



The Crankhandle

NEWSLETTER OF THE HEREFORD AUSTIN SEVEN CLUB

Jan 2026

Issue 96



HA7C's first learner driver!!

Sydney arrived at the Christmas Lunch driving his Austin 7 on L plates. Another amazing fact was that 75% of the club members came to the Carvery at the Bunch of Carrots. Father Christmas arrived and gave out presents. The crackers were eco, and did not have a 'snapper', so that they could be recycled. Thank you to Michael Harcourt for arranging.

Chairman's View

Welcome to a new Austin Seven year. Already I am aware of several activities for the Club to be involved in but, by the time that you read this, at least two would have already happened. New Years Day was dry and bright for the VSCC meet at Much Marcle, at which our members took their Sevens and were welcomed for the event. Eddie Loader kindly arranged lunch at the Trumpet Inn for those who had not had sufficient over Christmas and New Year! Kip Waistell's monthly lunch meet, this time at The Nags Head, Peterchurch, is scheduled for the 8th January and snow permitting, will as usual be well supported. June and I are meeting up with other Austin Seven friends in late May for the Stonehurst Rally in Leicestershire. Our little group consists of A7's from Leicestershire, Cambridgeshire, Essex and Herefordshire but the event attracts others from much further afield than us.

Also, by the time that you read this, your present committee would have met for the last time before the AGM to be held on 24th February. The committee has been blessed with a broad mix of skills, enthusiasm and gender, so I am hoping that this will be repeated in those stepping forward to fill the next term of office. An officer serving on the committee is not an onerous task and entails very little time but produces great rewards, both for the Club and personally. I urge you to keep the club moving forward by playing your part and being involved, supported of course by those standing down and those continuing in post. Make it known that you would like to be nominated for a position.

The membership as a whole, holds a wealth of Austin Seven experience. When I was editor of the *Crankhandle* some years ago I was eternally grateful to those who offered short reports and snippets on what they had been doing with their 'Seven'. Some of these were a full page report but others were just a few lines. The latter I named 'Humble Hints'. Something as simple as using a 'Squeezy' bottle to top up the rear axle oil. So, do not keep it to yourself if you can help others, as this is what the club is all about; sharing ideas and tips to make life easier.

I believe that there is a peak time for everything and over the next eight or nine weeks, most of us will be getting our Seven ready for a new season. Above all, enjoy what you do and I look forward to sharing experiences at the various events that will appear in the Calendar.

Enjoy your Sevenning,

Michael.

EVENTS

Tue Jan 27 7.30pm HA7C Meeting Richmond Place Club.

Thur Feb 12 Lunch Noon at The Alma Inn, Linton, Ross-on-Wye
 Pre-book: 01989 720355

Tue Feb 24 7.30pm AGM Richmond Place Club.

Thur March 12 Lunch at The Black Swan, Much Dewchurch
 Pre-book 01981 540295

Tue March 31 7.30pm HA7C Meeting Richmond Place Club.

Thurs April 9 Lunch at The Undercroft Pub, Llanthony Priory,
 a new venue. This Pub does not have a telephone
 (!) so contact has to be with Annabel via e mail to
Llanthonyprioryltd@outlook.com

Weds 15 April 7pm Skittles and Meal at Grove Golf club

Sun April 26 **DRIVE IT DAY**

Tue April 28 7.30pm HA7C Meeting Richmond Place Club.

Committee Meeting January 2026, summary

Rosemary Lillico (founder member of the HA7C, who funded the original newspaper advert that started the Club), has sent a Christmas card, wishing us all well.

Club finances are healthy, with about £2,000 in the account at the moment, and annual expenditure last year of about £700.

There are 60 primary members, 38 partners and family, and 4 honorary members.

Michael Ward has agreed to stay on for a further year as Chairman, but would like someone to take over next year.

Steven Earl is prepared to stand as Secretary and Deputy Chair.

Annie Peake has agreed to take over as Crankhandle Editor.

The AGM agenda was discussed, see below

A full version of the Minutes is available on request from the secretary.

AGM **Tues Feb 24th at 7.30pm, Richmond Club**

Please come, and get involved

HIGHLIGHTS

The Richard Youard Prize will be awarded: it could be you!

Vote for the member you wish to be awarded the new Roland Alcock prize. This is a secret ballot (slip provided). No reason has to be given for your choice.

