

AUSTIN 1800 *mk. II*



THE differences in the Mark 2 version of BMC's Austin 1800 — long known as "the land crab" because of its somewhat ungainly appearance — are only small, but they are very significant.

In two particular departments — performance and steering — they wipe out our only real complaints about the old 1800 and make it, despite two price rises within a few months, one of the best bargains on Australian roads.

If they'd only make the thing look as good as it really is, BMC would have the sales winner on their hands that they deserve — and need. But BMC have always under-rated the importance to-day's market puts on styling.

Basically the new car is little different from the Mark 1 1800. Styling changes have been made to both front and rear panels but these are of a fairly superficial nature. The rear fenders have been extended slightly to give the car a more pleasing overall line, and increase boot space, too.

The radiator grille is restyled, and turn indicator/parking light cluster enlarged.

A stainless steel strip which you occasionally saw fitted on Mark 1s, and which in our opinion made a

world of difference to the look of the car, is standard on the Mark 2.

Internally, the instrument panel is restyled and rocker switches marked with international pictographic symbols replace the Mark 1's toggles.

There is some evidence of cost paring in the 1800's interior, but it is very slight.

For instance, the Mark 1's generous front seats aren't quite so generous any more. They still provide pretty luxurious comfort nonetheless, and the

back seat still offers an astonishing amount of sprawling room.

Carpet is standard, and trim material a good quality expanded vinyl. Now available on the Mark 2 is a very stylish "white" trim which, BMC say is easy to keep clean, and cool in hot weather.

Changes in the engine compartment are slight, but they make a marked difference to the way the car performs. Motor is the 1798 cc. B series block, which first appeared years ago on the MGB. On the 1800 it is, of course,

RIGHT: New rocker switches replace toggles in 1800's roomy cabin; generous parcel tray is split by console.

BELOW: New extended rear fenders, vertical lights, steel strip give 1800 a longer look.

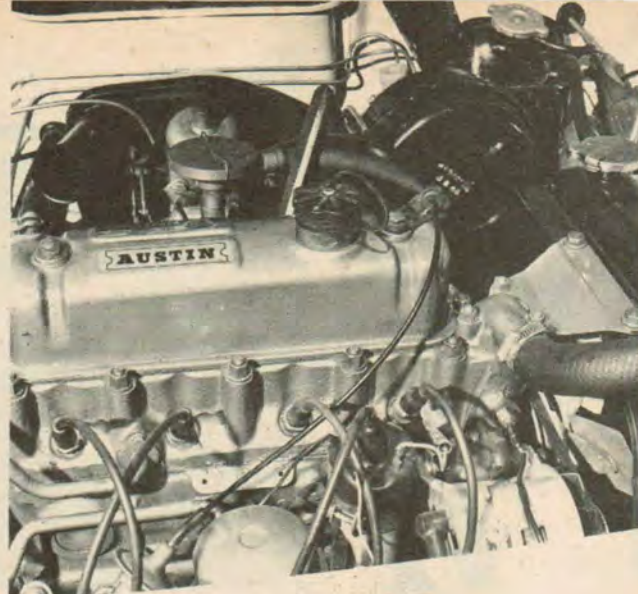
TOP: New grille and light cluster.



**MODERN
MOTOR
road
TEST**

**BMC makes
its land crab
lovelier —
and much
easier to
live with, too**

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coupled to a front-wheel-drive gearbox/differential unit.

This motor now develops 87 bhp, compared to the Mark 1's 84. This modest increase is achieved by a re-designed cylinder head giving better gas flow characteristics, larger inlet valves, and an improved inlet manifold.

Compression ratio is up from 8.4 to 8.6 to 1, and torque is up from 100 lb. ft. at 2200 rpm to 101 lb. ft. at 2200.

Despite the slight variations in specification, the difference on the test strip is remarkable.

The Mark 2 recorded a true top speed of 93.7 mph and, thanks to a speedometer that told enormous fibs, could be wound "right off the clock" when any long straight stretch of road opened up in front.

It isn't just top speed either. We managed a best standing quarter-mile of 19.5 sec., while the slowest of the four we did was 19.8! The fastest standing quarter we ever managed in an 1800 previously was 21.1 sec. and the best top speed we've recorded was 86 mph—so BMC engineers have made headway in these departments at least.

Of course, the 1800 felt faster than

it really was because of that highly optimistic speedo — nearly 3 mph fast at 30, 7 mph fast at 60, and a full 10 mph fast at 70! Black mark, BMC.

After taking our acceleration runs which were — with that speedo error — very impressive indeed, we corrected back to find that the Mark 2 was quite a bit more accelerative than the Mark 1.

Comparison figures are (with Mark 1 in brackets), 0-30 mph 4.6 sec. (5.7), 0-40 7.2 (8.5), 0-50 10.3 (13.2), 0-60 14.4 (18.3), 0-70 20.2 (28.1). All good gains these, and an improvement that makes the 1800 a much more enjoyable car on the road.

