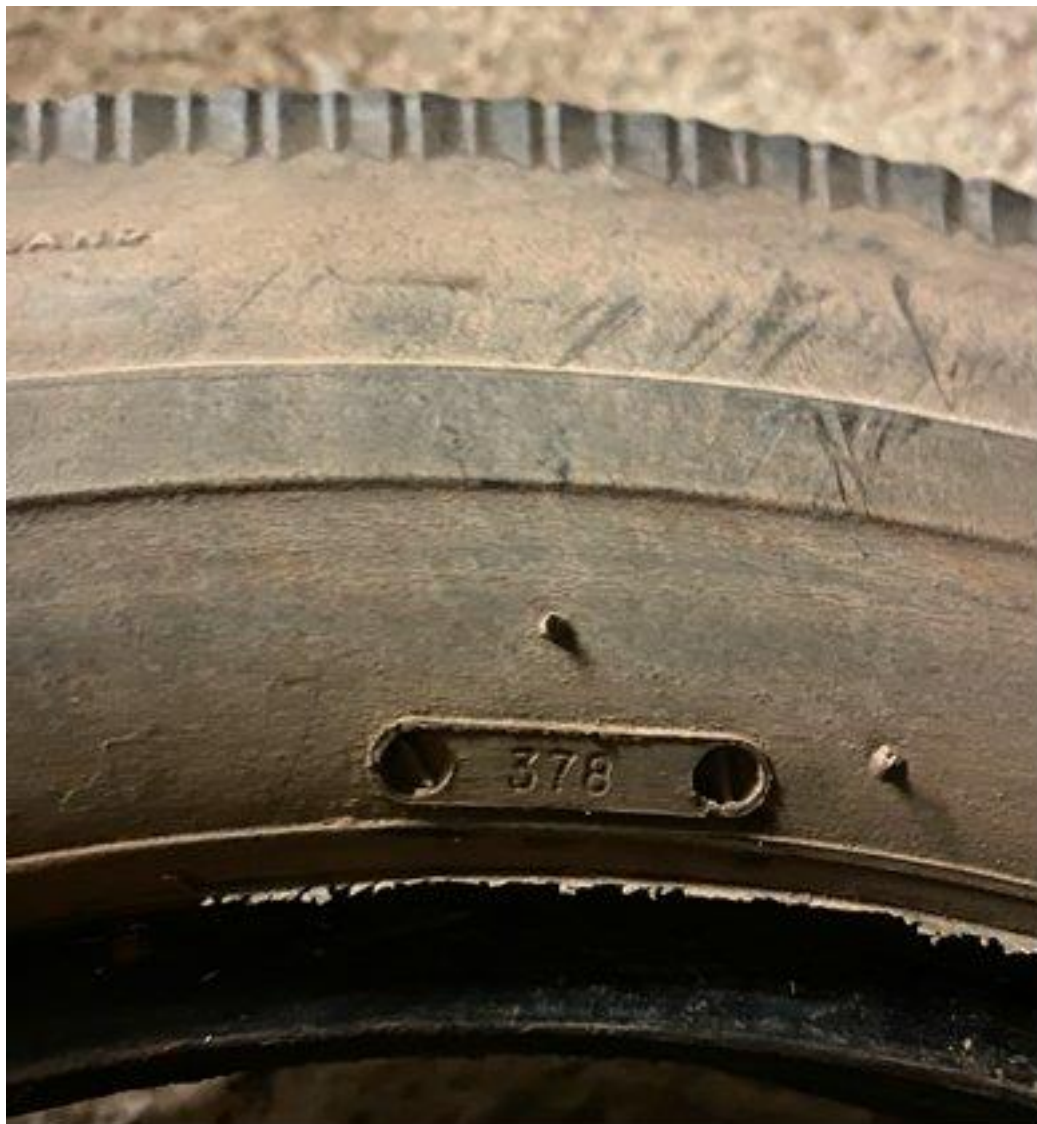


Austin Seven Tyres by Frank Sibly

I assumed that all my fellow club members were endowed with superior powers in controlling their Austins, as I found my Ruby Mk2 leaping across the road when on uneven surfaces, leading me to be a rather slow motorist.

However, others assured me that it was the car rather than driving style that was at fault. I set about changing simple things, such as tyre pressures, radius-arm ball-cups (which were indeed somewhat worn), and then the friction discs on the front shock absorber (in fact it turned out that one of the three discs was missing). However there was no improvement.

As part of my investigations I looked at the tyres, which appeared fine, and are an expensive item to change at about £400, when rim tapes and inner tubes are included. I was disconcerted to find that the date stamp on them was only 3 digits: 378 (see photo), which means they are either 24 or 34 years old, being made in either 1998 or 1988.



Although it is not illegal to use tyres more than 10 years old, if the poor road-holding caused an incident, the tyres might well be regarded as a contributing factor. For this reason, I bought a set of new tyres. To my surprise the handling has been transformed by the new tyres, the car being much more stable, allowing me to go 40-45mph rather than my previous 30-35.

The old tyres were Avon HM Tourist 4.5 x 17, which are still available, but not the size of tyre that the factory fitted to the Ruby, which were only 4" wide. Longstone make a 4" tyre, which is 13% narrower than the Avon, and also 3% smaller in inflated diameter, a speed rating of 112mph (!), and with a very different tread pattern (see photo). Tom recommends 26psi all round for his tyre



I thought the narrower tyre would give less grip, but this is not the case. The old tyres may have lost pliability with age, which in turn could have been the cause of the instability on rough surfaces.