

Lost and found

The story of a 1933 AEW bodied Austin Seven

From time to time I take my 1937 Austin Seven Pearl Cabriolet to our local foodshop in Cobham in Surrey.

The two friendly chaps who run the shop mentioned that their father, Ted Arlidge, now 88, owned an Austin Seven as his first car. During casual conversations over a period of weeks, it emerged that the car was a 1933 sports Seven with a 4-seater body by AEW. Ted bought the car for £100 in 1935 and used it in the Swindon area. In 1937, the family fell on hard times and moved to Surrey. Ted left the car behind and for years assumed that his brother had sold or written off the car. The photograph shows Ted's then heartthrob, Joan Webb, somewhere in the Wiltshire countryside. Ted then



Joan Webb, somewhere in Wiltshire.

put Joan onto the train at Swindon and never saw her again!

Last December, Ted's sons asked me if there was any chance that the car still survives today. "Not likely!", I said, knowing that my friend Paul Winter has an AEW and there are only a handful in existence. I was duly given the registration number, WV 3461, and later that day phoned Neil Carr-Jones at the 750MC office.

I listened to the sound of Neil thumbing through the A7CA register and after a pregnant pause Neil exclaimed "Yes, found it! It's red and it's in Scotland". After a call by Neil to Scottish A7 Club Secretary Ruairidh Dunford, I soon found myself on the phone to the car's current owner, Ian Darling in Lanark.

Ian was, to put it mildly, tickled pink to hear about his car's early history. Soon, the old and new photos were being swapped in the post.

Ian told me that the car was the only surviving 4-seater AEW Seven. Only 10 4-seaters were made by AE Wright's company in Alexandra Palace, North London. All other AEWs were 2-seaters.

Ian had been able to piece together some of the AEW's more recent history, although some of the facts are based only on hearsay. It seems that sometime in the 1940s, the car was on a level crossing near Carlisle and was hit by a train! It was left in a buckled state by the side of the track for several years, when it was bought for £1 by George Nicholson from Newcastle. George later sold the car to John Rooney in Glasgow, who owned it for 20 years until Ian Darling bought it around 5 years ago. Ian then restored it again.



Ian Darling with the AEW as it now. Photo by Val Darling

Judging from the photos, it looks in lovely condition and Ian says it is on the road and running well.

Back in Oxshott, Surrey, Ted Arlidge is over the moon at seeing the pictures of his old car. His sons say that the discovery has given him a whole new lease of life.

Meanwhile, the missing piece in this jigsaw is: whatever happened to Joan Webb?

Ian Nelson



*A rear view of the unusual AEW model.
Photo by Ian Darling*