

January 1991

The **HUMBERETTE**



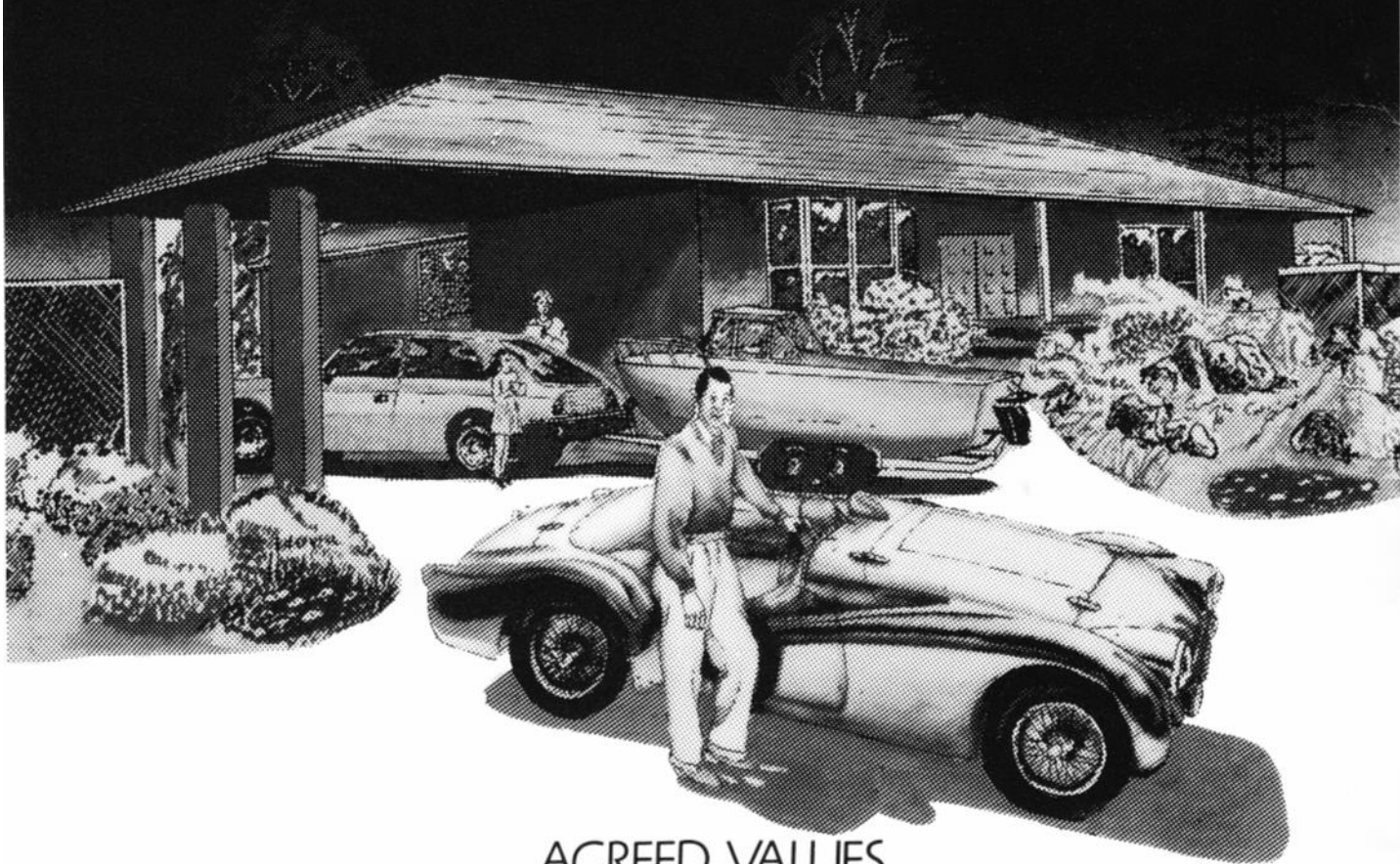
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The Royal Family

Official Newsletter of the
Humber Car Club of
Victoria Inc.

Affiliated with the
Association of Motoring Clubs



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- JANUARY 25TH. FIRST GENERAL MEETING FOR YEAR. DEEPDENE PARK HALL, WHITEHORSE ROAD, DEEPDENE. (MELWAY 46 A7/8). 8.00PM. COME EARLY AND ENJOY AN INFORMAL "CUPPA" AND CHAT BEFORE THE MEETING COMMENCES. NEW MEMBERS AND VISITORS ARE PARTICULARLY WELCOME.
- JANUARY 26TH (SAT.) AUSTRALIA DAY GARDENS DISPLAY, ALEXANDRA GARDENS, CITY. MELWAY MAP 43 J/K 10. (Entries for this display have closed but onlookers are encouraged - this makes a great family picnic day.)
- ***** FOR FURTHER DETAILS OF THIS EVENT AND THE TWO OTHER AUSTRALIA DAY WEEK-END EVENTS LISTED BELOW SEE OVER PAGE.**
- JANUARY 27TH (SUN.) "STRAWBERRY FIELDS" DAY RUN EAST OF MELBOURNE.
- JANUARY 28TH (MON.) DAY RUN ORGANIZED BY VINTAGE DRIVERS CLUB. APPROXIMATELY 80 MILES STOPPING AT POINT COOK METROPOLITAN PARK FOR BYO MORNING TEA THEN TO THE YOU YANGS FOR PICNIC LUNCH.
- FEBRUARY 10TH. "PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK". MT. MACEDON. ORGANIZED BY THE MACEDON RANGES AND DISTRICT MOTOR CLUB. ADMITTANCE FEE. To ensure that the Club parks together at the picnic grounds we will travel up in convoy meeting at the Keilor Shire Offices (Melway map 14 H5) ready to depart at 9.00AM. Light refreshments are available at the grounds but it is advisable to take a picnic lunch.
- FEBRUARY 17TH. CHACA SWAP MEET. THE FRESH CENTRE, FOOTSCRAY ROAD, FOOTSCRAY. (MELWAY MAP 42 H6). 8.00AM - 2.00PM. ENTRY VIA GATE 6. \$2.00 ENTRY PER ADULT.
- FEBRUARY 24TH (SUN) GENERAL MEETING, FOLLOWED BY THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE HUMBER CAR CLUB OF VICTORIA INC. DEEPDENE HALL. 2.00PM.
Mar 2-3 Ballarat swap
- MARCH 3RD. ROOTES GROUP ANNUAL GET-TOGETHER AT BUNDOORA PARK, PRESTON. ORGANIZED BY THE SINGER OWNER'S CLUB. PICNIC AREA NO.7. MELWAY MAP 19 F4. SIMPLE CAR EVENTS, KITE-FLYING (BYO KITE), PEOPLE'S CHOICE ETC. BYO BBQ LUNCH. 11.30AM - 4.00PM.
- MARCH 9TH - 11TH. (LABOUR WEEKEND). 2ND ANNUAL RALLY ORGANIZED BY CASTERTON MOTOR ENTHUSIAST'S CLUB. ENTRIES CLOSE FEB.28TH. ENTRY FORMS AND DETAILS FROM CLUB SECRETARY AT NEXT MEETING OR FROM JIM KENT, P.O. BOX 144 CASTERTON 3311. PH: (055) 81 1414.
- MARCH 16TH. (SAT.) KOO-WEE-RUP POTATO FESTIVAL.AND CHARITY DAY.
(Koo-wee-rup is about a 90 min. drive from Melbourne through Dandenong.) Would anyone willing to enter their Humber in the Saturday morning street parade please collect an entry form at the next meeting.
- MARCH 17TH. ZEPHYR AND ZODIAC CLUB ANNUAL MULTI-CLUB DISPLAY AND FAMILY OUTING AT ELAINE RECREATION RESERVE. (MELWAY MAP 255 C3). Elaine is a small town on the Midland Highway about half way between Geelong and Ballarat. It is approx. 120 Kms from Melbourne taking the Western Highway through Melton to Ballan then the Meredith turnoff to the Midland Highway. The day is designed to be a non-competitive, fun family day. BYO lunch and meet at the Elaine reserve 11.00AM on.
- MARCH 22ND. GENERAL MEETING. DEEPDENE HALL. 8.00PM.

