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Austin Times

A NEWSLETTER FOR ENTHUSIASTS OF AUSTIN PRE-1955

IN THIS ISSUE

Milestone or tombstone? There is no question the A40 Devon/Dorset was a significant Austin. But what really was the price of dollars in the late 40s?

A book that puts rust under your finger-nails by featuring those evocative scrap-yards of our youth...

...While Aida finds much Austin interest at *Retro Mobile*.

NEXT ISSUE

We'll conclude the Devon/Dorset story with a look at the export markets for which it pitched.

There'll be a surprise item that's linked to the A40 in this its anniversary year.

AND COMING SOON

More on aeroplanes as a sequel to our WWI coverage.

**BY GOLLY
THERE'S SO
MUCH IN IT, SO
DON'T MISS
AUSTIN TIMES
YOUR
FAVOURITE ON
AUSTIN PRE '55.**



by
MARTYN NUTLAND

There is much of truth in expressions like 'let the cobbler stick to his last', 'horses for courses' etcetera. And down the generations it would have been well if a dissimilitude of groups had heeded the wisdom; not least where it concerned motor vehicles. Had engineers, not accountants, continued to run the British motor cycle industry, and government ministers concerned themselves with opportunities to build excellent cars, buses and lorries, rather than short term political advantage, there might even be a full blown motor industry.

Before World War One cars were taxed on engine power at the rate of about five shillings (25p) per brake-horsepower. The formula, devised

by the Royal Automobile Club, gave a fair indication of what the power output actually was and is not to be confused with the artificial calculation soon to follow.

In 1920 the Motor Taxation Act (the government in other words) decreed that from January 1, 1921, all cars would be rated at £1 per two square inches of piston area regardless of the brake (or actual) horsepower. Vehicles would thus have a 'treasury rating'. The RAC reworked the formula accordingly.





Certainly pretty. But although an example of the GS1 Ten was the first British car to be exported after WWII, it was not what the world wanted.

It's often said that the sums took no account of piston stroke and made the ratings a travesty. This is not strictly correct. The flaw was that the calculations made three basic mathematical assumptions one of which (on maximum achievable piston speed) did involve an engine's stroke but was soon overtaken by advancing technology. Adjusting the calculations was never considered, and the RAC rating as it was called, lasted until 1953 when an annual tax of £12 10s (£12.50) was charged regardless of horsepower, or indeed, brakehorsepower.

More prestigious

Whatever the shortcomings of this 30-year-long system, it actually suited public and manufacturer alike, particularly in the 1920s when there was a huge demand for motor cars and vehicles like the Austin Seven and Singer Nine would have seemed attractive financially. The manufacturers of more prestigious cars often advertised models with a double rating, Alvis's 12/50 being a typical example. The 12 represented RAC rating and 50 the brakehorsepower, discovered mechanically by running the engine on a 'brake' or dynamometer. As Micky Radford puts it in that excellent tome, *The Vintage Alvis Manual*: 'You felt you had outsmarted the taxman by £38 per annum'.

Everyone seems to have conveniently forgotten that the tax had increased by 75% per horsepower!

What, you ask, has this to do with Austin and more particularly the Devon/Dorset story?

A little more ancient history first.

One of the overwhelming consequences of

the RAC rating was that it stultified design and development, particularly amongst popular, volume produced cars, just as similar UK law had impeded it at the dawn of motoring. Now, big bore (or at least as great as, or greater than the stroke) should have been the way to go.

In the 30s the desire to keep the cylinder bore small didn't really matter. There was a huge empire full of customers and the marketing stance was largely – this is what we're making; that is what you get.

But commendable car though it was, something like an Austin 'Ten' Lichfield – bore 2.4 inches, stroke 3.5 – was not ideal for transverseing the vastness of countries like Australia, Canada or India.

The First World War changed the social and economic structure of Britain but the old order lingered on to a noticeable extent through the 20s and 30s. The effect of the second great conflict was more dramatic, as we see even today. The American influence changed the very culture and fabric of the country – the style of what you wore, what you bought and what you ate; the music, the language, attitudes and values. But above all else, it left Britain bankrupt.

Lease/lend had been great...until the War ended. Then the lease bit came into play and it all had to be paid for. In dollars. Even the items that were in transit when the flags went out.

