



An improvement on the original Land Crab is the new . . .

AUSTIN 1800 MK II

Whatever you think about its looks it should be the epitome of reliability and mechanical refinement, if nothing else.

WHOMEVER nicknamed it the Giant Land Crab was speaking more than just the proverbial true word in jest. The Mk I Austin 1800 not only looked like a giant crab, it also handled a bit like you'd imagine one might.

We'd like to report that the Mk II is all sweetness and light with all the little faults of the Mk I ironed out into a pleasant-looking, peppy performer. Sadly this isn't quite the case. Granted it is a much more refined crab with a nicer nature and quite a bit more heart through the gears — though the top speed is much the same. It's also a prettier crab. The ugly rump of the Mk I has given way to a pleasingly — and functionally — rounded off rear with bigger, easier-to-see taillight assembly which is quite smart.

Inside you still get the impression you're driving a bus: upright driving

position with the wheel steered from above, tram-fashion. Perhaps this is why it takes most corners as if it's on rails but all that is by-the-by.

In its new form the Mk II looks set for a brighter future, both in Australia and abroad. Already in England the Mk II has sold more in a month than the ill-fated, trouble-plagued Mk I did in its entire career. There, however, a swarm of bugs almost drove BMC's engineers out of their minds till they found one bug had bitten the dipstick markings causing conscientious owners to accidentally overfill their sumps — and unwittingly blow their engines. The story is a sad one and bears repeating if only for the fact it didn't happen here.

Early in 1966 the Mk I started reappearing at dealerships round England with its grim-faced owner. The story was almost always the same: burnt pistons and run bearings. Almost always the owners fitted the same trend. They were usually careful owners who did a fair bit of motorway driving. At first the engineers blamed the diamond honing — the fastidious polishing of

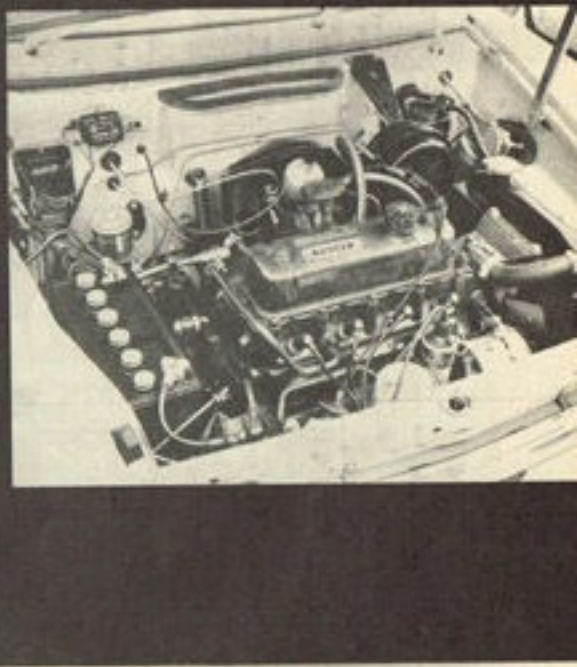
the bores calculated to give the engine an 80,000 mile trouble-free life without overhaul. The experts figured the cylinders were too smooth and the oil wasn't sticking to them.

Thousands of Mk Is were repaired under guarantee. And the trouble persisted. BMC was frantic. The dealers were livid. And experiment after experiment was desperately tried till finally discovered there was no mechanical reason for the oil overheating and the pistons seizing. It was the loving owners who were the cause of the trouble — together with an incorrect level mark on the dipstick. The sump level had been set too high. This in itself was not so bad — except when the loving owner "gave her a little bit extra for the journey" and slightly overfilled the sump. Then

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Neat layout and most accessible. Not an awful amount of power, but it just goes and goes.

Front seat (and back for that matter) is roomy and comfortable.



it happened. You got up to cruising speed on the motorway (and the 1800 is designed to cruise at near maximum, certainly in the 80s) and with the rods submerged in oil the oil was soon beaten into a froth and in no time at all the pump was sending up AIR.

The dipsticks were called back and re-calibrated and suddenly the problem disappeared. Except in Australia where, for some reason the problem never appeared. Could it be that we treat our cars a little on the rough side?

Then came the Dreaded Summer Sickness. This was eventually traced to a cross-eyed stencil cutter who got the summer and winter marking round the wrong way. If you got one of the wrong batch you ended up with warm air being pumped into the engine in summer and cold air in winter instead, of course, of the other way round.

This wasn't so bad in itself — except that the intake pipes chafed against the hydrostatic suspension feed line. One day — in a shower of alcohol and suspension green fluid — the body would settle on its rebound pads.

The lid seemed endless. Collapsing rubber couplings on the drive shafts were next. The answer was finally traced to a jerking throttle cable (make sure this has been fixed when you buy a secondhand Mk II). Noisy steering at upwards of 35,000 miles came next. Clutch failures in hatches followed. But

eventually they were all ironed out, one by expensive one at a cost to BMC of around \$400 per car — for 10,000 cars.

Because of this the Mk II is a better machine. Perhaps, you might say, it would have to be. But make no mistake, whatever you think of its looks or its driving position the Mk II is a car of a vastly different color — mechanically at least. Unfortunately half-hearted attempts at re-styling have only slightly lessened the lumpy look.

The automatic won't set the woods on fire performance-wise. But the manual is a boy racer's delight if you don't mind the notchy, long-reaching floorshift.

Room is the 1800's big point. In fact, some motor writers have complained it is too big inside. Be that as it may, the car can't be criticised in any way in the space department. Comfort is at a peak, too, being almost in the armchair class. Luggage space is tops and parcel and map shelves abound. Lateral support for driver and passengers is not so good.

