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Austin Times

A NEWSLETTER FOR ENTHUSIASTS OF AUSTIN PRE-1955

IN THIS ISSUE

DON'T MISS IT, IT'S ALL IN YOUR FAVOURITE AUSTIN NEWSLETTER. THE BEST PLACE TO FIND STORIES ON ALL ASPECTS OF YOUR PREFERRED MAKE PRE-1955

The lost tycoon?

The editor takes a look at what is, perhaps, the saddest Austin story of all.

Invariably, when the fates take the young from us they perform them, and perhaps the world, a great disservice.

Who can say what Mozart had left to contribute or to what heights John Travers Cornwell, the youngest holder of the Victoria Cross, may have soared had they not been struck down.

So it was with Vernon James Austin and it is easy to make the stark contrast with the inheritors of a dynasty like that of Ford.

So is Vernon the lost tycoon? It is hard for us, 90 years after he was killed at 21 on a French battlefield to assess, and our difficulty is compounded by the fact that it is unlikely anyone knew him particularly well, not his parents, not his two sisters.

He would only have been aged

Vernon at 'Kings' - third from the left in the middle row. He bore a striking resemblance to his father.

SOME ASIDES ON SIZAIRE BERWICK

MOST OF YOU seemed to find the story of Austin and Sizaire Berwick, published last time, interesting. But readers Barry Walker and Jim Stringer have pointed out that Bent made a couple of *faux pas*! Jim, no mean Austin historian himself, informed us that the Abbey Road in west London is not that of Beatles fame which the author, and for that matter the editor, thought it was. The Beatles recordings were made in Abbey Road *north* London. And Barry Walker who has an incredible fund of Longbridge knowledge as a consequence of his sterling work for the ex-Austin Apprentices' Association tells us that the Harvey du Cros involved with Austin at that time was actually the son of the Harvey du Cros of Dunlop fame. We are endebted to Jim and Barry for these clarifications.

about six or seven when he left his home at Berwood Grove, in the Erdington district of Birmingham, to board at St Cuthbert's School on Worcester Road – the main route to that nearby city – in Malvern. And in reality he was never to return – not to Berwood Grove or Lickey Grange, where the family moved in 1910.

As to why Malvern and why St Cuthbert's we can only speculate. The town, nestling in Elgar's Malvern Hills, would have been comfortably close to home, appealingly gentile perhaps, and then, as now, offered a wide selection of schools – Seaford Court, just next-door, would have been an alternative!

Natural Dream

However attractive, St Cuthbert's has long since disappeared along with its records. It had come to prominence in the late 19th century and overlooked the placid Malvern Links common, one of many studding with green that picturesque spa. The school closed sometime in the first half of the 20th century.

As to whether, at the St Cuthbert's stage in Vernon's life, Herbert Austin seriously aspired to eventually handing over the company to him is hard to ascertain. Though this would be the natural dream of any father with an only son, especially in the 1900s. And it would have been practical and logical.

Age of fifty

We do have confirmation that it was the case, ironically in an obituary for Vernon published in the *Birmingham Post* on May 24, 1915. It notes remarks by Herbert Austin, that when he reached the age of fifty, he intended to cede power.

It is also born out by the March 1915 issue of Vernon's senior school magazine, The *Canturian*, announcing his death in March 1915, when it says he had spent his time 'preparing to take his place in his father's motor works'.

How enthusiastic Vernon had been about all this is uncertain, but there is some evidence that for a short time he was working at, or closely associated with, Longbridge.

Our picture of him starts to become plainer as he begins to grow up and took that exam for The King's School, Canterbury. He would have needed to be gifted, but not brilliant, to pass, and again there is no obvious connection between 'King's' and St Cuthbert's and, as we will see, in some respects it was a strange choice.

In those days the new entrants were said to have been 'elected' or 'on the foundation' and were called 'probationers'. After two years the prefix was dropped and after a further two the pupil would become a senior King's Scholar.

Vernon started in September, 1907, for the Michaelmas term, had a Mr Bell as housemaster and Dr Galpin as his 'head', but left after only two years; on July 1, 1909.

Was he unhappy at school?

Maybe.

It is easy to leap to the conclusion that because he was subsequently buried in Canterbury, he adored the place. But Somerset Maugham, whose years at 'King's' were not his most joyous, also requested his ashes be interred within the school grounds!

