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Austin Times

A NEWSLETTER FOR ENTHUSIASTS OF AUSTIN PRE-1955

IN THIS ISSUE

We conclude the story of the A40 Devon and Dorset, 60 years on from its launch in 1947.

AIDA takes a look at the J40 pedal cars, appropriately, because the styling was inspired by the A40.

And there's a couple of period snaps to intrigue you.

NEXT ISSUE

BENT HORSINGTON will have more to say on aeroplanes as a sequel to our WWI coverage.

AND COMING SOON

We hope to mark some of the Austin anniversaries taking place this year.

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For a few *dollars* more

by
**MARTYN
NUTLAND**

As mentioned last time the A40 was released with a crescendo of publicity – most of it heard in America, a notoriously difficult market for small cars.

It cost around \$1660 in four door form, 1595 in two. (If anyone could get one in the UK a Devon was £15 less than a Ten - £325 before tax of about 36%. A Dorset cost £315.)

Things got underway with what was probably quite an ineffective ditty on commercial radio that alluded to fuel consumption and saved cents. No lessons learnt there from the abortive



Austin splashed out on professional models for this British publicity shot, rather than use folk from the Works. But it was to little avail as few cars were available for domestic customers.

attempts to launch the Seven State-side, where the anticipated appeal of miserly mpg came to nought.

Much more sensible and impactful would have been the campaign to educate Americans on the driving technique for a small British car – copious use of the intermediate gears to maintain revolutions and achieve what the brochures claimed would be driving 'excitement'.

Publicity too was self generating when the Americans found they could not get into a Devon or Dorset and sparked a raft of discussion on how one should enter an A40



Frank Hocevar drove this Dorset from Los Angeles to New York. After leaving the Ambassador's Hotel at noon on October 6, 1948, it took him 57 hours 27 minutes to reach Times Square. Previously he had driven from New York to San Francisco and it was to celebrate this achievement the picture above was taken.

overturning the preferred and age-old methods of either stepping, or even walking, into cars.

Exposure, if that is not to make a risqué pun, was enhanced when car washes started offering a 20 per cent discount on Austins. And individuals took up the cudgels. One proud new owner, engineer Frank Hocevar, of Gary in Indiana, drove coast to coast. This was no mean achievement for a gentleman of 58 years of age when you consider he covered the 3000 miles of the legendary Route 66 between Los Angeles and New York in 57 hours 27 minutes at the extremely impressive average speed of 53 mph. Petrol consumption was fractionally over 30 mpg, and so dedicated was Hocevar to the Austin cause that he had the timing carried out by the irreproachable Western Union Telegraph company.

Also on hand, of course, was ex-BBC journalist and indefatigable Austin publicist Alan Hess. Rather like the man who air-dropped Christmas turkeys to starving Africans, Hess discovered that it did rain in Utah, certainly in April 1949, and having come all the way to New York on the *Queen Elizabeth* and onwards to the Bonneville salt flats where he intended to pack 10,000 miles into 10,000 minutes, that that 'dry' white expanse was very wet indeed.

A quick change of plan enabled him to go for endurance records with his Devon around the perimeter road of the Suffolk County Airfield at Westhampton, Long Island.

He was partnered by Goldie Gardner of MG fame and between them, and despite colliding

with a deer and damaging the car, they took 36 stock car records on their twisty circuit. The most impressive was 1000 miles at an average of 65 mph.

Hess then had the American Automobile Association observe a fuel economy run from New York to Toronto – in the heart of a prime market. The results were equally impressive with the the Austin returning 33 miles per US gallon at an average of 31 mph.

The Bonneville stunt had to wait a year and then the venue was changed to

the rather closer and infinitely more predictable banked track at Montlhéry near Paris, France. The Devon proved almost too good.

Amusing explanation

Running at 65 mph Hess had to pull it off for 12 hours to hit the '10000 in 10000' mark.

He later proved his mastery of the publicist's art with this rather amusing explanation: 'I am convinced it was a wise move to stop because the magic phrase "10,000 miles in 10,000



Period publicity with, left, Hess, unfortunate deer and Goldie Gardner. The Devon had taken endurance records at a Long Island airfield.

‘ “10,000 miles in 10,000 minutes” massages the ego of the man in the street who can work out for himself - and his wife - that it represents 60 mph.’

