

## IN THIS ISSUE

### Pretender's tragic end

Bent Horsington concludes his detailed assessment of the Austin Sheerline.

### Fantasy Island?

The editor speculates on the possibilities of replicating a unique sporting Austin.

### Far and Wide

And Aïda Maurice has been looking for Austins at old car events around the globe.

### Next Time

We'll be looking into the adventures of another intrepid traveller and his Eighteen

And revisiting a model featured in one of the first issues of *Austin Times* - The Big Seven.

**Plus, of course, lots more on Austin pre-1955. *Austin Times* - where you find the stories others only aspire to!**

A NEWSLETTER FOR ENTHUSIASTS OF AUSTIN PRE-1955

# Such screaming from Lord

**L**ongbridge built some 12280 K5 army lorries between 1941 and 1945. That compares fav-

ourably with the output of the K6, familiar as a 6x4 wireless or gantry vehicle (about 13,280) and equates to roughly a quarter the production of K2s famed as fire appliances and ambulances.

But today the K5 is the rarest of Austin species with just five up and running in the UK and four more awaiting restoration.

In a nutshell, the K5 is the Birmingham factory's answer to the Bedford QL and the various models of forward control, three

ton 4X4 General Service military trucks that emanated from other manufacturers.

It shared the familiar

six cylinder 3995 cc (87.31 x 111.12mm) petrol engine with the



*K5 - one of only five survivors still running in the UK, this magnificent example was painstakingly restored by enthusiast Chris Baxter.*

K2 and K6 and with its governed Solex RZFAIPO carburetter, and on a compression ratio of 7.7:1

We've been promising you a glimpse at one of Austin's least known military vehicles from WWII. MARTYN NUTLAND looks at the K5

churned out 82 bhp at 2900 rpm.

The main gearbox provided ratios of 6.58:1 on first, and then 3.48, 1.71 and 1:1 on the subsequent speeds. The transfer

box that carried the drive to the front wheels could modify the overall gearing quite substantially by inter-splicing ratios of either 2:1 or 1.16:1. The axle gearing was 7.2:1 and the constant velocity joints of the somewhat

troublesome Tracta design.

The most prominent feature of the



*Austin's familiar four litre 'six', here fitted to a K2 ambulance. It is interesting this same engine was adapted for the Sheerline car discussed later in this issue.*

transmission is said to have been extremely pronounced gear whine, giving rise to the model's nickname of 'screamers'.

K5s rode on totally conventional suspension having semi elliptic springs all round and the Luvax piston type hydraulic shock absorbers favoured by Austin at that time. Tyres were normally 10.50 x 20 and as on the K2 there was an engine driven pump to inflate them.

Steering was by cam and roller on the Bishop principle.

The lorry had a quite sophisticated hydraulic braking system from Lockheed with vacuum servo assistance and a mechanical handbrake that acted on the rear wheels but also had an inter-connection to apply the front hydraulics.

The Tommy at the controls used a central ball change gear lever behind which was the control for engaging four wheel drive and selecting high or low ratio. He was also provided with a hand throttle.

Most K5s came as General Service or GS trucks but wireless and 'office' bodies were also fitted. In addition there was a version called the 'Portee' with a winch for

loading the machine gun it was designed to carry.

This model had slightly different dimensions to the GS. Although on the same 12 ft wheelbase it was wider at 8ft 5 ins as opposed to 7 ft 6 ins and higher at a touch over 11 ft instead of 9 ft 10 ins.

In standard lorry form the K5 weighed 3 tons 14 cwt and had a top speed of about 30 mph, mechanically pumping fuel from its twin, 16 gallon, side mounted tanks at around a gallon every eight miles.

### AMMUNITION

One of the best restorations of a K5 is that carried out by Chris Baxter. Chassis 55988 was built in March 1943 as part of contract 52552 and allocated the Army number L5192186.

It is thought it served with an armoured unit and carried ammunition and supplies during the D-Day landings, reached Germany and returned home in 1945.

55988 was rebuilt by the Army in Oct 1955 and passed to the Territorials before being disposed of on October 10, 1957 at a time when the military were standardizing on the Bedford RL.

