

Dear Members



These are desperate times, we have come through Brexit, Covid lockdown and now there is war in Europe. However, we are fortunate in our country that life is returning to normal albeit with hyper inflation. In the meantime, NHAEG is returning to usual club activities where possible.

There are a number of events coming up in April, starting with the Farnham Classic show on the 10th, our club night on the 11th, Brooklands on the 16th and the NHAEG Drive it Day on the 24th. So please check your vehicle over and get ready to roll !.

“When was the last time you started her up ? ”

Dale Johnson lecture – Home Guard Re-enactor





Trevor M and Don B met Dale in the afternoon of the 14th March prior to the club night. Dale was already unloading having driven up from Poole in the Yellow Peril (Austin 7 van 1933). Dummy bombs, grenades and weapons of all sorts were appearing from the 'Autogophasta' as Dale called it and we managed to get these inside without too much trouble. However, guests staying at the New Inn were very interested in what was going on. Dale's talk which lasted about 40 minutes was full of the Home guard stories and snippets about how they were issued with roller skates etc. There was a Q&A session afterwards and Dale was thanked by everyone. Dale said he really enjoyed meeting NHAEG members and thanked them for a warm welcome. Trevor and Dale then stayed for nightcap before Dale retired to his hotel room for the night. (Trevor eventually got home about 11:45pm !)

(Thanks to Trevor M for his input on this article)

What is lying hidden in your garage/shed/workshop/barn ?

(The following story is from an article by Dale Johnson)

In January 2021, I phoned one of my fellow Home Guard re-enactors who lives in Sussex, and he related the following most interesting story.

In his younger years he worked at Luton airport. There one of his work colleagues had many years earlier purchased a Harley Davidson motor bike. It was in very poor condition but the price was reasonable and he bought the bike planning at some time to restore it to its former glory.

It sat in his workshop until many years later when that time had come, he noted the chassis number and made a list of all the parts he required.

When he phoned the Harley Davidson spares in the UK, they said it was an early model, and he would have to contact head office spares in the USA, and gave him all the contact details.

When he phoned as suggested and gave the chassis number, there was a pause, and he was asked if he could double check this number which he duly confirmed.

The next question was could he go back and check that there should be a small toolbox on the rear mudguard. Could he remove the tool tray in the box and see if there was anything underneath ?

When he did this it revealed an engraved plate stating:

To Elvis Presley wishing you a happy 21st Birthday from Dean Martin

It turned out that despite World Wide enquiries, this unique machine had 'gone missing' for very many years.

He accepted the offer of a huge sum of money and was asked not to touch the machine. UK Harley Davidson engineers would get the bike road legal, he could drive it in the UK for a month, after which it was to be sent air freight to Gracelands, where the bike is now on permanent display at the Elvis Presley museum !

A Brief History of the Austin Seven

After WW1 Austin production returned to the big 20hp model. However, when Britain fell into a sharp recession in 1920 and car sales crashed, Austin was in receivership by 1921. To make matters worse the RAC increased vehicle excise duty to £1 for every (RAC rated) horsepower that a new car produced. These were desperate times and Herbert Austin had to make smaller, more affordable cars to tempt owners of motorcycle and sidecar combinations. This radical re-invention of his company was not shared by the board, so the design and engineering of the new downsized car was funded by Sir Herbert himself. Stanley Edge was chosen as the designer, but at just 18 years old, he had never designed a car before, let alone one that would save the company. Edge based himself at Sir Herbert's home and over 18 months designed and engineered the car from the ground up, with Sir Herbert providing guidance.