*** PRESENTATION DAY AND CLUB AWARDS 1990. ***

Congratulations to all Concours trophy winners and recipients of Club awards which were presented at the December Break-up party. A full list of winners is printed below.

Congratulations also to all who helped make 1990 a successful Club year. It is your support and continued membership that keeps the Club moving!

CONCOURS TROPHY WINNERS 1990.

MASTER CLASS: Kevin Megee Ser.V SS. MARK & PRE-MARK : Bob Kennedy '34 Snipe.

SERIES CLASS: Geoff Webb Ser.II SS. LIGHT CAR CLASS: No entries.

OUTRIGHT CONCOURS WINNER: Kevin Megee; Series V Super Snipe.

PRIDE OF OWNERSHIP: Bob Bruce; Series VA Super Snipe.

MOST IMPROVED VEHICLE: Alison Bodycomb; Series IV Super Snipe.

PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD: Bob Kennedy; 1934 Snipe.

CLUB SERVICE AWARDS: Vic Wilson; Joan & Bill Holmes; Graeme Finn.

RESULTS OF CHRISTMAS HAMPER SPECIAL EFFORT:

1ST. CHRISTMAS HAMPER: TREVOR YORK. (white ticket no. F 11)

2ND. ROOTES WINE: JAN WILLIMOTT (orange ticket no. E 66)

3RD. TIN BISCUITS: BILLIE-JO BOSNICH. (orange ticket no. D 60)

Thank you to everyone who supported the raffle and sold tickets.



ALEXANDRA GARDENS DISPLAY - SATURDAY 26TH.

Vehicles entered in the display will be able to park on the perimeter of the Gardens (Jeffries Parade) as well as the paths within the Gardens. Please arrive early, (8.30-9.00AM) and look for the Club banner in the parking area. It is suggested you enter Jeffries Pde from either Linlithgow Ave or Alexandra Ave. Melway map 43 10 J/K. Entertainment during the day includes an all day concert, a playfest, F.E.I.P.P., and the light horse brigade.

"STRAWBERRY FIELDS RUN" - SUNDAY 27TH.

Meet at Lilydale Lake Reserve car park, Swansea Road, Lilydale (Melway map 38 G7) at 10.00AM for BYO morning tea. Depart 10.30-11.00AM for a scenic drive through the hills to Sylvan for a BYO picnic lunch and a visit to Jim Chapman's U-Pick strawberry farm. Please bring own containers for picking. Other fruit and vegies available.

POINT COOK HOMESTEAD AND YOU YANGS - MONDAY 28TH.

Meet 9.30AM at Coles NewWorld Car Park, Clarendon St. South Melbourne. (Melway 2F C12). Departing 10.00AM travelling over the Westgate Bridge to Williamstown, following the bay through Altona to Point Cook Homestead for BYO morning tea. Continuing around the Bay through Werribee South and Werribee, then on to the You Yangs Forest Park for a BYO lunch and social get-together. Round trip approx. 80 miles.

THE HUMBER CAR CLUB OF VICTORIA INC.