Alan Hess

minutes” massages the ego of the man in the street who can work out for himself - and his wife – that it represents 60 mph, whereas 10,000 miles in 9,374 minutes means precisely nothing to him’.

The British press, meanwhile, were doing their bland best to help the A40 on its way. *Light Car* felt Austin had: ‘set a new standard by which future cars in the small family saloon car class will be judged’ and *The Motor* felt almost

exactly the same. As did *Autocar*. They were so complacent, perhaps xenophobic, that when they re-visited a Devon in 1950 they declared it ‘so very good that there is little need to dissect and analyse’.

Did all this promotion work? Certainly, up to a point.

In under a year 8000 cars had been shipped to the USA and there were some 25 countries on the destination list; from China who took 1100, to Scandinavia with an impressive 5000.

1948 was the peak year for America with 11,740 heading that way, but it fell off sharply, and barely two years later was well under half that figure.

In November 1950, with production at 450 A40s a day and production figures being broken almost by the hour, the 250,000th was made. A Devon for Australia, it inevitably had to go via New York for display at the American motor show. But by that year Canada was far and away the star performer with 23,000 sales, while Australia was coming up behind with 18,000 by 1951. Their cousins in New Zealand were also important customers having taken 6,200 by the first summer to make them the sixth most enthusiastic devotee of the A40.

Of that quarter million total almost 80% had been exported and the American quota alone had earned \$70 million. The A40 was declared

the branded product that had earned the most for Britain and it had also helped make the nation the world’s biggest exporter of goods.

Lord could proudly reflect on government statistics that showed a Canadian sale of a car like the Devon enabled Britain to buy 163 tons of wheat and one in Australia 53 tons of meat. Expressed more colourfully by Lord, it worked out that in six days in 1949, Austin had brought in 35,000 tons of that wheat and over 14,000 of the meat. Or put another way, Austin was making £115 a minute from exports; enough to feed 187 average Britons for a week.

In private though Lord would have been less gung-ho and observed that it was costing more than the A40’s selling price to build them. A situation that was to repeat itself in the years ahead and that was an endemic failing of his pricing policies.

Sake of expediency

The shortfall on cost would have been even worse, of course, if the A40 had been better built. As it was, warranty claims in the early production period are reputed to have totalled £750,000.

There is a story reported by Barney Sharrett in his book *Men and Motors of the Austin* (Haynes Foulis 2000) that the Dutch Ford dealer displayed an A40 in his showroom, with the wheels removed, to illustrate the inadequacies of the frame and suspension. Supposedly there were also crankshaft breakages.

This writer has never heard the latter complaint, nor, as some authorities suggest, the engine was prone to blowing its cylinder head gasket. However, there is no question, that for



In this decidedly scruffy scene in 1948 Devons and a Dorset await shipment to America. The ship is the Pacific Stronghold built in 1945 and operated by the Furness Line.

Later the bodies were made of steel and the spats dispensed with. Also to go, in 1951, was the handsome Mazak grille in favour of a perforated pressed steel affair.

the sake of expediency, an inadequately tested and developed car was rushed onto the market.

Another obvious curiosity is why, when Austin had been using a form of platform chassis on the immediately pre- and then post-War Eight and Ten, they reverted to a conventional frame for the Devon and Dorset.

In engineering terms, it was probably the case that the Eight/Ten design was not stable enough

to take the ifs the market had to have, and could not be made so in the available time. But a much more important reason is that a vehicle with a chassis can be exported in kit form.

In some countries that attracted lower import duties, but it also facilitated the mounting of locally built commercial vehicle bodies or other non-factory coachwork viz-a-viz the 'utes' and convertibles of Australia that we will come to in a moment.

In its short life the A40 saw a number of significant changes and turnabouts. The Dorset was dropped at home as early as September 1948 and for overseas outlets just over a year later. Total production had only been 16,000.

Tourers were not considered worth the bother even after a prototype was tried in the summer of 1948.

However, if the conventional car was a success so would be a light commercial and by 1948

there was a 10 cwt van, pick-up and Countryman and also to come specialist vehicles like ice cream vans.

