

# FORD TIMES



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# Report on Those English Cars

*by William D. Kennedy*

“**W**HEN are you people going to bring out a \$1,000-car?” Everybody in the automobile business is getting used to this question. It appears in magazine articles, newspaper quotes, letters and viva voce; the give-away is a leer of triumph on the face of the questioner—a sort of now-I’ve-got-you, wait-till-you-hear-this-one expression.

Perhaps it was because I had heard the query so often that I was so keenly interested in one exhibit in the mid-April show in New York’s Grand Central Palace, put on by British manufacturers of cars, trucks, motorcycles and bikes. With thousands of others I gawked at the experimental turbo jet job, Cobb’s record holder, the folding motorbike—small enough for the baggage compartment, the side-car closed in like a limousine—the astradome bus, and, last but not least, the snappy little sports cars. But what really caught my attention was a sign pointing out **THE LOWEST PRICED CAR IN THE SHOW.**

It was a four passenger car, bigger than the midgets, but smaller than the American standards. Too business-like looking to be called “quaint” or “cute,” but with an odd little foreign cut to the jib. Fine workmanship. Bugs worked out. Road-tested millions of miles by thousands of owners all over the world.

An American manufacturer probably would have had to gamble many millions in tooling and promotion to put a model like this one on the market, with no assurance that he could build up enough volume to get his money back. *And the dealer’s price tag said \$998, delivered in New York.*

It was an Anglia, made by Ford Motor Company, Ltd., of England, and sold in the U. S. by Ford Motor Company, Dearborn. The Prefect, a deluxe companion car manufactured by the same company, costs approximately \$100 more.

These cars are not entirely new to the American market. In





*Anglia chassis—a prize contest will test its possibilities for home-made sports cars (see page 41).*

fact, they have enough of a history behind them to point up some interesting lessons in the economics of distribution. They were put on the domestic market months ago by a number of Ford dealers impressed by their fine workmanship and economy of operation. The experience of Russ Dawson, largest Detroit dealer, is typical of others in this area.

The Anglia was then priced by Detroit dealers at \$1,400; this was before the devaluation of the pound sterling from \$4.03 to \$2.80. At this price Dawson found that it moved very slowly. The cost was too close to that of the American Ford. In spite of the fact that the cars gained high owner-satisfaction because of workmanship and economy, it was difficult to build up enough sales momentum to promise a permanent market. Of course, as Russ Dawson points out, it was not quite a fair test, because Detroit, the biggest auto city, is probably the least auspicious place to launch a foreign car. The shop talk about local products among Detroiters, and their conflicting loyalties, leave little place for word-of-mouth

publicizing of a newcomer, however meritorious. (Dawson has recently re-ordered twelve units, significant of public response, even in Detroit.)

But there is another side of the picture, and quite a different one. Bob Heintzelman, Orlando, Florida, Ford dealer, started selling these cars after devaluation. In a phone interview, he says that the English Anglias and Prefects are now selling in his market in the ratio of *one* to every *five* new American Fords. If anything like this situation prevailed country-wide, you would soon see Anglias and the Prefects on the highways.

Bob has sold many of these cars in his area—enough that present sales are being boosted by a sizable ground-swell of owner-satisfaction expressed in word-of-mouth publicity. He believes that the market is beginning to look like a permanent one. He says his competition is almost entirely \$1000 *used cars* of all makes, and that Anglia and Prefect owners are reporting that their operating costs—gas, oil, repairs, etc.—are running just about half what they would have expected if they had bought a used car in the \$1,000 price class.

Weather and geography probably favor the newcomers in Florida, but as a matter of fact, owners have found that the English cars perform satisfactorily in snow and mud, on mountainous terrain, and under other unfavorable conditions.

All in all, it should be interesting and instructive to watch the progress of these cars over the next few years. At least we now have an answer to the people who have been demanding a \$1,000 car. Want a ride?

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Another item in the Ford exhibit that struck me was the Thames Estate Car—call it a station wagon if you insist on being American about it. As shown in the photographs, the two rear seats fold down flat to form a cargo space of 100 cubic feet with a 30-square-foot unobstructed platform so firm they carry sheep around in it in Britain—so we're told. This car is distributed by dealers handling Anglias and Prefects. In New York it sells for less than \$1400, placing it in a price class by itself.

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The Anglia chassis with its neat, trim lines attracted a crowd, and I know, from overhearing several remarks, that the younger generation had the same thought about it that I had. Where could you find anything better to start with in home-





*Thames Estate Car, 7-seater station wagon with fold-down rear seats, is notable for its low operating costs.*

designing and home-building a sports car? The cost is less than the amounts many clubs, tech classes and individual tinkerers are spending in reconditioning old cars for their sports car conversions.

For some time the emphasis has been swinging away from souping up motors toward new body designing. This neat little package might help this trend—a challenge to the ingenuity of the motor-minded younger generation that is working over old cars in garages and metal shops all over the country.

With this thought in mind, we located an Anglia chassis in storage and shipped it out to the custom conversion hot-bed of the country—Los Angeles. It, together with a cash prize of \$500 to help defray the cost of materials for the body work, will be given to the club, team or qualified individual submitting the most interesting automobile body design, by *Motor Trend Magazine*. For details, write *Motor Trend*, Los Angeles 36, California. ■

*Cargo space of Estate Car when rear seats are down. This passenger-cargo combination sells for \$1400 in New York.*