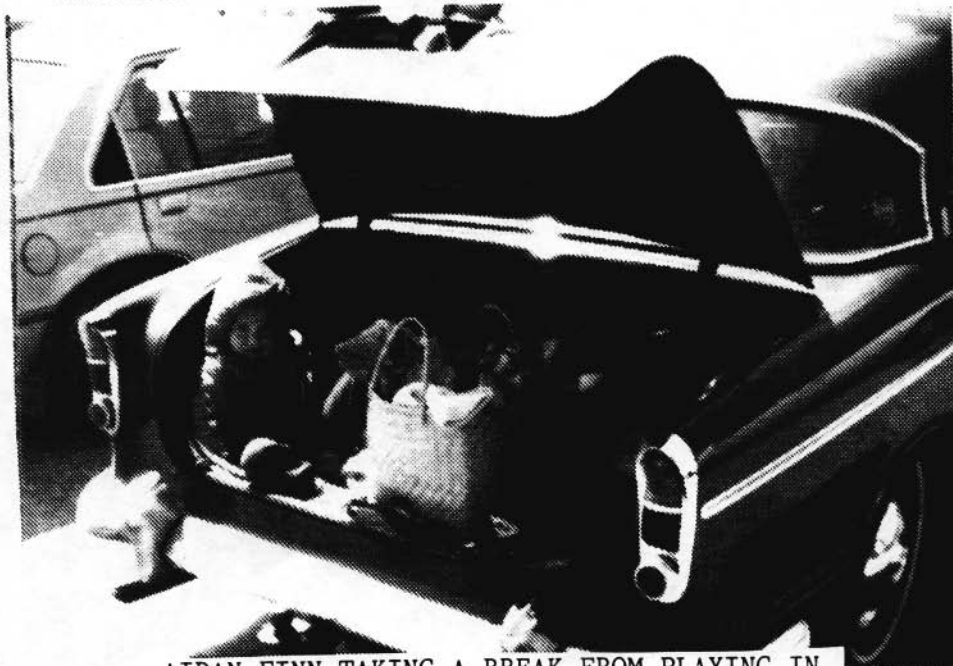
CLUB ADDRESS — 23 HIGH STREET, WATSONIA. 3087

COMMITTEE 1990-91

PRESIDENT	:	Geoff Webb	803 6592
VICE PRESIDENT	:	Margaret Willimott	435 6354
SECRETARY	:	Ian Foreman	
TREASURER	:	Brian Parkinson	842 6753
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY	:	Graeme Finn	497 4231
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EVENTS DIRECTOR	:	Mike Dupla	390 2211
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TECHNICAL ADVISORS	:		
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- Series V, VA S/Snipes	:	A. Goldman	(059) 75 6807
- Hawks	:	K. Willimott	435 6354
- Mk Cars	:	B. Kennedy	789 5119
- General Information	:	B. Kennedy	789 5119
- Auto Electrical	:	M. Fitchett	366 8987



"HUMBERING" THROUGH MT. SAMARA NATIONAL PARK, MANSFIELD.



AIDAN FINN TAKING A BREAK FROM PLAYING IN THE SNOW AT MT. BULLER.

PRESIDENTS REPORT JANUARY 1991.

Firstly I would like to wish every member the compliments of the season and trust that you all had a happy and healthy Christmas and New Year.

I would also like to apologise in advance for my non-attendance at the January 1991 meeting, but I will be on leave in Tasmania.

Last January in my report I floated a couple of thoughts in relation to the make up of the executive committee. My views expressed then related to my personal view that I would like to see a progression from Vice President to President whenever possible. I believe that this assists continuity within the committee, and at the same time allows new members to become involved in the running of the Club.

I have already advised the Committee that I will not stand for re-election as President for the coming year as I believe we must continually have different members running the Club.

I would also remind members who currently operate "Red plate" registered vehicles that new regulations operate from January 1, 1991, and that we suggest you obtain a copy of the A.O.M.C. booklet to be carried in your car at all times. Generally these amendments extend the available use of your car provided it is approved by our Club on the appropriate forms.

Geoff Webb.
President.

MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING

HELD 23RD NOVEMBER, 1990

Meeting commenced at 8.10pm.

Apologies: P. Batten, N. Kennedy, P. Davenport & S. Peterson.

Welcome New Members: Keith Barrett and Judy Allen.

Minutes of Previous Meeting: Accepted, Moved Bob Kennedy and Seconded Keith Willmott.

Business arising from Previous Minutes: Nil.

Correspondence: Casterton M.E. Club (Jim Kent) invitation and annual rally forms for C.M.E. Rally on March 9, 10 & 11 Labour day weekend., C. & H.A.C. Membership renewal form., Austin A40 Car Club apologies not being able to attend H.C.C.V. Concours., Coles New World Re: Gift Vouchers., Australian Recreation Exports Re: club emblems., Transformers Nightclub.

Club Magazines: Wolseley "Hornet", Chevrolet Car Club, The Flying "A", C.M.E.C. Newsletter, A40 Newsflash, H.C.C. of S.A. Newsletter, Rootes Group Car Club, S.A.T.O.C. News, Rover "Torque", C.H.A.C.A. Annual Report.

Editors Report: 216 magazines distributed this month (November 1990).

Treasurers Report: Nil.

Social Secretary's Report: Reminder of Australia Day Parade in Alexandra Gardens, cars up to May 1965 may enter.

Picnic at Hanging Rock on February 10th, 1991, invitations from Macedon Ranges Motor Club.

Margaret reported on H.C.C.V. Concours.

Hall Committee Report: Hall to be secured during the year for Sunday meetings. A motion was carried on this matter.

A.M.O.C. Report: President mentioned the A.M.O.C. report with regards to the Red Plate Scheme. Many Red Plate holders have previously broken the law with regards to the usage of their vehicles out of the stipulated conditions. Refer August 1990 H.C.C.V. Newsletter for details.

Technical Report: Discussion with regard to running older cars on unleaded petrol. Most older cars will run on unleaded fuel. Referring to lower compression ratios 7.5 to 1 or lower.

For Sale: 2 x 1938 Snipes for Sale refer Mr. Carl James (Bendigo)
1964 Vogue Mr. Ericsson.

General Business: Bill Holmes made mention of the excellent article in November 1990 H.C.C.V. newsletter by the Wilde family, this article was enjoyed by all, Congratulation Anne, Ian, Karl, Melanie and Heather for a great article.

Also Phil Newells letter to Federal and State Environment Ministers refer November/December 1990 H.C.C.V. was a first class petition and we all endorse these points that have been made. Well put together Phil.
Club has insisted phone number in telephone book.

Meeting Closed: 8.45pm followed by supper.

FOR SALES

'38 Snipe, complete plus spare 350 S.V. also Vogue gearbox, 4 speed, clutch and flywheel also disc brakes.

Contact: Carl James, 91 Wood Street, Chinaman's Gully, Bendigo (054) 46 7240.

Series V Super Snipe Workshop Manual Mint Condition, also photocopied spare parts manual, plus one owner's handbook \$50.00 the Lot.

Contact: Peter Sheldon, Hawthorn. AH 818 5829.

66 Hillman Gazelle, body good, motor seized, no Reg, spares included motor, new suspension, tyres and brakes. \$660.00 ONO.

Contact: S. Salzana. 469 2036.

Series V Super Snipe, fully dismantled except seats and body shell, excellent condition, no rust all cleaned.

Contact: J. Wells. 546 0439.

64 Super Snipe, auto, needs work on motor and interior.

Contact: (058) 62 2556.

63 Vogue, auto, no reg, was going, parts missing, tyres OK, also parts car (manual)

Contact: 354 5044

67 5-A Super Snipe, Reg Nov '91, RWC, 130000 miles, 1 previous owner, new chrome and paint, interior excellent. \$5,500.00

Contact: J. White 808 7981

HAWK Ser.11 1962. \$500

Car is in running order and fairly straight but has "tired" front end and steering. Also another car for spares.

Contact Wilson Bunton, Castlemaine. PH: (054) 723 186.

HILLMAN HUNTER. 1968. Car is currently registered.