And at the risk of jumping ahead of ourselves. This is the great significance of the Austin A40 Devon and Dorset, which celebrates its 60th birthday this year. It wasn't a great car. It wasn't a beautiful car. It wasn't even particularly nicely made. But it was a life saver.

Leonard Lord had joined Austin in 1938. It is possible, though not proven, his appointment was government, rather than Herbert Austin



This very early prototype has the makings of a handsome car. Note the 'Ten' style wheels. Photo Austin Motor Co.

This was very much an old fashioned British side valve, pre-War car and not what the rest of the world wanted.

inspired.

Austin was aging and tired. Lord was vigorous, dynamic and decisive and at something of a loose end.

With war anticipated, just the man to capitalize on the resources of one of Europe's largest vehicle production plants. It could not have been anticipated though, that he would be just the man to try to win the peace.

But as it turned out; he was.

First job in 1945 was an August re-launch of the Eight, Ten and Twelve and to get the new Sixteen underway. Not so much for a deserving and new-car-starved British public, but to earn export revenue and especially 'greenbacks'.

The very first British car to be shipped was a GS1 Series Austin Ten.

Although on a platform chassis and with a re-worked engine that actually made it decidedly inferior to its Lichfield and Cambridge sisters; and although the dealers loved them when they were clinching deals on the basis of pretty looks - they loathed them a few thousand miles later when the exhaust valves had burnt away - this was very much an old fashioned British side valve, pre-War car and not what the rest of the world wanted.

Lord, of course, had a cunning plan. Two actually. The first was for a new, super-efficient, flow line production plant that was to become Longbridge's Car Assembly Building One (CAB 1) to build the new generation of, ultimately, chassisless cars. The other was for a flagship dollar earner.

The latter was the Devon and Dorset. They were launched in the autumn of 1947 in a star burst of publicity and blasted away the Eight, Ten and Twelve at a stroke. The Sixteen was all that remained of the traditional Austin and was with us in saloon form until March 1949 and as a Countryman until that autumn.

The Dorset was the two-door version and the Devon the four. Both had a brand new 1200 cc overhead valve engine. Originally the name Dorset was to have been applied to a narrower 1000 cc version, but as testing and development proceeded it was not found to offer worthwhile economies over the larger car (returning about 32 mpg as opposed to 30) and was deemed just too small for export markets. So it was simply widened to become a two-door 'Devon'.

The '1200' developed 40 brakehorsepower at 4300 rpm. That gave rise to what was to become the familiar model designations for Austin - A40 and so forth. The Dorset as originally conceived would have been the A35, nothing, of course, to do with the car that subsequently carried that appellation. Maximum torque was 59 lbs/ft at 2000 rpm.

Proper oil filter

The engine had the now commonplace combined block and crankcase with a detachable iron head to carry the rocker gear and pushrod operated valves. There were split skirt pistons in fully water-jacketed cylinders working by forged steel connecting rods to a crankshaft made in the same way.

A centrifugal coolant pump, with thermostatic control operated in conjunction with a radiator similar to the old Twelve's, with its 'overflow' pipe to an expansion chamber.

But there was now a proper oil filter attached to the side of the block/crankcase. It was of the AC-Sphinx by-pass type and had an element renewable every 6000 miles.

The normal running pressure was 40 pounds psi.



Like the young 'servant' girl of the publicity, the British may have craved new cars. But they weren't going to get them. She'd have been lucky if 'sir' acquired this pre-War Eight.

***‘Handsome
yet honest,
avoiding
airy flamboyance
on the
one hand or
sombre dignity
on the other’.***

Leonard Lord

AC also supplied the mechanical petrol pump which drew fuel from a rear mounted eight and three-quarter gallon tank for the Zenith downdraught carburettor. This was a 30 VM 4 as on the HR1/HS1 Light Twelve Four and also post 1937 Tens, but jetted slightly differently. The air cleaner was the same as all the production ‘S’ series side-valvers – Eight, Ten, Twelve - a cylindrical job lying horizontally across the carburettor

intake. There was an oil bath variety on A40s destined for some export markets.