The commercials used most of the Devon's front – back to the 'B-Post' - but needed a re-radiused arch to take 17 inch wheels. The first versions had aluminium coachwork with simply windows inserted in the van sides to make the Countryman. All were complimented by attractive but impractical spats over the rear wheels. Later the bodies were made of steel and the spats dispensed with. Also to go, in 1951, was the handsome Mazak grille in favour of a perforated pressed steel affair with token chrome trim bars that gave the commercials a 'pursed lip' appearance. It also caused over-heating. So slots were cut in the nose of the bonnet and prettied up with bits of chrome in the same way as the grille.

Commercial gear ratios were always lower than on the cars.

Buzz-box effect

Moves on the latter front included a utility version, dubbed the Mark II and launched in May 1949.

Needless to say, this was pitched at the export market and had a leathercloth bench front seat, no over-riders, if you were lucky a wiper mounted above the windscreen, and that useful accessory – a sparewheel without a tyre. It went a bit faster though because apart from the weight saving there was a high axle ratio and reworked ones in the gearbox. But even at £328 there were few takers.

In autumn 1949 Devons got front quarter

This charming brochure shot shows the range of light commercials after the bonnet vents had been added but when spats remained.





Another splendid period image. Features to spot on this early van are the canvas roof panel, Mazak grille and, of course, the spats.

lights to improve ventilation and the higher axle, 5.14:1 instead of 5.43, to reduce the buzz-box effect and push up cruising from about 50 to 55 mph.

Then in August 1951 the Devon got a new 'bridge'. It featured column gear change, a central, round, speedometer with the other instruments ranged on either side and a new steering wheel with the wire sprung spokes disposed less symmetrically than before. Very importantly there were now two ash trays on what passed for a dashboard 'capping rail' plus all-hydraulic brakes. The revisions were unveiled at that year's London motor show and incorporated in the A40 Somerset launched in February 1952, the month the Devon died.

Changed the law

The light commercials and Countryman continued until 1956.

The history of A40 production overseas is equally interesting but the story to dine out on is that of the Bermudan government who, in 1948, conveniently recinded a law that prohibited cars rated at more than 10 horsepower under the British system. The Austin agent immediately cabled 'home' for Devons and vans and still more Devons.

The ships were indeed waiting – but only just. Twenty five of the 135 cars demanded snook onto the first boat and the operators of a second were persuaded to divert to the island with 50 more. That was before the Bermudans changed the law back again with the first vehicles already in transit.

The solution was to sleeve the standard engine to 1125 cc. That was managed for the

engines in the second shipment. However, those first 25 had to be sent to distributor Young, Trott & Co for a not inconsiderable retro-fit!

In Australia, by 1949, Longbridge was selling 5000 more vehicles a year than all the other importers. Having arrived in huge crates

stenciled 'Britain has made it', the kits were assembled by a new Austin company, reconstituted the previous year from Melbourne's Ruskin Motor Body Works; by the All-British Motor House in Adelaide, Brisbane's UK and Dominion Motors, Winterbottom in Perth and Larke, Hoskins in Sydney.

Across the ocean in New Zealand the distributorships assembled the cars.

A purpose-built factory was built in Hamilton, for Canada, with a projected output of 500 cars a week by 1949 and plants were established in Argentina, Brazil and Eire.

In South Africa A40s and Austins were voted the most popular British car and Stanley Motors opened a factory near Johannesburg to build them and compliment an Austin owned undertaking at Blackheath, outside Cape Town.

Cars for America went as complete vehicles moved to the docks on special trains with box-cars that employed double doors at each end to enable the A40s to be shunted the length of the rake. Alternatively they were distributed on Austin's own immaculate fleet of articulated Pullmore transporters hauled by K4 tractor units and emblazoned with the slogan 'Austins for dollars'.

In the big post launch push a record transatlantic shipment of 420 cars was claimed when the *Pacific Stronghold* set sail in March 1948. The transport costs alone were £14,000.

Australia, where there seems to be a flair for such matters, were probably the most imaginative builders of A40 variants. In the absence of an open car from the factory most of the undertakings who were constructing the kits turned their hand to tourers.



Not to everyone's taste, but highly distinctive, the Hi-Lite from Hope and Larke.

