window. The Ten has a divided one as on the Twelve and Sixteen.

Reverting to bumpers for a moment, the pre-war cars could be lifted by attaching a ratchet operated jack to the bumper bracket at the relevant corner. Post war cars had a trap 'door' on either side for'ard of the front seats through which a Stevenson's telescopic jack was lowered and operated with the wheelbrace. The van had a screw jack hand-me-down from the Seven.

The little car was just over 12' foot long overall and 4' 8" wide and when it was launched there were six options. The most basic was a two door saloon without a sunshine roof and costing



The Eight, even in its most basic form was an extremely pretty little car although perhaps not quite as 'cute' as the Morris!

£128 - £139 with - model code ARA. For the same £139 you could have had instead a four door with a plain roof or one with a sunshine roof for £149. The four door model code was AR.

Unusually, by today's standards, something a little bit more exotic was, with one exception, cheaper. A lovely two door tourer cost £132 and a whole ten shillings, and its four-seat counterpart a round £135. They came with a hood and side curtains the latter being stowed when not in use in a special rear compartment.

LUGGAGE PLATFORM

The windscreen folded flat and there were cutaways to the tops of the door so hairy drivers could jump in if they wished!

The body shells were the same but on the two seater the rear seat was replaced by a large, flat, luggage platform making the model 'very attractive for touring'. The code was AP.

There was also a pretty little 6 cwt van – AV.

Colours for the saloon cars were blue, black, maroon and grey and the same for tourers except blue was deleted.

Production of the Austin Eight cars ceased for the duration in 1942 and of the van in 1940. By then about 46,400 had been made. A proportion of those would have been for military use – some saloons, some two-seater tourers.

The latter were outwardly distinguishable from the civilian version in that they had two large, near-vertical louvers in the scuttle instead of the chrome embellished horizontal slit in the bonet side panel.

ARMED FORCES

The wheels were also of a disc type without the perforations of the peace time cars and the front registration plate was often above the bumper bar instead of below it.

As far as the author is aware the only difference to the engine was that the coolant inlet on the right side of the block was cast steel and not aluminium. But there may have been other detail changes.

Apart from Austin Eight vehicles commissioned by the armed forces their engines found a variety uses. These included use in the Beresford Stork portable fire pump and of

course, for the airborne lifeboat where they had a dubious reputation amongst 'the powers that were'.

Other appearances were as the machinery for merchant ship lifeboats where they adopted the model name, Thetis, as applied to Austin Seven marine engines since the mid-1930s. Marinization took the usual form of major



From the top: *WD* tourer differed from the civilian cars in a number of ways. Pre-war publicity shot is interesting in that it promotes a two-door Eight as a 'tender' for the family's larger car - presumably another Austin! Tourer is a Ten but styling was virtually identical.

modifications to the cooling and lubrication systems, the application of a wet plate clutch and adoption of magneto ignition the latter also being fitted to the stationary engines.

Production of the Eight car and van recommenced in August 1945, but there was now only one private version – the four door saloon re-coded AS1. The van was AV1.

Numerically the model was Austin's most successful car of the post-war era, out-stripping even the Ten with sales between 1945 and withdrawal in 1947 of some 56,000 - 500 more than the larger model. The price though was now well over £300!

The marketing of any car is fascinating and the Austin Eight no exception.

There was nowhere much for the company to place the Seven other than as mobility for the masses or 'introductory' motoring.

By the time the Big Seven came along the customer for economy cars was much more sophisticated and that model was positioned rather differently – perhaps too much so.

CUSTOMER

The publicity films portrayed a mature, discerning male motorist who preferred a small car or, in their printed advertizing, someone who, if not an enthusiast, had more than a passing interest in cars.

The Eight customer is different again. Certainly the early literature attempts to woo the middle class male who has, perhaps, just one child, but the main thrust is at the ladies.

The cubby hole, at eighteen-and-a-half inches is 'even deep enough to accommodate a *ladies* (my italics) umbrella'. 'She' is shown jacking the car, adjusting the seats, operating the sun roof, stowing the tourer's side curtains and even removing the bonnet panels.