No longer is it an old granny at traffic lights, and while not about to blow off a big six Holden or Falcon, it won't be disgraced.

Maximum speeds in the gears are 27 (a bit of a stump puller this), 47, and 71. Third gear is a good highway cog with enough bite to make it useful for overtaking fastish movers on the highway.

The 1800 is geared to do just on 17 mph/1000 rpm in top, which means that it sounds pretty busy once speeds over 70 mph are reached.

Fuel consumption doesn't seem to have suffered appreciably from the car's improved performance. The last Mark 1 we drove returned 25 mpg over a long trip. The Mark 2 we've just driven averaged 24 mpg.

The 1800 uses hydrostatic suspension, which gives a very level ride in good surfaces, but is inclined to be bouncy over short dips and rises.

On gravel, the 1800 handles very predictably, understeering strongly all the way, and responding to a closing of the throttle by tucking the nose in tighter in typical fwd fashion.

The suspension is fairly quiet in operation, but on this particular test car there was a considerable amount of feedback through the steering, and the column itself rattled badly. Perhaps there was something amiss in this department.

Slight mechanical changes at the front end have lightened the 1800 steering admirably—thereby removing our last complaint about this otherwise superbly practical car.

Radial ply tyres are standard on the 1800, and while these certainly improve adhesion, handling, and steering sensitivity, they do contribute a certain harshness which can't be damped out of the suspension completely.

Braking arrangements are mainly good. A servo-assisted front disc/rear drum combination is used, and while there was no evidence during our test of serious fade, the pedal grew hard under our braking foot during a sustained high-speed run along our regular circuitous test route.

Behaviour under heavy braking was entirely predictable. Panic stops in an 1800 are accompanied by two particularly noticeable phenomena—a pronounced drop in the nose of the car, and a very strong impression of deceleration. The 1800 recorded several crash stops in the order of .88g which is pretty impressive. A pressure-limiting valve prevents wheel lock-up.

After several hundred very comfortable miles in the Mark 2, we are more convinced than ever that it is very good value for money.

Manufacturer: British Motor Corporation, Victoria Park, NSW.
Test car supplied by them.
Price as tested: \$2476.

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE

Water-cooled, four cylinders in line, cast iron block, five main bearings.
Bore x stroke 80.26 x 88.9 mm.
Capacity 1798 cc.
Compression 8.6 to 1
Carburettor single SU HS6
Fuel pump mechanical
Fuel tank 10½ gallons
Fuel recommended super
Valve gear pushrod ohv
Max. power (gross) 87 bhp at 5300 rpm
Max. torque 101 lb. ft. at 2200 rpm
Specific power output 48.1 bhp/litre
Electrical system 12v, 50 amp hr. battery, alternator

TRANSMISSION

Four-speed manual all synchro gearbox, single dry plate clutch.

Gear	Ratio	Mph/1000 rpm	Max. mph
Rev.	3.075	—	—

1st	3.292	—	27
2nd	2.059	—	46
3rd	1.384	—	72
4th	1.000	16.7	94
Final drive ratio	4.187 to 1		

CHASSIS

Wheelbase 8ft. 10in.
Track front 4ft. 8½in.
Track rear 4ft. 7½in.
Length 7ft. 7in.
Width 5ft. 7in.
Height 4ft. 7½in.
Clearance 6in.
Kerb weight 1 ton 1 cwt.
Weight distribution front/rear 63/37%
lb/bhp 30 lb.

SUSPENSION

Front: Independent wishbones, lower trailing links, hydrostatic displacers.
Rear: Independent, swinging longitudinal trailing arms, anti-roll bar, hydrostatic displacers.
Brakes: 9½in. disc/9in. drum, servo assisted; 282 sq. in. of swept area.
Steering Rack and pinion
Turns lock to lock 3.8
Turning circle 37ft.
Wheels: Steel disc with 175 by 13 tubed radial ply tyres.

PERFORMANCE

Top speed 93.7 mph
Average (both ways) 92.1 mph
Standing quarter-mile 19.6 sec.

Acceleration

Zero to	sec.
30 mph	4.6
40 mph	7.2
50 mph	10.3
60 mph	14.4
70 mph	20.2
80 mph	31.8

	3rd
20-40 mph	5.2
30-50 mph	6.4
40-60 mph	6.1
50-70 mph	7.5

BRAKING: Five crash stops from 60 mph.

Stop	percent G	pedal pressure
1	.88	48 lb.
2	.88	49 lb.
3	.85	50 lb.
4	.78	54 lb.
5	.72	56 lb.

Consumption: 24.1 mpg over 362 miles, including all tests.

Speedo error:

Indicated mph	30	40	50	60
Actual mph	27.2	36.0	45.1	53.2