Austin Motor Co had a version they gave to Larke, Hoskins to launch as the Falcon for £560 pre-tax; 'Dominion' had their A40 Smart Set and Charles Hope a rather nasty, rag roofed, steel paneled, doorless, wooden floored device called the Rouseabout that Dominion also sold. As the model became more established detachable plastic tops became an accessory for the open models most of which could be had in two tone colours.

Naturally the ubiquitous 'ute' was on the scene made by 'the usual suspects' – Hope and Larke, Hoskins, for example, and others. Although not to everyone's visual taste the most distinctive was probably the latter's rendition which they called the Hi-Lite and had a bulbous back to its cab with a Perspex window dubbed an 'Astro'.

Perhaps there's one last permutation of the Devon/Dorset we should consider, although it deserves an article in its own right and Aida will take a closer look in a moment.

One of the many brilliant ideas Leonard Lord had was to launch an Austin pedal car. Prompted by government funding to provide employment for disabled South Wales miners he had designer, Alfred Ash, shape such a vehicle.

It was to be built at a factory near Bargoed and the prototype 'JOY 1' was a replica of an open Eight. There was subsequently a racing car based on the pre-War Austin Seven single-seaters and christened Pathfinder.

'On test' JOY 1 was found to have brake trouble (it was ever thus) and be too heavy for young feet to successfully propel. It was thus remodeled as a Devon/Dorset lookalike, sometimes called the Joy Car, but more usually J40. It had those delights of the young, a horn and lights, was the ultimate joy of many and the

staple of fairground roundabouts for decades. Some 32,000 were built, they went all over the world, are adored, restored and collected today as production ceased in 1971.

So how does history view the A40 Devon/Dorset?

It is a significant though not a great Austin. In a way it was the embodiment of Lord's own personality. A creature of its time, deeply flawed, but the hero of the hour.

In the order of 344,000 of this first A40 were built. Close on 80 per cent were exported and they earned Britain £88 million in a vast range of currencies, but most importantly US dollars. That was a remarkable achievement.

Whether it would have made more if it had been properly developed prior to its launch is debatable. The issue was to get out there and sell. Lord got it there and it sold. It was pretty, modern, had a modicum of performance, was straightforward, reliable, durable and popular amongst, admittedly, a fairly undiscerning public.

But there's not a lot more anyone could have asked at the time.

The real downside is not to do with any immediate shortcomings in the Devon or Dorset. It is to do with Lord.

For all its smart looks and pretty colours, its novelties and overhead valve engine the A40 was a very ordinary rearwheel drive car constructed on a chassis. The industry worldwide would soon be, indeed was, thinking in different directions. Yet BMC stuck with that out-dated concept long after Lord's day, ended up in the medium family saloon sector with the A60 Cambridge and similar, which, although the chassis had gone, were the same basic package as the old A40. The brilliant

It is a significant though not a great Austin. In a way it was the embodiment of Lord's own personality. A creature of its time, deeply flawed, but the hero of the hour.

cars they did have – the Mini, 1100 and 1800 'landcrab' - were often hopeless in marketing terms. The first making no money at all and the 1800 having to be supplemented by the ancient Cambridge, which helped mire a potentially world-beating range.

Furthermore, Lord considered, for obvious reasons in the late 1940s, production was all. To achieve it he was prepared to accommodate the emergent and muscle-flexing unions at every turn.

Significant following

By so doing, and although it came much later, he sowed the seeds for the rancorous late 60s and 70s which not only eventually destroyed what had been Austin, but the British motor industry itself.

But let's put that behind us. Happy 60th Devon and Dorset.

These cars, and indeed the Somerset, still have a significant following. If you would like to become involved in the UK the best club is The Austin Counties Car Club.



A soupçon of Windsor

Editor, Martyn, encountered the charming Mrs Val Taylor, through his connections with the Pre-War Austin Seven Club in the the UK.

Mrs Taylor had much of interest to say about the Austin Seven but as contact developed she also provided the marvellous period picture above - note that super Coleman's Mustard sign to the left.

Not a great deal is known about the circumstances - 'the new car' perhaps and judging by the shine - snapped by dad with a Box Brownie maybe, or just the start of a family day out.

Mrs Taylor was interested in the car and I hope that many of you with sounder knowledge of the vintage Twelve than us will rush in to correct any misidentification. But we think it's a circa 1927 'Heavy' Twelve Four Windsor.