This would be a proper motor car but in miniature. Cleverly designed within its miniscule dimensions of 9' 2" by 3' 10" the side valve engine propelled it to a thrilling 51mph, and a non synchromesh three speed box transmitted drive through to the rear wheels. Cable activated drums operated on all wheels (when rear brakes only were the norm) and thanks to its basic A frame chassis and light weight body rigidified by using the scuttle fuel tank as a stressed member, the Seven weighed in at a mere 360Kg (800lbs). It even featured a conventional pedal layout that finally put paid to the centre throttle arrangement, which was said to be influenced by Cadillac. In short, it was a tough (at least mechanically) and simple package that offered all of the essentials for family motoring at a cost that was within reach of the average British worker, who was earning just £5 a week.

Named the 'Seven' because of its 696cc engine RAC rated at 7hp, capacity was later raised to 747cc when the car reached production. When the car was launched in July 1922 it cost a mere £167. The Seven pulled Austin backed to financial health and started to change the dynamics of the British market as buyers shifted from the 12-14hp class of car, dominated by the Morris Oxford and Cowley, to the 7-8hp category in which the 747cc Seven was the principal player. Annual production of the Seven reached approximately 22,500 in 1927, 26,447 in 1929, and rose to a peak of 27,280 units in 1935 following the introduction of the modernised Ruby. With broadly unchanged mechanicals the Seven was manufactured with a multitude of body styles until 1939, by which time something of the order of 290,000 had been made.

The Austin Seven was also important as one of the very earliest examples of the licenced production abroad of a British car. The first and best known deal was with a minor German

motor manufacturer called Dixi, who went into production in late 1927 with a re-tooled left hand drive, metric threaded, clone of the Seven. In 1928 aero engine and motor cycle manufacturer BMW bought Dixi, as a way of entering the car market. The next licence built Austin Seven to enter production, in 1928, was the French Rosengart. Lucien Rosengart made his first fortune manufacturing nuts, bolts and washers, and his second during WW1 when he mass produced artillery shells.

In 1939 when production of the Seven ended, arguably its long term influence was only just beginning. That same year the 750 Club was founded, its key aim being to promote low cost motor sport based on the use of the Austin Seven. When competition motoring began again after the war, the club organised races for cars based on the Austin Seven, and soon attracted a wealth of talented drivers who were to become household names. The most famous was Colin Chapman, who by 1951 was winning races in an Austin Seven special, thereby laying the foundation for the Lotus company.

Sevens continued to be a common sight well into the 1950s and many were rebuilt into home made open two seaters for road use. A growing number of companies also developed GRP bodies for the Seven and this developed into the first generation of kit cars which was a particularly British phenomenon.

The Seven was also a tuners dream. While its basic design remained unchanged, body variations were legion (Jaguar founder William Lyons' Swallow body, an early example), as were improvements to its powertrain which by the late 30s meant a four speed, part synchromesh gearbox and a dizzying 17bhp from its engine. In fact its engine was so tuneable, that Austin sanctioned the building of a series of single seater, supercharged racing cars and there was great rivalry with Morris. William Morris sanctioned MGs building a sporting adaption of the Minor and the M type midget was duly announced at the 1928 London Motor show. No sooner was the M type in production than it was being used in competition, and often pitted against Austin's new Ulster sports model. During the period 1931 to 1935 increasingly specialised machinery from Austin and MG would frequently compete at Brooklands. Eventually this MG versus Austin rivalry on track came to be perceived as a drain on the finances of both companies and in 1935 Leonard Lord put a stop to MG's direct involvement in racing.

Driving the Seven

The standard fabric bodied box saloon built in 1929 is simple to operate. The fuel level is checked with a broom handle in the bulk head mounted tank, and after a crash course in the crash 'box technique, it is ready to drive off. Instruments consist of a clock, speedo, ammeter and oil pressure gauge mounted on a crackle black dashboard. A floor mounted starter button is sited right behind the starter motor. With ignition retarded and magneto switched on, the Seven's tiny 747cc 'four' churns into life. Find first gear, across to you and back, as in a reverse dog leg H pattern, with a lever that has at least a foot's lateral movement, pop the short travel clutch and we're away, marvelling at how light and spritely this 93 year old feels. You quickly realise that maintaining momentum is vital even if it means skipping the occasional double declutch in favour of crunching through to a lower gear. But tanking a long at 30mph seems to suit the Seven's natural gait, its leaf spring suspension crashing over rural roads. The worm and sector steering is light and quick to respond, and you soon get used to the car's tendency to

wander from side to side as it reads the surface's cambers. But it is a little gem of a time machine which takes you back to a time of uncluttered roads when everyone wore hats, and SUVs and Covid did not exist.