PERSONALITY

And it's amazing how it worked. Even the long wheelbase late Eighteens were projected as suitable for affluent women in their prime, and whereas I doubt whether many in precisely that group bought the Windsor, elderly ladies certainly did!

So it was in the town where I lived. We had a bevy of Eights and nearly all were driven by women.

Yet the Austin Eight is largely unloved and the survival rate remarkably low.

There are a variety of reasons for this. In the first instance they most certainly lack the sheer, love it or hate it, personality of the Seven. And let's face it most motoring enthusiasts love it - to this day.

And the same applies to the Big Seven, it

oozes character and is of conspicuously better quality than the Eight.

Furthermore, by the very nature of its construction, the Austin Eight has to be a 'rot box' and many succumbed to that malaise once the MoT was introduced; and many more have since.

I said at the outset that the model was 'over shadowed' by almost everything. It is true the Series E Morris Eight, also introduced in 1939, was marginally prettier with its more



The model's charm for the ladies was clearly emphasized. Accommodation for her umbrella was highlighted as was the ease with which the car could be jacked. Mind you, she still had to get the wheel off!

streamlined front, faired headlights and shapely, well proportioned rear end. But, setting aside hydraulic brakes, it was not that much more technically advanced than the Austin. However, it did have a headstart on technology.

When Leonard Lord (yes, he worked for Morris before Austin) introduced his peppy Eight in 1934 it was not only a sensation but had everything the Austin was to bring to the Longbridge 'party' five years later; and more – a well designed chassis, semi elliptic springs all

round, hydraulic shock dampers, Bishop cam steering, those hydraulic brakes, an SU carburettor and electric fuel pump. The only thing it lacked was four speeds and that didn't matter much as it could do 35 in second then accelerate briskly to 50, and well beyond, in third. On top of that it was roomier and more comfortable than an Austin Seven.

Finally, garage owners that knew the Austin Eight and GRQ/GS1 Ten when they were popular everyday cars, loathed them. They will tell you that they both sold like warm baguettes because they were so pretty – especially the new 'Lord Look Ten'. But the engine was a workshop disaster.

EXHAUST VALVES

The re-work of valve timing that was one of the distinguishing features of the engine over the Sunday-school-sweet unit in the GRB (Lichfield) and early GRL (Cambridge) led to them burning out their exhaust valves. On number one cylinder especially. As one old mechanic, in his 90s, put it to the author: 'the sort of concept that's designed to lose wars'.

It's easier to have this discussion regarding the Ten, of course, because there is a proven engine with which to compare. But, as we know the Big Seven motor is somewhat different to the Eight's. However, it has no vices, whereas I have never stripped an Austin Eight engine that has not had exhaust valves burnt away and/or heavy valve seat recession especially on that number one cylinder.

Not one of Longbridge's finest, but a neat and very pretty little 40 mpg, runabout that on a good day may see about 60 mph.

**LIKE A STORY INCLUDED IN
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EXPRESS? SEND IT TO THE EDITOR
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**10 Avenue de la Porte de Ménilmontant
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Show the flag in France

THE ORGANIZERS OF the Chanteloup-les-Vignes hillclimb near Paris always extend a warm welcome to British participants and there is usually an Austin presence.

If you want to bolster this, the road run and ascent take place over the weekend of June 10-11 and feature a comprehensive support programme to celebrate the first automobile hillclimb in the world on June 1, 1898.

Of particular interest this year is that the Saturday evening dinner is being staged at the *l'Esturgeon* restaurant at Poissy which was the 'watering hole' for competitors in the very first event.

If you are interested speak to Alain Radigue now. He's on alain-radigue@wanadoo.fr
Tel 00 33 (0)1 39 70 55 41

Advance on Morges

NOW IN ITS 15th year the Swiss Classic British Car Meeting takes place on Saturday, October 7.

This is not an exclusively Austin event, of course, but welcomes all makes (preferably British) of cars and bikes.

