

I congratulate Angela on her first newsletter.

However. I must leap to the defence of the Pre-War Austin Seven. This was the first successful British small car and not the Morris Minor. At the end of the First World War the only cars available were large expensive ones or crude cyclecars. The Austin Seven was the first proper small car for less wealthy people. It gave motoring for the masses like the Ford T did in America.

Although there were more Morris Minors made than the Seven, the latter has a much greater influence on the motoring world.

During its production life the chassis became longer, the engine and brakes became more powerful and the 3-speed gearbox was replaced by a 4-speed etc. Special parts were fitted to make sports models and chassis were supplied to many coach building firms.

The origin of many cars can be trace back to the Seven. For example, the Swallow Side Car Company branched out to build bodies on chassis brought from Austin. These were marketed as the Austin Swallow. They then did the same with chassis brought from the Standard Motor Co. These were sold as SS cars, which stood for Standard Specials. The last model sold before the Second World War was known as the SS 100 jaguar. After the War the name SS wasn't popular, so the firm renamed itself the Jaguar Motor Company.

Austin also allowed the Dixi Motor Co in Germany to produce complete copies of the Seven under licence. After a few years they were brought up by a motorcycle company called BMW. They restyled the cars with their own radiator and badge to become the first BMW cars. Two brothers built an Austin Seven special. A chauffeur driven car stopped alongside of them at traffic lights. The passenger lent out of the window and offered to sponsor them to produce more of the cars. That was the start of the Jensen Motor Co.

Datsun's first cars were unauthorised copies of the Seven. Herbert Austin, as he was then, thought that they were so badly made that the firm wouldn't last long and did nothing about it.

The American Austin Co built Sevens under licence and after a while became the Bantam Motor Co. They designed and built the prototype Jeep. However, the contract for building them went to Ford and Willys.

When Austin stopped producing the Seven, they sold the tooling for the engine to Reliant. They produced a modified version of it to fit in their 3-wheeler cars and vans.

After the War the Sevens influence continued. Colin Chapman. Bruce Maclaren and Jem Marsh started their racing car building careers with them. That led to the start of Lotus, Maclaren and Marcos cars respectively.

Roach manufacturing who produce replica Pre-War Grand Prix cars for the Mercedes Benz Museum, started by building replica Austin Seven Bodies. Even today various firms and individuals, including myself, make bodies for the Seven chassis.

There is a trace of the Seven inherited in the Morris Minors and 1000ers. A Seven starter dog ill screw straight into a Minor crankshaft and vice versa. It is a special thread similar to BSF but with a slightly different pitch. It is an Admiralty thread that was first used in the 1800es. Austin bought the tooling for this when the factory first opened. I suspect that most Austin engines would have used it and of course it was used in the A series engine. The elongated plain washers on the timing cover are also the same as those fixing the sump of the Seven.

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