

Aug/Sept  
2007  
Volume 5  
Issue 4

# Austin Times

A NEWSLETTER FOR ENTHUSIASTS OF AUSTIN PRE-1955

## IN THIS ISSUE

We take a long hard look at the Austin Ten to coincide with the 75th anniversary of the launch of this archetypal British family saloon.

There's a round up of what's on in the UK and continental Europe, plus some hot news with a highly sporting flavour.

And to wrap things up, Bent dons his puttees and takes aim on those unusual Austins, the Military Sevens.

## COMING SOON

We still have a few Austin anniversaries to catch up on this year, so Aida and your editor hope to be chasing those stories.

Plus much more on your favourite marque pre-1955.

DON'T MISS YOUR OTHERFAVOURITE AUSTIN TIMES. FREE by eMAIL.



*It's not often we bring you a wedding car but this beautiful, early Ten-Four, in black, not ghastly white, seems to typify the Ten-Four. Part of the culture of society, still highly respected and still enjoyed by the hundreds. Photo thanks to owner Terry Shearwood, photographer Mark Jagger and the Pre-War Austin Seven Club, whose magazine the picture is from.*

# Ten-Four good buddy

The editor celebrates the 75th anniversary of the launch of the Austin Ten.

**T**his year sees the 75th anniversary of the start of Austin Ten production in the week of April 11, 1932.

Save for the Seven, the Ten was probably the best-known, most significant and best loved of all Longbridge models. Ironically, it is also the one car that typifies more than any other that stupid expression, 'grey porridge', coined by ill-informed observers.

Unspectacular the Ten maybe – 'a sports car the Austin does not pretend to be', *Export Trader* had said - but it is a vivid expression of the quality and value for money Austin represented. It is also the embodiment of the British social scene in the 1930s as mobility for most increased as did affluence for others.

'Let us erase from the thought and speech of the nation the word "depression". The persistent use of the term has undermined our faith in the future and impaired our initiative', Herbert Austin had said at the



*The Seven and the Ten were true stablemates. This fine example of a circa 1932/33 Seven, not only shows the family similarity but how one developed from the other.*

beginning of 1932.

The Ten was a more refined and sensible car than the Austin Seven and it achieved precisely what the company wanted; the obvious step up for the middle class family man from the baby car.

It also responded to market trends already evident. In 1931 11 per cent of new car registrations were for cars of 10 horsepower. Just a year later that figure had more than doubled with sales of all the larger sizes falling.

The foundation for the Ten-Four, as it was catalogued, was a cruciform braced pressed steel chassis that was not actually made at 'the Austin' but bought in from the firm of Projectile and Engineering Co Ltd. Cruciform, as opposed to 'ladder frame' was the way to go and along with a downward sweep of 70mm between the axles would have given the car a much more stable platform than that of the skittish Seven.

The thinking was further underpinned by the use of semi elliptic springs at each corner instead of junior sister's antiquated single transverse to the front, quarter elliptics to the rear arrangement. Plus there were adjustable André Hartford shock absorbers. Steering was by worm and wheel and the wheelbase was 93 inches; overall length about 140.

The 14 cars made in the first week had no sunshine roofs but by week two this facility had been added and a further 1549 examples were made to that design. The 'Sunshine Saloon' though was dropped at the end of June and a

re-detailed car appeared in July.

This 'De Luxe', had the sunshine roof, ran on 18 inch wheels as opposed to the 19 of the first series, had, according to the catalogue, 'good lamps', which probably means a slightly bigger variety than those fitted to the earliest examples, and Magna wheels, which were a wire spoke type, but with a chrome plate over the nave as opposed to the predecessor where there had been a closing plate over the hub cap – rather like the Staybrite centres on Sevens after the solid pattern had been discontinued.

In September a 'Standard' model was introduced but never really caught on (only 388 made in 1932 as opposed to nearly 6000 De Luxes). It reverted to 19 inch non-Magna wheels and would have lacked other little refinements from the De Luxe like chrome headlamps, bumpers and leather upholstery.

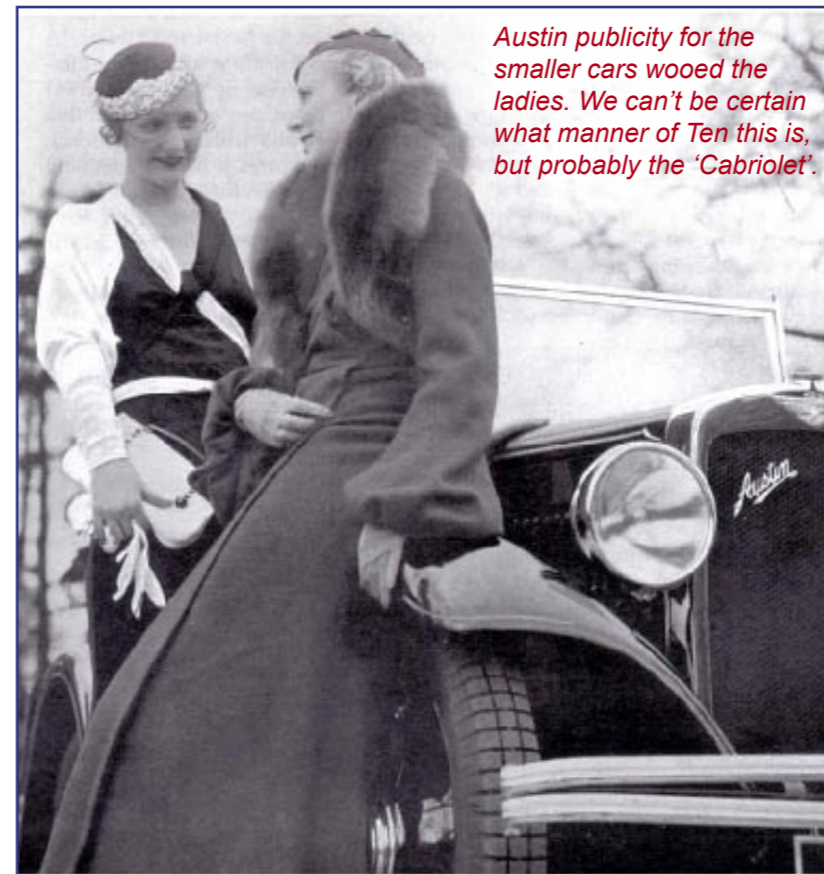
A rakish two-seater was introduced the same month and Austin would have the 30 customers that year believe it was an 'occasional four' by virtue of two places in the dickey.