Drive was via a single dry-plate Borg and Beck clutch to a four speed gearbox that manipulated its ratios by an extraordinarily lanky floor change. Overall they were 5.14, 7.89, 12.52 and 20:1 from top to first respectively. There was synchromesh on the three higher speeds. Transmission went via a one-piece shaft supported at each end on Hardy Spicer universal joints, to a spiral bevel three-quarter floating axle.

All this was mounted on a traditional cruciform-braced steel frame with the side, front and rear cross members boxed. Hung on it was Austin’s second attempt at independent front suspension – the first was on the Sheerline, unveiled as the A120 at the Geneva Motor Show in February the same year. The A40’s system used coil springs and wishbones mounted in Metastik bushes then connected to double acting Armstrong shock dampers.

The rear springs were conventional, reverse camber semi-elliptics, underslung and with zinc interleaving in the Austin mode. Again there were hydraulic dampers, and, *à la* Twelve but not Ten, an anti-roll torsion bar.

The car steered by a fairly typical ifs divided rod system incorporating an idler box and was stopped by hydro-mechanical braking from

Girling. The front hydraulics had twin leading shoes while the rears were the well tried wedge and roller devices activated by rods. The handbrake lived under the dash and we were back to the pistol grip style of late pre-War Cambridges. The road wheels themselves were pressed steel disc types shod with 5.25 x 16 tyres.

The most impressive element in this package was undoubtedly the engine. It was straightforward, reliable, was to prove durable, and it was lively; pushing out 33 bhp per litre compared with around 29 for the Ten and Twelve.

Predictably, the body was different from anything seen before on an Austin and much more pleasing than what most other popular car manufacturers were to come up with as they strove to Americanize their designs into dollar earners.

As the pictures show the Devon and Dorset had well balanced lines tastefully set off by subdued trim. Or as Lord said: ‘Handsome yet honest, avoiding airy flamboyance on the one hand or sombre dignity (sic) on the other’.

A number of the large pressings and sub-assemblies for the new bodies were made in Cowley by Pressed Steel and others by Fisher and Ludlow of Castle Bromwich, before being welded together at Longbridge.

Another statement Leonard Lord identified with was that the A40 had put ‘the colour back into motoring’. The schemes were certainly attractive. Apart from classic black with brown upholstery and carpets, there was royal blue with the same accompaniments, then burgundy with beige trim and fawn mats, Portland grey with beige upholstery and fawn carpets and mist green (a winner) with the same complimentaries.

The paint itself was a thermoplastic enamel



The chassis was a conventional cruciform braced affair but with a new ohv engine that was lively, straightforward, reliable and durable. Photo Austin Motor Co.



George Eyston was engaged to test the cars and is seen here in the Alps with one of the unpleasantly proportioned 'narrow' Dorsets.

that needed to be baked. It was more flexible than the old celluloses, needed no abrasive finishing and was thus longer lived.

The dashboard featured rectangular and square white faced instruments in the American mode of the day and, of course, similar to the Sheerline. But unlike the big car, and indeed the Sixteen, they were set in front of the driver in the way of old pre-War Austins. In addition to the essentials (speedometer and fuel gauge) there was an ammeter and oil pressure indicator and visual balance was preserved with a small plaque for the ignition warning light and another to give notice that the Ecko radio was on, if fitted for £30 extra. The knobs were on a central panel and there was a lidded cubbyhole on the passenger side. Finish was painted metal to match the body colour and topped off, inevitably, with an ashtray. This of chrome and mounted in the middle. There could also be a heater for £6.

The upholstery was of leather and although not as sumptuous as on the Twelve there was a central armrest in the rear of the Devon and there were actually running boards, but concealed behind those full depth doors on their concealed hinges.

Externally the car had pretty chrome over-riders, straight from the earlier cars, neat built in tail and stop lamps and pedal car-size headlamps incorporating a bulb for the sidelights.

These five inch diameter jobs went in December 1948 when the Americans change the rules and wanted seven inch sealed beam units with separate sidelamps. On the Devon and Dorset these moved below the 'heads' to the wing face.

The grille was a clever replica of the attractive, smiley '30s Buick' item, used on the immediate

pre-War and post-War 'horsepower' range and at first incorporated the same stylish blue, maroon and chrome badge with the rating.

There's a little confusion about what that figure was. Some say '10'. On very early brochures it's definitely '12'. In any event it soon became A40.

