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Eastern Daily Press

Photograph sparks memories of a pocket money-priced car

Richard Batson

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It was a classic car that cost a schoolboy four terms worth of pocket money, and went on to be his commuter transport as a young bank worker.

And a picture of the 1929 Austin 7 which appeared in the EDP's Down Memory Lane feature last week, unlocked a boot full of memories for its former owner.

Richard Howard owned the special lightweight bodied Stadium model when it starred in the Kenning car showroom window in Norwich's Prince of Wales Road in 1972.

"I bought the car in 1964 when I was at Gresham's school. I saw it while out on a bike ride, and asked my dad for four terms worth of pocket money - £8 - to buy it from a builder at High Kelling."

As soon as he could drive it became his transport to work at banks in Holt and Norwich - but he sold it for £750 to buy a Ford

"It was a sweet little car. It only did 40mph, had awful brakes, and lights. It never let me down and was £8 well spent."

Richard Howard

Escort in 1972 which was more suitable for a longer commute to Bungay.

"I didn't really want to sell it, but my dad said I would never beat that price. In 1987 I saw it advertised in a classic car magazine for £5,000," said Mr Howard from Cawston.

Just before the reluctant sale he displayed it in the Norwich showroom where his builder father bought his cars and vans.

The Stadium car was among a range of lightweight bodies made by former designer of first world war aircraft and gliders E C Gordon England, using a works at Wembley, hence its name. Only 350 of the Stadium specials were built and only a handful survive, said Mr Howard.

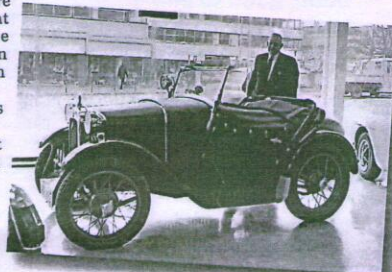
"It was a sweet little car. It only did 40mph, had awful brakes, and



■ Top and above right, Richard Howard of Cawston with memorabilia from his old Austin 7, which appeared in the EDP's Down Memory Lane recently - that picture from 1972 is below. Above left, John Andrews' photo of the Austin 7, taken on its trip to London.



Pictures: ANTONY KELLY/SUBMITTED



lights, so you had to anticipate problems ahead - and it taught me to drive well.

"It never let me down and was £8 well spent," Mr Howard recalled.

"It did stop going up Edgefield Hill once when all the fuel ran to the back of the tank - but I just

turned it around and reversed up there," he added.

The memories of the car were also revived last year, when Mr Howard bumped into a fellow Austin 7 enthusiast while buying spark plugs in Norwich - and discovered customer John Andrews from Cromer had also owned the same car UV5886.

Mr Andrews, 76, from Holt Road, had owned it from 1958, buying it from Allen's garage in the town where he worked as a mechanic.

It cost him £45 and was his first car too - and did one memorable round trip to London, Briston and Derby in a couple of days.

There are pictures of it near Big Ben and Trafalgar Square which Mr Howard also found in a letter in his late father's desk.

Mr Howard used to take it to Austin 7 rallies, including one at

Houghton Hall with friend Dick Joice, the former TV Bygones presenter, who invited actor Richard Hearne (children's entertainer Mr Pastry) to judge the entries.

He does not know where the car is now, but remains an Austin 7 fan, having owned a total of five, including a self-built Cup special replica currently undergoing some further restoration.

The former private school bursar, who also restored cars and furniture, has taken his Austin to the cadet force engineering workshop at Gresham's school to show students how cars used to be made.

■ Have you got any stories about favourite old cars or restoration projects? Contact newsdesk@archant.co.uk.