A true four-seater tourer, adopting a name that was to become an Austin staple – Open Road – appeared in October along with a pretty van while a 'cabriolet' squeaked in in November. Just four were built specifically to show in Paris where there was perceived to be a market for this style.

In fact, it was not a true cabriolet, but what we might call a drophead coupé or even a *coupé de ville*. The misnomer probably comes from the fact that what was a particularly nicely designed roof could be opened half way as well as dropped right back. In any event it is a particularly interesting car as sales were envisaged from those first four demonstrators amongst Parisian women. This may have been an idea picked up from Lucien Rosengart, who was doing well in this area with the Sevens he was building in France under licence, or the petticoat pound (or franc) might have been a target for the fancier Tens, as the illustration from the advertizing suggests.

Power for all these cars came from a new 1125cc (63.5 x 89mm) side valve four cylinder engine that had an integral block and

***In fact, it was not a true cabriolet, but what we might call a drophead coupé or even a coupé de ville.***



*Austin publicity for the smaller cars wooed the ladies. We can't be certain what manner of Ten this is, but probably the 'Cabriolet'.*

crankcase. The crankshaft ran in three main bearings and carried plain big ends. The camshaft was driven by duplex chain and worked solid, block type, tappets as on the Seven.

The mounting of the engine/gearbox unit was an ingenious three point configuration. Unlike the more familiar, 'one at the back, two at the front', of later years, there were brackets extending from the front of the engine to secure it to a single rubber bush behind the radiator. Then, more conventionally, it was held on either side of the gearbox at the rear.

Fuel came from a six gallon tank at the back, courtesy a mechanical pump on the left of the crankcase. There was a Zenith side draught carburettor hanging on the inlet pipe of a two piece manifold. Ignition was by coil and distributor, of course, with a six volt dynamo sitting on top of the cylinder head and driven by belt from a crankshaft pulley. The electrics were uprated from six to 12 volt after about a year.

The car was slowed by cable brakes of Austin's always dubious configuration. There was a four speed gearbox of the type Longbridge confusingly called 'twin top'. In reality it had two sets of helical gears (third and top) that were constant mesh rather than of the sliding pinion variety. But they had no synchronizing cones, as later, and although changing was easier than

on a crash gearbox, it was still tricky for those new drivers the salesmen sought. Ratios were 5.25, 8, 12.8 and 20.7:1 overall from top to first respectively. It drove through a dry plate clutch that was a lot more docile than the Seven's via an open transmission shaft, as opposed to the smaller car's cardan shaft and torque tube system. The axle was a three-quarter floating, spiral bevel type.

Cooling relied on the thermosiphon principle and filtration of the gear-pump pressurized oil was equally basic, employing a cylindrical wire gauze element within the sump accessed for cleaning by a cover plate in the base of the pan.

Brake horsepower was around 21 at 2500 rpm, the RAC Rating obviously 10, and that meant the annual tax was a modest £10.

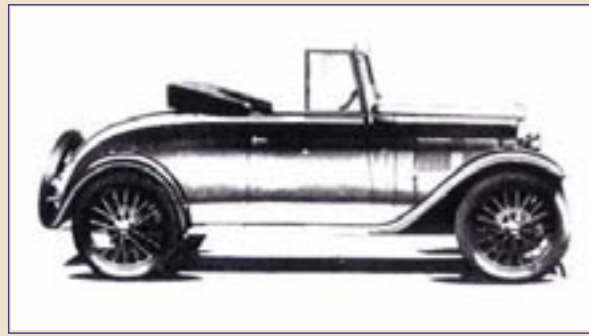
The body was made of pressed steel panels and on these early cars the weld seams are visible at the back. Also to the rear is an exposed spare wheel with a fold down luggage grid on the fresh air side. All very *Sevenesque*.

The front too is reminiscent of the baby car but the bumper sported by the De Luxe had a sexy twin blade job at the bow clasped in the centre by a smart, chrome, script 'A', badge. The style was replicated at the rear with short bars on either side of the low mounted registration plate, to defend the quarters.

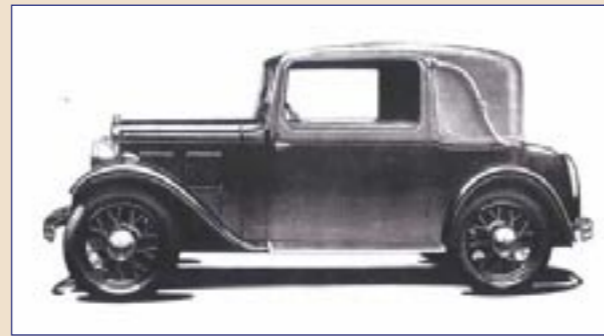
There was comprehensive instrumentation and a lanky gear lever rooted beneath a pretty little chrome 'positions plate' which the Seven was shortly to get as well, plus an elegant central handbrake control with a Bakelite grip and chromed trigger that was vastly more sensual than the flimsy crudity in the smaller car.