Vote on the location of this coming year's **Christmas lunch**

Vote on the **location of future monthly club meetings. Perhaps Bunch of Carrots??**

Show interest in HA7C holidays

- i) Mid Wales 2026
- ii) Mid France 2027 Kip to organise.

Also let us know what time of year, what cost is acceptable, what location

Put yourself forward for Committee positions: particularly:

- Events Co-ordinator
- Membership Secretary
- Chair (from 2027)

Skittles and nibbles at the Richmond Club November 25:



Photo by Gill
of the
Richmond
Place Club

Skittles at Grove Golf club Weds 15 April 2026 at 7pm



Annie Peake's A7 suffers an indignity in its garage

N.B. this did not actually happen, it is AI !

RACING CAR DRIVER

Tim Bradley hopes to do most of the 2026 historic 750 formula races. You can watch the Brands Hatch and Silverston races on Youtube.

CALENDAR

 18TH & 19TH APRIL 2026 BRANDS HATCH INDY APRIL ORGANISING CLUB: 750MC	 9TH & 10TH MAY 2026 SILVERSTONE NATIONAL MAY ORGANISING CLUB: 750MC	 27TH & 28TH JUNE 2026 ANGLESEY JUNE ORGANISING CLUB: 750MC	 18TH & 19TH JULY 2026 CADWELL PARK JULY ORGANISING CLUB: 750MC	 30TH & 31ST AUGUST 2026 SNETTERTON 300 AUGUST (SUN/MON) ORGANISING CLUB: 750MC	 11TH OCTOBER 2026 MALLORY PARK OCTOBER ORGANISING CLUB: 750MC
VIEW EVENT RESULTS	VIEW EVENT RESULTS	VIEW EVENT RESULTS	VIEW EVENT RESULTS	VIEW EVENT RESULTS	VIEW EVENT RESULTS



Editor's Christmas present from his brother

A pencil!

John Barlow's Spares



Austin7Ulster.com

6h ·

We have just spent a very busy two days on the monumental task of moving thousands of new Austin 7 Spares from Nottingham to Belfast.

We have just purchased all of John Barlow's 'Austin 7 Spares', not just all of his new and reproduced parts, but also all of his patterns and moulds.

John is such a lovely guy and was a big figure in the Austin 7 world, but unfortunately due to age and ill health, it was time to move these parts on to a new home.

So our task, now over the coming weeks and months, is to sort through all of this to see exactly what we have, make an inventory of it all, add these products to our website and ultimately find new homes for it all!

There is a vast array of different spares and patterns, a lot of which have not seen the light of day in many years. (We will also be producing new and improved versions of his cast aluminium products over the coming months.)

RATHER THAN FLOOD THE SPARES PAGE EVERY DAY, we will be running a series of posts called 'JOHN'S TREASURES' on our Austin7Ulster Facebook page. So if you are interested in seeing what treasures we uncover then make sure and follow our page. Feel free to drop us a message / make a bid, if you see anything you like!

[Www. Austin7ulster.com](http://www.austin7ulster.com)

Sent in by David Southcott, seen on Facebook

Easier Starting your A7 in cold weather

Eddie Loader

Start on the handle, rather than the starter motor. The latter uses most of the battery power, with reduced power available for the spark plugs. Avoid 'Easy Start' as it dissolves the engine oil in the cylinder

Choke: make sure it is flat and mating with the carb air intake. If not, carefully straighten it out with a panel beating hammer. Put washing up peg on choke cable in cab, to keep it out for longer. Cover up the central hole in the choke flap with insulating tape to enrich the mixture further.

Petrol: this may be stale, so consider draining off and putting fresh in, and perhaps use a fuel-preservative

Check jets are correct size: In a Zenith 22FZB updraught carburettor the jets should be: Main jet:70, Compensating jet:75, Slow Running jet 35. These numbers refer to flow rate, rather than diameter (units unknown).



New Years Day at Much Marcle VSCC Rally



Afterwards, at the Trumpet

Propylene Glycol Antifreeze

Antifreeze is ethylene glycol with additives to extend its life. We must use the inorganic additives (IAT), not the organic ones (OAT). It should be changed every 2 years, and must be disposed of in the chemical section of the household waste sites at Rotherwas, Leominster and Kington. It must not be poured down the drain as it is very poisonous. It also damages car paintwork and a small amount getting into the engine oil will damage the bearings.

OAT damages solder in the radiator and silicon in hoses and gasket sealants.

