News Bulletin **July 2019**

Dear Members,

This is a quick update from the Committee on some past and future events which are listed in the Club Diary.

Monday 8th July - Coveted Car Evening Winners:

Overall: John Pratt — recently acquired *1935 Triumph Gloria.* John received the Peter Adnams Trophy for Best Overall.

Best Austin Seven: Dave Holland - recently completed build - *Austin Seven Special.* Dave received the Jan Barker Memorial Trophy for Best Austin 7.

Best Austin: Roy Roberts - *1935 Austin 12/4 Ascot.* Roy received a bottle of 'bubbly'.

Thursday 18th July - Mid-week Run.

Alan Pickett kindly devised another rural and scenic route down to Hayling Island where we had fish and chips and ice cream on the beach. The weather was a bit overcast but 7 cars made the journey to the coast. Picture taken at a rest point overlooking south coast.

We also wish to bring to your attention the following future events:

Club Event	Sun 28th July	Picnic in the Paddock	Andrew Barker
Club Event	Sat 3rd August	Half Gallon Run. Meet at 09:30 canal car park Odiham	Adrian Grey
Club Night	Mon 12th August	Walking Rally	Peter Kenrick
Club Event	Sun 8th September	Heritage Day Run	TBC
Club Night	Mon 9th Sept	Natter & Noggin	TBC
Club Event	Mon 9th-13th September	Warners Littlecote	Trevor Edwards
Club Night	Mon 14th Oct	Shoebox Challenge	Don Breakspear
Club Night	Mon 11th November	Auction Night	TBC
Club Event	Sat 16th November	Nightjar	Richard Long
Club Night	Mon 9th December	Festive Fun Evening	TBC
Club Event	Mon 2nd December	Christmas Dinner	Committee

And now for something completely different:

AUSTINS in the AIR

(Extract from a document written by R.J.Wyatt and originally published in 'Old Motor' April 1963)

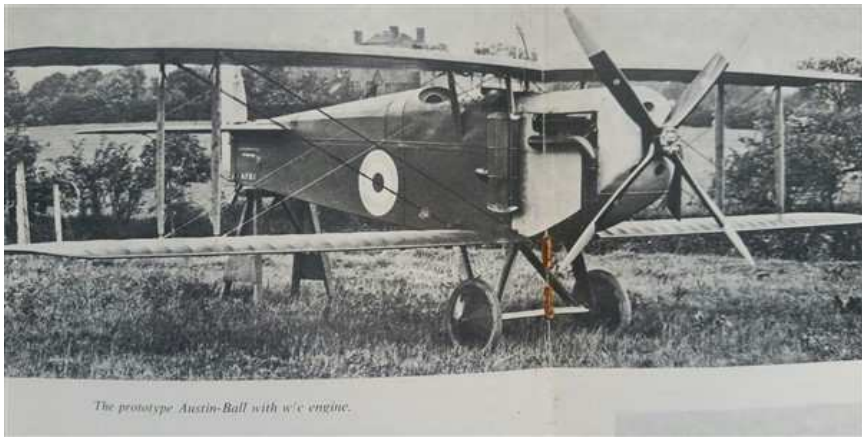
Herbert Austin first became interested in flight in the 1890's and in 1894 he wrote to Sir Hiram Maxim who was then building his 'steam driven flying machine' at the Maxim Guns and Ammunition Co's factory at Crayford, Kent. Sir Hiram had been thinking about powered flight for years and so when asked by a group of wealthy business men in 1887 if it was possible to build such a machine, Sir Hiram employed a couple of American mechanics and in 1889 began his experiments. Steam was used as the motive power because the petrol engine was still in need of development. Sir Hiram approached Austin, who at the time was working for the Wolseley concern and the result was that many of the parts used in the steam driven machine were designed and made at the Wolseley factory. In 1890, the machine got a few inches into the air and skimmed the ground for 50 yards. A larger version was then designed and when it flew in 1897, it barely got off the ground and then crashed.

Austin then became fully occupied with car production and it was not until December 1909, when he was approached by an early enthusiast the Rev. J.Swann of Liverpool, that he built an aeroplane at his own Longbridge factory. This solitary machine was powered by an F.N. Motor. The Reverend customer took it away, but according to contemporary reports it jumped but never flew.

Things remained on the ground at Austins until the 1914-18 war. Aircraft were needed in great quantities at the early part of the war and the Royal Aircraft Factory, Farnborough, farmed out work to factories all over the country. Producing aircraft engines proved no problem for car manufacturers. During the war Austin produced 2,500 engines of various types ranging in size from small rotaries, V8's, to an experimental 250hp V12.

The Ministry of Munitions virtually took over the factory for shell production but a large number of aircraft were also made. Fifty two R.E7's were delivered in 1915, later 300 R.E8's, and then a very large contract for 1,550 S.E 5a's. The S.E 5a's were used as experimental scouting machines and although it only had a top speed of 130mph it had the ability to dive at high speeds.