### PROPER BODY

By 1961 it was in the hands of a Sussex farmer who removed the original body in favour of a tipper to carry peas from his fields to a processing plant in Ashford, Kent.

It soldiered on in this capacity until 1970 when the engine failed. The K5 was now abandoned but eventually rescued along with the proper body.

A rebuild started but sadly the new owner died before completion and the Austin was again abandoned until taken into storage by a friend of her original saviour and a fellow K5 owner.

It remained dormant for another 15 years until acquired, in October 2002, by Chris who moved it to the museum premises at Bletchley Park and began a full restoration.

He had the K5 running by 2003 and attended many rallies but the refurbishment was not completed until 2004 when a new cab top and doors were fitted.

Resplendent in military colours the Austin then travelled to France for the D-Day 60th Anniversary celebrations.

With K2 ambulances and fire appliances surviving in respectable numbers and also a reassuring representation of K6s, it is surprising so few K5s remain with us.

Unlike their military K series sisters they were never popular with civilian operators - just look at that top speed and fuel consumption.



*The K2 was much more numerous - and subsequently much more popular - with civilian operators than either the K5 or K6. This example is seen in Malta*



*Typical of a British Army three tonner but not as smoothly contoured as the ubiquitous Bedford QL. Note the substantial but somewhat vulnerable steering drop arm of a K5.*

The author only remembers ever seeing two in everyday life. One, a cab and chassis used by the scrap dealer in his home town where it no doubted ended its days on the mound of rusting hulks it had helped create. The other was working for the Forestry Commission near Chepstow.

### COMPLEXITY

Apart from the modest performance and running costs I suppose one also needs to take into consideration the complexity of the transmission and a probable shortage of spares.

This article has taken no more than a glimpse at the Austin K5. If you have anything to contribute to the story of this now obscure model, worked on it, or drove it in service, the editor would love to hear from you.

**Meanwhile many thanks to Chris Baxter for sharing the story of 55988 with us and for other information. Also Barry Walker of the Austin Ex-Apprentices' Association.**

**MORE MILITARY NEWS IN FUTURE ISSUES OF AUSTIN TIMES**

## A package for Fantasy Island

**SOME FANTASIES** are said to add interest to your marriage, but the motoring kind just help us through the long winter nights. But forget those thoughts of Marilyn Monroe and the Speed Six Bentley you'll never afford and come dream with me.

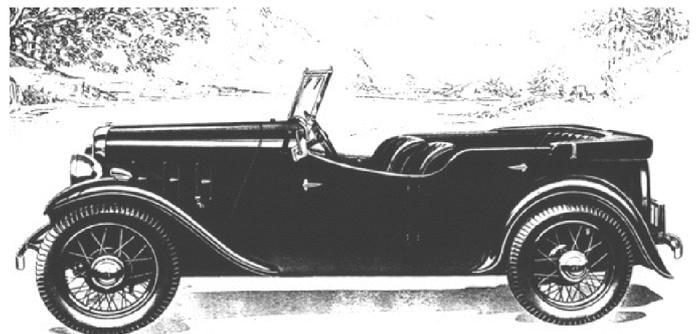
Browsing through the superb magazine of the UK's Vintage Sports Car Club the other day ( Issue 236 Summer 2002) I came upon a photo of a row of Austins resting after the 1936 Land's End Trial.

Six of them are Grasshopper Sevens ( AOX 4, AOV 343, BOA 60 and 59 all gold medal winners for Buckley, Orford, Hadley and Goodacre respectively, and AOX 3 and BOA 57 which took bronzes for Milton and

Scriven) but the seventh car, AVP 505 is a 10/4 'super-charged sports' which was driven by W S Sewell and also won a bronze medal.

Now most of us know about Grasshoppers. Not for public consumption, they were the special Le Mans and trials Sevens built between 1934 and 1937 and most of the '34-'35 output is in that 'Land's End' picture. Only BOA 58 is absent. Altogether 12 cars were made.

*The Ripley was a handsome car by any standards. This is a brochure shot, but there is no mention of an optional supercharger.*





*Ripley in the flesh. They are a rare beast. This is a standard model.*

That's all very well. But what of the Austin Ten?