It usually attracts well over 1000 machines and can draw 20000 visitors to the shores of Lake Geneva.

There's free entry for participants and public and special offers on hotels and other support facilities.

You can get more information from the website

www.british-cars.ch

Here, there, everywhere an Austin

by BENT HORSINGTON

Austins turn up performing some very unexpected tasks.

Apart from the inevitable collection of home made tractors and mechanized farm implements, usually based on the Seven or 'Heavy' Twelve, and examples of which are still being made today, there was at least one instance where an old Seven saloon body was used to add a touch of luxury to a crawler tractor.

However, there were much more sophisticated applications.

For example, in the 30s Motorail of Bedford, UK, made a workmanlike little prime-mover for narrow gauge railway operations at locations such as quarries and mines.

Called the Simplex it took an Austin Light Twelve-Four engine, virtually off the shelf, as the lusty power plant.

On the same theme was an exceptionally manoeuvrable works tractor from the well known industrial equipment firm of Lansing Bagnall. This too adopted the 'Light' Twelve.

While for those leisure hours the 12 inch gauge railway which ran through the grounds of Chessington Zoo in southern England relied on a standard Austin Ten engine to power its facsimile of a steam locomotive named *Queen Elizabeth*.

Amazingly, the Austin pulled a total of five cars and 60 passengers weighing about seven tons, on a half mile journey.

However, the warning on the loco that the



This beautiful period picture, possibly not published before, is of an Austin powered railcar destined for South Africa. Maker Wickam's story is told in the text.

Photo courtesy: Mr D Holden

train was not to exceed 80 mph was tongue in cheek!

In similar light-hearted vein was the WASP built in the 30s by Midlands motorcycling brothers Jack and Eric Holmes.

This professional looking creation is probably the most famous of the amateur motorcycle productions that had as their heart an Austin Seven engine. The name was an acronym for 'Was All Spare Parts'.

It had the distinction of appearing in a 10-minute Austin publicity film entitled *The Mighty Atom* used to illustrate the versatility of the Seven engine.

WASP went on to appear in *'the Green 'un'* (*Motor Cycle* magazine) so was certainly causing a stir in motorcycling circles in the 1930s.

John Holmes had a cycle shop in Red Lion

Street, in the centre of the picturesque Worcestershire town of Alvechurch. Tragically he died while only a young man and the business was inherited by his 19-year-old son, another John, and popularly known, of course, as Jack.

With courage and resourcefulness Jack continued to run the shop, and the full extent of his enterprise manifested itself in WASP around 1933, although the engineering input is thought to have come from brother Eric, who was not directly involved in the cycle shop but had a flair for matters mechanical.

Jack's son Ken, says: I don't think Dad and uncle Eric imagined a commercial future for the motorbike. It was more a bit of fun, but they certainly used it on the road.

'Fun' maybe, but WASP certainly looked magnificent with compact installation of the engine itself and neat, professional-standard attachment of items like the Austin car's instrument panel and a neat rear number plate.

None of this could have especially pleased George Brough

Quite where the bits came from is not clear but Ken Holmes suspects the engine may have been sourced from a scrapyards much in the mode of the Dellow brothers who may have been scouring the same local yards a few years later to find Austin Seven parts to build the first Dellow cars!

None of this could have especially pleased George Brough, who had built professionally, using an Austin Seven engine, what he considered to be the ultimate motor cycle!

Some foster parents who adopted the Austin Seven engine for two wheels went further than others.

When, in 1937, a gentleman named Roberts from Stockton in the north of England decided he wanted a motorcycle combination he resorted to building virtually the whole thing out of an Austin Seven.

The rather tired car cost the princely sum of £5 but Mr Roberts wanted to get maximum value for money, so rather than use the still-willing engine and scrap the rest he decided to use most

of the other parts as well.

Once the engine had gone into an old BSA frame with the forks, 'bars', front mudguard and petrol tank still attached, and a Scott motorcycle radiator had been fitted, Mr Roberts set about using parts of the Austin transmission for the final drive.