You cannot rely on colour to ensure it is IAT, as some OAT anti freeze now come as blue, and may even be labelled as safe for older cars (just meaning 10 year-old cars!). So only use antifreeze that specifically states it is IAT.

The alternative is Propylene Glycol, which is not toxic, and bio-degradable, and much less damaging if it gets into the engine oil or onto paintwork. It has a bitter taste, and is unlikely to be consumed by wildlife. It does not damage the engine components. It is used in central heating systems, eg Fernox Alphi 11 at 25%. It may not need changing, just test it after 5-10 years by putting a sample in the freezer. If you do need to dispose of it then it should still go to the chemicals section of the household waste sites, as above. Costs about £55 for 5 Litres.

Based on an article in newsletter of North Hampshire Austin Enthusiasts Group, NHAEG

Eddie adds that phosphoric acid, as used in central heating systems to clean out the debris, is also useful for the same task in a radiator, or for most cleaning up metal components

RH INSURANCE

Many people insuring their cars through RH will be used to seeing their policy underwritten by ERS. However, RH also uses other underwriters (for example, KGM).

It is important that you are aware of which policy you have because, depending on which underwriter is applicable, there are different phone numbers to use in the event of a breakdown. This is particularly important if calling outside office hours.

The numbers I have been given are different to last year: **01277 720 763**

When abroad: **00800 999 00 999**

DID YOU KNOW?

The very first A7s had a choke cable led to the radiator, so that you could adjust it while starting the car on the handle, as they had no starter motor. After the first year or so of production, a recoil starter (like on a lawn mower) was added. Austin then even experimented with a 2-stroke version of the A7.

3-in One oil is equivalent of SAE 5



Classic
OILS & LUBRICANTS

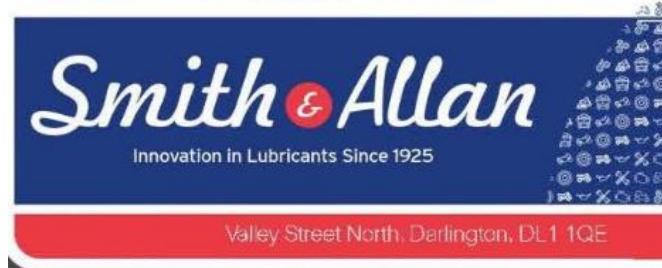
Select SAE 30

High Quality, Detergent Free Engine Lubricant

Performance Levels

API SB

01325 462228 www.smithandallan.com



Should we use 20W50 or straight SAE30 in our cars? It must be detergent-free for a classic car. The American Petroleum Institute oil classification: API SB is only for pre-1950 cars. API SE is only for cars prior to 1979.

Frank's Chummy suddenly developed very rough running of the engine. It was irregularly missing a beat every half a second or so. It had done it before, but was seemingly cured by changing the spark plugs, but not this time.

I used the great benefit of the HA7C, and rang for help from the Tech Advisor. This is the steps I took:

Step One: Drain Petrol, in case it is denatured. Disconnect fuel pipe at carburettor end, and drain petrol through tubing into can. Don't disconnect at petrol tank end, as this is a weak soldered joint. Put in fresh E5 petrol