The interior as a whole spoke of Austin quality and attention to detail with leather seats for four fully formed adults (published carrying capacity 52 stone), wind down windows, clock and electric wiper

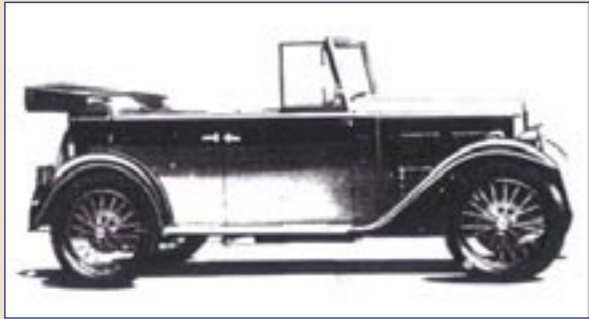
***Although changing was easier than on a crash gearbox, it was still tricky for those new drivers the salesmen sought.***



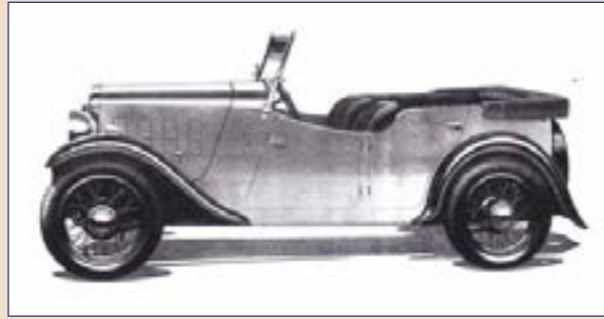
*Two-Seater*



*Cabriolet*



*Open Road*



*Sports*

amongst the features. Admittedly the Standard car would have been a little more spartan but it still begs the question 'how did they do it for the money' which was actually £155 basic, 168 with all the trimmings.

If the Seven could be described as a 'big car in miniature' it is equally fair to say the Ten was a scaled down luxury one.

Performance was never going to be stunning but the model could usually manage a maximum of about 55 mph – some magazine road testers got a heady 57 and some only 52. Fuel consumption though was around an exhilarating 32 mpg.

1933 then saw some significant events on the Ten-Four scene.

Production of the 'cabriolet' got into full swing although sales of this handsome car with its useful luggage compartment and a choice of trims that progressed from normal leather through moquette to Bedford cord, were disappointing. Barely past 1000.

There were clearly problems with the rigidity of all the chassis. As early as December 1932, at chassis 8210, stiffening webs were added to the side rails at the front. But in July '33, about 13000 cars on, it was necessary to revisit this and go the full hog and add a transverse brace to the centre.

Soon after the cosmetic, and indeed

mechanical, changes for the 1934 season filtered through. The adoption of 12 volt electrics actually came at the same time as cross-bracing - chassis 21,000 (July '33) - and a month later synchromesh arrived in the gearbox, but only on third and top. The manifold was now a one piece casting to provide a hot spot.

Body-wise there would be scuttle mounted trafficators for all and on the De Luxe a sun visor, metal cover with a chrome band for the spare wheel, plus upholstery choices in accord with the 'cabriolet'.

Perhaps the most interesting development though, was the unveiling of a sports version in the middle of August. This was a bid to capitalize on the vogue for hotter versions of standard cars. Austin got on that bandwagon in May with an exceptionally attractive version of the Twelve Six then used a smaller version of its body for a Ten.

The engine had a high compression cylinder head, high lift camshaft and down draught Zenith carburettor and developed around 30 bhp at 3800 rpm. There was a close ratio gearbox that descended from 5.25:1 for top, through 7.9:1 and 11.39 for third and second respectively, to a bottom gear of 18.9:1.

The suspension was lowered, a fold flat windscreen featured, not to mention ventilator doors in the bonnet sides as opposed to louvres and

a rorty silencer, but only four takers materialized in 1933 and not many thereafter.

And perhaps the *most* significant occurrence in that year was the Ten outsold the Seven...just – 20,937 against 20,475.

Prices were now £158 and £172.10s respectively for the two Ten saloons, £178 for the 'cabriolet' and £152 for both the two and four-seater tourers. The Sports Tourer was a prohibitive £215.

1934 was another important year for the Austin Ten. Mechanical changes included the provision of a thermostat for the cooling system in June, and then, in the middle of the summer when the changes for the following season were revealed, the addition of synchromesh on second gear. The philosophy of bottom gear as an emergency ratio for this 17 cwt car was now being encouraged so driver appeal of 'all synchro' must have been high.

Much more apparent, of course, was the car had undergone major cosmetic surgery in common with most of the other horsepower sizes. The saloons got a radiator cowl of body colour (by now royal blue, Westminster green, maroon, dove grey and, naturally, black, but anything else to order!) a lidded compartment at the rear to accommodate the spare wheel and deeply valanced wings.

Refinements inside included interior lights, pile carpets and draught and fume excluders plus there were now dual windscreen wipers.

Although they worked like a bus's from the top of the screen!

Rather colourfully, the model now got a name – Lichfield. It must be true to say, this is the archetypal Austin Ten, loved by all, astonishingly good value for money, outselling all other 10 horsepowers by a mile, alongside the Seven representing 60 per cent of all Longbridge output, and still managing to outstrip its little sister by a few hundred sales.

The price was £172. The 'poor man's version' was still on the books at £155 as Austin never did seem to fully get the message that there was not much call for a down-market variant on a winner.