The centre part of the rear axle, crown wheel and pinion and the torque tube and cardan shaft were all utilized to provide a sophisticated shaft drive. The clutch also remained as did the three speed gearbox complete with reverse.

The brakes used BSA shoes on the Austin's drums and wheels, arranged to serve the Watsonian sidecar in addition to the bike. Two pedals were needed, the one for the rider's left foot working the system for the motor cycle's rear wheel and another on the right applying that on the 'chair'.

The engine itself retained its car type carburettor and was tuned to give a cruising speed of 40 mph with a maximum of 55 and petrol consumption of over 50 mpg.

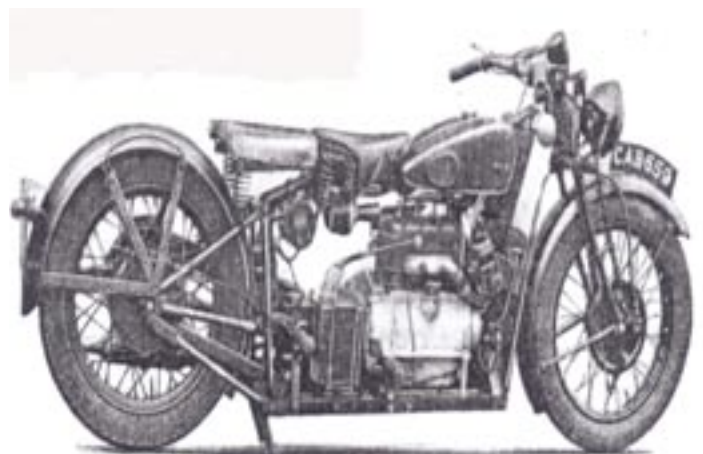
The only problem encountered with the 'Stockton Special', which cost a total of £28, was overheating caused by the inadequacy of the Scott radiator. Subsequently the Austin's unit was mounted between bike and sidecar.

The Seven crops up again as the loyal servant of the wartime Air Raid Patrol (ARP).

Hundreds were bought by Birmingham pump makers James Beresford to fit to the trailer units used by the patrols.

They could draw fire fighting water from a depth of 24 ft and throw a 100 ft high, 100 gallons per minute, jet.

Model name Stork, the early examples had a cylindrical combined coolant and fuel tank



WASP was a handsome well engineered machine, by the Holmes brothers of Alvechurch.

above the engine.

Later versions, which used a motor derived from the Austin Eight car and van, were more 'up-market' with an encased engine and other refinements to facilitate handling.

Improvisations down on the farm have already been mentioned but Austin were once at the cutting edge in combine harvester power.

Massey Harris chose the Longbridge product in the 50s and 60s, the obvious selection being the four litre six cylinder petrol engine used in the later K Series commercial vehicles and CX range of buses and coaches, the Loadstar lorry and, incidentally, the Sheerline car.

AUSTIN POWERED COMBINE HARVESTERS

**Massey Harris 726
(1949-53) 6 cyl 3995 cc.
Petrol or tractor vaporizing
oil (tvo) i.e. paraffin
56 bhp @ 1935 rpm
Massey Harris/Ferguson
780 and 780 Special
(1953-62) as above but
with 4 cyl Perkins L4 diesel
option later A-4-270
Massey Ferguson 780
(1963-66) as above.
Massey Ferguson 735
BMC 4 cyl 1489 cc
Petrol/tvo with option of
coil or magneto ignition**

The engines were converted by a firm from Manchester called Newage who became best known for marinizing Austin, Morris and later BMC engines.

John Farnworth is an expert on the Massey Harris 'combine' and drove the Austin-engined versions professionally in the 1950s. He describes them as 'incredibly reliable'.

If we took to the highways around the same time and encountered road works there could well have been more examples of Newage's handiwork on Austin engines - for concrete mixers, rollers and compressors.

Apart from the big six cylinder four litre there were 'fours' in the 1500 cc and 2000 brackets to provide from 10-40 horsepower at around 1500 revs. The idea was always that Newage did the 'make-over' in such a way the Austin would

drop into any amount of designs. It worked.