For details contact Kathy Kordell, PH: 614 2521 (B.H.)

SUPER SNIPE PARTS: A number of body parts/doors for Series IV SS. (1964).

Contact Neil Barclay, Markwood via Wangaratta. PH: (057) 270277.

WANTED & "FREEBIES".

SUPER SNIPE MK.11: Glen Hall of Seaspray (near Sale) has a MK11 body-shell and chassis which have a fair degree of rust but are available free to any takers. Contact Glen on (051) 464 333.

WANTED: For Series V Super Snipe; Radiator, Front Shockers, Exhaust System, Spare Water Pump, King-Pins & Bushes. Also 2x Tyres size 205:65 HR15, Rootes Badge and Roof-rack.

Harry Miles, Larundel St, Manangatang. PH: (050) 351 324.

Harry would also like any information on the removal and repair of a damaged vinyl fascia panel.

New Members.

Happy New Year to all members and on behalf of the Humber Car Club
I would like to welcome our new members.

Jack and Carol Bloustein of E. Ivanhoe. Jack has a Series 5 Snipe.

Barry Parr of Richmond, Tasmania.

Mr. H.T. Frederico and his daughter Serita. Mr. Frederico has a Series 5 Super Snipe.

Neil and Dorothy Turnley of Camberwell and their Series IV Super Snipe.

Gaston Saint of maldon. Gaston is restoring a Mark I Super Snipe.

Welcome to you all.

Graeme Fynn

Membership Secretary

Drivers denied better brakes:

MOTORISTS were being denied better braking performance because asbestos-free pads were not fitted as original equipment even though they were available.

The director of research and development at British brake specialist Perodo Ltd, Mr Geoff Ross, said in Melbourne that it was feasible to introduce non-asbestos products before 1997 without technical or economic compromise.

He also criticised what he regards as misinformation being spread in Australia about the effectiveness of asbestos-free brake pads.

And Mr Ross rebuked the Victorian Government for not making enough inquiries into the use of asbestos-free materials in vehicles in place of those with asbestos.

Mr Ross said suggestions that it was not feasible to introduce asbestos-free brake pads before 1997 were "flying in the face of facts".

"It needs only the will to do it," he said.

"Asbestos is a bit like Maggie Thatcher - good in its time but it has overstayed its welcome."

Mr Ross, one of the world's experts on the control of asbestos in the automotive industry, attacked what he called mistaken information about the availability and viability of asbestos-free brake pads.

He said asbestos-free products were not only much better than asbestos brake pads in terms of stopping power, they also lasted twice as long.

They provided additional benefits to the health of the workers who produced them and to the public.

Mr Ross was commenting on doubts expressed by witnesses at a Victorian Occupational Health and Safety Commission inquiry that asbestos-free braking materials were not as effective as asbestos products.

Last month, the commission recommended banning the import of all raw asbestos fibres and products, and gradual replacement of all asbestos products in use.

In Australia, the Ballarat-based Bendix-Mintex Pty Ltd is the sole supplier of original equipment brake pads to the five manufacturers and has 80 per cent of the replacement market.

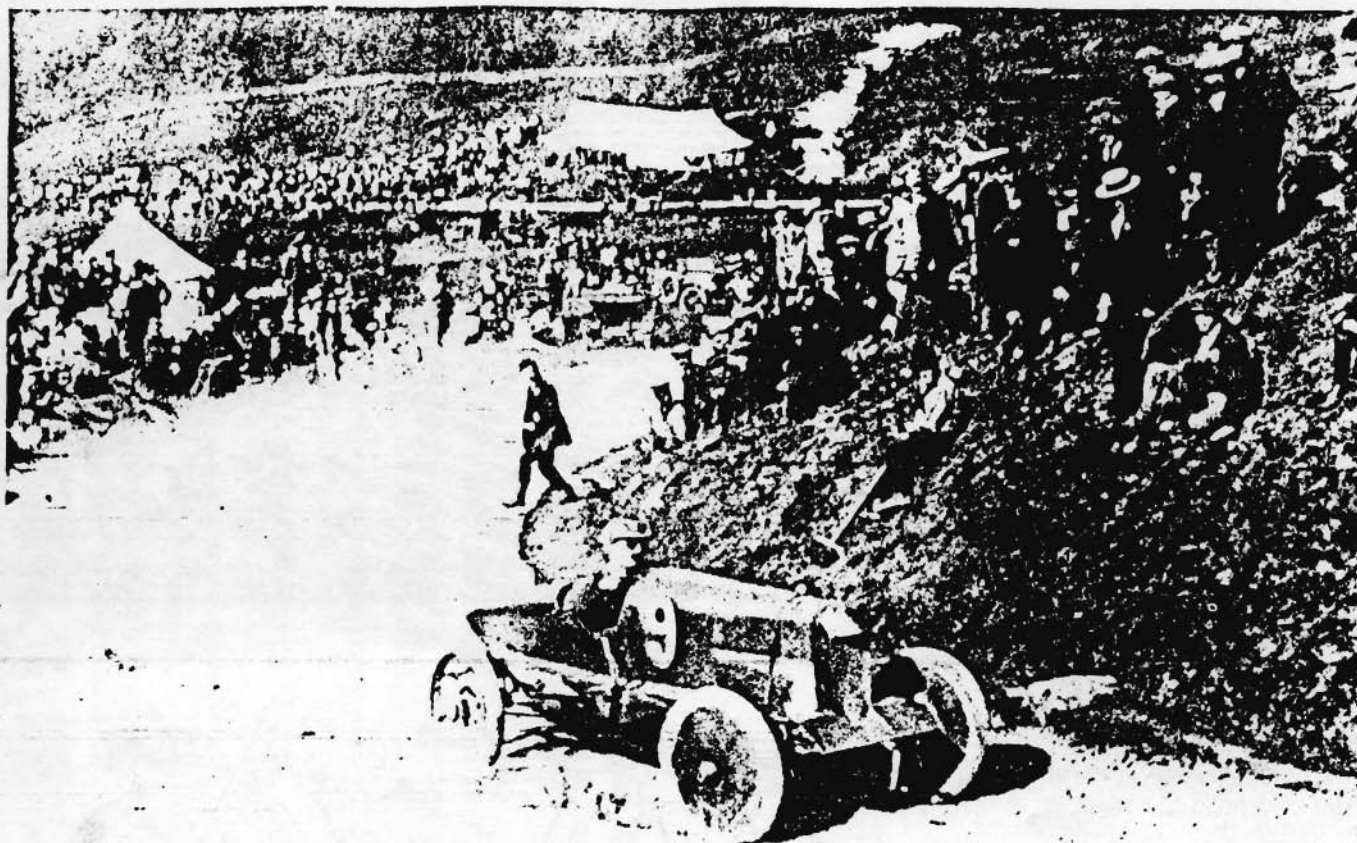
Mr Ross said Bendix-Mintex was manufacturing asbestos-free brake pads overseas.