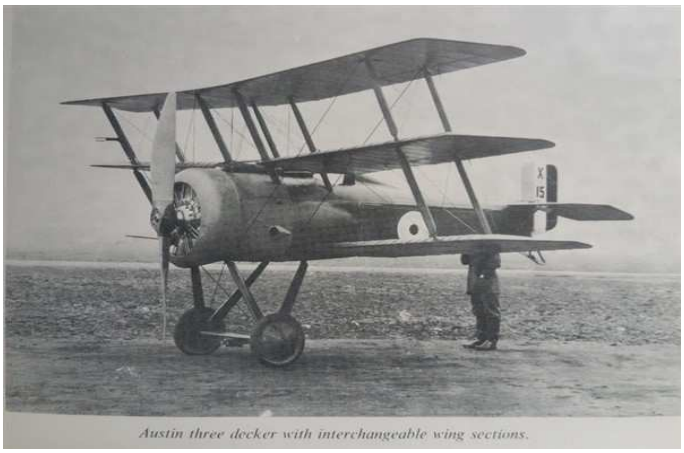
In 1916, Austin designed in collaboration with Capt. Albert Ball the Austin-Ball A.F.B.1 a single seater fighter to combat the Fokker. Unfortunately the Air board, with whom all decisions rested,



Prototype Austin-Ball with w-c engine

were not impressed with the design and only two were ordered. Two Lewis guns were used, one to fire at targets above and the other through the hollow propeller shaft, an advanced idea patented by Austin himself in December 1915. It is interesting to note that the first British aeroplane fitted with a gun to fire forward through the airscrew by means of synchronising gear reached France in May 1916, some 4 months before the first interrupter gear made by Vickers was first used in action. The prototype Austin-Ball aircraft were not ready for testing until July 1917. Unfortunately the Air Board did not consider the performance superiority great enough to disrupt the production of the S.E 5's and Sopwith Camels that had developed to fill the gap.

Other experimental aircraft followed. The Austin A.F.T.3, or the Osprey, was a triplane designed in 1917 as a competitor to the Sopwith Snipe, which first flew in early 1918. The machine was made almost entirely of wood and featured interchangeability of the 6 separate wing sections.
Finally there was the Greyhound, a two seater intended to replace the Bristol Fighter and the last military machine designed by the Company. Three were made and their equipment included a camera, wireless, oxygen and heating apparatus. Had they been developed and not suffered from the unsatisfactory 320 hp Dragonfly rotary engine it might have gained the Company some Government orders at a time when the demand for Munitions was beginning to tail off.



Austin three decker

All this experimental work expanded the workforce at Longbridge to 130 aircraft carpenters and some 300 riggers and fitters. This led to the introduction and subsequent manufacture of the Whippet. Experimental prototypes were made in the first half of 1919 under the direction of the Company's chief aeronautical engineer J. Kenworthy, who in his early days had worked with Geoffrey de Havilland at the Royal Aircraft factory. During the war the aircraft had become a familiar part of the military scene and Austin were not alone in thinking that a new era in flying had

begun in which an inexpensive light single seater machine would be in sufficient demand to attract sportsman and ex-military flyers.

The amateur pilot, as well as knowing how to fly, needed to be something of a mechanic to keep the machine of those days in a fit state to fly safely. The only alternative was to employ a mechanic and he could cost you anything up to £3 15s a week. Most aircraft were made from wood covered with fabric and the whole structure held taut by bracing wires which needed constant skilled attention. In the Whippet an attempt was made to overcome this problem and at the same time to cater for the non-mechanical pilot as no manufacturer had done before. Bracing wires were not used and the fuselage was made of steel tube, wood being done away with entirely.

Kenworthy in one of the Austin Whippets.

Austin Whippet

Two other problems faced the owner pilot, space and cost. The Whippet had folding wings and when those were parked the machine could be housed in a shed 18ft long , 8ft high, and only 8ft wide. Landing speed was as low as 30mph and the idea was to land in a field near one's house – about 150 yards were needed for safety – fold the wings back and taxi down the road to one's garage. Concerning cost; with quantity production the Whippet was to sell at £450 about the price of a medium sized car. At the Aero show in 1919 a prototype was exhibited fitted with a two cylinder horizontally opposed engine but production models had six cylinder Anzani rotaries. The total dry weight was 500lbs, the full wing span 21ft 6in and the fuselage 16ft long. Air speed was 30-90 mph, rate of climb 5000ft in 8 minutes, 10,000ft in 18 minutes and it was capable of flying for 2 hours without re-fuelling (about 180 miles). Two examples were shown at the Olympia Aero show in July 1920 by which time the price had increased to £500.

A few Whippets were sold, perhaps as many as seven; a production failure, not because the machine was in anyway unsatisfactory or owing to heavy competition, but because amateur flying simply did not catch on and people with money in the immediate post war period, even though they all seem to have disposed of it by the time of the slump which followed, certainly did not spend it on Austin aircraft !

One final fling, possibly due to Austin's obstinacy, was the entry of another Kenworthy designed prototype called the Kestrel, in the Air Ministry Trials held at Martlesham Airfield, near Ipswich, in August 1920. Prizes totalling £64,000 were given to stimulate interest amongst manufacturers and the Kestrel came third in class winning £1,500 for the Company. This 2 seater was powered by a 200hp Beardmore engine, used steel tubes again and with a top speed of 100mph it cruised for 4.5 hours at 3000ft at 80mph giving 32mpg. Its landing speed was given at 35mph but the best it could do on these tests was 45mph and at that rate it needed 224 yds in which to reach a standstill !

And that was the end of a movement which might have led to the replacement of the car for long distance motor trips in the 1930's – pity it did not come off.

The committee is always looking for news articles that we can put on the website or in the Bulletin. So if you have stories about a rebuild project or tips on how to refurbish some component then please forward it to the committee at secretary@nhaeg.org.uk

Happy Motoring
from
NHAEG Committee