All fantasy needs a framework of fact. So let's be sensible for a moment.

Just as most of us are familiar with the Grasshopper the majority of Austin enthusiasts will have come across the Twelve sports. This fascinating Longbridge project represented a bid to get in on the 30s act of turning family cars into sportsters. Good examples, apart from the Austin Seven itself, are the MG M Type, derived from the Morris Minor, and a larger cousin, the MG VA, whose engine was not so far removed from that of another relative, the Wolseley 10/40.

Austin took as the basis for their sports the 1500 cc Light Twelve-Six Harley saloon of 1931. A double drop frame was used to lower the centre of gravity and actually allowed three of the cross members to pass under the stouter transmission shaft. It also necessitated changes to the rear springs.

The compression ratio of the engine was raised from 6.2 to 7.1 :1 and a high lift camshaft acted on valves with double springs served by revised manifold and a down, as opposed to sidedraught, Zenith carburetter. The

crankshaft was balanced and power output around 40 bhp, as opposed to 32, at 3,700 rpm .

The unit was coupled to a four speed close ratio gearbox and was helped on its way to a top speed of 75 mph by an elegant, open, four-seater body. It featured racy cut-aways to the doors and once inside the driver sat four inches lower than normal behind a gently raked steering column and sloping windscreen. Running boards were omitted and the picture completed by a stylish chrome grille with herring-bone slats behind the current bumper with its twin blades clasped in the middle by the script 'A' insignia. There were also bonnet ventilator doors instead of louvres.

### **Modifications**

These lovely cars started hitting the road in May 1933 with a price tag of £268. For the 1934 season they were given the name Newbury and remained in the catalogue until mid-1937, although it is unclear how many were made. About 500 might be a good guess and there are some survivors.

Austin were clearly committed to the sporty-version-of-standard-models policy and that brings us back to the 'Supercharged Austin 10 Sports' of the photograph.

A few more facts before we dream. There certainly was a Ten-Four Sports, called the Ripley, to compliment the Twelve-Six, and production sports version of the Seven. Wyatt tells us in *The Austin 1905-1952* ( David & Charles 1981) only that it had similar

modifications to the engine as the Newbury and a close ratio gearbox. No mention of a supercharger. But most people agree that between August 1933 and 1935 no more than between 130 and 150 were made, and there are perhaps, no more than eight survivors.

We know from the photographs that the coachwork was scaled down Newbury except the chrome radiator shell had no slatted grille, simply a central vertical bar and there was a single blade front bumper as available on standard Tens. AVP 505 in the Land's End picture also has bonnet straps like the Grasshoppers, although, as with the supercharger, it is possible these were not fitted to other Ten Sports.

Given you wouldn't expect to buy an 'Ulster' for much less than three times the price of an 'Open Road Tourer', it's only right and proper a Newbury would cost an arm and a leg compared with a Harley, particularly as the latter is probably the worst car Longbridge ever built!

Given also, there are so few of the delectable Ten Sports in existence, wouldn't it be fun to build a replica of the 'Lands end' car.

To make any fantasy



*Twelve was similar but had a different grille. The picture is from Bob Wyatt's excellent book.*

worthwhile you need a modicum of substance and a while ago I was fortunate enough to acquire two circa-1936 Austin Ten engines. The one had lain outdoors with the head off for about 30 years and was in commensurate condition. The other had stood under the bench, was complete almost to the last detail, but had a cracked cylinder block.

Make-your-mind-up-time. Repair the crack or refurbish the sound block and do a transplant.

Any decision must be influenced by severe weather damage to the top face of the 'good' block and the three remaining piston assemblies so corroded as to be as one with the bores.

### ***Undersize***

That's the bad news.

The good news is - when the pistons were driven out they took with them fragments of cylinder liner leaving a serviceable surface beneath so new sleeves are all we need to solve these problems.

Obviously a further spell in the machine shop will deal with the top face. In addition, the crankshaft, rusted though it is, has not even been reground to the minimum undersize. So here, after all, we have the makings of one viable engine. Dream on.