As regards the other Tens, the 'cabriolet' had taken the name Colwyn and was as handsome as ever having brought the spare wheel 'in-doors' and adopted all the other new features. It cost £178.

The two-seater tourer was now the Clifton – an old Twelve name - and although it got the cowled radiator and new wings still kept its spare wheel at the back. The rather more pro-saically named four-seater Open Road did so also for a time. These two were priced at £152.

The 'Sports', now called Ripley was still there with that discouraging price tag of £215 and struggled for 76 sales in 1934 and just 48 in 1935. Sadly there are only a handful of survivors of this super motor car.

In general terms, road performance had

Photo Austin Ten Drivers' Club



*Lichfield*



*1939 Tourer*

Photo Ron Day



*Cambridge*



*Post-War*

improved very slightly. The saloons could now muster a full 60 mph while some testers boasted of 'considerably more' down hill. From 10-30 mph on top took about 14 seconds and pressing on, over the same range, in third, about nine. Allegedly the car would run down to around 5 mph on its highest gear.

A host of detail mechanical improvements were carried out during 1935 including stronger valve springs right at the start of the year, which probably helped push the brake horsepower a little upwards. In addition, Luvax hydraulic shock absorbers came in July at chassis 70,494 and shell main bearings at the same time. Brighter headlamps came in September, ready for the winter, and were immediately followed by a better cooled dynamo. Then, as the year drew to a close, at chassis 81,001, the steering gearbox was changed to accommodate worm and sector.

In January 1936 the steady progress of the Ten-Four suffered something of a hiccup when a version called the Sherborne appeared for the '36 season. These were an attractive enough style that dispensed with the Lichfield's spare wheel compartment and replaced it with a 'fastback', then introduced an extra side window aft of the rear door.

However, Austin displayed one of those marketing aberrations of which they were sometimes guilty. The Sherborne was mechanically identical to the Lichfield and equipped in almost exactly the same way.

What you did get was a car seven inches longer than a Lichfield (11' 14 1/2 inches). The rear seat had comfy armrests at the sides and was deeper than its running mate's, with altogether bigger ones in the front. But there was the pain of a higher price tag compounded by the well-

established car having its price cut from £175 to £168 - £10 below that of the new model. While the Standard Lichfield (no bumpers etc) took a reduction of a whole ten pounds on its tag of £162 10s. It's just hard to see any gain in return for what was potentially the pain of an extra £16 outlay. As with the other saloons, there was a

**Austin displayed one of those marketing aberrations of which they were sometimes guilty.**



*Fast-back Sherborne failed to make the grade on almost all counts.*

down-market Sherborne at £162 10s, but it didn't help.

The Sherborne was gone by August, almost before it had arrived.

Perhaps it should be said that this little disaster may not have been entirely to do with a marketing and pricing gaff. It is said in some quarters the car was unstable compared with the Lichfield and prone to overturn. Something to do with weight distribution perhaps.

On a happier note, in 1936, the Open Road tourer received the Lichfield-style boot and this made an already attractive car more so. Some are presented today with pressed steel Easiclean wheels, which did actually appear that year, and it's likely this is correct for these very late examples.

Ten sales were now well ahead of the Sevens - 27,000 as opposed to 23,500 - and the bigger car's fortunes were to receive a further boost with the big event of the year that saw the open models disappear and a re-styled saloon emerge.

As had happened with the Lichfield, the other sizes were getting the same treatment and it was to give them all a much more modern look in the aftermath of the streamlining *faux pas* of the Sherborne.

The Cambridge, as the latest Ten was called, had a far greater slope to the front and back and instead of a single pane rear window, a curved light, divided centrally and out of which you could see very little. Although that didn't matter too much in the traffic conditions of the late 1930s it is dangerous now.

The design was ready by August and mechanically followed the basic and highly successful form of the earlier cars. The important changes were brakes of the extremely effective Girling wedge and roller design and operated by rods,

and a Zenith down draught carburetter with an air cleaner-cum-silencer.

There was also steering by hour-glass worm and sector, smaller wheels of 16 inch diameter in the pressed steel Easiclean style linked by a track rod placed in front of the axle enabling the steering gear to be moved forward. The engine was also brought forward about four inches, making more room inside the car, although the wheelbase was very slightly longer too, and the length sans bumpers nearly a foot so.

The all steel body was strengthened by a sturdy bulkhead and there was extensive sound proofing on all the panelling with felt topped, rubberized underlays between the carpets and floor. Even the horn had its own rubber mounting under the bonnet.

The boot was much improved with the spare wheel stowed beneath the floor but easily accessible when the lid, with its central chromed handle was folded down. The former, of course, was still intended to be used as a luggage platform when the need arose. Its capacity was 3/4 hundredweight. But one of the nicest features here was a fitted trunk for an extra few shillings.

In the passenger compartment there was an entirely new instrument board with the large speedometer incorporating a clock set to the left and the remaining gauges clustered in a second dial to the right - charging, electrical goings-on and fuel content were all catered for of course. The combined ignition and lamps switch was in the middle with the ignition warning light and an inspection lamp socket to either side and above. Starter button was bottom right - no crude wire pull here - and the panel light switch on the other side.

The strangler control was in the middle of the dashboard beneath that even more essential item to the 30s motorist - a pull down ashtray, this one somewhat in the art deco mode. There were knobs on the capping rail to start and park the dual wipers - concours contestants please note; both blades point outwards when parked and should not be laid across to one side! The screen could be opened by a neat central winder. And a final little interior touch that I always

liked, there was a driving mirror on the headboard that replicated the shape of the rear windows!

Great play was made of the car's comfort including the range of adjustment for the seats, and naturally there was pleasant detailing like stretch map pockets in each door and a rear blind.

