

## *1923 Austin Seven (Nurse Maude's Car)*

First, some background on Nurse Maude. She sailed from New Zealand to England in 1889 to take up training at the Middlesex Hospital in London, first as 'Lady Probationer' and then as the Sister of a ward.

On returning to New Zealand in 1892 she was offered the position as Matron at the Christchurch Hospital. In 1896, after resigning from this position, she then set up what was to become The Nurse Maude Association; the first District Nursing organisation in New Zealand. With the help of a few friends at first, the sick and poor were visited. The people of Christchurch raised the money for a dog-cart and later arrangements were made to pay her one hundred pounds per annum, fifty pounds for her assistant, and a small amount for the office girl. They visited some 5,000 people per year. Lady Rhodes bought her a bicycle and some years later it was decided to buy Nurse Maude a car. Two hundred pounds was raised by public subscription while thirty-five pounds, the balance of money needed, was provided by her lawyer. This was in 1923 and the car chosen was one of the new model Austin Sevens.



*Nurse Maude - The Nurse Maude Foundation*

In later life she was offered the O.B.E. which she refused. However, Lord Bledisloe, the Governor General, came to her rooms and invested Nurse Maude in the presence of committee and staff, with the honour. She died one year later, in 1935.

By 1980 Nurse Maude Association employed 59 District Nurses, 227 Nurse Aids and 193 voluntary workers and ran a home aid service, a linen service and two hospitals with 76 beds and 33 beds.

So now to the car - this was part of a shipment which arrived in December 1923 ex the "Tuakina" and was invoiced on 22 December at two hundred and thirty-five pounds. As Nurse Maude's legs were rather short she became tired of having her foot on the throttle, so she had the bright idea of driving with an open throttle!! with little regard for traffic rules, and certainly had some narrow escapes, but she continued to drive along serenely!

By the way, the Car number is A1.1936 (this is listed as a serial number in Crozier's records). The engine number is M1900. I have found that on most Austin Sevens I have seen, the engine numbers are higher than the chassis number, but in this case that does not apply. It is the correct engine.

Maybe now - a few thoughts on how Nurse Maude would have found the car. Being one of the first type of production Austin Sevens she would have to have started on the handle, as there was no starter motor, and the first type of magneto was a Scintilla which did not give a good spark at cranking speeds. At the end of 1923 they fitted BLICs. However, as she lived on Scarborough

Hill, in the morning she would have had a 'downhill starter'. The garage for the car was cut out of the rock!! She would not slam the door shut as the catches were a pivoting lever type, needing to be closed by hand. Being a woman, she would probably not be hard on the aluminium\* seat backs. With the very short brake levers and 6" brakes, she was lucky there was not much traffic in those days. There were no shock absorbers, and the beaded edge tyres would be pumped up to 40-50 pounds so she would have to hold the steering wheel very lightly, which was a good thing as there is no bracket from the column to the dash board. The car would need maintaining very regularly, especially the front universal joint as it was all steel and bronze with very little room for lubrication, needing greasing very regularly. Further to that it would be a very reliable little car, as I found out years later.

The car re-appeared after the war when it was bought by a North Canterbury lad for seven pounds, ten shillings. It was then driven to Culverden where it was dismantled for restoration. This never happened, so it was sold to Richard Foster who was more interested in Humbers etc. Richard sold it to me, as his father did not want it around. As I had my other one (Car A1.1743) as family transport, I stored it at my friend Maurice Hine's place while we moved to the North Island for a few years.



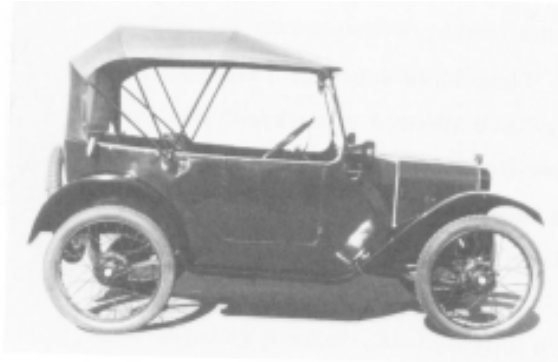
*Photo: Ross Haynes.*

We all had a great time at the Rally. In the evening of the final dinner I drove the Nurse Maude car into the aircraft hanger where the function was being held. It caused quite a stir!

Shortly after the event Ralph Dunwoodie, curator of Bill Harrah's Las Vegas Museum, contacted me regarding buying the older car, so the 'family transport' went to America, while I continued to compete in V.C.C. events and have a lot of fun in the 'Nurse Maude' car. About this time I sold my 1920 Austin 20 tourer, and as a fair amount of money was needed to finish my 1923 Sports Austin 20, I decided to sell the Seven. It was bought by a group of retired nurses who had worked for Nurse Maude Assn. and who had formed the "Friends of Nurse Maude Association" for the purpose of fundraising, helping, and other activities, to foster the already good name of 'Nurse Maude Association'. The car now lives in the little garage show room in the village at Ferrymead Historic Park, where I go now and again to check it over, blow up the tyres, and talk to it!

Over the years since 1945 when I started my mechanical apprenticeship at Croziers, (Austin main agents, South Island) I have developed my liking for, and knowledge of, early Austins; particularly early Sevens, and have been in the Vintage Car Club of New Zealand since the late 1950s and the Vintage Austin Register since the first year that Peter Fry started it here in 1969, and am still involved; at present owning a fairly original 1927 tourer Seven, and a fake 1929 Super Sports.

*\* Note from David Cochrane (Pram-Hood Registrar): Phil Baidon and I only know of seat backs being made in steel - we would be grateful if owners of 1923 cars could let us know what material their seat backs are made from! Please contact via e-mail: [pramhood@ingineur.co.uk](mailto:pramhood@ingineur.co.uk) or the address in the back of the magazine.*



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*David Cochrane has kindly passed this further article, concerning Nurse Maude, on to us. It makes quite a read and gives further insight to her character. **RD***

Extract from “**Nurse Maude – The first 100 years**” published by the Nurse Maude Foundation, PO Box 36-126, Merivale, Christchurch, New Zealand.

It soon became apparent that Nurse Maude was an extrovert behind the wheel. She was an exuberant driver, reckless even, and thoroughly enjoyed taking her friends for outings. She knew nothing about the mechanics of the car. As long as it would go, and travel fast, that was all she wanted. Her friend Miss Elmsie gave a full description of what it was like to go travelling with her.

“Being short in the leg, she found it somewhat tiring to keep her foot pressed on the accelerator all the time and soon hit upon the dodge of driving with an open throttle and not bothering with her feet at all, but there were times when she forgot about the throttle being open and pressed down her feet as well - and the car fairly leapt along... She usually drove well in the middle of the road, throttle wide open, nodding and waving to old friends and acquaintances as she passed by and wrenching wildly at the steering wheel when the car showed an odd inclination to cross the road and mount the kerb. But she never had an accident with any serious consequences, and had a nerve of iron. A drive with her into Christchurch had its exciting moments. She usually drove well over 30 miles an hour and would scoot past the old electric trams on the inside... I think it is true to say that never once was she summoned for a traffic offence. The traffic officers literally gave her the freedom of her own home town.”