Clearly, after machining out the weather damage the compression ratio will be raised because of a reduction in height above the piston crown. This runs the risk a standard Ten Four piston would succumb to the higher temperature/pressure, particularly as the crown could rise

fractionally above the bore. Although, with 2.8 mm of land above the top ring there should not be an issue over the ring itself emerging.

One school of thought though, is that it is the big end that would suffer not the piston crown.

### ***Skimmed away***

Accepted 'wisdom' is to either fit two gaskets - unacceptable engineering - or make a compression plate to restore the usual 5.4:1 ratio. This seems a wasted opportunity since down the ages people have deliberately skimmed away metal to raise compression. So why not look for a piston/big end that can live in the changed climate.

Reference to the engineering manuals reveals the TA series MG Midget, current from 1936-39 had exactly the same cylinder bore as the Austin Ten (63.5 mm) and developed 50 brake horsepower at 4,500 revs on a compression ratio of 6.2:1.

### ***Do the trick***

So assuming the Ripley, which produced about 30 at 3,800 ran on standard Ten-Four pistons, the Abingdon part ought to do the trick.

If the big ends are a problem conversion to shells might be the answer.

Other Austin sports features should be fairly straightforward, double valve springs, enlarged ports and a hotter camshaft.

To remain true to our fantasy we will need to supercharge our creation. No doubt someone reading this will be able

to quote the chapter and verse of 'AVP's' blower in which case everything will be hunky-dory. In the absence of such wisdom it is probably best to look to the Seven.

Most supercharged 'Ulsters' used a French Cozette Number Four blower acting at four lbs p.s.i. but Grasshoppers adopted a Centric 125 working first at 4.5 lbs and later nine, so maybe we should adopt the latter at the more modest pressure. Choosing the version which instead of a Solex or Stromberg carburetter used an SU, would provide one of these excellent instruments at a stroke and simplify sourcing.

### ***Bracketry***

Driving the supercharger may be a complication. Whereas there are lots of precedents for the Seven, there are precious few for Tens the front of whose engine does not provide many power take-off opportunities. Again, cause for some expert advice I suspect and perhaps special pulley runs and bracketry.

Like its larger relative, the sportsTen had a four speed close ratio gearbox and providing this for our dream car is going to call for some ingenuity. The Ripley's overall gearing was 18.9:1 for first, then 11.39, 7.19 and 5.25 respectively, as opposed to 21.1:1, 12.78, 8 and 5.25 for the standard car, so it should be obvious, even if you have never compared a 'cooking' and 'close ratio' Seven, that this Ripley should hum along nicely.

**To be continued**

# Were these looks that killed?



*The Sheerline was a competent long distance touring car with superior features. Its misfortune was that it wanted to be a Bentley. This is a New Zealand example courtesy Bob Hayes*

**T**here are angles from which the Sheerline is a handsome machine. Full astern, for example, and threequarter view from the rear quarter. Side on she is acceptable but Lucas P100 headlamps turn the frontal aspect into an aesthetic and aerodynamic disaster.

The concept was the work of Jules Haefli, a Swiss who had come to work at Longbridge in 1914. He eventually took over as chief designer in 1942, replacing A J Hancock who had been with Herbert Austin since the beginning and left at the end of '41.

**It would not be entirely true to say the Sheerline 'did for' Haefli; there had been unpleasantness over other models, but it is a fact he barely survived the launch.**

Having compared the Sheerline and Mark VI Bentley in broad terms in Part One, it may help to put matters into perspective if we try to determine the philosophy behind the big Austin.

Austin chairman, Leonard Lord, quite remarkably for such an astute marketer and publicist, ran a Bentley. He had even had the famous

Austin 'Flying A' modelled on the Bentley's winged 'B' radiator cap.

It is therefore quite obvious that Lord wanted to produce - a Bentley; not just a luxury saloon, or a touring limousine; but a Bentley. To realize this you only have to look at the models available from other manufacturers, pitching for this sector - not Daimler's 2.5 litre Consort series and larger DE27, nor Humber's Snipe range nor Jaguar's 3.5 looked anything like the Bentley. Yet the Sheerline was so obviously a crib - certainly in styling if not engineering.