Colours were royal blue or maroon both with black wings. Ash

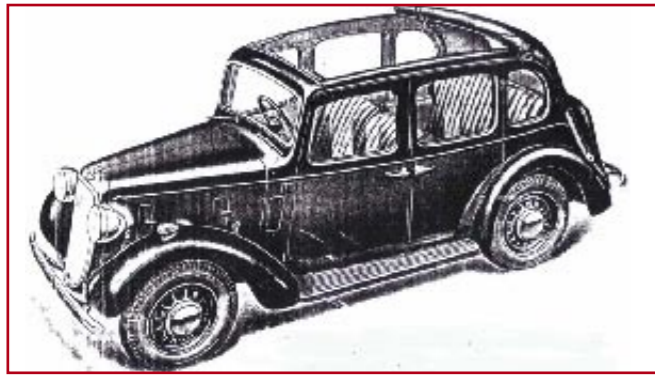
grey with grey wings, princess or bluebird blue both with blue wings, or black all over. There was also the rare standard hue of pueblo brown (a kind of toffee shade) with brown (chocolate) wings. Again, beauty show contestants please note, these cars did not come in tangerine with a chrome cowl and certainly not wedding white (uch)!

The Cambridge cost £178 and its fixed head companion on which some of the colours were not available and one or two of the frills omitted, £160. Not only were the cars, once more, exceptionally good value, they set Austin streets ahead of the opposition, Ten sales soared by a third and a night shift was needed to cope but this was soured slightly when there was a strike over rates for making the Cambridge (and larger Goodwood) body.

In January 1937 a proper cabriolet was introduced and given the name Conway. These were an exceedingly handsome car priced at just £182. They have been criticized for



*Austin advertizing continued to reflect the ethos of the Ten and also of a lifestyle. Split rear window, acceptable then but dangerous now, is in evidence.*



*The Conway was a true cabriolet and one of the most desirable family cars you could buy.*

the lack of durability of the canvas roof that could be rolled back between the cant rails of what was effectively the standard Cambridge. But given a model such as this was never going to have wide appeal there is a modest survival rate.

Don't fix it if it ain't 'broke', they say, but in 1938 there was another of those little hiccups Austin would live to regret. It's the more surprising because the Ten had had a record year in 1937 with 35,000 sold – the most of any Austin model and Sir Herbert himself was always saying: 'No change for change's sake'.

However, in December that year the Fourteen Goodwood got an aluminium cylinder head and other engine 'improvements'. They came to the Cambridge and Conway the following April along with a raised compression ratio and at the same time, or just a little afterwards, a larger inlet valve than exhaust and revised manifold. This hiked the power output quite substantially to 32 bhp at 4000 revs and necessitated a stronger rear axle and clutch. Meanwhile the chassis got piston type, double acting, hydraulic shock absorbers.

On the body, the sides of the boot interior were removed to give extra width and the front seat squabs hinged so they could be tilted forward and improve access to the rear compartment. The splendid central handbrake lever was abandoned in favour of a pistol grip affair under the dash' on the right, and the somewhat dubious claim was made that this facilitated the driver sliding across the front seats and egressing on the left side.

The 'new' engine didn't do a great deal for the car's top speed but it made it peppier. What aluminium for the cylinder head *did* do was make its removal difficult because of the reaction between that metal and the iron block and it could also make the car difficult to start from cold.

By now though the national economy was in decline and sales of the Cambridge descending with it. Down to 18,238 in 1938.

Austin tried to ease the situation with an engine exchange scheme for Tens, Twelves and Fourteens which helped keep the Works active. Then, in announcing the models for 1939, Longbridge cut the price of the de luxe Ten from £195 to £185.

Something more drastic though was needed. Not that it mattered particularly for the Cambridge, as its days were numbered. Leonard Lord was in charge by now and had set Austin's talented Italian stylist, Dicki Burzi, about designing a new look.

Strongly influenced by trans-Atlantic trends of the time these latest cars would move Longbridge away from the shapes that had dominated the 30s.

Both the Seven and Big Seven would disappear in favour of an eight horsepower two and four door saloon and a two and four seat tourer. The Cambridge and Conway would be replaced by a new Ten and an open version of this fresh model launched. The delightful New Ascot and Goodwood would be ousted by a handsome though pusillanimous new and unnamed Twelve. While the noble Eighteen and magnificent Twenty Eight would disappear altogether.

There would be alligator bonnets, smiley Buick-like grilles and on the two smaller cars a form of unitary construction.

Quite apart from its appearance the most significant thing about the Ten, which it shared with the Eight, was chassisless construction. This was described in some detail in *Austin Times* last year but to recap: There was a steel platform floor that had box section side members open on the outward facing side so that when the body, which was still separate, was fitted, it formed box sections.

There were also transverse, boxed cross pieces and in addition, the side members formed 'arms' or 'pontoons' extending ahead of the interior floor to hang things like the engine in and the axle and suspension on.

Longbridge were a bit timid about all this new thinking so stuck to publicity terms that their rather conservative customers would have been comfortable with. They talked of a 'light chassis' and 'remarkable strength' etcetera.

The basic mechanics of this new, unnamed, Ten remained the same as for the Cambridge.

Axles, brakes and transmission; steering and suspension. But the engine got a reworked aluminium head, barrel, as opposed to block, tappets and a slightly stouter crankshaft.

It also got a fairly disastrous revision of the valve timing that had the inlet valve opening at 10 degrees before crankshaft top dead centre as opposed to tdc on the earlier cars. Not only did this spoil the sweet running for which cars like the Lichfield had been renowned but it led to the rapid development of valve and valve seat disorders. It was all compounded by the inaccessibility born of the new bonnet layout and although the customers found these cars, coded GR1, and after the War GS1 stunningly attractive, they were decidedly unloved by anyone who had to work on them; an eventuality that arose fairly early in the vehicle's life.

