

BOOK REVIEW - Alan Gulleford

Some Steps towards Modern Motoring

The Thoroughbred Motor Car 1930-1940, David Scott-Moncrieff

Manufacture

Machining and assembly made tremendous strides between 1930 and 1939. Few people know it, but full automation was achieved in the 1920s. When William Morris took over the old Hotchkiss works, he attempted to machine cylinder blocks in such a manner that they went from fettled castings to finished product without being touched by human hand. Woollard of Morris Motors, ably assisted by a very bright young production engineer called Leonard Lord, and Wilkins of Wilkins and Mitchell, who actually built the machine, devised it together. It worked, but the transfer machinery was too far ahead of its time to be reliable and so, although the complex machine was in use for many years, the actual transferring from one jig to another was done manually. I understand that some of the multi-drill stages of this pioneer rig are still in use today. (1963)

Coachwork

A fitment that became almost universal in the 1930s, and died with them, was the sunshine roof. In 1934 there was a celebrated lawsuit between Lehwess and Austin. (*The Solcar sunshine roof was patented by Lehwess in 1928. He had made some of his patent specifications and drawings available to Austin on an agreement to take a licence for his roof. Austin patented his own roof and the court determined that some infringements had taken place*). After the cessation of hostilities in the second German war, the big manufacturers encountered great difficulty in putting this popular fitting to death. Only the fact that the nation was desperate for new cars, enabled the manufacturers to get away with its murder. The truth is that a plain steel roof was much easier to make and much cheaper! (*The Morris 8 saloon body was from Pressed Steel Ltd and the fabric covered roof panel was an attempt to reduce drumming*).

Lighting

The problem of beating the dazzle hazard was already very much in people's minds in 1930. There were a vast number of patents. *The Pre Series Eight switched off the drivers headlight and a solenoid dipped the passenger side headlight, known as "cut & dip". The roller blind in the back window of saloons was also there because of dazzle from behind. My 1933 Austin 12/6 used two solenoids to dip both lamps and it had excellent lights.* The invention in the middle 1930s of dual filament bulbs put paid to practically all other methods of headlamp dipping.

Red lamps at the rear of a car, to indicate when the brakes were applied, were an optional extra, apart from the most expensive cars. *In the UK, stop lamps were required by law from 1 January, 1936. Earlier Morris Eights did not have stop lamps or the switch on the brakes to make them operate. Obviously there was a thriving business updating cars at that time. Apparently some Morris 8s with luggage racks had a single tail-lamp which plugged into an outlet on the passenger side of the number plate.*

Accessories

Although all our Morris's had indicators or trafficators as they were known. Many makes did not and a wide and at times strange variety of options was available. Morris 8 saloons and tourers were supplied with bumpers, but vans were not.



Club members at the Rolleston Motor Fest 2020