Step 2 Check Carb float is in right position



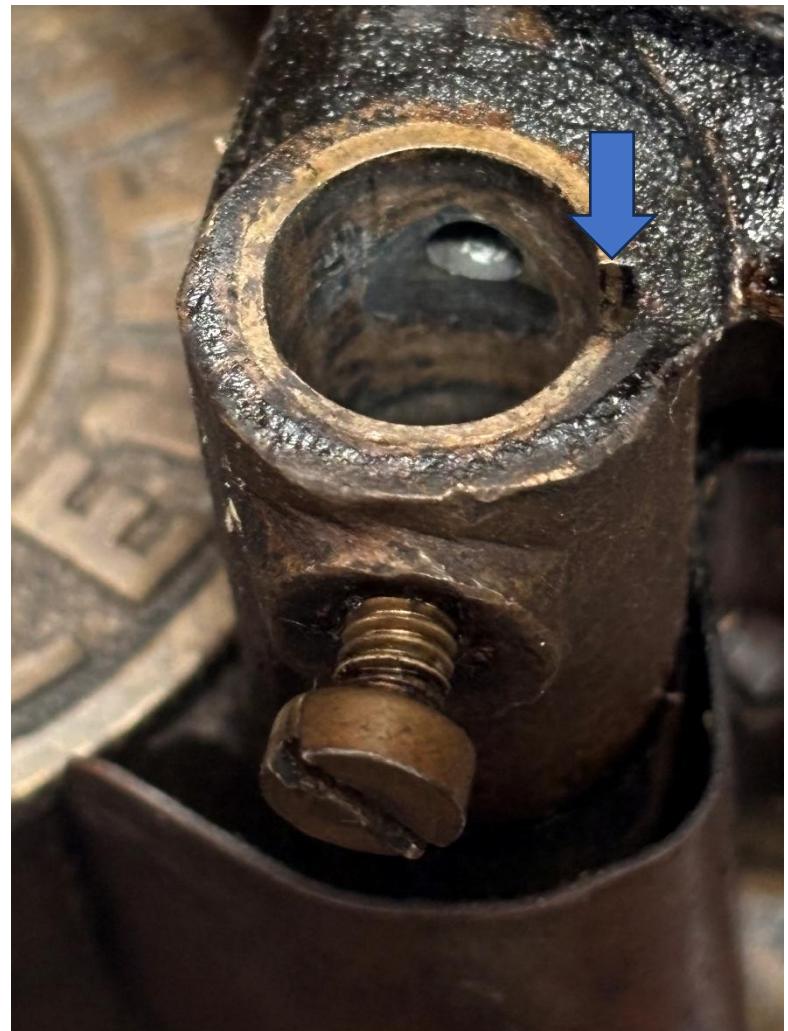
Step 3. Clean all three jets in Zenith carb. This should be done with air blasting, although I hear some use a very fine wire, such as from a wire brush.

The mixture jet is accessed by taking out the slow running device. Undo the screw on its side (*left*), and then it lifts out.



Use a 4BA spanner and pliers wrapped in padding to take the mixture jet off from its tube.

After cleaning, note that the lug at the top of the slow running device fits into a recess (arrowed) in the carb body.

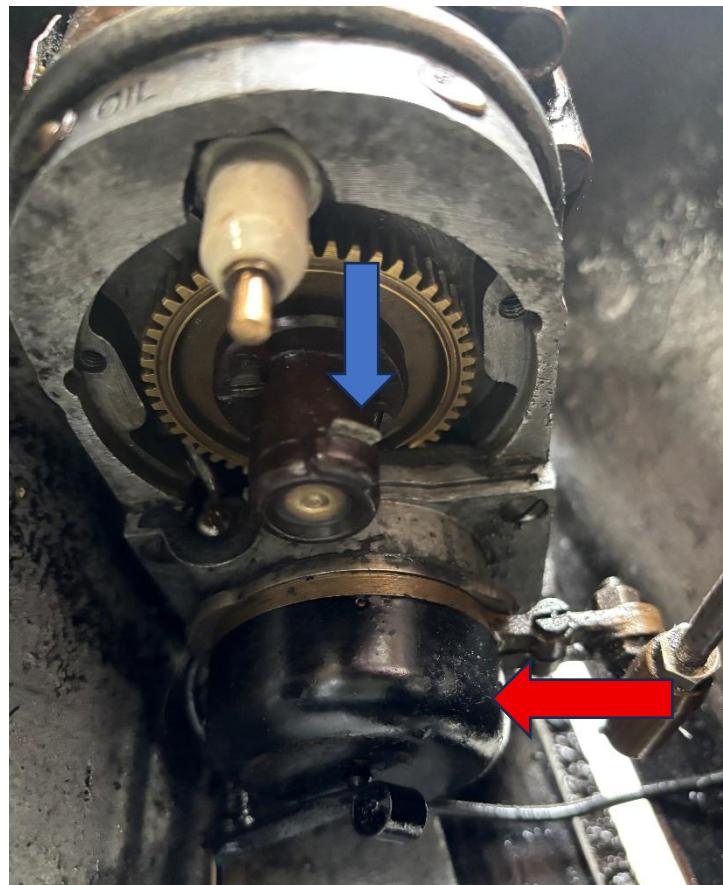
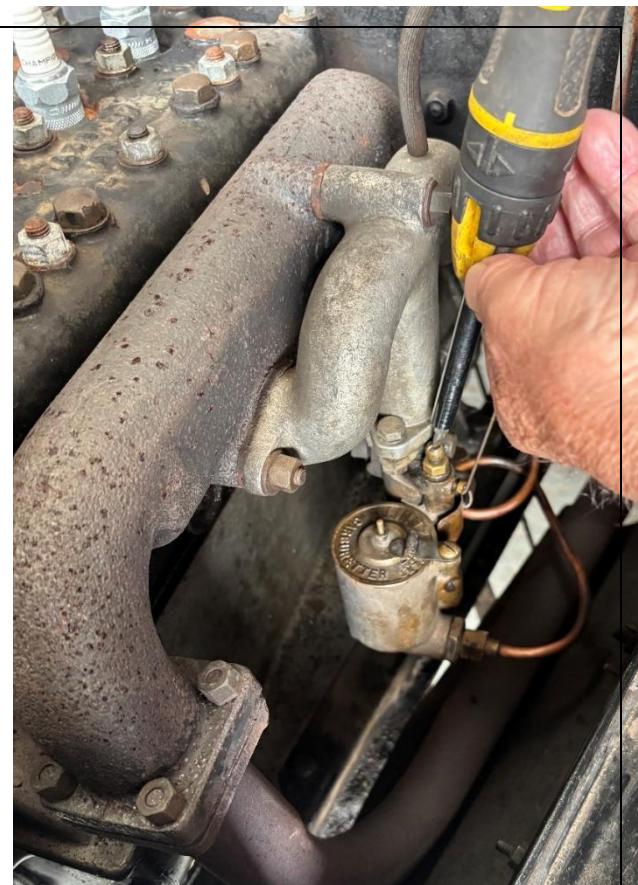