Engine — basically the MCB, longstroke with a five-bearing crankshaft — is remarkable for its flexibility. Speeds in gears aren't startling (30 in first, round 45 in second and 70-odd in third) but the 1800 is deceptively quick in getting from point-to-point.

At first glance the Mk II would

seem a success. Mechanically it should be the epitome of reliability and engine refinement. Certainly the car we used on our torture test gave a good inkling of this. The power has been increased slightly (about 8bhp) as has the torque. Economy has suffered slightly.

But for the family man, the commercial traveller, or the person who is looking for a car for his retired parents, the Mk II could be ideal buying at \$2476 (\$2736 for the auto). He has every right to expect a reliable, completely sorted vehicle which, while not being a beauty contest title winner, represents extra good transport value.

THINGS WE LIKED:

Ease of entry and exit. The way the door bottoms don't catch on the footpath.

Extra-efficient wipers that self-park but will stop if so directed in any position. Tricky, till you get used to it.

Super roominess, both in the cabin and boot.

Wide torque range.

THINGS WE DIDN'T LIKE:

Uninspiring dash with vague, strip speeds.

Awkward door shutting drill. You have to twist your arm to grip the underside of the arm rest.

Out-of-the-way choke. Once you've found it you could easily forget it was there — and on.

Automatic gearlever is easy to get at.



TECHNICAL DETAILS

MAKE:	Austin	OPTIONS:	Nil
MODEL:	1800 automatic and manual	MILEAGE, START:	30641
		MILEAGE, FINISH:	23006
BODY TYPE:	4-door sedan	WEIGHT:	261 cwt
PRICE:	auto, \$2736		
	manual, \$2476		

FUEL CONSUMPTION:	
Overall:	35 mpg
Cruising:	26 mpg

TEST CONDITIONS:
Weather, fine/dry; surface, bitumen bonded gravel; load, two persons; fuel, Super.

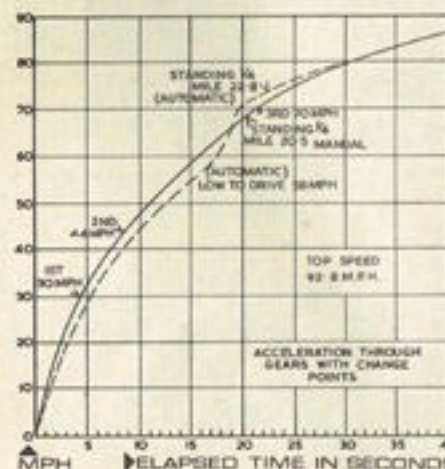
SPEEDOMETER ERROR:	
(Automatic):	
Indicated mph	30 40 50 60 70 80
Actual mph:	26.8 36.3 45 56.4 65.2 75

PERFORMANCE

Piston speed at max bhp	3000 ft/min
Top gear mph per 1000rpm	Manual, 16.4
Automatic	17.4
Engine rpm at max speed	Manual, 5350
Automatic	5385
Engine rpm at cruising speed (85mph)	Manual, 5183
Automatic	4885

MAXIMUM SPEEDS:	
Maximum speeds	92.8 mph
Fastest run	33 mph
Average of all runs	92.8 mph
Speedometer indication fastest run	89.5 mph
In gears: 1st, 30 mph; 2nd, 44 mph; 3rd, 70 mph; 4th, 92.8 mph	
Automatic changed low to drive 58 mph.	
ACCELERATION: (through gears)	
0-30 mph	manual 4.5 automatic 5.5
0-40 mph	7.5 8.2

(Broken line represents automatic figures)



0-50 mph	11.8	13.2
0-60 mph	15.8	18.6
0-70 mph	21.0	23.2
0-80 mph	27.8	31.0

	Automatic	Manual	4th gear
20-40 mph	9.0	7.5	11.5
30-50 mph	5.5	7.5	12.0
40-60 mph	10.4	9.0	12.8
50-70 mph	12.5	10.4	15.8

STANDING QUARTER MILE: Automatic 22.8; Manual 20.5

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE:	
Cylinders	four, in line
Bore and stroke	80.25 mm by 88.90 mm
Cubic capacity	1794 cc
Compression ratio	8.6 to 1
Valves	pushrod overhead
Carburetors	81J-189Q
Fuel pump	mechanical
Power at rpm	87 bhp at 5300 rpm
Torque at rpm	101 lb/ft at 2200 rpm

TRANSMISSION:	
Type	four-speed, all synchro
Clutch	8 ins. dry plate, hydraulic
Gear lever location	floor

OVERALL RATIOS:	Automatic	Manual
1st	2.30 to 1	3.292 to 1
2nd	1.65 to 1	2.050 to 1
3rd	—	1.394 to 1
4th	1 to 1	1 to 1

CHASSIS AND RUNNING GEAR:	
Construction	unitary
Suspension, front	Hydroelastic
Suspension, rear	Hydroelastic
Shock absorbers	Hydroelastic
Steering type	rack and pinion
Turns 1 to 1	3.8
Turning circle	37 feet
Steering wheel diameter	14 ins.
Brakes, type	disc/drum
Dimensions, front	9.3 in. disc/9 in. drums
DIMENSIONS:	
Wheelbase	105.8 ins.
Track, front	54.5 ins.
Track, rear	55.5 ins.
Length	166 ins.
Height	56.1 ins.
Width	68.8 ins.

TYRES:	
Size	175 x 13 tubeless radials
Pressure	38-22
Make on test car	Dunlop TL
GROUND CLEARANCE:	
Registered	61 in.