They were four inches longer than the Cambridge and 1½ wider. The sliding head saloon cost £185, the fixed head £175 the same as the very pretty tourer (code GQC). There was also a 10 cwt van – GVE – as there had been for all Tens, loosely following the trends in car design and usually with disc wheels.

The first of the 'Lord-look' Tens rolled off the production line in May 1939 and although only about 7000 are thought to have found their way to customers in those last few months of peace, production continued for the duration, both of saloons for military use and of the 10 cwt 'utility' – a type of pick-up truck nicknamed the 'Tilly'. These used a bored out (66.65 mm) 1237 cc version of the engine that also went into the post-War van.

The Ten was the only Austin car to be produced throughout the war and some 53,600 were made.

Lord, ever quick off the mark, planned to make 2000 civilian examples of each of his new range, and of another fresh model, the overhead valve BS1 Sixteen, between May and December 1945.

Some authorities claim

all models started in August but that would seem not to be so. Tens were first in June, probably because they were already being made for the military, Eights followed in July, the Sixteen was the car to actually slip in in August and the Twelve had to wait until October.

Practically all would be for export. Colours were limited and 'specs' high.

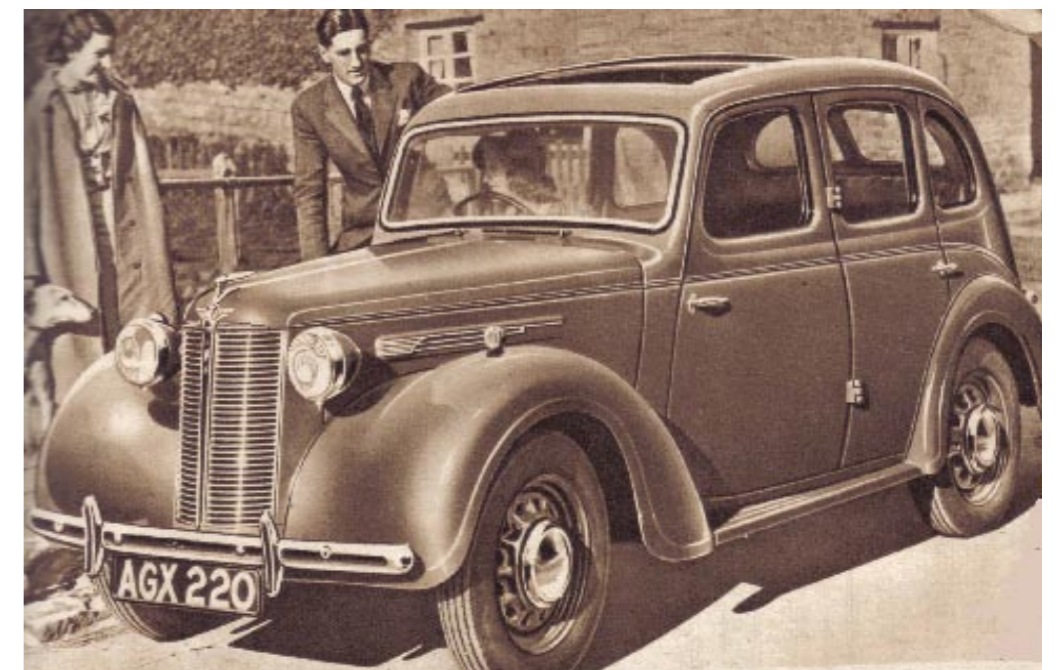
However dubious mechanically this last rendition of a Ten may have been – GS1, and apart from the van there was only this model post-War - it is beyond question that their reintroduction played a significant role in allowing Leonard Lord to start earning the dollars the UK so desperately needed.

So what did the car offer to those few people in the UK who would have been able to get one and to overseas customers, the majority of whom would not have known what to expect.

The engine was very similar to the pre-War and wartime versions but the cast iron head was back and the carburetter got a larger choke. It would have bigger jets throughout from 1946 until the end of production in 1947.

Gear ratios were now 5.43, 8.31, 13.22 and 21.82:1 overall from top to bottom respectively with proportionately lower values for the van.

And while Dick Burzi's styling of the car cannot be praised highly enough the ambiance of the true pre-War cars had largely gone. It was certainly no longer a 'scaled down luxury car' and the detailing was nowhere near as nice. There was a nasty little knob to pull for the starter



*This charming 1939 press shot shows an extraordinarily handsome design to the 'Lord look'. What was happening under the bonnet was less fetching.*

and a Heath Robinson patch on the dashboard where the wiper start and park knob went through, plus rather less charm all round.

Nonetheless it was a GS1 Ten that was the very first British car to be exported to America. It arrived on July 18, 1945 ahead of 21 others that month. The price was the equivalent of £400 and in a market that was not the least bit amenable to small pre-War foreign cars, however pretty, something different would be needed.

If any one could manage to get one in the UK the price was a crippling £310 plus £87 tax. Well over twice the tab in 1939.

It was all something of an anti-climax. Perhaps, an anti-climax for Britain. Victory in the soon-to-be-over War would mean rationing continuing into the 50s, no new cars, drabness everywhere,

American values and standards all-pervading.

A very far cry from the days when those first Ten-Fours took proud, optimistic and perhaps a little self-satisfied new motorists into the English countryside.

Between 1932 and '34 53,695 Tens were built, from 1934 to 1936 54,377 came off the production line and in the period 1936 to '39 73,632 were made. During the War another 53,000 followed and afterwards some 55,000. About 293,000.

