

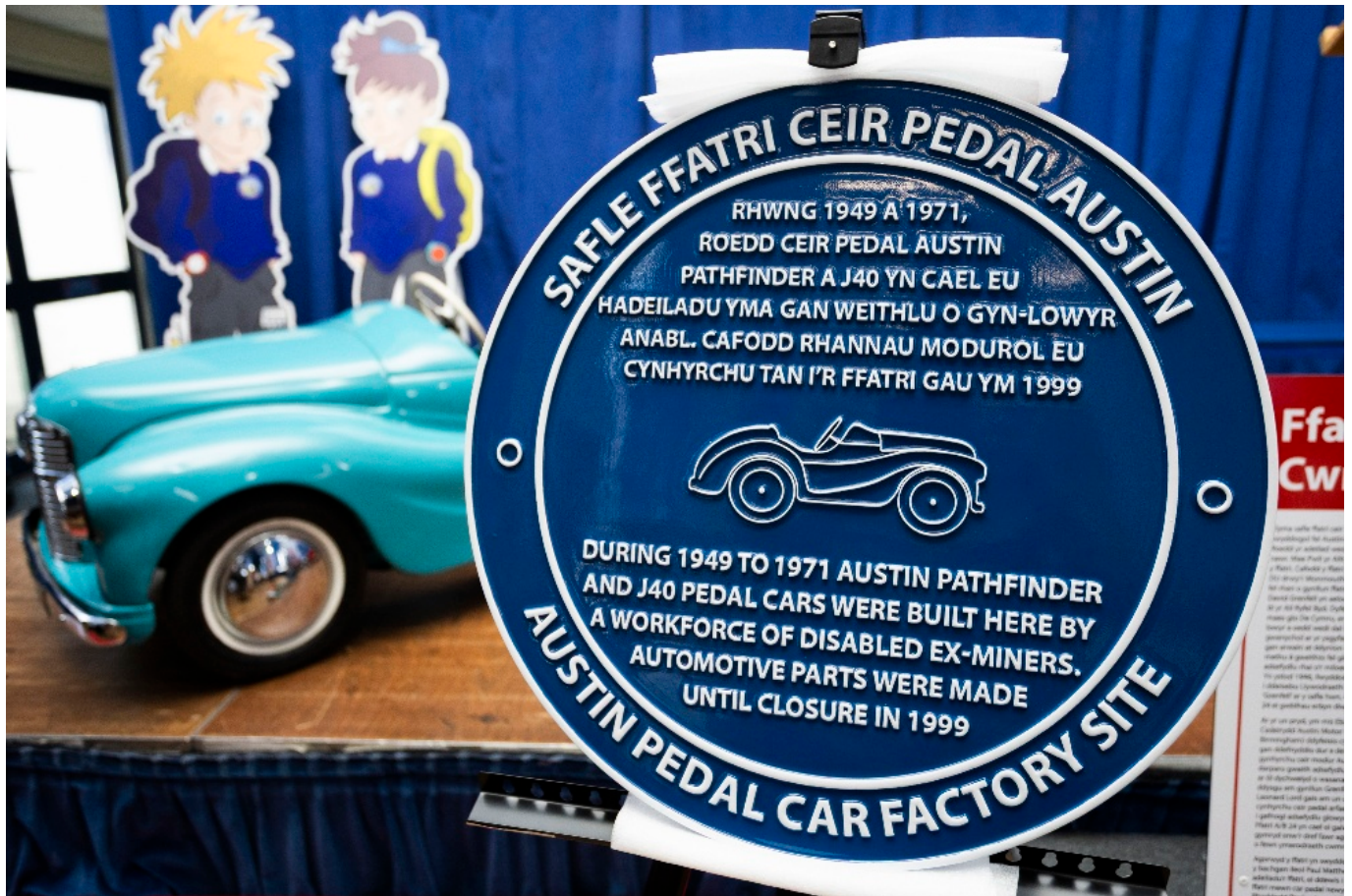
Legacy of Austin pedal cars honoured with Blue Plaque at original factory site in Bargoed

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The new Blue Plaque.

Austin Pedal Cars tells us...

Historic Blue Plaque unveiled to celebrate Austin pedal cars factory in Bargoed, Wales

- Austin factory produced the J40 and Pathfinder pedal cars from 1949 until 1971 and continued



to make parts up to its closure in 1999

- **Blue Plaque unveiling attended by councillors, dignitaries, former employees and children from the Tir-y-Berth Primary School**
- **Austin Pedal Cars worked with Caerphilly County Borough Council, and funded the plaque, to celebrate historic site**
- **Austin Pedal Cars founded in 2020, offering a full range of parts for the J40, extensive restoration services, classic J40 sales and the J40 Continuation.**

Salisbury: 7th July 2025

Austin Pedal Cars and Caerphilly County Borough Council are extremely proud to announce the unveiling of a Blue Plaque at the former site of the original Austin pedal car factory in Bargoed, Wales. The plaque, soon to be on permanent display outside of the Tir-y-Berth Primary School, is the closest landmark to the location of the factory where the historically significant Austin J40 and Pathfinder pedal cars were produced from 1949 until 1971.



Children at the Tir-y-Berth Primary School, before the unveiling.

The Blue Plaque was officially unveiled by Mike Sheehan, the first Trainee Manager at the site and David Hook, the longest serving and last employee at the factory. They were joined by Cllr Jamie Pritchard, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Transformation, the Mayor of Bargoed, Howard Llewellyn, Jamie Burnett of Austin Pedal Cars, and David Whyley, renowned Austin J40 expert, Austin Pedal Cars historian and author of the company's award-winning book, *The Austin Pedal Car Story*.

