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For Your (Christmas and New Year) Bookshelf – Seven Years With Samantha (Around the World in a Vintage Austin Seven)

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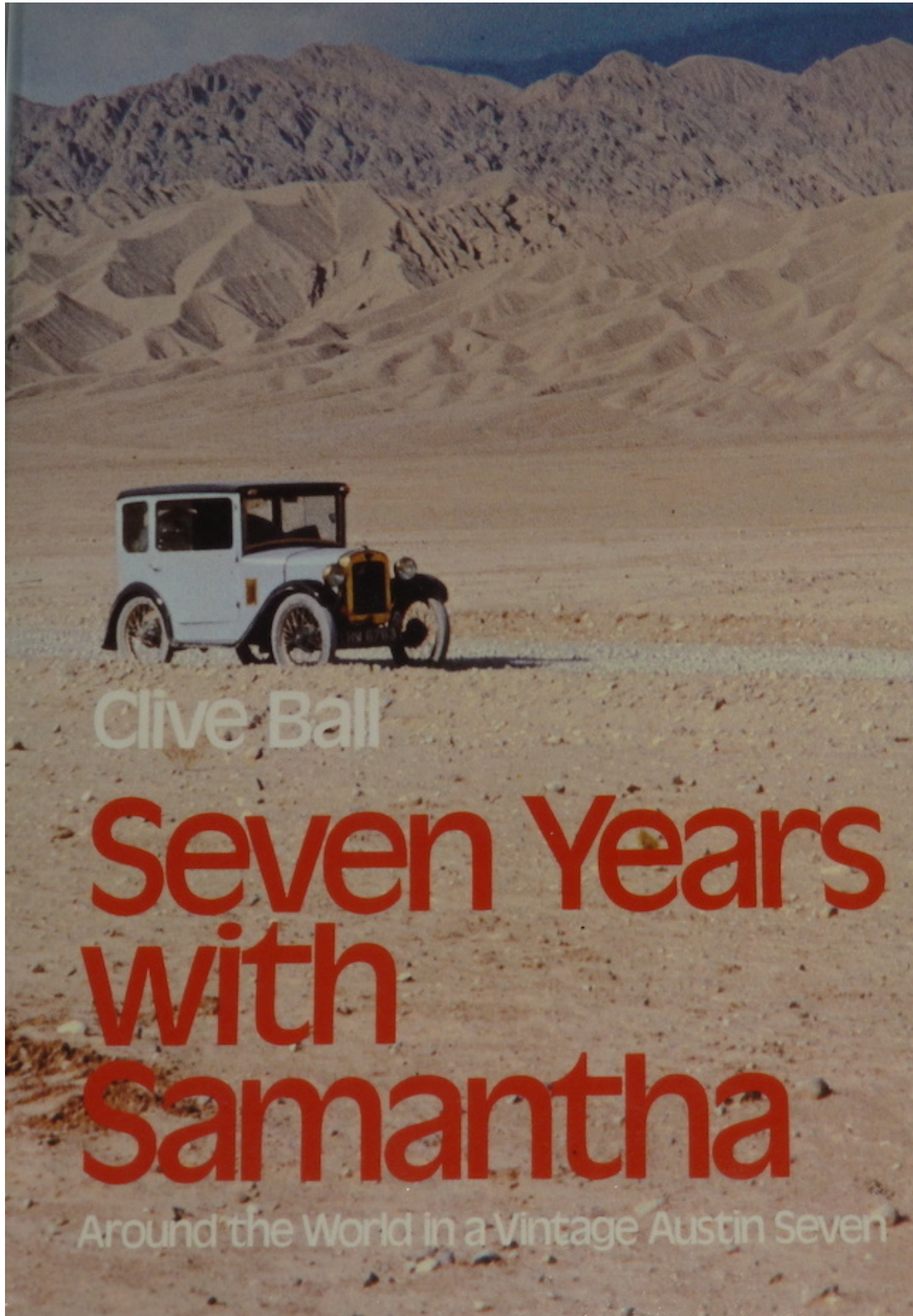
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For Your (Christmas and New Year!) Bookshelf – Seven Years With Samantha (Around the World in a Vintage Austin Seven)

Reviewed by: [Kim Henson](#)