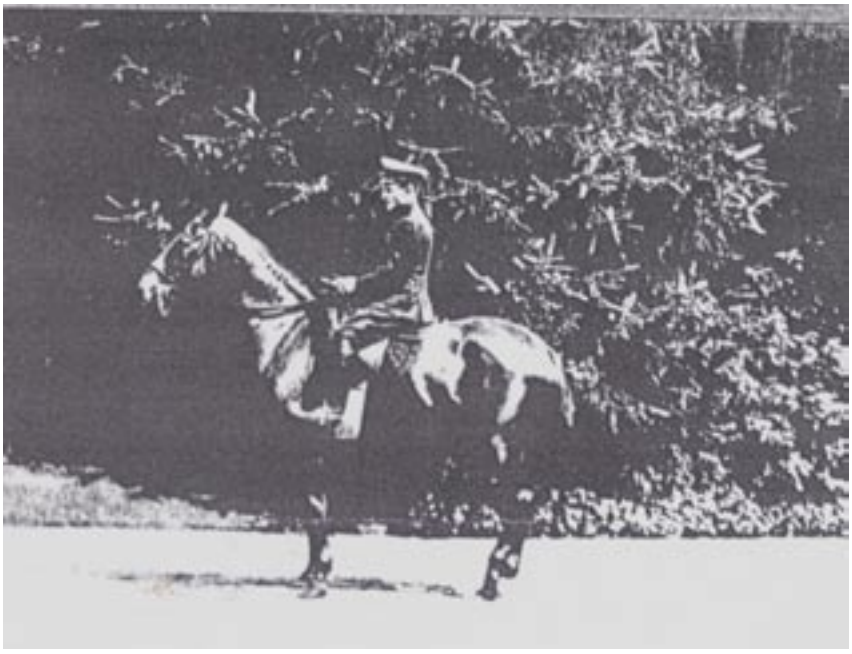
Invariably, when the fates take the young from us they perform them, and perhaps the world, a great disservice.

Unfortunately, we know little about Vernon's time within those cloistered walls other than that he bore a striking resemblance to his father – there is at least one school photograph, which confirms this. Also, 'he was keenly intelligent, of amiable disposition' and….'always, quiet, reserved and with grit, of which his contemporaries seemed largely unaware'.

This could simply mean he was studious or, it could indicate he was not feeling particularly at home.

In those days the ethos of the school was 'service and the empire'. Of the 26 probationers who entered with Vernon no fewer than 23 enlisted for the First World War, one was awarded a VC, two the MC and eight went on to become either colonial civil servants or career soldiers.

And whilst the highest academic standards



Vernon liked horses. The location of this picture is not known. Possibly it's a military setting but quite probably, Lickey Grange.

were set, remarkably few Kings' Scholars – for the period – entered the Church, and one has the distinct impression that the adoption of a business career or, in 'trade', as it would have been disparagingly termed, was discouraged.

Also acclaimed was prowess on the games field and participation in the social life of the school. The VC, Fleming-Sandes, was a sports all-rounder and a monitor by the time he left in 1913. Ralph Juckes, one of the MCs, could hardly ever have been out of his kit such was his superiority on the rugby and fives fields, at rowing and in the boxing ring, and Kidson, who like Vernon perished in the War, had been school captain, edited the magazine and run the debating society.

Vernon was none of these things. But he joined the Cadet Corps almost as soon as he'd unpacked and some authorities describe him as a keen golfer and we know he liked horses.

Classmate, poor Robert Lang, gets the curt reference in the school records: 'left 1 July 1912. Advertising and Publicity Specialist. Club: Publicity Club of London'!

Vernon himself, but for his military distinction, might have featured even less prominently, as his entry begins. 'Went into business'.

Even if the *Canturian* had not helped us by pointing out that Vernon was 'becoming an experienced motorist' it would be obvious what that business was.

Yet there are mysteries.

We know Vernon was interested in motors. Some suggest that a serious teenager in a cap, caught in the background to photographs of Austin steering 'number one' out of the workshop, is Vernon. And the age is about right.