Other special guests at the unveiling event included Tony Osbourne, the last factory key holder, Margaret Fuller, Office Secretary, Gwyn Palmer, the factory nurse, Tudor Owen, the Press Shop Foreman and Alan Esau, the factory Tool Repairer.

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Two very special Austin pedal cars were displayed. One was a Pathfinder driven to the entrance of the brand



new Austin factory in 1949 by five-year-old Paul Matthews, who then handed the scissors to the Chairman of Gelligaer Urban Council for the official opening on the 5th July. The other was the last J40 to be pedalled off the production line in 1971, a sad moment in the factory's history, and the end of a magnificent era of British car manufacturing.



First Pathfinder and last J40.

This very special moment recognises the incredible history of the world famous pedal car based on the globally successful Austin A40 Devon and Dorset. It also celebrates a unique piece of British automotive manufacturing history and a factory that was an intrinsic part of the social fabric of Bargoed and South Wales. Originally called the Austin Junior Car Factory, the company was initially created to provide employment for disabled ex-miners from the region who had developed respiratory illness from working in the coal mines.

Following the demolition of the factory in the early 2000s there was nothing in place to mark where this



innovative factory had once stood. Austin Pedal Cars Director, Jamie Burnett, and J40 expert David Whyley have wanted to mark the location for a number of years, David working for many months with David Hook and Caerphilly County Borough Council to agree a suitable location. The plaque itself was funded by Austin Pedal Cars.



Ex J40 factory workers were present at the Blue Plaque unveiling.

“The unveiling of this Blue Plaque is a fitting tribute to the incredible heritage of the Austin pedal cars factory and its lasting impact on the local community. For decades, this factory was not just a place of innovative manufacturing, but a source of pride and opportunity for local families”, said Councillor Jamie Pritchard, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Transformation. “Celebrating this legacy reminds us of our rich industrial history and the importance of preserving it for future generations. We are honoured to recognise the factory’s role in shaping both the local economy and the childhoods of so many.”

As part of Austin’s global manufacturing facilities, the factory was also instrumental in training many Austin employees in car production before they moved on to build full size Austin cars. Many senior Austin



managers have passed through the doors of the Austin pedal cars factory in their early years, including Harold Musgrove, Mike Sheehan and Dick Perry.

Austin's pedal car started off as a 'little idea' in the mind of then Austin Chairman, Leonard Lord, an idea turned into reality in secret by the J40's designer, Jim Blaikie. He and his team at the Austin plant in Longbridge created a prototype that set the miniature car on a road to playing a significant role in thousands of childhoods.

Every J40 pedal car was made in the same way as the full-size Austin cars, produced from metal and parts transported from Longbridge. They even had similar features, including working headlights and horn, detachable wheels with Dunlop tyres, vinyl seats and an opening bonnet and boot to ensure authentic childhood motoring adventures.

When production came to an end in 1971, the factory at Bargoed had produced a total of 32,098 Austin J40 and Pathfinder pedal cars, many of which had found homes around the world. King Charles even received one as a present on his fourth birthday in 1952, a specially produced J40 Junior Roadster Special that remains in the Royal Collection.

The end of J40 production was not the end for the Bargoed factory though, as it continued to produce automotive parts until it finally closed its doors in 1999. It was eventually demolished a few years later.

Appreciation for the pedal cars continued and in 2012 the Goodwood Revival hosted the first Settrington Cup, a race exclusively for the Austin J40 with a Le Mans-style start and endearing competitive spirit. among the young racers. It has become a highlight of the famous historic event and is the most watched race of the weekend on the Goodwood live broadcasts.

In 2020, the company now known as **Austin Pedal Cars** was launched by Jamie and Mark Burnett as a division of **Burlen** in Salisbury, Wiltshire. The new company manufactures a full range of parts for the J40 and provides extensive restoration services as well as classic J40 sales. In 2022 it introduced the J40 Continuation, a modern interpretation of the original that is completely bespoke and produced to an exceptionally high standard with the latest in engineering expertise, style and luxury.

"This unveiling was a proud moment for all involved", said Jamie Burnett, Director of Austin Pedal Cars. "The coveted Blue Plaque honours the history of the Austin pedal car and the vital role the factory played in the community of Bargoed and the wider British motor industry. Now it will be forever remembered by the local



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community and visitors alike. My thanks go to David Whyley for his tireless dedication to the Austin pedal cars legacy and for his work to officially recognise this historic site."



Last J40 made.

The legacy of the unique J40 lives on with **Austin Pedal Cars** as they keep the classic J40 pedal car rolling, ready to be enjoyed by children and collectors for generations to come.

The plaque will soon be on permanent display at **New Rd, Tir-y-Berth, Hengoed CF82 8AU**

Further information on the Austin pedal car story, the award-winning Austin Pedal Cars book and the future of Austin Pedal Cars is **available on request**.

About Austin Pedal Cars

Austin Pedal Cars secured the Austin trademark in September 2022 allowing it to manufacture pedal cars officially, and exclusively, along with a number of related products and services, using the Austin name. The



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company offers a full range of spares for the Austin J40, designed to original specifications, using modern techniques, for a perfect fit and the highest quality. It also provides a range of restoration options to perfectly suit all types of J40 owner as well as bespoke, handcrafted J40 continuation models
<https://www.austinpalcars.com/parts>

The full story of this famous piece of motoring history can be explored in **The Austin Pedal Car Story**, the definitive book written in partnership with Austin J40 expert, David Whyley. The comprehensive book uncovers new information, stories, and images to tell the full story of this important Austin car and the title received the accolade of **Book of the Year at the prestigious Royal Automobile Club Awards in 2024**. <https://www.austinpalcars.com/the-austin-pedal-car-story>