Returning to the original subject of Austin Sevens, Mrs Taylor's grandfather, Albert Woolley, worked at 'the Austin' all his life, and as a machinist engaged on manufacturing for the First World War was provided with a certificate, signed by Kitchener, exempting him from military service.

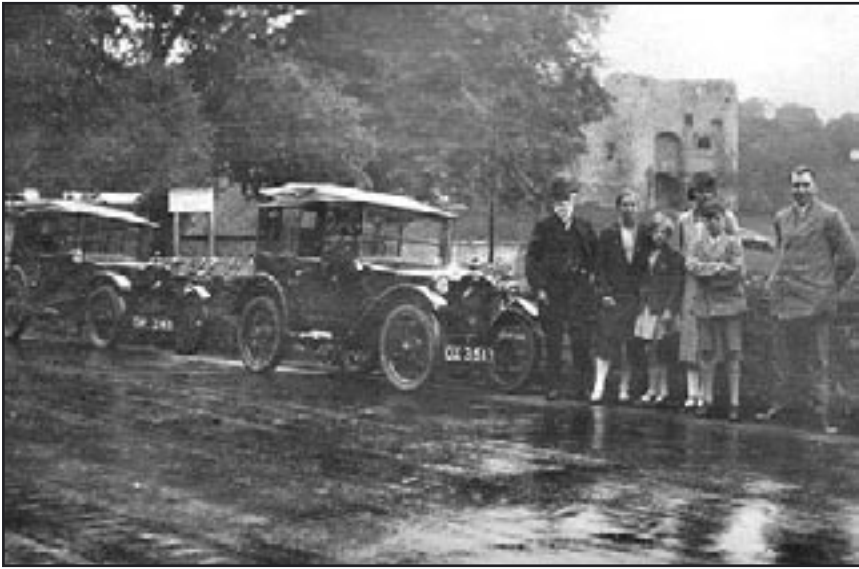
Not surprisingly, the family were heavily committed to Austin and Austin products and over page there is a picture of two early Chummies captured on the road past the castle in the town of Chepstow on the English/Welsh borders. Who said the rain comes from Wales!

For Jack... who's head of his class!
From a very proud Dad

Created by leaders... for leaders... It's the new Devon from England, the car that combines liveliness, comfort, beauty and price. It's built by Austin—established for nearly half a century, and Great Britain's largest builder of large motor cars. Illustrated catalogue on request.

Austin of England

AUSTIN MOTORS COMPANY, LTD. (INCORPORATED IN GREAT BRITAIN), 214 WEST 57TH STREET, NEW YORK 19, N.Y.



The gentleman on the extreme left is Mrs Taylor's great grandfather. Next to him is his daughter while the little girl is Mrs Taylor's mum with her brother next to her. Who the other couple are is not now known, but it is probably them and the first car, that appear in other photographs where its registration is not visible. Mrs Taylor found all these snaps when her mother died and was sufficiently historically minded to preserve them.

Austin used this office until the end of his life in 1941 after which it was occupied briefly by Leonard Lord.

It survived many redevelopments at the plant having been relocated in the South Engineering Building in the late 1950s. It remained there until 2003 when it was dismantled again and painstakingly rebuilt in the exhibition centre which now houses a small collection of cars and items associated with Longbridge.

The office is totally original and contains such apocryphal items as the half crown Austin is said to have tossed in 1921 when deciding whether to continue his financially vexed company or shut up shop.

There is an alternative story to the effect that the half crown was used when Morris and Austin both

Office affair

THE FUTURE OF Lord Austin's office is assured following a pledge from motor manufacturer and current owner of the Longbridge site, Nanjing, to preserve it.

Herbert Austin moved into the room when he set up his works in the former home of printers on metal, White and Pike. It was adjacent to the main door and looked out over the factory entrance - later K Gate - south along the Bristol Road towards the village of Rubery.

wanted to buy Wolseley. Austin, of course lost the toss.

Visitors will also be able to see the signed portrait of Henry Ford given to the British motor magnate by his American counterpart and the depression in the wooden mantelpiece that is said to have been worn by Austin leaning on it as he held forth.

All will be viewed from outside the room through glass panels thus ensuring the fabric of the room is preserved long term.

What transpired therein concerning our favourite car is mind-boggling.