Proof positive of his involvement with cars – and the company – comes as late as June 1914 and the Austrian Alpine Trial. The event, which started in Vienna and involved storming 25 passes along an 1800-mile route, is now largely remembered for the performance of one Rolls-Royce.

James Radley swept all before him including the newly included *Turracherhöhe* or 'terror pass', to take top honours. But there were other participants – 78 in all, including five British cars and Vernon Austin.

The contingent from England comprised, Radley of course, but also an Armstrong-Whitworth, Vauxhall, Wolseley and 20 horsepower Austin, OA4133.

The latter was entered for Harold Kendall with Vernon as co-driver. Kendall was Austin's test driver. He began his competition career with the company brilliantly in 1910, by winning the St Petersburg Automobile Club Trophy over a course considered to be the toughest in the world. He did much the same in an event from the then capital to Riga in 1912. Although he took no prizes in Austria, car and crew excelled, being one of only 14 finishers, achieving over 60 mph in the speed test and covering a total of 7000 miles without breakdown.

Further proof of Vernon's involvement with automobiles, though less specific, comes just two months later, when we discover from the *Canturian*, he was due to sail for Russia 'to take part in an important motor race on the very day war was declared'. (August 4).

This would seem to be a rally organized by the Automobile Club of Russia in conjunction with the Imperial Automobile Club of Moscow and due to finish in that city on August 19. We know that as well as the Austin, three Siddeley-Deasy was entered. The Coventry cars were booked

This painting by Robert Johnston was commissioned for the Austin Golden Jubilee in 1955. Herbert Austin drives the first car from the Works in 1906 and it is thought the lad, second left, is Vernon.

on a boat from Harwich on the seventh of the month. It is reasonable to assume the event never took place.

Vernon is also reported to have spent time continuing his studies overseas – in Leipzig and Sweden. This is hazy. Herbert Austin was a Francophile, and a lot of his engineering influences had come from just across the Channel. And whereas many would argue Germany has joint claim with France for the development of the automobile, it seems likely that if Austin had wanted his son to experience practice in another country, he would most definitely have chosen France.

There seems to be no revealing information about Sweden. Was it market driven? Austin had courted Russia almost from the beginning and could he have perceived opportunities in another northern European country, which Vernon was exploring? But that is purely speculation.

At The King's School, as well as his core subjects, Vernon spent time in the army and engineering class. This is interesting because the two fields are not automatically synonymous and we might draw the conclusion that he was studying the technical side of soldiering, born out, to some extent, by his joining an artillery brigade.

We also know from the *Canturian* that he was one of the first Old King's Scholars to join the Special Reserve and 'devoted a good deal of his time to his military duties'. More, perhaps, than he did to his motoring. And was it in the army rather than the machine shops and drawing offices of Longbridge that Vernon felt his destiny lay.

The Special Reserve along with the Territorial Army and Officer Training Corps had been introduced by Lord Richard Haldane during his term as War Minister in the governments of Bannerman and Asquith.

Vernon entered the scheme around 1911 – just two years after he had left school – and, aged 18 was given the rank of 2nd Lieutenant in the Royal Field Artillery, gazetted in January 1912.

Immediately before he went to France he received further training at Bulford Camp on Salisbury Plain and was then attached to the 22nd Battery of 34 Brigade Royal Field Artillery.

This was a Regular Army unit and one of the very first to go to France. Vernon could hardly have enjoyed his 21st birthday on November 21 and a few months before would already have seen action at Mons, the Marne and Aisne prior to taking part in the push north or 'race to the sea'.

Sometime around that last anniversary he arrived at what is now known as the 'Forgotten Front' - the vicious line from Armentières to La Bassée. And it was near the latter small town he died on January 26, 1915.

Losses to mines and snipers were heavy in the area and on that tragic Tuesday morning, he and his commanding officer, Lieut. Col. Sandilands, had gone forward alone to reconnoitre. Returning along an open piece of road, at about 11.30 am, Vernon took a sniper's bullet in the right side of his chest. He lapsed into unconsciousness and died within minutes.

Sandilands, who, coincidentally, was an Old King's Scholar, wrote to Herbert and Helen Austin of the gloom among the 200 or so men of the battery and added : 'He was such a cheery little chap and always showed such a stout front under fire. He was a keen and capable officer and he is a great loss to the Brigade with all of whom he was so popular.'