The mixture screw will usually need to be adjusted after refitting.

Roly Alcock also told me to check the Studs on the inlet manifold in case they were loose, allowing excess air to enter the mixture.

IGNITION

Step 4 Clean spark plugs with wire brush, and check gap (Champion D16s are 25 thou)



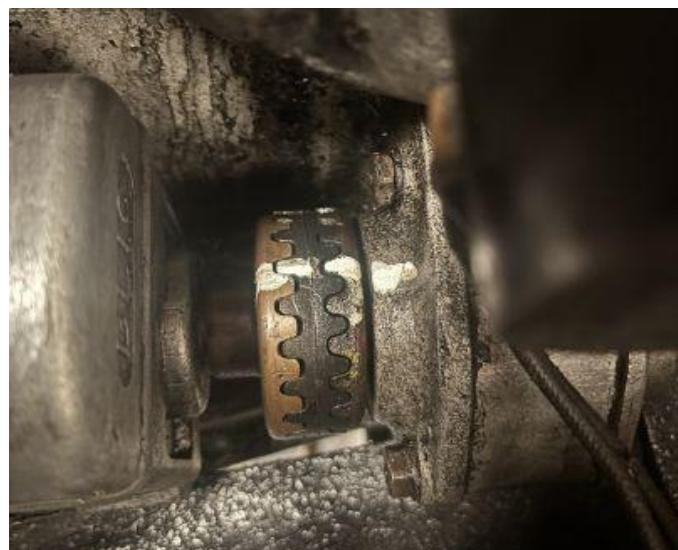
Step 5 Take distributor cap off magneto, and clean the rotor arm(blue arrow), the 4 points in the cap, and also the connection from the magneto to the cap

Red arrow is contact breaker unit

Step 6 With multimeter, check resistance in all four High Tension leads from the distributor to the spark plug. It should be less than 0.5 Ohm, and should reach that low level quickly. If higher, then change the leads (Auto Electrical Supplies Tenbury supply the parts)



Step 7 Remove the contact breaker: on a BLIC (Birmingham Lighting and Ignition Company) Magneto, this is the lower black case at the rear, and slides off. This is necessary as the contacts are inaccessible whilst in the car. Clean the contacts with wet and dry paper, and then check the gap is about 15 thou.



If you want to remove the magneto, then mark the alignment of the 2 brass couplings, and the intervening rubber vernier, so that the timing is not disturbed. I did this, but when I put it back in, the engine would not run at all. Eddie advised, and Ray Moses confirmed, that the Mag needed to be disconnected from the engine drive, and turned one complete turn, as there is a 2 to 1 reduction inside the Mag. This got it running again.