In Australia, Sydney-based Futuris Industrial Products Pty Ltd supplies 16 per cent of the replacement market.

A spokesman for Bendix-Mintex, Mr Russ Stovall, told *Automotive Business* that it had manufacturing facilities for both asbestos-free and asbestos friction material.

"We can meet whatever the market wants. We have no vested interest in either product," he said.

But he said there were some applications where asbestos-free material was not suitable, especially in older vehicles were designed for asbestos braking systems.



HUMBER IN THE TWENTIES

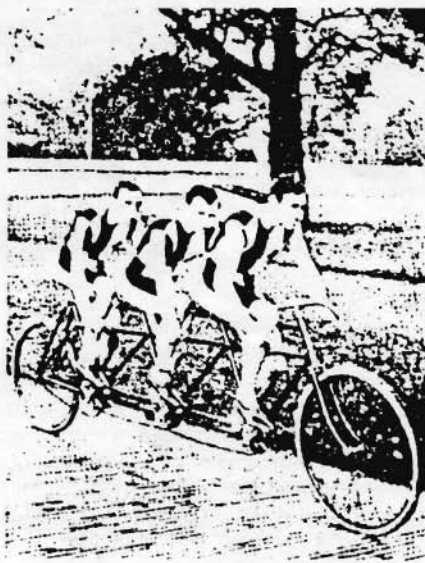
Without doubt Humber's finest years as car makers were in the 1920s.

A B DEMAUS has a special interest in the company and in the period. He has written this important assessment of their position for contrast with

Michael Sedgwick's article on their activities under Rootes in the 1930s which appeared in *om* 8:6

H G WELLS wrote: 'The highly fashionable and the absolutely vulgar are but two faces of the common coin of humanity'. In *OLD MOTOR* Vol 8 No 6 Michael Sedgwick wrote a fascinating assessment of the post-vintage Humbers, making a convincing case for dubbing them the English Buick. He also gracefully acknowledged that the predominantly inlet-over-exhaust Humbers of the vintage era have long been a cult. As one who, as founder of the Humber Register some twenty-five years ago, may be in a small way instrumental in the existence of that cult, I now try to assess the position that Humbers occupied in the decade from 1920 to 1930.

To do this it is, I think, necessary to look first into the background of



Cycling heyday: a Humber path-racing triplet of 1896 on a typical wood-boarded track

the Humber image in earlier years so as to try to make some sort of judgement on what it was that motivated the firm. That old Thomas Humber had started by producing bicycles in 1868, that the concern had prospered abundantly and achieved a very considerable reputation for the high quality of its cycles, and that by the end of the 19th century it occupied a pre-eminent place as a major cycle manufacturer on a worldwide scale, is well known. The ethos of the firm in that period could perhaps best be summed up as being quality, plus performance in competition. It would be a fair estimate, I think, that somewhere around 50% of successful cycle racing men in the last twenty or so years of the 19th century were Humber mounted, if not invariably, then at least frequently. Humber cycle advertise-

W G Tuck at the South Wales AC's Caerphilly hill climb in his sprint 14hp model

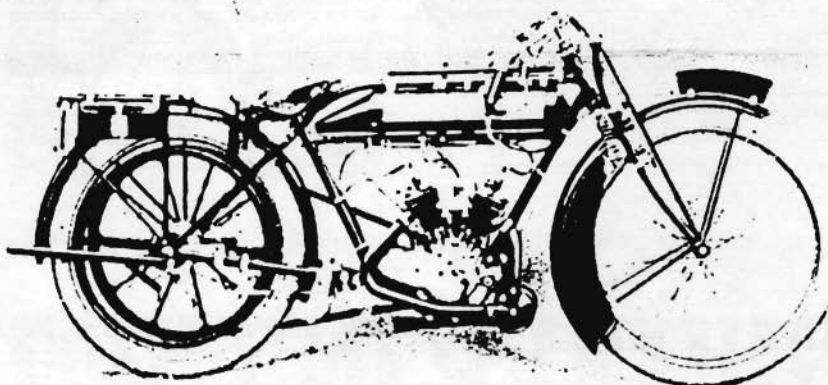
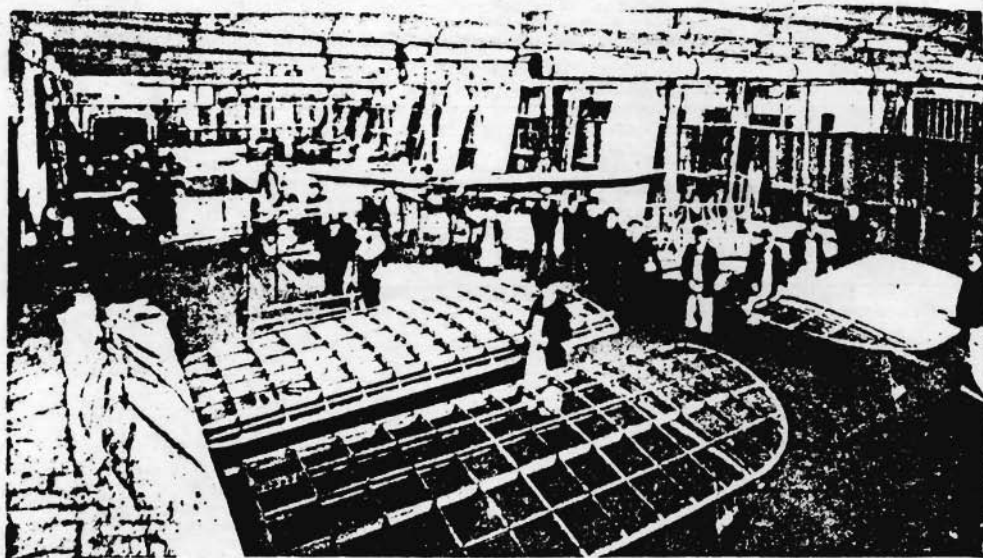
'Heaven is mine if God doth say Amen', as the proverb has it. Humber Aerial Department of 1910, a short-lived diversion

1914 2½hp Lightweight TT motorcycle from the catalogue of that year

ments continually plugged both their competition successes and the quality of their machines. Other makers did that, too, of course, but the difference lay in the fact that for a period of many years record after record fell to Humbers and their touring machines were of consistently high quality. Words were constantly and reliably backed by deeds.