Photo Federation of Austin Clubs, Registers and Associations Ltd and MG Rover.

Don't forget that popular annual, the Swiss Classic British Car Meeting is on October 6 at Morges, beside Lake Geneva.

Now in its 16th spectacular year it attracts well over 1000 cars and bikes from all over Europe and around 25000 onlookers who, along with the participants, enjoy the experience free.

Although not an Austin 'do' as such, organizer Keith Wynn is an enthusiast for our marque with a superb Ascot. More info on www.british-cars.ch or contact Keith on british-cars@iprolink.ch

*We promised
you a surprise
item on the A40,
so here goes,
as AIDA
takes a look
at the history
of the pedal
cars. Very
obviously
based on the
Austin Eight
at first, they
soon became,
in their most
familiar form,
an 'A40'. We
now present
the J40.*

The very best pedal



Artist Robert Johnston's lovely design for the brochure featuring both J40 and Pathfinder.

car in the world

To say the Austin J40 was the Rolls-Royce of pedal cars is to mix metaphors shamelessly. But for a kid growing up in the Tiger Bay district of Cardiff, who could occasionally press her nose against agent Howells's showroom window in the not-too-distant 'boulevard' Hayes, it certainly was... I probably aspired to one as much as 'Bay' neighbour, Shirley Bassey, did a R-R Silver Cloud!

Creating new-look Austins and a determination to make his company worldwide market leaders were Leonard Lord's fortes. It is not often he is remembered for what is that most famous children's pedal car in the world!

Yet, in 1946 Lord came up with the idea of a miniature motor that would be 'Just like father's' and rather more pompously – 'induce a satisfying sense of ownership and provide valuable experience in road usage that will be of lifelong.' The project had many brilliant facets, not least the marketing courage to launch a 'toy' costing around £20 in a dismal land where even some food would be rationed for another eight years.

But also the benevolence to turn over production to disabled South Wales miners, and, if you are slightly cynical, to recognize that as helping colliers suffering from the debilitating lung condition, pneumoconiosis, was a priority of the Labour government, any company who co-operated might have a better than average claim on the precious steel stocks which made production of real vehicles possible.

To create his junior Austin, Lord initially gathered a team of three talented individuals. Jim Blaikie was working alongside artist Ron Phillips in the post-War planning office on sketches of modernized facades for the Works and had included in the foreground some stylized cars that



First lady - eight-year-old Marcia Ash was the first person ever to try the pedal car. This is the original version based on the Austin Eight. Photo Marcia Blake.

appealed to their chairman. Colleague, Alf Ash, had joined the company in 1927 and was now an expert on planning and assembly.

The three of them were charged with the design of a two seater suitable for a four-nine-year-old driver with room for a younger companion, and with those vastly appealing features of opening boot and bonnet, the mystery of a dummy engine and the ecstasy of working lights.

The first child in the world to experience any of that ecstasy was Alf Ash's eight-year-old daughter, Marcia, who was brought to the works one Saturday morning to 'road test' and be photographed in, the machine which had already been christened 'JOY 1' by Lord and plated accordingly.

The frontal appearance was that of the current alligator bonneted series of cars and vans but the exaggerated sweeps and curves in the panels were created by two exceptionally talented panel beaters - Bill Avery and Jack Turton.

JOY 1 was unveiled at the *Austin Progress* Convention on June 25, 1946 which also celebrated the production of the millionth car – Sixteen GOF 100 whose cream paint had been signed by the Longbridge workforce.

A dummy engine had not been included in the pedal car neither had proposed features like a hood attached to the top of a windscreen and a 'petrol' tank fillable with water. Making the packaging a self-assembly garage was also abandoned.

Work now began on a second prototype of improved design and more suitable for production

but there was soon a dramatic change of direction.

JOY 1 and its clone were set aside and, at the behest of Jim Blaikie, the team roared away on the design of an Austin Seven single seater racer of the type driven by Kay Petre and designed by Murray Jamieson.

This time the little car had a dummy twin overhead camshaft engine complete with sparking plugs, an excellent representation of the slim competition body, even down to bonnet straps and an outside 'exhaust pipe' ending in a fishtail.

This version, completed in Spring 1947, was in essence the car which was to go into production a little over two years later as the Pathfinder Special.