If Vernon's 'grit' had not been apparent to his classmates at Canterbury it had now been

Sometime around that last anniversary he arrived at what is now known as the 'Forgotten Front' - the vicious line from Armentières to La Bassée.

Vernon had a full military funeral. His father is just visible directly behind the gun carriage

In crude script on the wooden cross that had marked his temporary grave - 'a last *adieu* from his comrades on the battlefield'.

publicly displayed in the most heartbreaking circumstances.

Perhaps Austin's heart was broken.

The decision to bring the body home was, of course, a very personal one and provided for by War Office rules specifying grieving relatives paid!

The wish Vernon be laid to rest near his school in Canterbury and not his home is less easy to understand particularly in the light of the information, albeit sparse, on Vernon's short, inconspicuous time there.

'King's' has a very strong claim to being the oldest school in the country, and St Martin's, chosen for the interment, is the oldest functioning church. It is only a coincidence that these credentials were under discussion at the time Vernon was a pupil, but there is no doubt the locations have an aura of permanence and great antiquity. It is what moved Somerset Maugham to his request.

By the same token there is a theory Herbert Austin felt, that Vernon's future having turned out to be illusory his son would be safe for all time in the past.

Whatever the sentiments, the coffin was landed in Folkestone on February 6 and taken to the Holy Innocents Chapel at Canterbury Cathedral where, before a guard of honour formed from the Officer Training Corps of The King's School, Canon Mason and the Rev Dr McDowall, by now headmaster, officiated at a private service.

The main ceremony, with full military honours, took place two days later, on a Monday afternoon. The eight-man guard of honour turned out again at the cathedral to walk beside a Royal Horse Artillery gun carriage bearing Vernon's coffin, draped with the Union Flag.

Austin, in a top hat and his customary heavy winter coat walked behind, ahead of the band of the Third Reserve Cavalry Regiment.

On the cards of the carpet of wreaths at St Martin's was written the poignancy of the occasion. That from Uncle Harry and Aunt Gladys reminded he was just a boy; the fellowship of the soldier, spelled out by 'Six Austin Boys at the Front', and in crude script on the wooden cross that had marked his temporary grave -'a last *adieu* from his comrades on the battlefield', so many of whom would soon say their own farewells; the respect for Austin marked by the reserved, 'Staff and Workpeople Austin Motor Co, Birmingham; and the scale of the promise which had been lost by tributes from the Continent.

Of the Michaelmas intake of 1907 almost a quarter died in The Great War. As is the way of things they are not without their tangible monuments. Apart from the grave at St Martin's Vernon is remembered on a marble and bronze plaque inside the church.

In recent times, a memorial tablet to those who 'played the game to the end', and which stood on the former site of Moseley Rugby Club in the Birmingham suburbs was restored, moved and rededicated at Moseley Ashfield Cricket Club. The siting was thought appropriate as those early cricketers would probably have had close associations with their shin-padded neighbours.

Vernon's name heads the copper on granite plaque. Yet it seems unlikely he played with the team. He boarded at St Cuthbert's, boarded at

King's' and showed no interest in either rugby or cricket while there! And when he left became heavily involved in army matters. Perhaps the addition of his name was a courtesy to the Austins who lived nearby

We could also speculate the young men enthusiastically advocating motor transport to their elders in the dramatized 1930s Austin publicity film *This Progress* are 'Vernon'. The similarities are probably coincidence and Sir Herbert obviously let them stand. But it brings us inexorably to a final question - what Herbert Austin felt in his heart about the loss of his heir.

We will never know, of course, and we should not intrude on these intimacies.

However, it may be significant that as early as 1919 there seem to have been preliminary talks about a union with Humber and although it never happened, it might have given Austin the opportunity to play a less pro-active role in a motor company.

More striking still are discussions a year later with General Motors of America, one permutation of which was buying out Sir Herbert for something in the region of £700,000.

Numerous people gave their time and expertise to assist the author with what is still an inadequate assessment of Vernon Austin's short life. I am immensely grateful to all of them, but especially to PAUL POLLAK MA, the archivist at The King's School, Canterbury, who not only provided factual and photographic material but gave an insight into the cultural and sociological mores obtaining at the time Vernon was at the school.