Also dating from the heyday of Humber cycle production came that odd dichotomy of the Beeston and the Coventry Humbers, the former being notably 'up market' in price and quality as compared with the latter, though the latter were also quality machines. For a time there was the Wolverhampton Humber as well, but nothing was allowed to sully the sacred reputation of the Beeston machines. I press this point because I feel that by the time Humbers were serious contenders in the motor markets it had become almost a fetish; for until the new Coventry factory came into being in 1908, the same philosophy was applicable to Humber motor cars, the Beeston models again being considerably 'up market' compared with their Coventry counterparts. It is my own feeling that by this time (1908/09) this dichotomy had become quite outmoded, and that quite apart from the enormous physical reorganisation involved in centralising production at Coventry, Humber's policy makers were themselves anxious to be rid of it and of its implications. (It was perpetuated in Humber cycle circles for some years yet, however.) In other words, the physical move to Coventry merely offered a reasonable and convenient excuse for dropping the Beeston tag, a tag which Humber executives could see had already outlived its usefulness.

Up to 1914 Humber motor production had embraced a wide variety of types (they had even introduced an Aeroplane Department for a few years!), ranging from the cyclecar-like simplicity of the early Humberettes to the luxury of the big fours and even a 30hp six. They had dallied with sporting aspirations, not only by providing works entries in long distance reliability trials, but by entries in the Tourist Trophy races, culminating in that quite untypical team of Henry-inspired twin overhead camshaft 1914 TT cars. They had entered early into the field of motorcycle production and in this field, too, had sporting aspirations, with numerous successes in a wide range of events, even including a



Well-found light car, the 1914 Ten. This one did not opt for the electrics, however

Tourist Trophy win in 1911. W G Tuck, one of the works drivers in several TT events, also performed with considerable success with rather special versions of the 11.9 and 14hp cars at speed events all over the country.

But the future pattern was already clearly emerging prior to 1914. The catalogued Humbers available in that momentous year covered six

models. The Benjamin of the range was that superior twin cylindered cyclecar, the Humberette, available in air and water cooled forms, and additionally there were the 10hp, the 11hp, the 14hp, the 20hp and the 28hp cars. Apart from the Humberette, all the remainder were four cylinder models. The 10hp was available with two or four seated open bodies, as was the 11hp, the 14hp as a two-seater, five-seater tourer or as a four-seated landaulette and a 'coupé landaulette' was also

Superior cyclecar: the air cooled version of the twin cylinder Humberette

Stylish pre-war middle-weight: a 1914 Fourteen tourer

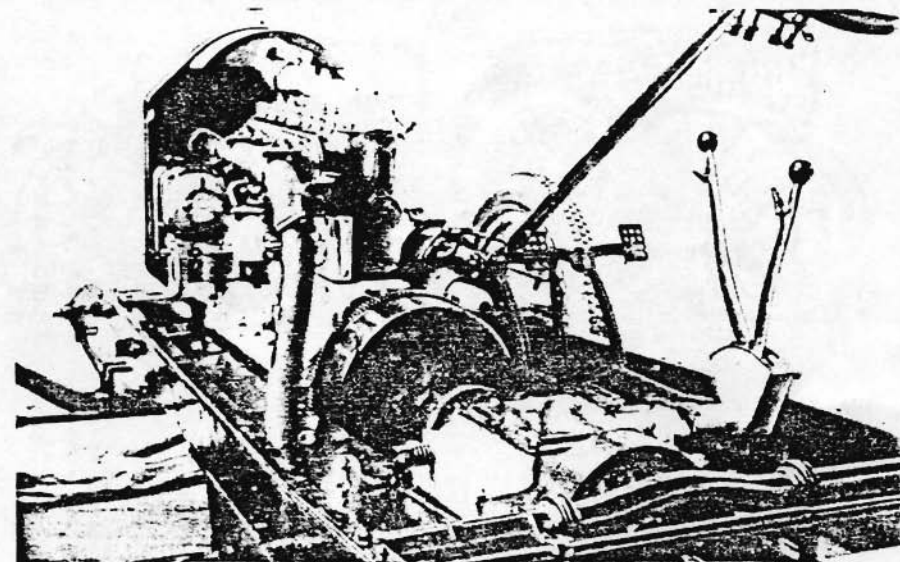
offered at £480 on this chassis. The 20hp could be had as a two-seated or five-seated open car and in six-seated landaulette or limousine, or cabriolet or cabrio-phaeton body styles also. The same body range, apart from the two-seated version, was available on the 28hp chassis. Prices ranged (at 1914 values, remember) from £120 for the air cooled Humberette to £650 for the 28hp cabriolet de luxe.

The two most significant cars in the range were the 10hp and the 14hp, for they were destined to become the basis of almost all Humber's vintage production in the 1920-1930 period. The 10hp was a charming quality light car, featuring a monobloc 4 cylinder engine, unusually with a detachable head, and unit construction 4 speed gearbox with right-hand control. The clutch was a leather cone. Bore and stroke were 65mm x 120mm, the final drive ratio was 4.33:1, and braking was by two sets of shoes on the rear wheels. CAV electric lighting and starting was standardised soon after the model was introduced. Bodywork and appointments were fully up to Humber's quality standards, so all in all the Humber Ten was a well-found and advanced small car of its time.

The Fourteen looked outwardly very similar, though larger, but there were important differences. The 4 cylinder monobloc engine of 75mm x 140mm had a fixed head and those good old brass valve caps to allow access to the valves. A 4 speed separate gearbox was fitted and the final drive ratio was 4.33:1, as with the Ten. The cone clutch, the braking layout and the CAV electric lighting and starting were again similar to the Ten.

The exigencies of war caused the 20 and 28hp cars to be dropped from the range in 1915, but the Humberette in water cooled form only, the Ten, the Eleven and the Fourteen were continued for a while. As a sop to prevailing conditions, a delivery van was available on the 10, 11 and 14hp chassis and, in addition, an ambulance van on the last-named chassis only.