The Austin flying 'A', that Lord had had styled after the 'winged B' radiator cap from his Bentley, topped the bonnet and there was a chrome strip part way down the centre.

Getting all this into the market place was something of a problem and the Works testers' reports are a litany of disaster. The models were tried in Switzerland, Norway and Belgium as well as extensively between Longbridge and the Welsh coast.

For the Swiss trial George Eyston of MG and Thunderbolt World Land Speed Record fame was enlisted to say what a good car the A40 would be. He said, in all honesty, on a subsequent publicity gramophone record, that the engine and gearbox were good and that the brakes worked. However, whether the steering and suspension made the car as 'sure-footed as a mountain goat' is more questionable.

And anyway that was only the half of it; the prototypes had shaken themselves to pieces with the wings coming loose, pushing bonnets out of line and causing them to fly open. Back home 7000 miles of continuous running showed the steering to be wearing, the 'dampers' tiring and the front tyres to have scrubbed off their treads in about half the test distance.

Trials in Norway broke the chassis so the only survivor was sent to Belgium to see if it was any better on pavé and that Devon (JOC 238) broke its chassis too. But not before demonstrating it could wander about the roads in cross-winds and make its steering hammer, prove the



English idyll; were it but so. Nearly all the early cars had to go for export. Photo Austin Publicity.



The oh-so-modern interior of the first A40s. Observe the painted fascia and lanky gear-lever.

suspension was generally too weak and that, given due time, the brakes didn't work very well.

The shock damper arms were modified to try and improve the suspension but dealers of the day would tell you that the customer's initial delight with their A40, and the wizardry of ifs, soon evaporated when the tyre bills started to roll in.

The underlying problem though was not an engineering one. It was that of dollars and desperation to get cars into overseas showrooms. Lord was demonstrating his dynamism and decisiveness. When confronted with components the design of which was being reworked and improved he would say: 'Does what we have work? Yes? Then use it!'

And we should not be too critical of Longbridge on this score. When, in the mid-30s, Lefebvre created Citroën's masterpiece, the *Traction*, the company was bankrupt. The only hope was to get a new model to the customers immediately and out it went with among other things, brake problems and issues over the fit of body panels.

Next time we'll be taking a close look at how the Devon and Dorset and the various derivatives performed in the market place and taking a view of the legacy of these first A40s.

If you have an opinion on this or any other Austin topic pre-1955 the editorial team are always delighted to hear from you at:

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Don't forget Chanteloup

AN EARLY CALL last issue from those intrepid organizers of the Chanteloup road run and hillclimb, so if you haven't already done so put June 2 and 3 in the diary now.

It will be the ideal antidote to the presidential elections, underway in France around that time, and we can virtually guarantee Nicolas and Segolene will be competing elsewhere!

On Saturday it's the run between Lyons la Forêt and Villennes which are in the Rouen area, followed by the climb on the Sunday.

This takes place on the main road through the picturesque little town of Chanteloup les Vignes, just north of Paris.



The splendid hillclimb at Chanteloup takes place on the main road through the picturesque little town, just outside Paris.

We know many of you rely on friends to show you *Austin Times*. Please remember that providing you receive it electronically it is FREE. Use the details at the foot of the left hand column to make contact and we will be delighted to send it to you direct.

...And don't forget either, that popular annual, the *Swiss Classic British Car Meeting* 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, organiser 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

Let the rot set in

by AIDA MAURICE



Resting in peace. But it would be nice if this Twenty-Six could be preserved in the bodily form we see it here.

In the 50s and 60s, before the coming of the car crusher, the countryside of Europe and far beyond was dotted with scrap-yards.

We all had our favourites. The clusters of decaying Rolls-Royces standing like deposed aristocrats, waist high in weeds, awaiting the inevitable; the yards full of traction engines and steamrollers red with rust; the 30s Americans and other behemoths, stranded in forgotten corners by a dearth of spares and soaring petrol prices.

If only our parents would have indulged us and found the pound or two that would have bought one! Sensibly, they didn't and we are left with our memories, most of them now contained in *Rust in Peace* from Dalton Watson Fine Books at £27 in the UK.

To cram 500 pictures, mostly in colour, of scrap, derelict and abandoned vehicles into a lavish, large format book is a remarkably imaginative initiative and makes for a truly original 'car book' in a sphere where that is a rarity.