By a remarkable coincidence, as many examples as there were of the Austin Seven which it consistently outsold for most of the 30s. And none of that takes into account, a marine version of the engine called the Triton and further types that were used in industrial situations and in wartime fire pumps and the like.



*A mystery to finish. We had to bring you some Ten vans, and here they are. You can just about see the disc wheels. It's Barnsley. They're ice cream mobiles. But nothing more is known, not even who sent the photo to the Pre-War Austin Seven Club, perhaps in the belief they were Sevens.*

## Classic show marks firsts and lasts

THE MAIN FEATURE in this issue of *Austin Times* celebrates the 75th anniversary of the introduction of the Austin Ten, but 2007 sees many other motoring milestones, a phenomenon recognized by the organizers of this year's Classic Motor Show.

They include another '75th' - that of the Ford V8, the centenary of Hillman, 35 years of the Lancia Beta, 25 years of the MG Metro, 80 years of Volvos and 25 years since the closure of the Delorean Factory.

Clubs celebrating birthdays are the Mk1 Ford Cortina Owners' Club (25 years), the Princess and Ambassador Owners' Club (10 years), the Triumph Sports Six Club (30 years) and from the classic motor cycle world, the BSA Bantam Club has been going five years.

None of that will over-shadow the Austin and among other organizations marking the

importance of the Longbridge product will be the Pre-War Austin Seven Club, previous winners of the trophy for the best stand by a small club.

The anniversaries flavour is encapsulated in the overall theme for the show of 'Firsts and

*No Austins actually in view here but should be something for all at the Classic Motor Show in Birmingham.*



Lasts' and altogether there will be 1,000 cars from all over the world to see.

The event is spread over five halls of the NEC in Birmingham totalling half-a-million square feet and some 300 traders will be showcasing their wares and services.

That apart there will be special attractions such as 10-mile drives in so-called 'dream cars' - we don't know if the Ten is included - in

return for a donation to charity, in addition to live demonstrations on restoration skills in the Centre's theatre.

The Classic Motor Show runs from Friday, November 9 to Sunday the 11th.

More information from:

[www.necclassicmotorshow.com](http://www.necclassicmotorshow.com).

**AIDA MAURICE**



*The great Bert Hadley in action at Crystal Palace in 1939.*

AMONG THE BEST known Austin Works racing drivers was the late Bert Hadley. It was one of the last wishes of his son, Clive, who died earlier this year, that some of his father's memorabilia be displayed alongside his single-seater in the Donington Grand Prix Collection.

Thus, overalls, goggles, cloth helmets and other items were recently handed over to Kevin Wheatcroft, son of the Collection's founder, by Geoff Roe of the Pre-War Austin Seven Club.

### Prestigious tracks

Mr Roe is the club's vice chairman and has just retired as co-ordinator of the Bert Hadley Memorial Championship, a 12-part series of sprints and hillclimbs established and run by him to honour the memory of the famous driver.

Now in its 13th year the tournament regularly brings some 30 PWA7C members in a wide variety of Austin Sevens to such prestigious tracks

as Prescott and Shelsley Walsh.

The items that will be displayed at Donington are on 10-year loan and afterwards will become part of the Austin Seven Clubs' Association archive.

Other items belonging to Bert Hadley are to be auctioned by H & H Classic Auctions at Duxford on October 9. Details are available by contacting their website [www.classic-auctions.com](http://www.classic-auctions.com)

If you want to take part in the Bert Hadley Memorial Championship, or the related Grasshopper Challenge for trials cars you need to contact the PWA7C membership secretary in the first instance:-

Keith Nelson, 2, Brackley Drive, Spondon, Derby. DE21 7SA. Tel 01332 664277. eMail [nellybake@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:nellybake@tiscali.co.uk)

**BENT HORSINGTON**



## Sign of the times

JIM STRINGER, who makes such an excellent job of editing the Vintage Austin Register magazine in the UK appears in these columns from time to time, not least because he markets high quality mementoes - like mugs - of our favourite marque.

Another of his lines is this superb enamel-on-steel replica of an Austin service sign. It is actually out of stock at the moment. But by now he should have a similar Castrol XL version that suggests the Wakefield product is recommended by Longbridge for all its engines.

The signs cost £55 each plus carriage and if you would like one for the workshop or drive we suggest you speak to Jim to ascertain exactly what's available and coming up jamescstringer@aol.com

# Were these scouts the cat's whiskers?

by  
BENT  
HORSINGTON

**J**anuary 13, 1935 was a bad day in The Saar.

It was the moment 90.3 per cent of the one million strong population of that ore rich state, at the very tip of northern France, voted for a future allied to Nazi Germany.

The plebiscite had been provided for in the Treaty of Versailles and specified that after 15 years the populace could opt for continued administration by the League of Nations, a future as part of France, or what they in fact chose.

The voting was supervised by an international force and it was Austin Sevens primarily, serving with the First Division Signals, that represented Britain.

They were all wireless cars and landed at Calais in late 1934. The coachwork consisted of a box-like area behind the front seats to house the Number One Wireless set. Development on this had started in 1926 under Col C J Aston at the Signals Experimental Establishment on Woolwich Common.

It was designed to provide radio-telephony and wireless telegraphy and to work on the move. Power came from batteries and it was tried out on an Oxford University expedition to Greenland in 1928.

The Number One Set was mainly intended for infantry and artillery brigades but there was



*This splendid example of a wireless car is attending a recent rally in Holland with its 'period' owner. The towing rings on the wheel centres can just be seen but the stowage area at the back is clearly visible. The screen mounted spotlight often had a driving mirror on the back and the method of raising the starting handle higher than normal is also interesting* Photo PWA7C.

to be a whole range to cover every operational need.