**BENT  
HORSINGTON  
concludes his assessment  
of the A125 Austin  
Sheerline**

This was unfortunate. To make the fact less glaringly obvious, the lines of the Austin were semi-razor-edged and anachronisms added like the headlights already mentioned, along with sidelights that looked as if they'd come from a bus, a divided windscreen and very angular rear window.

What it achieved was to make the Sheerline *look* inferior to the Mark VI, even before a wheel turned.

The Bentley, principally from the pen of Rolls-Royce's Ivan



*There was no guarantee that even a car as magnificent as the Rolls-Royce Silver Dawn would not 'flop' in America. This is the later version with 4.5 litre engine and the option of automatic transmission.*

Evernden looked from every angle - and they hoped it would be - a million dollars. Beautifully proportioned throughout, it is a dignified and timeless materwork. The Sheerline is a touch ungainly and was dated even when new.

Of course, there were other problems. Austin always fought for a presence in the prestige luxury car market and earlier I cited the pre-war Eighteen, Twenty and Twenty Eight as examples of these assaults. But there was *always* a problem not faced by firms like Alvis, Armstrong Siddeley, Daimler or, indeed, Rolls-Royce. None of these had made a worldwide reputation based on economy cars and ironically it was the magnificent Seven and its 10 horsepower cousin that, to some extent, embarrassed their aristocratic relations in polite company.

Austin only ever really traded on the 'inheritance' factor from Seven to Ten, recognizing perhaps, that as the Ten-Four owner's career and fortunes blossomed, he (no sexism intended. Most, but not all Ten-Four purchasers in the 30s would have been male) would probably display his

ascending status with a different marque. Rover maybe; or Talbot.

Longbridge's advertizing for the bigger models though seemed to aim at those who had already 'arrived'. The subliminal message being - 'your income and social status now warrants an Austin'.

This was all well and good amongst customers for a Twelve or Fourteen, but when 'big money' was at stake - say for a Twenty - an Austin was not always the done thing. After all the fish came round in a Seven and a cut-and-shut 'Heavy' Twelve had ploughed the local smallholding for years.

Quite apart from social perceptions, the Sheerline faced other difficulties in post-war Britain. The home market was incredibly difficult with petrol rationing still in place, a directive from the new Labour

government that half the new cars it would allow to be made had to go for export and the replacement of the RAC-calculated horsepower tax with one based on £1 per 100 cc. Matters were made even worse in 1948 when purchase tax on cars costing £1000 plus was doubled and the Sheerline's tag had to be docked by £1 to dodge under at 999.

Lord had always had a vigorous commitment to dollar earning exports and the very first British car to be shipped to America was, in fact, a GS1 Ten. But the situation in the States was not easy either.

Rolls-Royce themselves, who were looking to that market with a new model called the Silver Dawn, got cold feet.

They were so concerned that the car would 'flop' and damage their prestigious reputation, they sent the Bentley 'over the top' instead. The thinking being, Bentley was not nearly such a well known make in America and, if there was a commercial catastrophe, the ramifications would not be so serious. Even so,



*Other people's big cars didn't need to look like Bentleys. This is a Humber. Photo Bill Fenney*

although the Mark VI and later 'the Dawn' kept their bonnets above water, sales of these 'small', old fashioned, manual gearbox saloons were not spectacular.

So the poor old Sheerline had no chance!

It was little better at home. Crewe had shown enormous resolve in launching a luxury car costing £2595 *before* tax into a dreary, largely impoverished environment. But it has to be said, if you could afford a Bentley at all - and there *were* still those who could - you could afford the tax and fuel bills.

Of course, on this basis, that same person could have afforded an Austin at a third the price. But then the 'image' issues we explored in some detail a moment ago, kick in.

### VALUE FOR MONEY

'An Orstin pretending to be a Bentley? Not quite the thing is it?' While for people who were even comfortably off, the Sheerline was still a very expensive car and costly (14 mpg) to run and that Longbridge-lovely, the Sixteen, (35000 as opposed to 8000 sold) a much better bet.