All the proposals fell through, and an Austin, described as 'unhappy', is reported as having implied to a journalist afterwards that he had relished the prospect of retirement and living in comfort for the rest of his life.

Yet, at the end of the day, the best therapy may have been to drive on and turn the Austin Motor Company into one of the most important in Europe. One of the first steps towards this achievement, of course, was designing the Austin Seven and it must have been painful to work alongside that talented 18-year-old draughtsman, Stanley Edge, brimful of motoring and engineering ideas, in the intimacy of the library at Lickey Grange.

But the fact remains that loyal and talented though his coterie at Longbridge were, there was never again going to be anyone he could have moulded precisely to his own ways of thinking.

Leonard Lord - he was no Vernon..

Until, perhaps, 1938.

Leonard Percy Lord was certainly no Vernon. A Coventry technical school boy, he was handpicked by Austin and took over as works director in 1938 aged 41 – Vernon would have been 45. Lord Austin, who had been created a peer in 1936 was 72. It was a far cry from retirement at 50, but the great man was beginning to slip into neutral.

Lord was energetic, he had an eye for publicity, he knew the cars the public wanted, how to make them and how to make money from them. He had been doing it for three years when Lord Austin of Longbridge died. Maybe, at last, he was free to do so.

THEY PLAYED THE GAME TO THE END

One of those little anomalies in Austin history centres on the memorial tablet to those who 'played the game to the end' mentioned in the main story as having stood on the former site of Moseley Rugby Club in the Birmingham suburbs.

As we have seen it has been restored, moved and rededicated at Moseley Ashfield Cricket Club.

The name V *T* Austin heads the plaque and some think this is Vernon. Although I did not question it earlier it is unlikely 'our' Vernon played with the team. As we saw he boarded at St Cuthbert's, Malvern and the King's School, Canterbury and showed no interest in rugby or cricket then! And when he left he became heavily involved in army matters.

Perhaps the addition of his name, if it is his - the detailed records are currently unavailable - was indeed a courtesy to the family, who lived nearby. Although it must be said, not *that* close.

If 'T' for 'J' is a mistake, and in the first line, it seems unlikely anyone, least of all the Austins, would have let it pass.

THE 15th SWISS British Car Meeting takes place this year on October 7.

This event, at the idyllic setting of Morges on the shores of Lake Geneva, regularly attracts more than 1000 cars (not necessarily Austins!) and 'bikes' and 20000 admirers. It's well worth a visit so watch this space for further info or visit www.british-cars.ch

Chanteloup regulars the Donaz family turned out for this year's event with a a new single-seater Seven Special.

CHANTELOUP 'CLIMB BLAZES WITH AUSTIN INTEREST

The world's oldest automobile hillclimb, much publicized in this newsletter, glistened with Austin interest again this year, although sadly, it always comes from just one family based locally in the Ile de France, where the historic event is held.

Fine execution of the new single seater

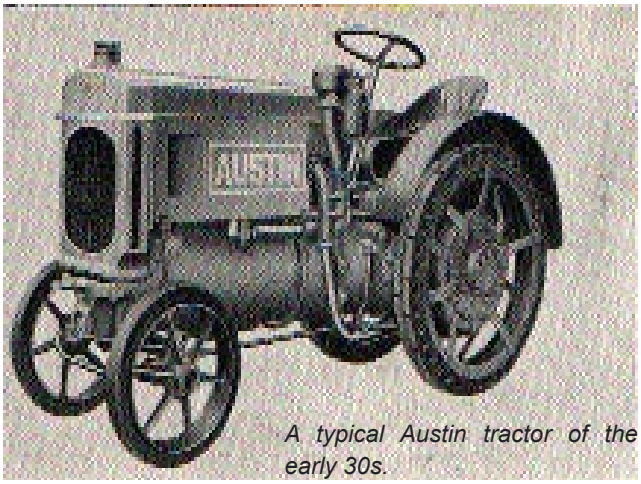
As the picturesque streets of the little town blazed on the hottest day of the year the Donaz family produced two Sevens.

One, of course, was the smart 'Ulster' that has delighted the crowds for years and is spiritedly and stylishly driven by Benjamin. But there was a newcomer in the guise of an attractively executed single-seater for 'dad' Jean Louis. *Aficionados* of the racing Seven would have been intrigued by the off-set engine to match a similarly disposed rear axle and by some impressively ingenious re-working of the front axle and suspension. Good stuff!

