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Book Review – An Austin Anthology

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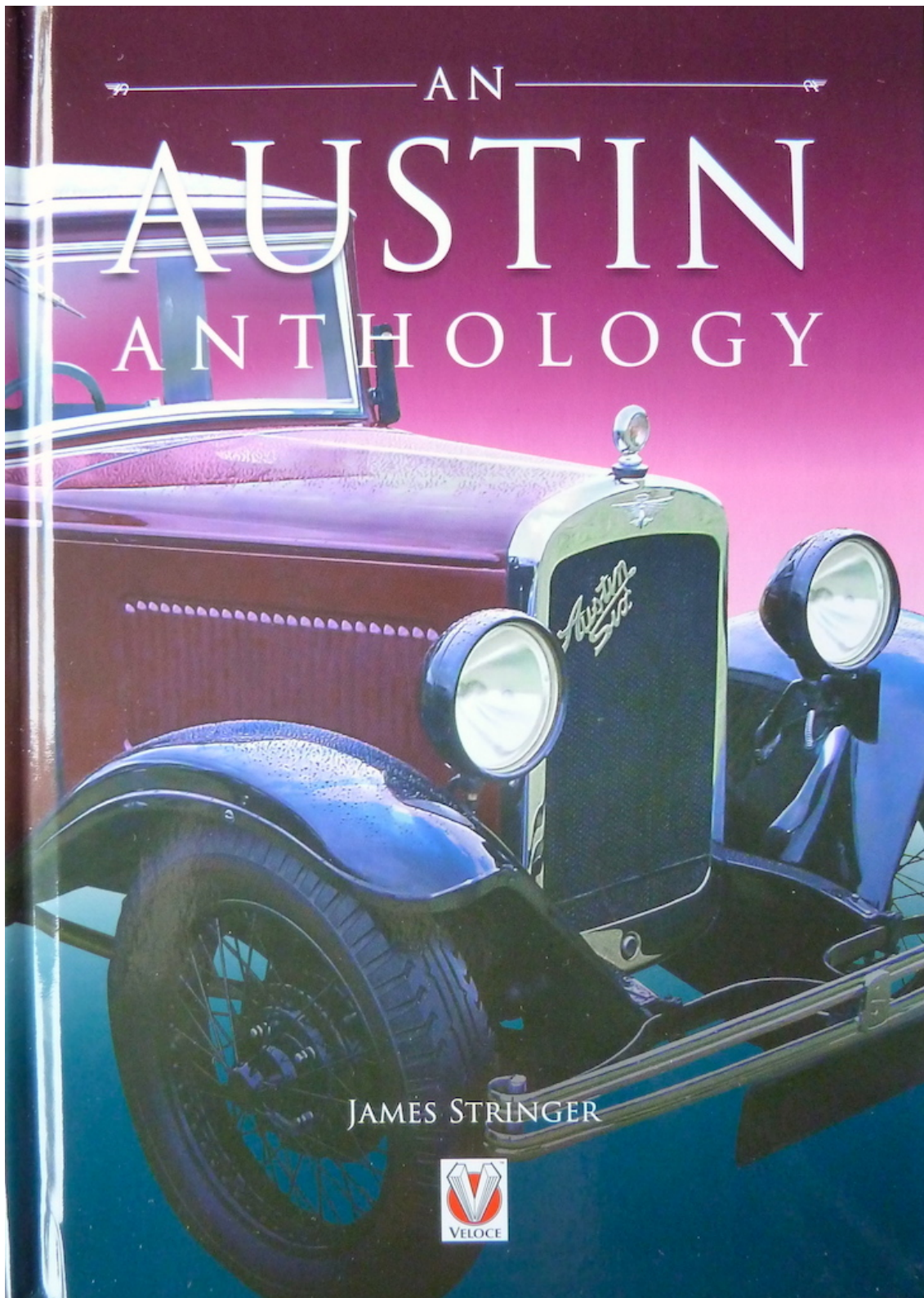
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fascinating new book about Austins – with a different historical approach...

Reviewed by Kim Henson.

Title: An Austin Anthology

Author: James 'Jim' Stringer

Published by: Veloce Publishing Ltd; www.veloce.co.uk

112 pages; hardback

Price: £14.99 UK; \$25 USA.

ISBN: 978-1-787111-91-2

All motor car manufacturers have interesting and often offbeat aspects to their history, many of which get lost forever in the mists of time... Thankfully for Austin enthusiasts (and indeed anyone interested in cars) James ('Jim') Stringer has taken much time and trouble to delve into the Austin Motor Company's past, and has come up with a fascinating book that summarises a wealth of interesting stories about some of the firm's products. Some of these are well known, others less so, and I must confess that as an Austin owner and enthusiast myself, I was unaware of many of the vehicles and episodes covered in this book.

At the outset it should be mentioned that the author James Stringer has an in-depth passion for Austins, and has owned one in particular (a 1929 16/6 saloon) for the best part of 60 years; he is well-placed to write about the marque and its products.

The book comprises 19 chapters, each the result of extensive research by the author and covering a fascinating Austin vehicle (or Aeroplane!) and the stories behind each one. Since the book is broken down into individual chapters/stories, it is easy to read a little at a time (if you wish) without losing the thread...



In fact I found myself engrossed for hours with this volume, and read each chapter with interest. It is very well-written and covers much detail about the history of each vehicle, also in each case talking about the people involved, and providing information about what happened to each vehicle (where this is known).

Without wishing to spoil the enjoyment of discovering for yourself the contents this book, I'd like to highlight a few examples of the vehicles (and aeroplanes) covered...

Many readers will probably never have heard of the Austin Whippet biplane, dating from 1919, and the account of Austin's involvement with producing aeroplanes is captivating. Of course, the Austin Motor Company produced aeroplanes during both the First and Second World Wars, but not everyone has heard of the types produced just after the Great War, with civilian flying in mind. This chapter in Austin's history is vividly brought to life within this book. (As an aside, interestingly to me, for many years my father, who was involved with aviation all his working life, had kept hanging in his garage a black and white photographic print of the Whippet biplane - I remember always being fascinated by this picture as a lad).

Another story which I found amazing was the true tale of 'Pobble', a 1907 Austin that was raced successfully at Brooklands by brother and sister Oscar and Muriel Thompson, then the vehicle was converted to an ambulance and saw extensive service in tough conditions in France. Both Oscar and Muriel were assigned to ambulance duties there too...

'Pobble' survived the War and was equipped with a landaulet body, to give civilian service in a new life, and it is believed that the vehicle may still have been in use during the 1930s. Again, the way that this remarkable story was written in this book, brought the subject to life; very poignant too.

A third example of a chapter that I found mesmerising is the tale of a family driving around Australia in the mid-1920s in an Austin Twelve; in fact two separate long distance trips were undertaken by the same family, the second of which took them right around that huge



country. The weather conditions, road surfaces (or lack of them), the difficulties that were encountered and overcome, and in each case how the vehicle coped make terrific reading for anyone interested in automotive adventures.

I hope the foregoing gives an idea of this book's varied contents; there are another 16 excellent chapters to savour too...

VERDICT

Fabulous; first class! If you like motoring books, my advice is to buy this one; I think that you will enjoy it.