The source for the work is the pictorial archive of the celebrated motoring writer and historian Mike Worthington-Williams, famous in Austin circles for an unrestored 1927 four cylinder Austin Twenty and his advocacy of this model. So it comes as no surprise that at one point there is the utterance: 'Often thought of as a totally dependable but sluggish car, if fitted with a light body it (*the Austin Twenty* this author's insertion) could give a Three Litre Bentley a run for its money; although your money would be safest on the Bentley'.

On the generality Worthington-Williams is quoted as saying: 'Traditional scrap-yards are my spiritual home' and the pictures are the culmination of 40 years' work.

Most of the text though comes from Malcolm Tucker whose non-literary achievements include restoring Rolls-Royces to concours standard and becoming the youngest chairman of the Rolls-Royce Enthusiasts' Club. That apart he has produced two volumes on his favourite

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Decidedly appropriate in this issue. The book describes this as a GS1 and if so, it says it all about the quality of post-war British steel. But look at the sidelight. Post-war Tens didn't normally have this type, so is it a '39 GR1?

there is much to delight the Longbridge enthusiast. Or should I say make him or her cringe. Something in the order of 50 shots many solely showing the Austin. Models range from the lowly Seven and Mini through the much more exotic like the magnificent Twenty hearse (pictured here), rare long wheelbase Sheerline and a couple of A90 Atlantics.

The intimacy of the shots reveals how our favourite car eventually fell apart and devotees of the immediate post-War models will find this a little worrisome.

Inevitably with a book like this there is a great temptation to rush out and save whatever takes your fancy.



While the Flying A on this Devon seems to be bearing up rather well.

However, it has to be remembered that Worthington-Williams has been collecting his pictures for nearly half a century and it's unlikely very much remains – not in the UK at least.

Furthermore the location of anything that *might* remain is not usually revealed in the text, and frustrating though this may be, the reason is obvious when you consider the state of British society particularly. Great fun; leave it on the coffee table, give it as a present, but make sure you have access to one yourself. Dalton Watson Fine Books are based at 1730 Christopher Drive, Deerfield, IL60015 USA but visit their website www.daltonwatson.com

make with a third to follow soon, plus five volumes on engineering subjects for children. His skill at writing for the junior market is evident in the concise, easily assimilable and sometimes humorous style of *Rust in Peace*, so much so, the book becomes a motoring history in itself.

He is not always spot on when it comes to Austin lore and there are some gaffs like a colossal muddle over the specification of a 1932 Harley, but to be fair, the book covers vehicles of many types and from 'A' to 'Zee'.

As most Austins were in volume production and so durable they tended to keep going until they, quite literally, dropped dead on the spot, having become so valueless as not to be worth carting away,

Austin bonanza at Retro Mobile



BMW's Dixi was a show-stopper on the German company's impressive stand. BMW acquired Dixi, and access to the Austin Seven which they then built for a number of years.

The 100,000 or so enthusiasts from all over the world who visit the Paris *Retro Mobile* each year are not really entitled to expect an Austin bonanza. Nor would they want one!

The 27,000 square metres of hall space in the French capital's Porte de Versailles exhibition centre is the province of the 'great and the good' from the European world of car dealers, its prestigious and household name manufacturers and exotica like Delage and Delahaye, Bugatti, Hispano and Voisin.

But this year was an exception with, if not something for every Austin taste, something for a wide range of Longbridge palates.

Almost the first thing seen by visitors to the 10-day-long-show - one of Europe's best for classics - was a DA-2 Dixi on the BMW stand.

BMW, of course, started their motor car building career with the Austin Seven. It is a complex tale that involves a number of personalities and other firms, but basically, prior to WWI, Bayerische Flugzeug-Werke had been making aircraft engines in the Milbertshofen district

of Munich.

During the War itself they secured an important contract to build V12 engines for Austro-Daimler. The company was reconstituted as the Bayerische Motoren Werke GmbH but had over-expanded and stalled.

Acquired by the the Austrian industrialist Franz Josef Popp, and now called BMW AG, they looked for new products, especially as, after the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, aircraft production in Germany was banned.

Brakes for trains were an opportunity, then came motor cycle engines and subsequently complete machines, before they moved to cars.