Favourite on the hill - the Donaz Austin Seven 'Ulster'.

Peer's ploughman

by BENT HORSINGTON



A typical Austin tractor of the early 30s.

WE KNOW AUSTINS have been pressed into service on the land, principally in the 1930s. Yet quite apart from these farmyard conversions of cars the company were a major producer of purpose-built tractors from just after the First World War until just before the Second.

As in so many other walks of life The Great War was to have a devastating effect on agriculture in Britain. Not only did the labourers volunteer in their droves in 1914 and 15 for the huge 'adventure' many of the horses that had pulled the ploughs went with them. As there had never been much enthusiasm for mechanized farming food shortages began to set in and the Government devised a remedy which was almost as cumbersome as the American machines it relied so heavily upon.

In 1916 it started looking for three million extra acres of corn and potato growing land and through county Agricultural and Executive Committees and the Food Production Department within the Ministry of Agriculture itself, the equipment that would be needed to work them.

This included coming up with a design for a suitable British tractor and Herbert Austin was co-opted onto the examining body. It began by hitching its wagon to tractor trials the Royal Agricultural Society had started in 1914 and these were intensified to concentrate on one vehicle in particular, as it seemed sensible not to re-invent the wheel, but better to adopt the promising Fordson Model F.

The 'F', rather obviously was a Ford, called 'son' because a sharp operator in North America called Ford had started producing linferior products to Henry while trying to cash in on his already remarkable reputation. The Fordson was an elegant machine by any standards and like the Model T, many of whose components, such as the eccentric trembler coil ignition system, it used, was the first mass produced vehicle of its type.

Henry Ford, on this occasion in philanthropic rather than curmudgeonly mood, offered to supply the 'F' free of charge providing it was not then sold to farmers.

Soon dubbed the MOM after the Ministry of Munitions, whose Agricultural Machinery Department had instigated the extended RAS trial, the arrangements were complex. Parts came from America and were assembled at a government workshop in Manchester. Hence the crop of MOMS was slow to sprout and certainly not ready for the 1917 ploughing season.

Meanwhile a selection of fearsome ready assembled tractors trickled through from America and we now see a familiar pattern

When it remained upright ploughed road more effectively than field.

emerge. Austin, who was from farming stock and had been intimate with agricultural machinery in Australia must have been appalled by the monsters passing through his hands.

The toppling Bates, for example, which when it remained upright ploughed road more effectively than field.

By now, and as was also often the case, entrepreneur, Austin backer Harvey du Cros had come on the scene. Companies in which du Cros was involved took over the troublesome disposal of the American tractor interests, first Vulcan, then the British Ariel (there was a US one in Bridgport, Connecticutt), but some lingered until 1919.

At least it left Sir Herbert free to pursue more sensible tractors and in the summer of 1917 he launched his R model which was practically the same as the MOM Fordson F which was the same as the Wallis – billed as 'America's Foremost Tractor'.

The significance of all three was there was no chassis. The crankcase, gearbox and rear axle were bolted together to act as the frame, making for a lighter, more compact vehicle.

The Austin version used what was basically the 20 horsepower car engine of the future and was described as the first all-British tractor.

It was demonstrated on farms throughout Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Kent and Surrey from late 1917 until mid-1919.

The R was being helped by a tractor boom, 10,000 of the participants in which went to a Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) organized trial at South Carlton, near Lincoln in 1919 to see the Austin perform magnificently.

In June1920, weekly Longbridge tractor production peaked at 66, with 1500 built that year.

But patriotism was not enough. For a time the Austin price of from £300-360 was on a par with the Fordson but then in 1924 the McKenna duties, which surcharged American vehicle imports at 33 per cent were temporaily removed. Ford reduced his price to £120 and the Model R became seriously uncompetitive costing on occasions two-and-a-half times the price of its American rival.

