Austin A30/A35

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Austin A30/A35 models are compact classics that are especially easy and fun to own. On the left in this shot is a 1955 four door A30, on the right is a 1958 two door A35.

The ‘baby’ Austin Seven helped to keep the Austin Motor Company in business through the 1920s, and the stature of this diminutive icon grew throughout the 1930s. During the 1950s the original Seven’s successors, the A30s and A35s, built further on the success of their pre-War counterparts. Kim Henson tells the story…

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Austin Motor Company introduced some popular and dependable new family models (including the A40s and the larger A70 saloons), which did much to help Britain’s export trade. However, the firm also badly needed a new small ‘economy’ car, in effect a modern version of the company’s hugely successful pre-War Austin Seven.

The 1951 Motor Show saw the debut of the highly significant Austin A30 ‘Seven’, which in size and market appeal was deliberately the true successor to the Austin Sevens of the 1920s/30s.

Featuring unitary construction bodywork (with no separate chassis, as used in previous Austins), an overhead valve 803cc engine (developing 28 bhp) and independent front suspension, the car was up-to-the-minute in design.

Originally offered in four door saloon form only (a two door version arrived in 1953), these compact but big-hearted Austins could comfortably accommodate four adults plus a sizeable amount of luggage, within deliberately small external dimensions (to make the cars easy to park and to garage in tight spaces). With typical petrol consumption of between 40 and 45 miles per gallon, they were economical to run too.

In 1956 the A30 evolved into the new A35, which featured a larger, stronger 948cc ‘A’ Series engine (34 bhp), a slicker, remote gearchange four speed gearbox and a higher final drive ratio, for more relaxing high speed cruising. The A35 was identifiable at a glance by its painted grille (whereas the A30’s was chromed) and its large, wrap-around rear window.

Van, ‘Countryman’ estate and pick-up versions of these ‘baby’ Austins were built, in addition to the two and four door saloons.

The saloons were discontinued in 1959, but the estates and vans carried on for several years, with the final van produced early in 1968. Later versions of the vans were fitted with 1098cc and 848cc (Mini type) engines.

These Austins provide fun out of all proportion to their size, are usually affordable to buy (although prices are rising inexorably) and inexpensive to run.

When buying, rust is the main potential enemy. Checks should include the sill assemblies (crucially important to the overall structure of the body shell), floor pans, rear spring supports and the perimeter sections of the front and rear wings.

Mechanically the vehicles are very tough, but the 948cc, 1098cc and 848cc engines used in later versions are stronger than the original 803cc units used in the A30s.

On all models, check for excessive smoking when accelerating (due to piston/ring problems), and for knocking from the crankshaft (the big end bearings are relatively weak on the 803cc motors).



Rare and increasingly sought-after today, the A35 pick-up was sold in small numbers (approximately 500 in total). Frankly, when new this model wasn't very effective as a pick-up, and was expensive. These days pick-up owners are having the last laugh!



The 'Countryman' estates are highly practical and fully trimmed inside. (Note: More commonly encountered are the many vans which have been converted to estates, and

usually identifiable by the roof-mounted air vent, not fitted to the Countryman versions).



Enginuity. Under the bonnet of the A35 is a four cylinder overhead valve motor, providing willing performance and good fuel economy.



The four door versions of the A35 saloon are comparatively rare but still fetch similar figures to the two door models. The large curved rear window was a feature of the A35.

SUMMARY

The cars are endearing to drive (once you've re-adjusted your approach if you're used to modern vehicles – especially with regard to being prepared for the comparatively high brake pedal pressures required), and willing performers considering their relatively small engines.

They are also easy to own and to look after, and the highly approachable A30/A35 Owners' Club exists to help keep these Austins on the road, and to bring together like-minded owners and enthusiasts of the cars.

For more information contact the Membership Secretary Harry Douglas, 103A, Park Lane, Thatcham, Berkshire, RG18 3BZ. Tel. (01635) 335034.

E-mail: membership@austina30a35ownersclub.co.uk

Club website: www.austina30a35ownersclub.co.uk

Last, but not least, it should be mentioned that wherever you take an A30 or A35 today, you will find people genuinely interested in the car. This aspect can surprise owners new to the models!

PRICES

Note: Prices are currently rising in response to demand, especially for good/excellent examples, and particularly for van versions.

Saloons: Rough, £250. Good, £2,500. Top Notch, £5,000

Van/Countryman: Rough, £350. Good, £4,000. Top Notch, £6,000+

'Van conversion' estate: Rough, £300. Good, £3,500+. Top Notch, £5,500

A35 Pick-up: Rough, £1500+. Good, £7,000+. Top Notch, £12,000+

(Note: The A35 pick-ups are especially rare and seen as the most 'desirable' model to own)

FACTS AND FIGURES

Built:

A30: 1951-56; A35: 1956-68

Body types:
Two-door saloon, four-door saloon, Countryman estate, van, pickup (A35 only)

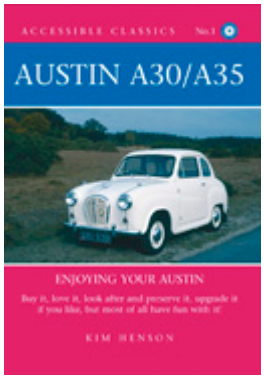
Engine:
Overhead valve, in-line four-cylinder.
A30: 803cc, 28 bhp
948cc A35: 34 bhp
1098cc A35 (vans): 45 bhp
848cc A35 (vans): 34 bhp

0-60 mph:
A30: 38 sec
948cc/848cc A35: 29 sec
1098cc A35: 23 sec

Top Speed
A30: 65+ mph
A35 (948cc): 75 mph
A35 (1098cc): 80+ mph

Typical Fuel Consumption:
40-45+ mpg

READ ALL ABOUT IT!



For further reading, try ‘Accessible Classics No. 1 – Austin A30/A35’ (sub-titled ‘Enjoying Your Austin’). This is a comprehensive, high quality 224 page all-colour hardback book, covering all aspects of model history, buying, looking after and having fun with your baby Austin. It also includes a section to inspire you if you have a rough example in need of work…

It is available direct from the publishers, Classic Car Publishing Ltd, Evergreen House, 51, Berkeley Avenue, Parkstone, Poole, Dorset, BH12 4HZ. Tel. (01202) 467074.

Further information and the facility to order and pay online is available on the firm’s website: www.classic-car-books.co.uk

SAVE MONEY!

When ordered direct from the publishers, the book normally costs £27.95 including U.K. First Class post and packing. However, because we’re a bit generous, for a limited time, if you mention the ‘Wheels-Alive’ website when ordering, for U.K. buyers the price has been reduced to an incredibly wonderful value-for-money £25.00, including the First Class postage.

No, we can’t believe it either…