There was even a railway inspection car that looked like a caravan on rails made by D Wickham and Co of Ware in Hertfordshire.

These later products used the somewhat unlikely scenario in their ads of two very intense schoolboys looking at a railcar and declaring: 'That sounds like an Austin. It must be an Austin, that tick-over like music to the ear...that surge of power as she quickly pulls away.'

No thoughts there of James Dean, or Heaven forbid, girls.

But the story of Wickham, and indeed Austin's association with them is fascinating.

The firm had been founded originally by the off-shoot of a brewing family to mechanize that industry. However, they diversified into trucks and trolleys for the permanent way.

After Longbridge started building closed Austin Sevens in 1926 Wickham had the idea of basing a vehicle on it which could run on rails and be used for tasks like track inspection and transporting gangers.

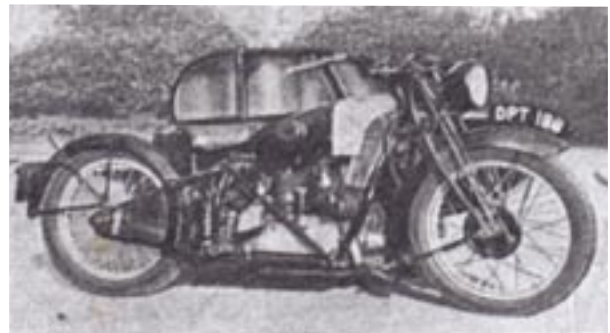
In 1928 they fitted 13 of the cars with wooden-centred flanged rail wheels and offered them for export, fully crated at £200.

Ten went to Argentina, three to Kenya but the concept was as inauspicious as the total and the company decided on a purpose built railcar.

In successive years Wickham became a leader in the field and their vehicles had a global presence. Often the power unit was an Austin Seven or Ten but Fords were also used.

During World War II the American jeep became the first road vehicle to be successfully adapted to run on rails.

But Wickham had now moved on to larger rail cars and these too were Austin engined until the diesel displaced petrol in this field.



Mr Roberts's combination used bits from an Austin Seven

IF YOU ENJOYED THE ARTICLE ABOUT UNUSUAL HOMES FOR AUSTIN COMPONENTS AND WANT TO TELL US ABOUT OTHERS, OR ADD TO THE STORIES OF THOSE ALREADY COVERED, THE EDITOR WILL BE DELIGHTED TO HEAR FROM YOU. CONTACT DETAILS AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGE.



Action Castella Style

Smoking wheels

LAST TIME I told you about the innovative book by Austin enthusiast Bryan Norfolk that deals with postage stamps from around the world featuring many different types of Austin.

Bryan has been back to us with details of another of his publications. This one covers cigarette cards portraying the Austin Seven.

He was inspired to start a collection after being shown that of friend Barry Harvey. Some years later this slim volume is the result.

Presentation is simple with the car reproduced on one side of the page and the text that would have appeared on the back on the other.

Slightly frustrating is that Bryan does not always know the date of the exhibits and we are left guessing on the basis of the typographical styling.

Inevitably the quality of the draughtsmanship varies from card to card but this is part of the charm and great interest of the little book.

Number 19 in an undated series of 50 from Barratt & Co is fairly poorly drawn, but at least you would recognize a Seven from it, which is more than can be said for some of the illustrations on the stamps! However, the technical info is sound and comprehensive.

by **Aïda Maurice**

On the other hand the offerings of Castella, Doncella, Brooke Bond (poetic licence!), Ogden's with a super 50 card series devoted to motor racing in 1931, and Wills, way back in 1926, are superb.

Players portray a Ruby tolerably well as number eight in a 1936 set of 50 which did actually also include a Sixteen.



1931 Swallow saloon featured in a Doncella set

Great accompanying text on both.

More details on the book, prices and postage from Bryan at 6 Ambrose Lane, Harpenden, Herts, AL5 4AX or e-mail bryan.norfolk@btopenworld.com

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