

Austin Metropolitan 1957

Göran Åberg



The car is from 1957, chassi number HNK 3 HL-210 623, left hand drive. The production of the Metropolitan was a joint venture between the English Austin Motors and the American Nash Company. The car was originally built solely for the American market with a body resembling the Nash bigger cars. One typical

feature was the front fenders covering half the front wheels limiting the turning radius.

From 1954 on the engine used was from the A40 Futura, like most of the parts in the car keeping costs down, but the American market wanted more power so from 1957 the Austin B engine of 1500 cc was installed. The same engine used in Austin Cambridge, Wolseley 1500, Riley 1.5, MGA, etc. Since Nash didn't want the external by-pass filter "due to extra service" it was omitted from cars to the American market filterage being left to the coarse gauze screen on the pump itself. From 1957 an English version, right hand drive with oil filter, was introduced and also an European left hand version which was a mixture between the American and the English. The one I have got is one of the latter type.

I bought the car in 1966 and used it partly as a field car working as a student/geologist in the mountain chain in the northern part of Sweden. Rural people are known to be more open and friendly than urban people but I was amazed by the reception I got. People were waving their hands at me wherever I went. However, after some time I learnt that there was another white/yellow Met in the area belonging to a local guy. Really a coincidence since only about 178 Mets were sold in Sweden and then mainly as town cars. When I met the guy he wanted to sell me the car as he had found out it was a catastrophe on snowy and icy roads which are the normal conditions up north most of the year.

The original engine on my car was not too good drinking lots of oil. Since there was no oil filter on the old ones (American version, see above) they probably ran down more quickly. But I got friendly with the owner of the local gas station and got free waste oil and also ran the car on 50/50 petrol/kerosene in order to keep costs down. The latter being tax-free and cost almost nothing but the smell from the exhaust was not of jasmine. Since the original engine was rather run down I put in a secondhand Austin A55 engine after some time.

With the A55 engine I made some long trips down in Europe. On one occasion down south in Europe to France. Then over the Pyrenees into Andorra and Spain. Getting into Andorra was special since it was about 40 C and the altitude of 2408 metres (old road before the tunnel) so the road was lined with boiling cars. The Met went along quite OK with the heater on and fan on full speed but suddenly the car stalled. I soon understood that it was not the engine but the fuel that was boiling and wrapped the fuel pump (mechanical), fuel line and carburetor with toilet paper soaked in water. Engine started nicely and the little Met passed the whole queue in good style. Then back through France to Italy, over the Alps and to Sweden. Another trip was around northern England and Scotland. It has been a really good little workhorse and in those days one never bothered if the car had a problem since they were always easily solved in contrast to today's computer run machines.

It really is a summer car but works well in the winter too. Started easily even if it was below -25 C and the heater was quite ok with the standards of that time. Only problem were icy roads, diagonal tires, heavy understeering and light rear. A very bad combination but I used to have a big sack of sand in the trunk in order to get more pressure on the rear tires.

I stored the Metropolitan in 1970 when I bought a MGB of 1965. But in 1980, after 10 years in storage, I fancied it was time to do something about the car so I started overhauling it. Apart from changing bearings, gaskets, brakes (linings-cylinders), etc. I put an extra blade on the sagging rear suspension. Since I had a spare MGB 1800 engine (sold the MGB with a racing engine) I replaced the A55 engine with that one. The MGB one fitted easily but it was some work to hook it up to the Metropolitan gearbox. The electrical system is completely rebuilt to negative ground, all wires changed and upgraded to 1.5-2.5 mm, lights-horn on relays, electric fuel pump, etc. I also fitted an electronic rev counter since the speedometer stops at 125 kph. I have taken the Met up to 6000 revs (25 kph/1000 revs) but that is not advisable since the handling performance is not matching that speed.



In 1991 I moved to Norway so I handed over the car to my eldest daughter since it was far too much trouble bringing it with me because of import rules and high taxes in Norway. The daughter had the car for some years but when she moved to France I got the car back. Had the car stored again before my youngest daughter had it for some years. Then she moved to central Stockholm with all the problems having a car in a big non-car friendly town so I got the car back again for storage.



Some years after retirement we bought a house on Mojacar Playa which gave a good opportunity to bring the Met out of storage, fix it up and had it go through the Swedish ITV before having it transported down to Spain. On a sunny day October 1st 2014 the car arrived in good condition to the smiling owner.



Everything seemed fine now but there was a long way to go before getting Spanish plates. I used a guy on the playa who was said to have the ability to arrange everything concerning matriculation of foreign cars into Spain, but that was not as good as it sounded like. After 4 years with no progress only excuses about problems with the Spanish authorities I demanded my papers back and found out that after 6 months, in spring 2015, the Spanish Traffico had made a mistake and registered the 1957 Metropolitan as an Austin Seven of 1937 model. Then this guy didn't do anything to correct it but filed my papers. So now with my papers in my own hands I used another contact who had to remake the whole process so now after another year, December 2019, I got the car matriculated but in the papers it is an Austin Seven Ruby Saloon from 1957. I know Paul Gough used the same guy on the playa and with similar outcome.



Since it was about 40 years ago I renovated the Met I went through the car again before taking it to the Itv. New brake cylinders, clutch cylinders, re-chromed bumpers and overriders, and resprayed the car in original colours since some corrosion had appeared during the years. Hopefully I will bring the car to the next meeting in the spring after we come back to Mojacar again.