This was the Dixi, an Austin Seven that was being made under licence in Eisenach by the firm of that name. They had taken it on when the going became too tough for their own much larger vehicles.

BMW bought Dixi out in 1928 and their car was born, yet it was not until 1933 that they began producing machines that had lost most of their Longbridge flavour.

Indeed the revered 328 of the last pre-WWII



The Dixi/BMW 'mechanics' were virtually identical.

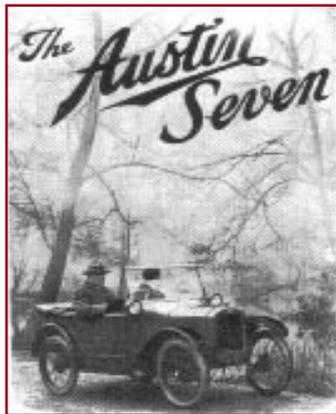
years still looked distinctly like an over-sized DA-2.

The car displayed on the BMW stand at *Retro Mobile* was a 3/15 DA-2. DA stood for *Deutsche Ausfuhrung* which meant German version and the remainder of the figures and letters alluded to power and taxation class.

What Austin enthusiasts would have found particularly interesting was how closely this 1929 example resembled a 'genuine' Seven in its mechanical details.

The presentation also featured a charming model of a Dixi van that again, bore a striking resemblance to the Austin and along with the DA-2 was the centre of attention for many visitors. Hearty congratulations to BMW.

Now I know a DA-2 is pretty exotic in Austin terms, but a much more prosaic Austin, on possibly the most exotic stand at the show, would have been focal point for readers of this publication.



Chummy OK 6807 was used extensively in Austin publicity material.

The less 'square' of our readership will know Nick Mason is the talented *avant garde* drummer with world famous rock band *Pink Floyd*. Such unforgettables as *Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun* and *The Dark Side of the Moon* spring to mind and for those interested in statistics album sales of 200m are enough to blow anyone's gaskets.

The other *side* of Nick, however, is a passion for historic cars and he has a collection of about 40, around a dozen of which he had generously arranged to be on display at *Retro Mobile*.

And you've guessed...among the Ferraris, 'Ulster' Aston Martin and vintage Bentley was his immaculate 1922 Austin Seven Chummy.

This is chassis 110 registered OK 6807. It is so early as to be one of the 695 cc cars and the one used in many Longbridge publicity shots including a selection with Sir Herbert himself.

The grey Chummy is one of two Seven's owned by Nick the other being a totally original



Pink Floyd drummer, Nick Mason's, very early Seven on the stand at Paris Retro Mobile.

military wireless car with coachwork by Mulliner of Birmingham and complete with all its fittings.

Hopefully a third Seven will soon join the Mason family as Nick is looking for an 'Ulster' that his two sons can race.

And that last statement puts the collection in context. This is no rich man's indulgence gathering dust. This sensitive musician would be appalled at that suggestion.

He was bitten by the motor racing bug as a youngster in the 1950s when his father, a celebrated documentary film maker, raced the 4½ Litre Bentley Nick still owns.

He moved on to try his own hand with - inevitably - an Austin Seven, but his core interest, music, got in the way and it was not until the 1970s that he was able to start buying and racing some iconic competition cars.

Today his wife, Annette and two daughters from a previous marriage all race the cars in the Mason stable while Nick himself has eight Le



Mason's cars, like this 'Aston', are vigorously campaigned.

Mans - five 24-hour events and three classics - to his credit plus a victory driving a 'Birdcage' Maserati in the curtain raiser for the 1990 British Grand Prix. That one's chalked up as his most satisfying memory.

For enthusiasts of 'Austins' later than the Seven *Retro Mobile* produced an extremely attractive Mini Countryman accompanied by period brochures and an immaculate pick-up of the same model disporting itself on the stand of one of the emporia that so enthusiastically keep the Issigonis design alive in France.

This all seemed very fitting as *Club Fiat* were having a field day to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the almost as legendary 500 and its derivatives.

The whole was topped off for Austineers by a Vanden Plas Princess that was, alas, poorly presented.

