Morris 8 - Box Spanners - Tommy Bar - Tool Bag

This article features the last of the tools within the Morris 8 tool bag, and takes a close look at the cloth tool bag.

Box Spanners

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Box spanners or tube spanners as they are sometimes referred to, have been a integral item in Morris tool kits for many years. Like some of the other tools in the Morris 8 tool kit, there were no manufacturers stamp on them nor were there sizes for that matter. They were plain nondescript box spanners with a steel blue colour. One nice design feature of the box spanners was that

they were designed to fit inside each other (nesting) (see figs. 2 & 3), much like a set of Russian dolls.

All box spanners had two 8.5mm diameter holes that went right through the side of the tube. This allowed a tommy bar to be inserted to give leverage for turning. The positions of these holes vary slightly but are approximately 1 1/8" (28mm) from either end of the tube for the 4" box spanners, and 1 1/2" (38mm) from either end for the 5" box spanner.
If you are after a set of box spanners and aren't too worried about originality, UK Morris Register member Tim James wrote to say that Melco in the UK sell Whitworth box spanners. I'm not sure if they are the nesting type, but the cost is between £3.50 and £5 each.

The Pre-Series Morris 8 tool kit included only two box spanners; pt. no. 35902 and pt. no. 35903. However in the parts book supplement dated August 1935, these were replaced by three box spanners, ET 140, ET 141 and ET142 at chassis 45000. In the parts book supplement dated November 1937, these three box spanners were again replaced by three more box spanners, pt. no. 39056, pt. no. 39507 and pt. no. 39508 at chassis 165001. It is unclear why there was a change in part numbers as the new replacements appear to be the same as the ones they replaced. Speculation that Morris Motors may have been superseding the "ET" numbers is not supported as the Tommy Bar carrying the identifying code ET300 for example, continued to be so numbered after the war in the Series E tool kit. If anyone has an explanation, please let me know.

Box Spanner (1/4" and 5/16") - Part No. 35903
This box spanner was used from chassis 901 to 44999. As these have proven dificult to locate I am unable to supply a length measurement. It was possibly 4", like other similar box spanners.

Box Spanner (3/8" and 7/16") - Part No. 35902
This box spanner was used from chassis 901 to 44999. Again, details are unable to be provided due to dificulty in locating these. The length may have been 4" or 5". If anyone has an original Pre-series box spanner, could they please confirm the length?

Box Spanner (3/16" and 1/4") - Part No. ET140
Used from chassis 45000 to 165000. Length was 4" (102mm).

Box Spanner (5/16" and 3/8") - Part No. ET141
Used from chassis 45000 to 165000. Length was 4" (102mm).

Box Spanner (7/16" and 1/2") - Part No. ET142
Used from chassis 45000 to 165000. Length was 5" (127mm).

Box Spanner (3/16" and 1/4") - Part No. 39056
Used from chassis 165001 until the end of the Series 2 production. Length was 4" (102mm).

Box Spanner (5/16" and 3/8") - Part No. 39057
Used from chassis 165001 until the end of the Series 2 production. Length was 4" (102mm).

Box Spanner (7/16" and 1/2") - Part No. 39058
Used from chassis 165001 until the end of the Series 2 production. Length was 5" (127mm).

Whitworth (Inch)	Metric (mm)	Inches (Decimal)
3/16	11.3	0.445
1/4	13.3	0.525
5/16	15.2	0.600
3/8	18.0	0.710
7/16	20.8	0.820
1/2	23.4	0.920

Fig. 4 provides a handy reference chart showing the size of Whitworth nuts and bolts in both millimetres and inches. The measurement is taken across the flats of a bolt head.

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

To assist in identifying the correct box spanners I have constructed two simple gadgets (fig. 5). Made from 8mm diameter rod, one is 5" (127mm) high and the other 4" (102mm). On each end a nut of the appropriate size has been welded. On the 5" gadget a 7/16W nut was welded on one end and a 1/2W nut on the other. In addition short lengths of 8mm rod were welded in the position equal to where the holes in the side of the box spanner are located. The 4" gadget , is similar but because there are four sizes for the ends of the box spanners, two extra nuts were welded on the side rods.

Fig. 5 - Tommy Bar - Part No. ET300

Tommy Bar - Part No. ET300

Fig. 6

Fig. 6

Of course box spanners are of no use without a tommy bar (fig. 6) to turn them. The one supplied in the Morris 8 tool kit was 5/16" (8mm) in diameter, had a half round/domed head on one end and measured 6 1/2" (165mm) from under the head to the end. This was a very common design and is found in the tool kits of many marques of collectable cars. However check the length of the tommy bar as a 6" version was also commonly available from other manufacturers.
I have found tommy bars to have two different finishes. Some with a bare metal finish, while others have a blue metal finish. The tommy bars found in original kits are the bare metal type. As the box spanners had a blue metal finish, it's curious that the tommy bars didn't have the same surface finish.

Tool Bag - Part No. 38266

Fig. 7

The tool bag (fig. 7) was a simple design made from a light weight cotton twill, with a leatherette/ rexine binding and cotton ribbons/straps to tie it into a roll. Dimensions vary between the two tool bags I have measurements for, so it is approximately 13 3/4" to 14 1/2" (350 - 370mm) wide and 12 1/4" to 12 1/2" (311 - 317mm) high when open. I would describe the colour of the roll as cocoa brown. The binding around the edge is black although one owner of an original tool bag thought it

may have originally been dark brown. The one inch cotton ties are black. I personally know of only four of these tool bags left in existence, one in New Zealand, one in Australia and two in the UK. I would be very pleased if any reader could let me know of any others that have survived the passage of time.

Tool Bag - Part No. 39098
Fig. 8

In the parts book supplement dated August 1938, there was a change in the tool bag from part no. 38266 to part no. 39098 (fig. 8 & 9). This is the same part number that was used for Series E and Series Z tool bags. The post August 1938 tool bag is made from the same materials as the previous tool bag part no. 38266. It measures 11" (280mm) wide and 16" (406mm) high when open. Unlike the single pocket of part no. 38266, the later tool bag has five pockets sewn in. The binding around the edge is more a dark brown than a black. This was confirmed on one tool bag by unpicking some of the stitching and examining the back of the binding which revealed it was brown. Another difference is the cotton ties were relocated from the top to the side.


Fig. 9

Feel free to contact me with your experiences of collecting Morris tools or to share information on any original tools you have.
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