Whatever the criticisms of this top of the range Austin no one can ever deny it was incredible value for money. Motoring writer S C H Davis said of it: 'How the Austin company manage to produce this machine for under a thousand pounds remains something of a puzzle', and, 'as value for money this car is second to none'.

He even went on to say: 'The Sheerline is a car that can compare most favourably with

any other machine on the market, whatever the country of origin'.

Whereas the Bentley had a beautifully finished interior very much in the tradition of top class pre-war British cars the Sheerline is, if anything, better appointed and Longbridge are to be commended for making a serious attempt to combine a touch of modernity with older values.

### LEATHER

The car uses as much walnut veneer as the Bentley and whereas the grain may not be as perfectly matched, it is of lighter hue and imparts this quality to the interior especially when the leather over Dulopillo upholstery is finished in cream.

Naturally, the fascia and instrument panel are where most of the woodwork is found and surround a very comprehensive set of square, cream-faced instruments, including a twin-needle water temperature/oil pressure gauge and a clock.

### SUPERIOR

Individual front seats or a bench type were available and this is a superior approach to that on the Bentley which has a 'halfway house' layout with two separate components almost touching and normally no 'straight across' option.

On the bench type Sheerline, sliding across for entry or exit on either side of the car was simple and this would become increasingly important as affluent motorists took their cars to

continental Europe. On the Bentley the manoeuvre was virtually impossible.

In addition the Sheerline boasted fold down armrests, pioneered on the Sixteen, that provided true armchair comfort for the driver and front seat passenger. Travellers in the rear got a centre rest and elbow pads as well as an upward extension of the seat sides against which to incline their heads.

Apart from the gear lever, the major controls were pleasing and well considered. The sprung steering wheel with its light coloured rim was equipped with a horn ring and central control for the indicators, a more convenient layout than the Crewe product which had clockwork timing for a centrally placed trafficator switch.

### SMARTER IDEA

The Austin's steering column was also adjustable, another feature lacking on the Mark VI.

The handbrake was of the pistol grip type and positioned under the instrument board near the centre of the car - an arrangement some consider safer than the right hand location preferred by Rolls-Royce.

The centrally hinged bonnet halves were released by controls on either side of the fascia, a smarter idea than the Bentley's outside handles, unless, of course, the mechanism breaks!

Externally the Sheerline was distinguished at the front by twin fog lamps mounted on the bumper valance and at the rear by fuel fillers in each wing - another boon for Continental

driving and a feature, incidentally, the Bentley was criticized in some quarters for not having.

But the *coup de grâce* was an inbuilt hydraulic jacking system. This had first appeared on the larger pre-war Austins and was resurrected for the post-war Sixteen and FX3 taxi and hire car. In the latter cases it had been operated manually from under the front floor or bonnet which was more sensible than the electric propulsion chosen for a Sheerline.

Obtaining a true picture of

### ***In assessing the Sheerline we have a number of dilemmas. Firstly it is difficult not to compare it with the Bentley***

this Austin as new, on the road, is difficult. Hagiography towards the British motor industry was the order of the day for the domestic motoring press and given the enormous problems facing car manufacturers this was, to some degree, justified.

It is certainly the case the Sheerline was a flexible, luxury touring car capable of high average speeds and a commendable top speed of around 83 mph.

It was not as fast as the Mark VI which had a bigger engine and, benefitting from some aluminium panels was lighter at 33 cwt and could reach over 90 mph. The

Sheerline was way behind on acceleration too. It had barely touched 60 from rest in the time it took the Bentley to sprint to 70 mph.

Handling seems to be something of a moot point.

*Motor* magazine praised the Mark VI's directional stability and the accuracy of its steering. *Autocar* imply the very low geared system on the Sheerline (4.25 turns lock-to-lock) effected 'absolute accuracy' and that the straight running was only 'sufficient'.

Davis though has no problem with any of this and compliments the same example for lack of roll when cornering fast - even with inadequate dampers - and the suspension generally.

In assessing the Sheerline we have a number of dilemmas. Firstly it is difficult *not* to compare it with the Bentley because Austin made the mistake, arguably, of making it a blatant copy of that car.