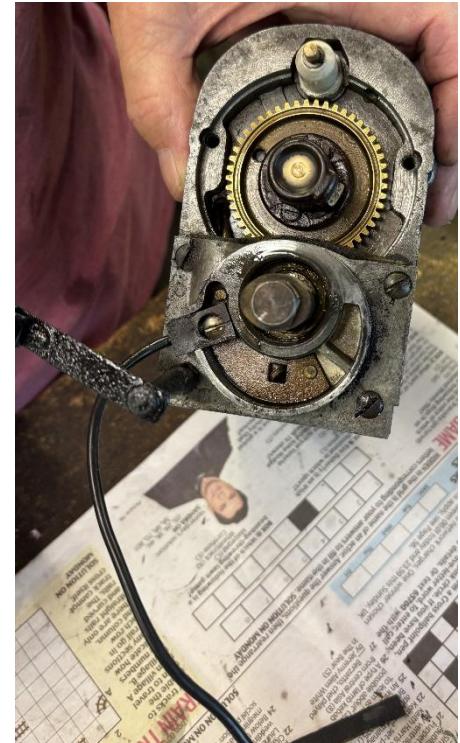


The contacts slid off the magneto. The arm on the right is attached to the ignition advance retard lever, and rotates about 45°

Right:

Inside rear end of magneto, with distributor cap and contacts removed. The thin wire on left is earth, to stop the magneto sparking

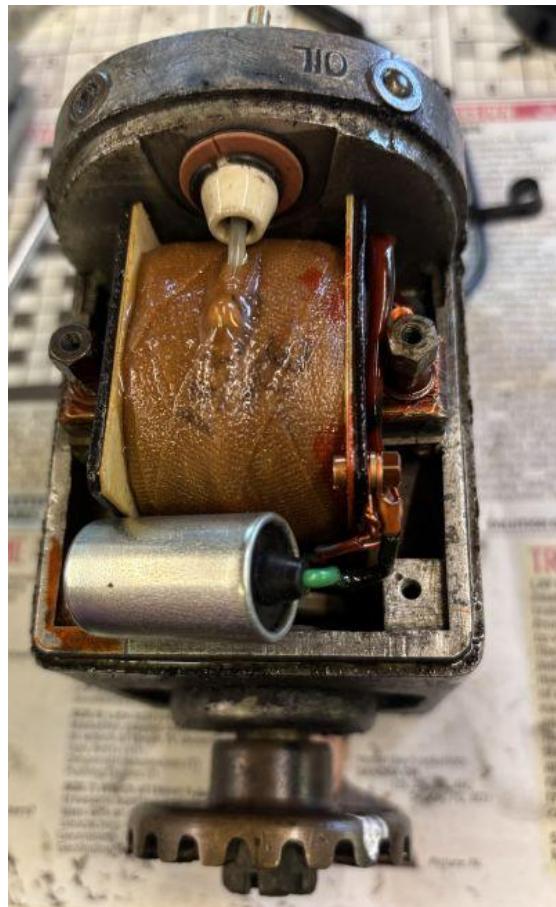
when the ignition is turned off.



Left: Inside magneto, with front at the bottom of the photo. This shows the coil that generates the electrical voltage, the condenser at the bottom

Disconnect earthing wire connected to the dashboard, in case this wire was intermittently contacted earth and stopping the magneto.

I tested the engine after each step, nothing corrected it. We left the magneto to last, as it is the most expensive to sort out. I put in a borrowed coil conversion for an Austin Heavy 12, and this cured the problem. As a result I bought a coil conversion from Austin Reproduction Parts, costing almost £600.



After setting the timing (see next article), the engine now runs well.

Setting the timing on my new distributor

Frank Sibly

My BLIC magneto was causing irregular running, and I changed it for a coil conversion. I had to set the timing. The distributor is a copy of the Bosch 009, mounted vertically, so that it does not obstruct the oil filler.

- i) Disconnect the battery
- ii) Remove Number 1 spark plug (the one nearest the front)
- iii) Rotate engine on starting handle. There are two revolutions to complete the 4 stroke cycle, and on one of the up-strokes of the piston you will feel the compression building up if you put your thumb over the plug hole.
- iv) On the compression stroke, get the piston as high as possible, without starting to go down (top dead centre, TDC). You could use the end of a vernier gauge depth-finder to find this top point. This point could be marked with typex on the bottom pulley against a mark on the crankcase for future use with a strobe for testing the timing (**timing mark, see next page**).
- v) Turn on battery. Use a 6V bulb test light connecting one end to earth and the other to the negative terminal of the coil.
- vi) Set the distributor body so that the number one distributor point is just about to contact the rotor arm. Now slowly rotate the distributor body until the test light just comes on. Tighten everything up. You have set the spark on Number one cylinder to fire at TDC.
- vii) Try a road test. If the engine is noisy and rattling, it is too far advanced (i.e the spark is coming too far before TDC). Mark the distributor body and drive casing with a typex line, so that you know your initial timing. Now turn the distributor body about 1° clockwise (when looking down from above) to retard it. If the engine sounds nice and quiet, apart from backfire on the overrun, but lacks power, then it needs to be slightly advanced by turning the body slightly anti-clockwise. The difference between fully advanced and fully retarded is only a couple of degrees, or a mm or so at the distributor body outer surface. If in doubt, it is safer to be too retarded than too advanced, because when too much advanced the premature firing puts excessive force on the big ends, making them rattle and wear out.