But Herbert had already taken a leaf out of Henry Ford's book. The American had a car

Base camp for the assault was a former shoe factory at Liancourt

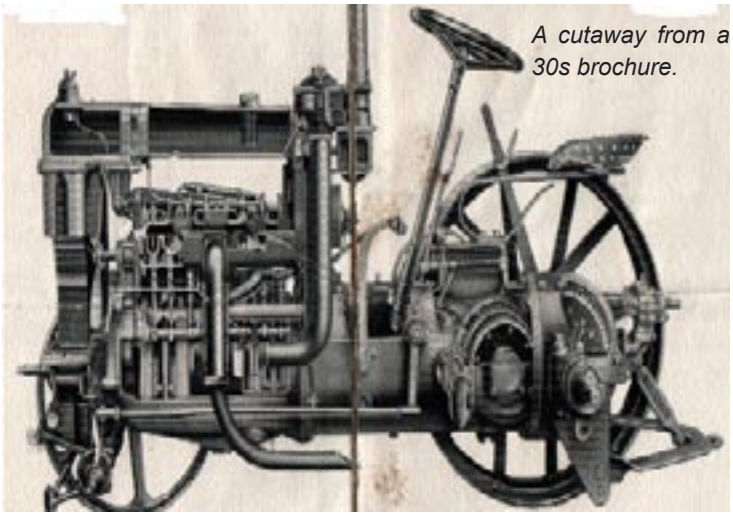
and lorry plant at Old Trafford, Manchester and would open a tractor factory in Cork, southern Ireland in 1929. So why not build Austin tractors in France?

With most of France turned over to agriculture Austin clearly felt he could do well if freed of the import duties designed to protect the incumbents.

Base camp for the assault was a former shoe factory at Liancourt, to the north of Paris, acquired in August 1919 and like Longbridge some years before, attached to undeveloped land – in this case 325 acres.

Things started brilliantly when France's popular wartime president, Raymond Poincaré examined a Model R at a meeting of the *Sociéte Syndicale de la Motoculture* in the St Germain-en-Laye suburb of the capital and heaped praise upon the machine.

It's not clear from now on who did what, when. Production of complete tractors at Longbridge probably continued until around 1922-23 with possibly engines and components being sent to France after that. Certainly the old WW1 models of tractor were listed until 1926.



A cutaway from a 30s brochure.

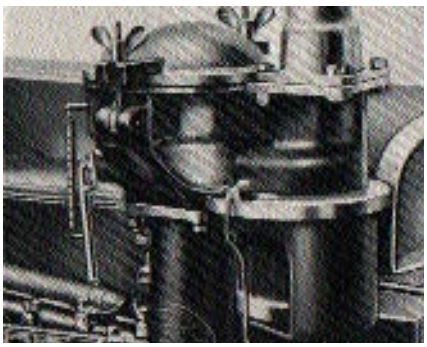
The elegant buildings at Liancourt had a potential for about 30 vehicles a week and for specific markets there was what Americans call a row-cropper or perhaps in this context a vineyarder!

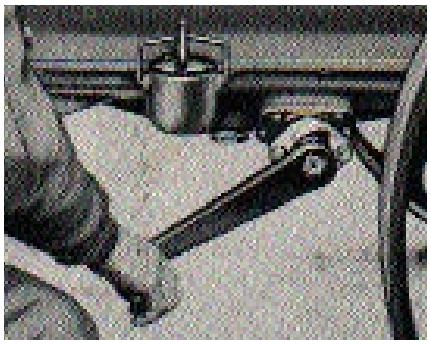
They had tracks of 3' or 4' while the standard version could also have its wheels set for rows 16, 18 or 21 inches apart.

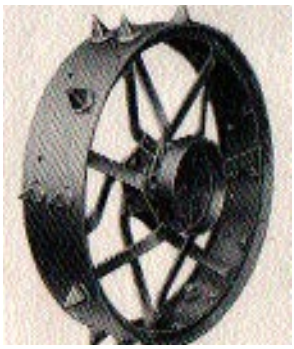
The core model was prototyped and launched around 1929-30 was a four cylinder job with five bearing pressure lubricated crankshaft producing 16 drawbar horsepower.

It started on petrol and ran on paraffin drawn through a dust-sealed Zenith carburetter from a 14 gallon tank with 1.5 gallon reserve.

The design was extremely well thought through with a waterproofed magneto and triple filtration of the engine oil through a Tecalemit unit incorporating a cooler. There was even a valve, opened with the starting handle, to allow sediment to be drained from a trap in the crankcase.







