



# Austin



## Owners Club Newsletter March 2013

Hi folks; Well at the time of writing we still seem to be suffering from the ravages of winter, a few nice days recently gave us all the taste of a good summer to come I hope. It has been quite an exciting time in the world of 3-Litres of late. I have been busy sourcing various parts; to that end I have included a parts section in this newsletter about the progress on that front.

My own car is now on the road but not quite finished; I guess they never really are! I am very pleased with how she has come out. It has taken 10 months of some very intense work and my guess is about 1000 hours of toil but oh so very worth it. The picture below was taken in March this year.



I am looking forward to warmer days but I have already started doing some classic motoring in a car which is very close to my heart. It's been 16 years since my last drive in her!

### 3-Litre Get Together

A few members have expressed an interest in a 3-Litre get together at the BMC day at Ferry Meadows Nr Peterborough on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> August this year. To that end let's make it National Rally for 2013. I think it must be at least 15 years since the club has had a National Rally so it would be great to do. More details can be seen at their website;

<http://www.bmcblrally.co.uk/2.html>

I am bringing my car which will mark something of an occasion for me; there is a picture on our website of my car with my Wife and then young Daughter taken in 1993 at this event so it will be a proud moment for us all to be back there at the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that picture being taken. There were seven 3-Litres there that day, (pictured below) can we equal or even beat it? Let's try! Please get in touch if you fancy it so we can make some plans.



## Spares Feature

It goes without saying that obtaining spare parts are an extremely vital part of running and owning a classic vehicle no matter what the make. This is even more so with a vehicle as specialised as our cars. For many years I was buying large quantities of parts from dealers and factors, I suspect due to low sales volumes they were not interested in keeping the parts in stock. About 10 years ago I was approached by a man who wanted a readymade business for his Son to develop, as I was doing 80+ hours a week at the time and the sales of parts were not even covering the cost of storage, I agreed to sell up. Big mistake! The promise to develop the range of parts and secure long term supply was short lived and the collection was quickly sold off in lumps. The days of finding large amounts of spares are now long gone I would suggest. Bearing in mind the last 3-Litre rolled off the production line over 42 years ago, large parts caches sitting in storage are not going to be forthcoming anymore.

That leaves us with what direction to follow to keep a supply of what we need.

There are three sources really;

1. **Keep sourcing new parts** where we can, many other BMC products use the same parts so my list of those is still being added to.
2. **Using second-hand parts**, most of us have a stock of parts such as these, Malcolm Stephens

offers an excellent spares service to us as well, Malcolm has been a great help to me with my recent restoration.

3. **Remanufacture**, this of course is the most expensive option. I have been in talks with Tony Wood from the Landcrab Club recently, Tony is looking at getting repair kits made for suspension joints on Landcrabs, this is an option for our swivel joints so that is worth pursuing. The one problem we have is numbers of surviving cars, that means any re-makes will be low in number and pro-rata more expensive than larger volumes. To that end our cars are now becoming somewhat valuable which will in turn affect how much money people will spend on them. There are some parts where we have no choice but to remake, namely body repair sections. I have recently started remaking rear radius arm bushes in the correct material, these are actually reasonably priced and are readily available, I now keep a set "on the shelf" as it were. I have sourced a supplier for silicone by-pass hoses, these are much cheaper than MGC suppliers can offer and are very pliable and easy to fit.



I have recently bought a pair of front wings; I do not intend to use these but to use them instead as a pattern for repair sections. The front wings are probably the hardest part of the panel-work to rectify, partly because they are so visible and also because they have so many areas where corrosion sets in. The front valences are another area that invariably will be in need of some attention. The tooling I am going to invest in can also be used to shape the front valence repair sections which will be my next area to look into. Door bottoms are relatively easy to repair using "L" section repair panels. If you are struggling to source any parts or would like to see anything remade, please let me know, if it can be done I will look into it. As I have already said the biggest problem will be volumes, basically the lower the volume the higher the unit cost will be, this is most noticeable when tooling costs are involved. I have found a company local to me who made an amazing job of my exhaust front pipe. It was made in 304 stainless steel, has a lifetime guarantee and at £300 was great value. Most importantly, it fitted perfectly and being heavy gauge pipe sounds like a 3-litre should.

E-Bay does have some items appearing at reasonably regular intervals, please get in touch if you are not sure what the part is, if it will fit or if the price is reasonable. I look on there in amazement at times at the prices quoted or indeed bid up to. Some of the parts quoted as fitting a 3-Litre simply will not fit. Some prices on "Buy it now" parts are many times what we can source them for once we know where we can buy them.

I am continuing to add links to the website of suppliers who can help us. This has proved very successful and has meant members have easily sourced parts which seemed elusive. I am mainly using suppliers I have used myself as I feel personal experience is vital when I am adding a link. I have had to source rather a wide range of parts to complete my restoration over the last 11 months. I have also managed to source parts for members which have been a bit elusive in previous years, rear suspension radius arm bushes being a nice triumph. Please let me know of any good suppliers you have used personally, and had a good experience of, that is the best advert of all.

## Austin Federation

I have sent off an application to join the Austin Federation, for a club this is £10 per year so it rather cheap. I did have some welcome feedback about how we fund things, (thank you) from a club point of view. One suggestion was members making a donation to the club. As a club we have no great expenses at the moment, I took it upon myself to build the website, so I will continue to fund that myself anyway. I feel at the moment a contribution when a car valuation is done, and maybe some merchandise for sale is sufficient to meet the costs of joining any other bodies such as the Austin Federation at present. I have listed some spare parts on the website; members receive a discount from what is quoted there, after discounting a very small profit is still retained which will go into the pot of running things for the club. In short I think we can run it as a free club for the foreseeable future.

I would like us at some point to join the FHBVC, this is £25 per year for a club our size.

## Our Website

The website is a year old in May this year, where does time go! I am rather amazed at what it has achieved, at the time of writing this in late March, the site has had over 44,000 hits and about 6000 different computers have logged into it. It has certainly helped to put our cars on the map. I have also had lots of enquiries from other "Austineers" from as far away as Australia looking for parts, I have been able to help them all which has been a privilege and proves the power of the internet.

## Car values

One thing that has come to light recently is how much our cars have increased in value over a very short period of time. The classic press have been very slow indeed to respond to this, this is the same for other cars too, classic vehicles are a far better investment than many saving schemes! Most lists still show a condition one car as being worth £5000. I recently did a valuation on a quite nice but not perfect car which I entered a value of £7500 I was told by the vendor and another very reliable source that it sold for £8500. I have also recently been involved in helping a dealer with information and help with a car they had for sale, this car sold for almost £12000. I have used this example as a base for the top end car prices. I have written to the most popular classic publications asking them to look at their price guides. One of the problems members are suffering, myself included, is getting insurance companies to accept a reasonable agreed value on our cars. Hopefully we should get the prices in the guides at a more accurate level soon.

Here's looking forward to a warm summer and lots of 3-litre miles.

Happy 3-Litre-ing Kind regards

*Neil*