When peace returned, Humbers were early in the field with their post-war programme, which consisted of the 10hp range, continued with minor but significant detail changes, and the 14hp, though still available for a time in pre-war guise, had suffered a sea-change into a 'new' 15.9. The latter was an 'updated' version of the old Fourteen. With these two models Humbers set the pattern which was to take them well into the next decade. The 75mm

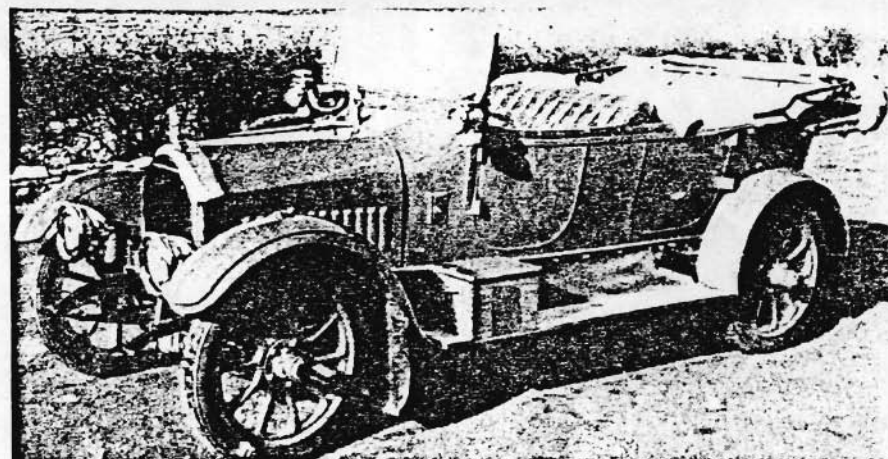
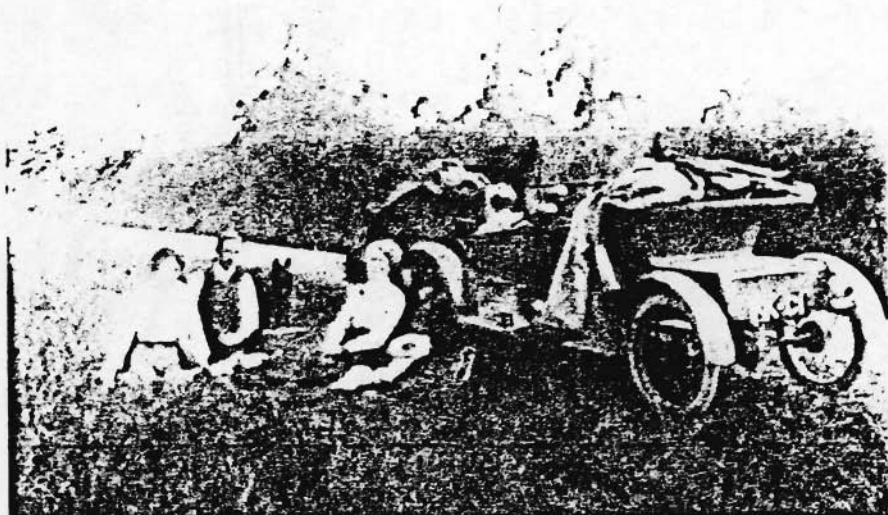


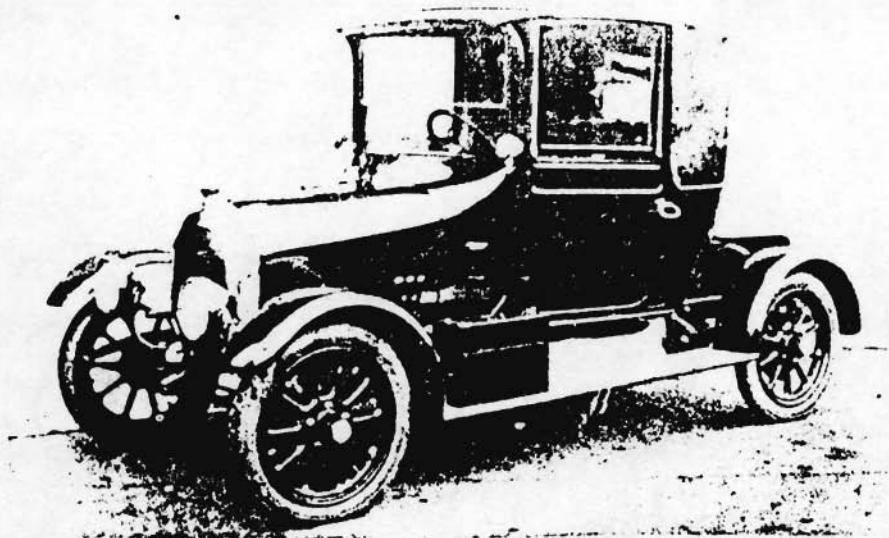
bore of the old Fourteen was enlarged to 80mm, the stroke remaining at 140mm. The fixed head was retained, as was the cone clutch and separate 4 speed gearbox. The old CAV electrical starting by means of the combined operation of a push button to energise the electrical side and a pedal-operated roller brought into contact with the periphery of the flywheel (incorporating a free-wheel device) gave way to a normal starter motor and bendix acting on a toothed starter ring on the flywheel.

Post-war Edwardianism: the s.v. 15.9 in undress

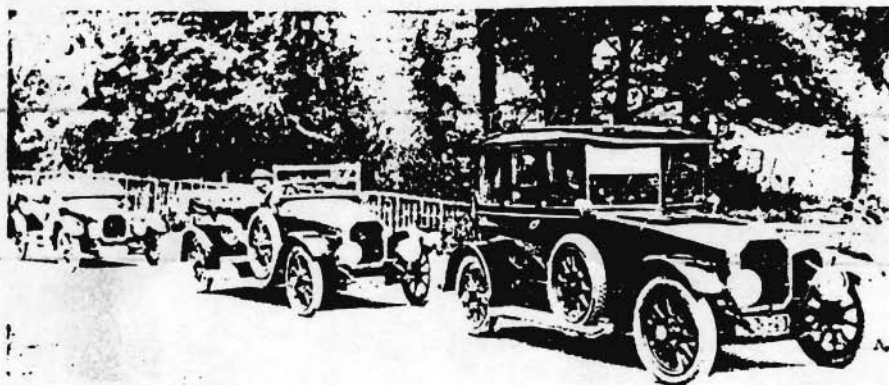
The double set of rear brake shoes also gave way to a foot-operated transmission brake and the side brake only acting on the rear wheels. Wheelbase had been increased from 9ft 6ins to 10ft 3½ins but the track remained the same at 4ft 9ins. The petrol tank was now at the rear, an Autovac lifting petrol to the Smith carburettor.