Fast Facts: Austin Seven

Years built: 1923 -1939 (unveiled in 1922)

Number built: 290,000

Price when new: £167 (1923)

Engine capacity: 747cc

Engine power: 10.5bhp

Top speed: 47mph

Weight: 360Kg

Length: 3023mm

Reminiscing (letter from old NHAEG bulletin)

Any mention of the Austin Seven brings back happy memories of a slightly misspent youth at the close of the '50s. A friend owned a 1932 'ish Box Saloon adorned with an L plate in which we, along with two others "stormed" around the local highways and byways, each the proud possessor of a brand new Provisional Licence!

In my opinion the very best car in which to learn to drive. A clutch operated by seemingly a small button on the floor that was either in or out, a throttle pedal providing the same miniscule amount of power throughout its travel, steep hills requiring one or more to bale out, and an adornment pretending to be a brake pedal. Utmost concentration required at all times. In addition the steering was a byword for imprecision. Cornering at more than a snails pace caused the body to roll outwards, compressing and lengthening the outer spring while relaxing and thus shortening the inner spring, the axle moving accordingly and providing extra rear wheel steering long before Audi etc. invented it, putting the fear of God into the driver. Oh happy days!

On the only two occasions we were apprehended by the law, we managed to persuade the officer that it was indeed the learner who was driving under our instruction and that one of us had a full licence! With a noticeable sigh from him, each time we were waved on our way with a "Mind how you go" When we set of to work or university we finally grew up and settled down to earn enough to buy a proper car. How times have changed!

Club Events

Club Night – 11th April

The Shoe Box Challenge" @ 7.30 prompt and the Monster Raffle

Drive it Day – 24th April

Start at New Inn @ 11:00

Club Night – 9th May

Noggin & Natter

Club Night – 13th June

Half Gallon run

Club Night – 11th July

TBA

Other (non-club) events - 2022

Farnham Classic car show – 10th April, central car park.

Brooklands, Surrey, 16th Apr - Easter Classic Gathering

Originally scheduled for New Year's Day and postponed due to Covid, Brooklands' Classic Gathering has been rescheduled for Easter Sunday, and is sure to attract a diverse range of classics.

Blackbush Car Meet – last Sunday of each month

Rural Life Museum – 7th & 8th May, Village at War in 1944. <https://rural-life.org/events>

Basingstoke Festival of Transport – Sunday 8th May

Trip to the Isle of Wight early May- (contact Trevor Mulford)

Beaulieu Auto jumble - 14th & 15th May

Rural life Tilford - 22nd May

Farnham Festival of Transport – 5th June, Upper Hart Car park behind Waitrose

Hartley Witney show - 11th June

Pre War car gathering – 11th June (contact Andy Seager)

Beaulieu, Hampshire,- National Austin Seven Rally – 3 July

One of the biggest events for anything Seven or Seven-based, and you can bring along other Austins or pre-1975 classics if you register in advance. Also autojumble and driving skills tests.

Hook Fete - TBA

Old Basing Fete - TBA

Upton Grey - TBA

Fleet Carnival – 2nd July

Thames traditional boat Fest 15th to 17th July

Austin 7 Centenary – 19th-24th July

Entry by pre-booked ticket only : www.a7centenary.com

The British Motor Show, Farnborough 18th -21st Aug

Swallowfield show – 29th Aug

Beaulieu Auto jumble - 10th & 11th September

West Green House, Hartley Witney – 18th Sept.

Stay safe

NHAEG Committee