Alternative Method, as described by Eddie Loader

- 1 warm up engine to working temperature .
- 2 slowly turn the distributor anti-clockwise (i.e advance) until the engine starts to increase in speed
- 3 now slowly retard by turning the distributor clockwise until the engine revs start to drop down.
- 4 slowly turn the distributor from the slow revs position until you reach the point where the revs just start to pick up, which is the correct timing position.

How was distributor advance & retard measured before the availability of the stroboscope? Eddie Loader

- 1 Remove distributor cap and rotor arm
- 2 a laminated cardboard disc (approx 3 inches diameter) is slipped down the shaft, marked around the outer edge in degrees (360° for a full circle). This then moves with the base plate
- 3 the distributor shaft is then turned in each direction by using a hand-held tool that engages into slot that engages the rotor arm.
- 4 a temporary pointer is then positioned close to the periphery of the disc, resulting in the ability to read the maximum degree of advance.

This only measures the advance when the engine is not running. The invention of the stroboscope allowed measurement with the engine running, the strobe being pointed at a timing mark (see previous article).

The amount of advance that a distributor allows is fixed for that distributor, and cannot easily be changed. However, a distributor may stop fully advancing due to faults which can be serviced.

To be fully accurate, the dwell angle should be found first. The dwell angle is the arc (in degrees) that the distributor shaft rotates with the contact points fully closed. This is the period that the ignition coil builds up a strong magnetic charge for a powerful spark. The dwell angle depends in part on the points gap. If the dwell angle is too small, then the spark is weak, too large and the coil overheats. It can be measured with the engine off, but ignition on, by slowly rotating the distributor drive, whilst using a test light, which will go out when the contact points close, and come on again when they next open.

Shed Night Decoking:

Eddie Loader

The poor quality of the petrol and oil in the early years of motoring meant regular decoking was necessary.

Karl Benz built the first motor car in 1885, although the stationary internal combustion engine had been around for about 20 years prior to that. The first oil well was drilled in the same year, previously oil had been obtained from where it appeared on the surface, and was mainly used as kerosene for lighting, and petrol was distilled for use as a cleaning fluid. Prior to kerosene, oil lamps were powered by whale oil.



It was less than 40 years between the very first car and the launch of the A7

The early cars up to about 1918 had a solid cylinder block, with no detachable head, and the whole engine had to be dismantled and the pistons removed, for decoking. The Model T of 1908 was unusual in having a detachable head, which made it much easier for home mechanics to clean the cylinders and the valves. Early cars did not have spark plugs, and instead they had hot tube ignition: a tube in the top of the cylinder was initially heated

by a blow torch, and then kept hot by the heat of combustion. This was superseded by electric ignition by the early 1900s.

Build-up of carbon in the cylinder caused pinking, which is pre-ignition caused by the hot carbon deposits igniting the petrol/air mix prior to the spark.

Decoking involves removal of the carbon deposits from the cylinders only, and would be done by removing the cylinder head and cleaning with a nylon pad. Subsequently cleaning was with wire brushes attached to a mains electric drill (battery drill speed is too slow). The stud holes were cleaned with a drill bit, otherwise on reassembly a deposit would fall from a hole onto the gasket and cause a leak. In the early days, the head gasket was not always changed on reassembly.

The head nuts should be removed in the reverse sequence to that used for tightening, so as to prevent the head from warping.

An A7 engine would last for about 28k miles before it was worn out, and needed changing (contemporary cost usually £30, when a new car was £100). In the service handbook for garages, it noted that white deposits should not cause alarm, and were due to lead in the petrol, which was introduced from the USA just prior to WW2.