Meanwhile the Austin experimental department had taken the rear of JOY 1 and united it with a facsimile of the front of the soon-to-be-launched A40.

***Donald Healey
of sports car
fame is
reputed
to have said:
'That's the
best looking
Austin I've
ever seen!'***



Detailing was superb. Note here the sparking plugs, rejects from Champion, and the dry cell batteries that would have worked the headlamps and horn.



For the opening ceremony by the Lord Mayor of Cardiff a child delivered the ribbon cutting scissors. His car's a Pathfinder Special and, if you're interested, the limousine is a Humber Pullman. Photo Western Mail.

This would eventually become the definitive Austin 'Joy Car'.

Jim Blaikie worked his magic on what had already been done to JOY 1 and created a shape of which Donald Healey of sports car fame is reputed to have said: 'That's the best looking Austin I've ever seen!'

The details included a dummy overhead valve engine - again with real spark plugs - detachable wheels, a representation of the A40's instrument panel and lights and a horn powered

by dry cell batteries authentically located under the bonnet. There was even a 'winged A' bonnet ornament removed, incidentally, in the early 1960s on safety grounds.

The 24,500 square foot Austin Motor Company Limited, Junior Car Factory was built at Tiryberth, just outside Bargoed. Apart from the production facilities which included a scaled down version of an advanced new paint dip to be installed at Longbridge,

The factory itself was unique and an outstanding example of social conscience and community care.

it had a medical centre and doctor on hand.

Unfortunately, things were not underway for the run-up to Christmas 1948, but by Easter the following year the first contingent of miners was in place and stock being accumulated for the official opening in the presence of the Lord Mayor of Cardiff on July 5.

A child brought scissors to the waiting dignitaries in a 'Pathfinder' and the ribbon was cut by the oldest former miner to find employment at the plant, to set the wheels officially in motion.

In the early days, as far as possible, metal for the miniatures was taken from off-cuts on the full-scale cars and bearing shells, rollers etcetera were also salvage.

Old presses from Longbridge were sent to Tiryberth but on sections where these could not cope the panels were formed at the parent factory and shipped to Wales. Accessory maker, Champion, supplied reject spark plugs and other Austin suppliers like Lucas and Dunlop contributed generously to the project.

The first Joy IVs or Joy Roadsters as they were also known, were in production by the autumn of 1949, some of the first examples going to the vitally important American export market.

The earliest British children would have received them was around Spring 1950 by which time the model was becoming known as the J40 alliterating beautifully with the designation of the life-size A40.

Pathfinder production ceased towards the end of 1950 but by the early 1950s Tiryberth was



Manufacture underway by disabled miners at Tiryberth, near Bargoed, in South Wales.



Many showman's rides were built around the J40. This is John Carter's superb example of such a restored 'junior'.

making other products for Longbridge alongside the J40, such as cylinder block side plates, rocker covers, fans and upholstery. The workforce expanded from just over 100 at the beginning to a peak of more than 500 in 1965

As the demand for the everyday components became more pressing pedal car manufacture was confined to about four weeks between September and October each year. In that short period the miners could build 1000 cars illustrating their reputation for devotion, pride in the job and excellent workmanship. Indeed, the factory itself was unique and an outstanding example of social conscience and community care. So highly did Lord rate his Bargoed facility that in the best Austin Motor Company traditions the brightest managers were sent there to experience the holistic approach to running a manufacturing plant before being placed in charge of the organization's operations around the world.

The peak in the labour force in 1965 coincided with the opening of a second unit at Bargoed to make items of trim for the Mini and 1100 series of BMC cars but the glue had an adverse effect on sufferers from pneumoconiosis and Number Two factory closed in 1971 and along with it J40 production ceased.

Quite apart from the enormous pleasure the Pathfinder and J40 could give to children

everywhere, the latter particularly, played an important role in road safety.

It was used, often having been given or loaned by Austin, by police forces in the UK and overseas as part of model street plans over which children could gain hands-on experience of traffic situations. A J40 used by British Petroleum for a schools road safety programme is estimated to have conveyed traffic awareness to three million children.



J40 was used extensively to promote road safety to schoolchildren.

If you want to comment on the story above or any of the topics in this or other issues of *Austin Times* we are always delighted to hear from you at the address below.

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