Features included clockwise from top left, *a dust sealed Zenith carburetter, a sludge trap in the crankcase that could be opened by using the starting handle to allow sediment to drain out, and a variety of standard accessories such as wheels to suit differing terrains. This is the version with 'spuds' for additional grip.*

The engine was governed to a maximum 1200 rpm by a centrifugal device operating on the fuel intake valve.

Drive was through a steel cone clutch engaging Ferodo segments in the flywheel, to a three speed gearbox, and finally by spur gears. Maximum speed was 3.6 mph with 2.4 and 2 'through the gears' with a cautious 1.75 in reverse.

The model was taken to the 1930 World Tractor Trials at Oxford and proved itself more powerful than any competitor priced at less than £300. It was also the most economical.

It was on its mettle again a year later when the Institute of Agricultural Engineering at Oxford University tried it.

Cashing in on all of this, Longbridge said: 'To be Austin-built gives a product a hallmark of distinction. The Austin tractor stands for reliability and the service available after sale is unique.

'Reasonably priced parts available immediately; agents on your doorstep to give assistance – this is the service you buy with an Austin.'

Austin clearly still felt committed to the argricultural market even though the cars were by now a great commercial success. And the publicity seems skilfully directed towards both the gentleman farmers of England and the more proleterean stock of France.

'Will cut out the "ifs and whens" from farming and make your work more akin to that of your townsfellows, who know not the risks you take, and references to "your driver", the Austin being "the most ubiquitous farm servant", and the harvest season being "the grave of great hopes" urging the reader to be "independent of all , dispense with extra labour and be master of the situation", is redolent of the green and pleasant land.

There are more nitty gritty facts for the *fermier*. "Cut and bind 25 acres in a 10 hour day" and talk of its capacity to plough five or six times as much as a horse in a day and with a three furrow plough in heavy soil to cultivate 5-8 acres in 10 hours.

All for around 3.5 gallons of fuel and the equivalent cost of six shillings an acre, including wages and depreciation.

Other selling points were its light 'footprint'

or facility not to compact the soil, and with a 16' 3" turning circle, the small 'headland' required i.e. the space needed to turn at the end of the workpiece.

Diesel tractors came in 1933 and by the late 30s had been developed into big 55hp beasts of over seven litres capacity.

In spite of all this activity, and its promise, Liancourt does not seem to have been especially profitable and *Société Anonyme Austin* were always tardy paying shareholders.

In the end, even Sir Herbert Austin decided there was no future in tractors and sold out to Robert Rothschild who had interests in the Hanomag species. Tragically though, it was a step on the road to Auschwitz for Rothschild. He refused to hand the factory over to Alfried Krupps after the invasion of France and died along with an estimated four million others at that camp.

An unhappy end to Austin's return to the soil.

Discovered down under

AÏDA MAURICE reports

Good friend of *Austin Times,* **BILL BALLARD** lives in Australia and is an enthusiast for the small side valve Ford.

He regularly drives his award-winning restoration of a rare Ten drophead coupé to events in that country and always takes the trouble to photograph Austins for our delectation.

Recently he's been to the *All British Day* at Tennyson, Brisbane, and we'll be bringing you some shots from there in a future issue.

But for starters, and nothing to do with the 'All British' is an extremely intriguing photo.

On holiday in New South Wales, Bill met an Austin enthusiast in Wauchope (he informs us it's pronounced 'Warhope'). He owned a Seven and also an Eighteen.

The Eighteen purports to be of 1933 vintage which seems a tad early as the cowled radiator was a mid-'34 enhancement. But that as may be, the coachwork is reputed to be the surviving example of only two built.

Unfortunately, the location of the car in the Wauchope garage makes it difficult to ascertain exactly what this is.and I have to say, that without wishing to be a 'smart ass', on first impressions it looks pretty much like a standard 1934 Hertford in very sad condition.

The most recent registration was the London mark 686 GGO which Bill puts in the 1960s.

He couldn't get behind the car, though, so we don't know what the tail looks like. Needless to say, if you can spot any tell tale indications that this is a coachbuilt Eighteen or can tell us anything at all about it, the editor or I would be absolutely delighted to hear from you, as we would on any other subject regarding pre-1955 Austins! Contact points below.