Taken in this context, one recalls the words of the late Stanley Sedgwick, president of the Bentley Drivers' Club and author of *Motoring My Way* (Batsford 1976) who wrote: 'The man who seeks the best of everything without demanding the ultimate in

anything will find the mixture served up at Crewe in the shape of a 4 1/2 litre Standard Steel Saloon'.\*

Sedgwick was partisan, but others have opined that Rolls-Royce only ever made two cars that were truly 'the best in the world'. One was the 40/50 Silver Ghost; the other the Mark VI Bentley.

On this basis there can be no contest.

To then try to describe the Sheerline as a 'poor man's Bentley' is disingenuous. There is no such thing. You buy a Bentley for all the ethos and qualities it embodies and there is no substitute - however much it might look like one.

Like most pretenders to the throne, the Austin came to a tragic end. It is stigmatized as the car that tried to be a Bentley, never found much patronage in the UK of overseas marketplaces and is now largely forgotten.

\*The engine capacity is that of later Mark VIs. Standard Steel Saloon alludes to the description of the first standard body available from Rolls-Royce. Formerly only chassis had been supplied to bespoke coachbuilders.

*One of the Sheerline's better angles was from the rear quarter. Twin fuel fillers were a feature. Note also the 'white' rear lights, vogue at the time, that shone red, albeit dimly!*



If we acknowledge the Sheerline could never be a 'cheap Bentley' we must also concede it could never be a very expensive Austin.

No one was going to pay upwards of £2000 for the Longbridge marque. That said, the Sheerline was probably *too* cheap. Money on a better gear change, a brake servo and less 'ingenious' hubs would have been well spent.

Then, there may have been an alternative route. I have said many times the Sheerline had an excellent engine and a sound chassis. It was a fast, flexible, comfortable and competent long distance touring car, brilliantly priced.

## MIDGET CARS

Austin's publicity chief, Alan Hess, said of the 1947 Geneva Motor Show, the first major post-war exhibition and where the car was unveiled: 'I was struck at once by the complete lack of originality displayed by the exhibition authorities for with the exception of the Austin exhibits and some of the Italian and, of course, the French midget cars, practically all the stands were filled with vehicles which were more or less the same as their pre-war counterparts.'

If only the Sheerline had looked different, we might be paying homage today.

If you have a story you would like to tell about Austin pre-1955 *Austin Times* is the place to do it so please contact the editor. Share your experiences of Britain's favourite marque.

## Vintage Allsorts

by Aida Maurice

THIS YEAR'S hillclimb at Chanteloup-les-Vignes, to the north of Paris, was distinguished for Austin enthusiasts by the appearance at the two-day event of a standard touring Seven Pearl cabriolet.

The car had been brought from England by Sue Frayling-Cork and husband Alistair, who were on holiday in France and took on the ascent much in the vein that the Bentley tackles the trials course in the celebrated motoring film *The Fast Lady!*

Other Longbridge interest centred on the customary attendance of the Donaz family's smartly presented 'Ulster', taken to the top by son Benjamin with relaxed and polished *brio*.

Chanteloup-les-Vignes lays claim to being home to the world's first hillclimb. On that day in 1898, commemorated by a monument at the finish, 48 top names from the



*Austins prosaic and potent*



*On the other side of the world from Chanteloup this neat 'Heavy' Twelve-Four (top) and trim Seven Special took part in the Steam, Horse and Vintage Rally in Echuca, Victoria. Photos Bill Ballard.*

embryo Continental automobile industry made their assaults including the Bollées, father and son, M and Mme Serpollet and de Dietrich.

Top honours though went to Camille Jenatzy, by far and away the fastest in an electric car. The event faded away in the mid-1930s but was revived for its centenary.

Chanteloup is non-competitive but provides the drivers - and passengers - with three climbs through the charming village's principal street.

Always a good spot for 'never-seen-befores', this year's jems were a rakish Léon Paulet, a stunning Labourdette fixed head coupé Bugatti and a pretty Fiat Balilla that almost matched Sue Frayling-Cork's 1938 Austin for colour!

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