Compression testing requires warming the engine up, then turning it off, taking out all the spark plugs, and opening the throttle to allow maximum air to be drawn into the cylinders. Then, rotate the engine on the starter and test the cylinder pressures. A minimum pressure for an A7 cylinder is 50 psi, and a good engine is 70+, with the maximum on a low-compression head being about 80psi. If the readings are low, squirt oil into the cylinders which will seal any leaking round the piston rings. If the pressure reading is now



satisfactory, the piston rings or cylinder are worn, but if the compression remains low, then the valves are leaking.

Chris Clarke noted that the RR Merlin engine in the Spitfire was a V12 carburettor engine,

which would sputter in a dive, and the only safe way to dive was to roll onto its side. The enemy Messerschmitt had primitive fuel injection in its Mercedes Benz engine, and could dive normally.

Next shed night in the Spring will cover decoking the valves.

Deadline for next issue: 20th March

New email address for editor: newsletter@ha7c.co.uk

The editor@ha7c address became unusable due to vast amounts of spam

Please do send in contributions

Ideal article length is up to 700 words, preferably with at least 2 photos or illustrations. Longer articles also very welcome, especially if they can be divided into parts for subsequent newsletters

Short notes, or just a photo or diagram also popular. Please keep writing!

For Sale

1930 Austin 7 Gordon England Cup

A truly beautiful car in excellent condition. Burgundy fabric over ash frame and plywood panels, aluminium bonnet with leather strap, black paintwork and leather seats. 747 cc engine, 6 volt electrics. The late 20th century coachwork replicates the famous Gordon England sports car. All major components (engine, gearbox, back axle etc.) are original. Has VSCC buff form. Comes with tonneau, spare set of wheels and tyres and Gordon England bodywork plaques.

The car is garaged near to Abergavenny. I am selling because since moving house I seldom use it and hope that a new owner will have as much fun from the car as I have had in the past. £14,500

bob.barber@btinternet.com **07776 122 576**





SPARES

Austin 7 Chummy side screen metal frames, hinges, sliders and frame pegs all UNUSED
£100,

Austin 7 H/C cylinder head ex condition £70,

Austin 7 L/C cylinder head good condition £50,

Austin 7 cylinder block rusty make me an offer,

Contact, Brian Bedford, 01432 820004, 07974 069430 or s.bedford45@btinternet.com

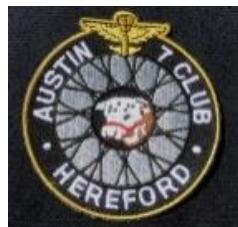
Club Regalia

Available at most monthly meetings from the Treasurer

Windscreen Stickers £ 2.00



**Sew-on Embroidered badge: no longer available,
But could be ordered if enough interest.**



Radiator Badge £20



Lapel Pin Badge £2



HA7C Committee contact details

Chairman	Michael Ward	01600 890 902	07939 539 926	chairman@ha7c.co.uk
Secretary	Bob Garrett	01497 831 310	07900 496 073	secretary@ha7c.co.uk
Treasurer	Julia James	01568 797 959	07748 613 110	treasurer@ha7c.co.uk
Membership	Kip Wastell	01981 550293		membership@ha7c.co.uk
Events Co-ordinator	Pat Caine/Jan Haywood		07966 387 815	events@ha7c.co.uk
Technical Advisor	Eddie Loader	01432 356 841	07817 361 921	technical@ha7c.co.uk
Editor	Frank Sibly	01531 640406	07971 820 721	newsletter@ha7c.co.uk
Webmaster	Roly Alcock		07730 557 952	webmaster@ha7c.co.uk

HA7C website

<https://www.ha7c.co.uk>

Herefordshire Austin Sevens Forum

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/357904524672062>

Some other useful resources on the Internet

Austin Seven Friends	http://www.austinsevenfriends.co.uk/
Austin Seven Clubs Association	https://www.facebook.com/thea7ca/
The Federation of British Historical Vehicle Clubs	http://www.fbhvc.co.uk/
Austin Seven Group on FB	https://www.facebook.com/groups/8069487412
Cornwall Austin Seven Club	http://www.austin7.org/
Bristol Austin Seven Club	http://www.ba7c.org/
Dorset Austin Seven Club	http://www.da7c.co.uk/
South Wales Austin Seven Club	http://southwalesaustinsevenclub.com/
Red Cross Directory of Parts, Products and Services	http://oldcarservices.co.uk/

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