As well as the actual wireless the Austins that went to Saar would have been distinguished by a fixed bracket on the left side of the scuttle for the aerial and a compartment at the back

to stow the rods.

The most striking visual feature though was that both scuttle and bulkhead were squared, departing from Longbridge's usual practice of flowing the bonnet line into the main body and the door apertures were kept shallow to add rigidity to the 'tub'.

About 170 Austin wireless cars went into service and there were almost as many Morris Minors with a body much closer to the standard car. However, the Morrises seem to have had a very low profile in The Saar and there may have been as few as 12, all attached to the Royal Corps of Signals.

It is not certain when the British Army first began using Austin Sevens but seems to have been in the summer of 1928 when Lt Col Gifford Le Q Martel initiated the building of a light reconnaissance vehicle at the 17th Field Company Workshops.

Austin supplied a bare chassis with a floor, bonnet and wings and the military seem to have done little more than fit some protection for the cardan shaft, attach carrying handles and build a low platform behind the driver so the observer could look over the hedge.

It does appear, however, to have gone into limited production by Austin.

An even more unlikely Seven appeared on the scene in 1929 when the Eleventh Hussars (Prince Albert's Own) got Gordon England Cup models to use as scout cars. Other cavalry regiments were similarly equipped from an initial batch of 65 and then from repeat orders.

In January of that same year the military also considered a purpose built Seven. It was basically a two-seater with a locker at the back fitted



*A very early version of the Mulliner Military Seven, probably at Catterick Camp. Note the absence of running boards, shallow door, short bonnet and, of course scuttle-mounted lamps.*

with rifle clips and baffles in the fuel tank to minimize petrol loss in the event of upset.

It was built by Page and Hunt of Farnham, but unfortunately, having been presented with this money spinner, they promptly went bust.

Mulliners in Birmingham then took up the cudgels and seem to have produced something very similar to Page and Hunt which they actually called the Military Seven.

Eleven were intended to be issued to each cavalry regiment to replace motor cycles as a scouting machine. There was the same locker with a lid on top and trap door in the back panel and an elaborate means of carrying the scuttle tank's fuel away from the hot exhaust if the vehicle overturned.

A spare-wheel was carried on the driver's side where the door should have been and a hood clipped to the top of a low windscreen. As only about 160 were made, mostly in 1929, the model seems to have gone through a remarkable number of wing and running board forms, around three in all.

Mechanically it was all basic Seven except later cars had a deep, finned aluminium sump and the axle ratio (5.6:1) was lower than standard.

Very similar was Mulliners Scout Car of 1932. The Army ordered these for use in the Egyptian desert, but the later contracts were cancelled and they were eventually off-loaded to dealers Pride and Clarke who advertised them in *Exchange and Mart*.

Of principal interest was the cooling system which featured a water pump and sizeable, four blade, sheet steel fan driven by twin belts and geared up. The radiator was also modified and



*An Austin Motor Company shot showing a later car from the rear. Just visible are clips for rifles on the lid of the tail.*



*Another Austin photo that shows an APD military tourer in the Lickey Hills in about 1934. The close resemblance to the standard PD tourer is very apparent.*

there was a larger header tank.

Next came the Wireless Car we began with. Whether having had their fingers burnt with the desert car or not Mulliners had no truck with this and the body was built by Austin.

As we have seen, it had a distinctive form while the engine was similar to the Scout Car.

After this Austin Sevens for the Army generally followed the design of the civilian models much more closely.

Contracts were placed in November 1933 for a two-seater and the recently announced PD was used. Departures from standard were minimal but included trafficators on the screen pillars, an inspection lamp socket in the dash, on/off switch for the tail light and strengthened road springs.

The model was clearly a success because the military were back for more in July of the following year – 110 - and even more in 1935 with a nice Christmas present in the form of December contract V2816, placed for 253 cars.

This time there were a few more bells and whistles. Sometimes medical panniers and a spare petrol can in the tail, sometimes brackets for a Lee Enfield rifle alongside the transmission tunnel. Some cars had green hoods some black, there were lifting rings and towing eyes and chunky tyres, rubber mountings for some of the engines while others tried water pumps and

a very few a Vokes type air cleaner.

Possibly the last military contract was that of April 1937 for 26 tourers for the Indian cavalry to serve on the North West Frontier.

They were loosely PDs but had no doors or side screens and had a high frame chassis with stronger springs. Everything else though, when they were dispatched to agent Naraindas & Co in Karachi, was much as before.

The coming of the Jeep, based as it initially was on the Austin Seven-derived Bantam, was still a few years away and it is hard to be certain for how long the ordinary Seven continued 'in uniform'.

We know PDs were serving as staff cars engaged on 'movement control' in Shanghai in 1937 but also that both Austins and Morrises were being passed to the RAOC depot at Chilwell, Nottingham in 1938 for scrapping or resale. It's likely these were the wireless car types of the early 30s

Ones that weren't actually broken up often went to the dealer, Tom Scott, of Beeston.

Some of the material in this article, and indeed the inspiration for it, came from the excellent journal of the Morris Register who, naturally, were dealing with the military version of the Morris Minor. *Austin Times* and Bent Horsington are very pleased to acknowledge this source.

## LAST CALL FOR MORGES

Don't forget the 16th Swiss Classic British Car Meeting is on October 6 on the glorious shores of Lake Geneva.

The themed make this year is TVR, celebrating its 60th anniversary, but there's a good chance the honoured marque next year could be Austin. In any event we hope for a high Longbridge content on every occasion.

More info from [www.british-cars.ch](http://www.british-cars.ch)

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