Author: [Clive Ball](#) (with black and white photographs by the author, plus drawings by Cedric Baxter)

Published by: [Patrick Stephens Ltd.](#) (First edition September 1974)

[248 pages \(hardback\)](#)

UK Price: [Varies \(no longer in print but used copies are available from a variety of sources\).](#)
[Current typical prices \(December 2022\) within the UK range from around £40 to £90. \(Plus delivery\).](#)

ISBN: [0 85059 168 6](#)

I knew of this book back in the 1970s, and had always wanted to read it, not least because in 1978 I was planning a similar 'Around the World' jaunt in my much newer (1955) Austin A30, 'Pru', which at that time was just 23 years old (it would have been 24 by the time I set off in 1979), whereas when Clive Ball started out in his 1929 to circumnavigate the globe, his Vintage Austin Seven was already 36 years old. The idea of this amazing journey captured my imagination.

However, somehow through the decades I missed the opportunity to read this book – until this year, when I was delighted to receive a copy as a present (thank you Rachel!) and at last I was able to read of Clive Ball's – and Samantha's – exploits.

Even just looking at the cover of this book fired my interest once again. The cover photo, in colour, depicts Clive Ball's diminutive old Austin in a huge, barren and hostile-in-appearance desert wilderness. To take an already old car, on an adventure on such a grand scale, and



without knowing what awaited along the way, took a great leap of faith in the vehicle and bravery on the part of the author to undertake such a trip.

The author describes how he acquired his Austin Seven, named 'Samantha', in a derelict state and how the car was readied for this epic adventure.

The progress of the journey and the amazing happenings along the route are described in detail, as Clive Ball kept a diary of each day's events, and used this record when writing his book.

It is easy to read, well-written and conveys the author's absolute determination to overcome each obstacle (and there were many!) as it arose, also his sense of humour which came in useful in many situations.

The author's own black and white photographs add to the story, including those showing his Austin Seven in a variety of situations, often with the car in very remote locations, and on one occasion when it seemed likely that the end of the trip had been reached prematurely...

I also liked the 'line drawings, also descriptive, used at the start of each chapter.

I was especially interested in reading how essential maintenance operations and running repairs were carried out, often at the roadside and usually single-handedly, although occasionally with the assistance of local workshops to cleverly fabricate parts from scratch, to ensure that the Austin kept motoring.

Across Europe and eastwards through many countries (such as Afghanistan, for example), where travel today would not be possible for political reasons, the Austin kept going and gamely continued on its way, despite appallingly bad road conditions in many areas.

I found it fascinating to learn about the various countries through which Clive Ball travelled, and the very different political landscapes that existed in the late 1960s/early 1970s. His necessary and extensive patience in crossing borders and dealing with bureaucracy galore



during those crossings and on other occasions during the trip, is also highlighted in the text. The threat of roadside bandits was ever-present too, in many remote areas.

I don't want to spoil the story by giving away too many details, but one of the many aspects of this book that really brought it to life for me were the accounts of many people that Clive and Samantha encountered along the route. These included enthusiasts of older cars but also many others whose kindness and local knowledge helped the journey along.

Eventually Australia was reached, where, in Perth, Clive Ball met the girl (Sheila) who was soon to become his wife. Together they continued journeying in Samantha, including travelling through Australia and New Zealand, also driving from north to south through 'The Americas', before eventually returning to London via Spain, from Buenos Aires in Argentina.

Great credit is due to Clive Ball for undertaking this momentous seven year journey, which completely changed his life, and of course to the Austin Seven named 'Samantha', which so pluckily tackled every type of road and surface (sometimes 'no road and no surface!') imaginable, and which kept going, through 48,000 miles of adventuring.

VERDICT

As regular readers will know, I am very fond of reading motoring books of all types, but 'Seven Years With Samantha' is one of the most enjoyable that I have ever read. I wholeheartedly recommend it to anyone interested in motoring in general, and old cars in particular, in 'cross-country' travel on a global scale, and in the personalities of people encountered around the world.

What a story this is, and shows that 'anything is possible' with optimism and determination to succeed. I am thankful that Clive Ball wrote this brilliant account, of a journey that I almost emulated in the late 1970s.

My personal rating? Ten out of Ten – a delightful motoring book.



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