

Morris-Leon-Bollee

Alan Gulleford, Kaikoura 2020

In 1924, William Morris attempted to break into the French car market by buying the old established company of Leon Bollee. A small manufacturer, established in 1895, this was presumably to avoid import duties and overcome French reserve against “foreign” car makes. Once again this was a personal purchase by Morris, like many of his other purchases of existing firms. He already owned the formerly English engine factory of Hotchkiss, (which is why we have French Metric threads with Whitworth heads in Morris engines). He contracted with the French Hotchkiss firm to supply engines for his new venture. Initially they received all the scrap, poor performing engines and often very late. By 1928 he was fitting Wolseley, (Morris Motors Ltd) engines into the Morris-Leon-Bollee. The business was sold in 1931 and ground to a halt in 1932.

Mystery surrounds the “why” of this venture still and there are many “theories” around this story. The body styles were extremely elegant and the cars were quite powerful. Sales were very poor, perhaps less than 2500. Morris even dabbled with a 3.1 litre straight eight based on the Wolseley 21/60, 10 bearing unit. The cars were intended only for the continent but some Morris dealers sold them in Ireland and Australia. Maybe Australia is where you should start your search if you feel you must own one of these unusual Morris cars! 1930 Sablons saloon shown below.





The Trocadéro was the catalogued four-light coupé or coach style for 1930. (Robin Barraclough)

Morris, The Cars and the Company, Jon Pressnell – Haynes 2013