AIDA MAURICE

If the editor is brutally frank he has to concede his French postman does not suffer muscular strain carrying sacks of correspondence to the door. He was gratified, therefore - the editor not postie - that the feature on the vintage Sixteen in the last issue generated a record amount of mail and a huge amount of interest in these fine cars...

JIM STRINGER who has done so much to revitalize the Vintage Austin Register Magazine and is a stalwart of so much Austin activity wrote to say... Many thanks for the latest edition of *Austin Times* which I found of particular interest since I have owned and run a 1929 16/6 with a fabric saloon body since 1962.

The 16/6 on the stand at the 1927 Motor Show was in fact a 'Windsor' saloon which had been modified to take the new six cylinder engine. The first production models were also 'Windsors'. A few still survive!

For the Austin centenary event I commissioned a set of bone china mugs depicting the 1920s range of vehicles.

The original Austin Motor Company publicity lithographs used are finished in royal blue whilst the rim of the mugs has a thin gold band around it.

Apart from the Sixteen there's a Seven Chummy, Twelve-Four Clifton and Twenty-Four Mayfair plus Wings and Wheel and script 'Austin' devices.

Only a few remain and are obtainable from me at £6.50 each or £30 for the set plus postage and

substantial packaging. Please phone 01795 880165*.

Meanwhile good luck for the continued success of *Austin Times*.

*Jim has other items and can provide a list.

PETER JELLEY is the long-time, inveterate campaigner of a splendid open Sixteen as well as editing the excellent magazine of the Preston and District Vintage car Club. He wrote briefly to say...

Good issue again, has to be if about Sixteens!

The engine drawing was in *Veteran & Vintage* I think but I never did discover for certain what engine it was. Marine?

Engineer MIKE LOASBY has a foot in many camps from early days with Austin Sevens and competing in sports racing and Formula Three events to senior positions with Aston Martin and Delorean. He wrote at length to say...

Interesting to read your article in the 'Austin' and the bit about crankshaft vibration and rear mounted camshaft drive.

The vibration you refer to is torsional vibration and perhaps this should be made clear.

It was a problem that bedevilled early engines with long crankshafts, six and eight cylinder, and was due mainly to the relative weakness of the crankshaft in torsion. It was this problem that caused the timing to be moved to the back of the engine so that the effect of any 'wind-up' in the crank or valve timing was minimised.

The 'damper', generally referred to as the tv damper - torsional vibration damper - was introduced, as you say, to counteract this torsional vibration. It was later refined and improved greatly, becoming a steel hub surrounded by steel annulus from which it was separated by a rubber sleeve.

The effect of wind-up and general 'spring' in the



Article on Sixteen aroused much interest.



Many of you will recognise this location with David's Twelve in 1996 as that used to photograph the 100,000th Seven (inset) in 1929.

system led to amazing variations of valve timing which could vary as a result by an enormous amount, 15 degrees or more on engines I have known.

Fascinating!

Might be interesting to hear of the experience of some of your readers in this respect.

Many of you will remember that good friend of Austin Times, DAVID CHAUNDY. David was the authoritative voice beyond our 'Ask Arnold' series and is a vehicle restorer par excellence. The quality of work on both his Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud, and for contrast, Austin A30, quite literally, have to be seen to be believed. He also owned for some years a vintage Sixteen and his car appeared at the head of my Dec/Jan issue article and is repeated on page 11 of this edition.

He was prompted to write after the Sixteen feature to tell us his latest Austin 'news' and it seems a fitting way to close this section on the vintage models...

I am once again the owner of a vintage Austin. The car I now have has spent all its life in Auckland New Zealand. It's a 1924 Twelve-Four five seat tourer (a Clifton but built before they were called that!).

It was the first new Austin car sold by the Auckland territory main agents Seabrook Fowlds Ltd.

Seabrook went on to be major players in the New Zealand motor industry so my car, 'Aunty Betty', as she is still lovingly called, was the start of great things for them.

I have a very full and detailed history of her life with her five former owners along with period photographs and many interesting stories about her life in New Zealand. I am in contact with most of those owners except the selling agent and first owner, which is quite something for an 83-year-old car.

I am currently undertaking a restoration and have been amazed at her wonderful original condition.

The pictures were taken last September and are of Aunty Betty outside the Longbridge factory - 82 years after she left in her packing case!

We hope to bring you more on David's car and its restoration in a future issue.



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