Post-war modifications to the Ten

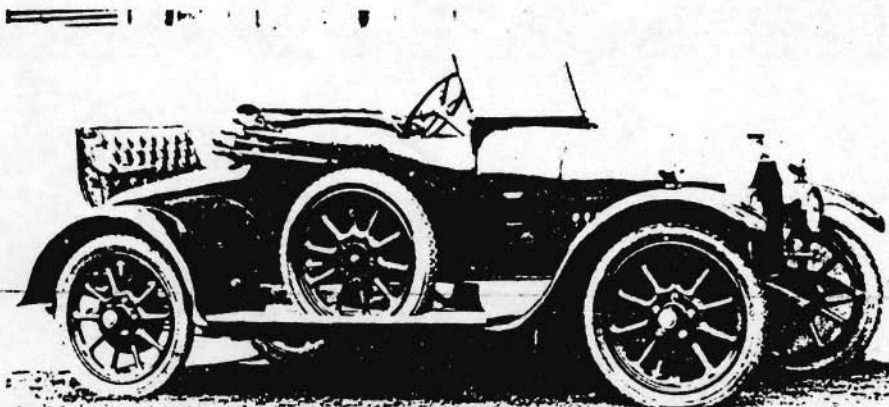




A 1920 10hp with the coupé body by then available



A 15.9 saloon leads a 15.9 tourer and a 10hp tourer in 1920



The 'improved' version of the 10hp incorporated a number of mechanical modifications and also carried smoother and more commodious bodywork. It was rated at 11.4hp though the works were singularly reluctant to drop the old nomenclature

took much the same form as those to the Fourteen in that electrical starting was now by Lucas dynamotor, chain-driven off the magneto shaft drive, necessitating some modifications to the timing case. Braking was now in line with that on the Fourteen, a transmission brake taking the place of the foot-operated

rear brake shoes. This arrangement soon showed up the relative weakness of the rear axle design on both the Ten and the Fourteen (alias 15.9) and it was not long before a new and stronger design made its appearance. A leather-hooded and very upright coupé was added to the Ten body styles.

I do not propose to detail the changes that took place in the post-war Humber range model by model and year by year. Suffice it to say that from the 1914 Ten, with its advanced quality features at the time

of its introduction, came the gradual development through the post-war Ten, the 'uprated' 10.8 (RAC rated at 11.4), right through to the 12/25 of 1925/26. From the pre-war Fourteen came the whole range of post-war 15.9 and 15/40 cars, the last of which was a batch of 50 produced in 1927.

The most important development in this post-war period was the introduction of an inlet-over-exhaust engine design for the whole Humber range, standardised from the introduction of the 1923 models. I have heard it said by one well acquainted with Humber workings at the time that this i.o.e. engine was a direct copy of the i.o.e. 4 cylinder Essex engine of 1918, but would welcome comment on this point. From 1923's models the whole Humber range, including the little 8hp light car introduced in that year, right through to the 3498cc Snipe of 1930, were all given this valve arrangement. Few other makes come readily to mind who remained faithful to this arrangement for so long, the i.o.e. engines lasting until the 1933 season when, as Michael Sedgwick remarks, Rootes influence went a step further in retrogression and reverted to the flat-head engines.

As for the 'infuriating' transmission brake, to quote Sedgwick again this certainly was a problematical device. The trouble has its root in the fact that however much Humbers may have overtly denied such opinions, Col J A Cole, head of the concern in the 1920's, regarded front-wheel brakes as dangerous. That Col Cole did hold this opinion comes fortuitously to light in that history of Temple Press, *Bouverie Street to Bowling Green Lane* (Hodder & Stoughton 1946) by Arthur Armstrong. On page 133 of that book, Armstrong recounts how a telegram from Col Cole requested him to come to Coventry immediately, and on arrival Armstrong was told that Humbers took a poor view of *The Motor* having boosted four-wheel brakes, as tests done by the Humber staff had shown that the system was dangerous and serious accidents were forecast. Despite the fact that Humbers did, somewhat grudgingly, fit fwb, first as an optional extra on the 12/25 and 15/40 models, later standardised, but not to the 9/20 range at all until after 7th February 1927, they obviously still had strong reservations about them. As any driver of a four-wheel-braked Humber of the period knows, the compensation between the front brakes and the transmission brake (being the foot-

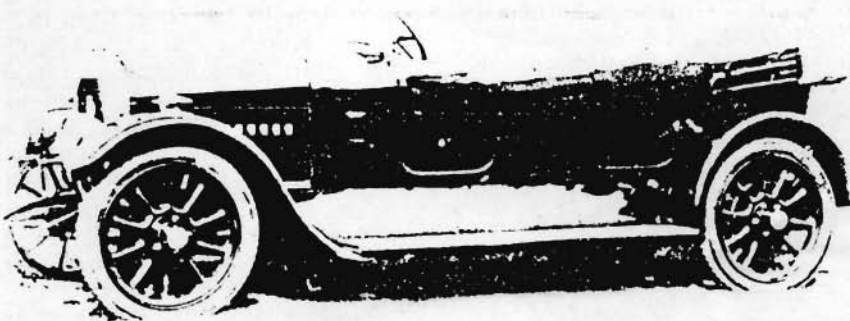
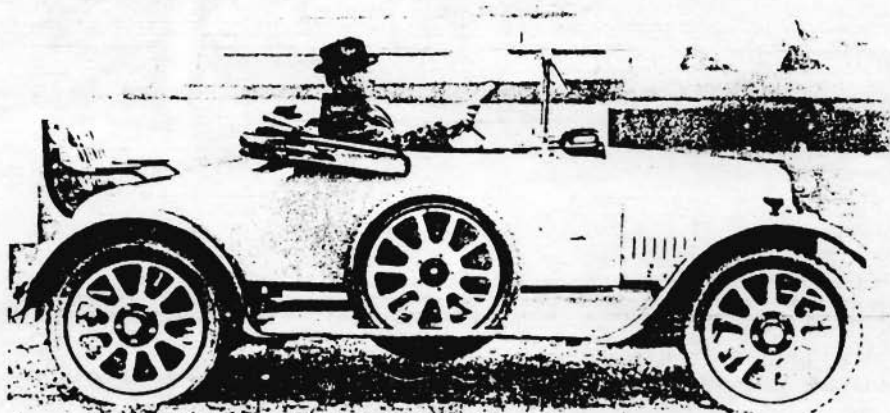
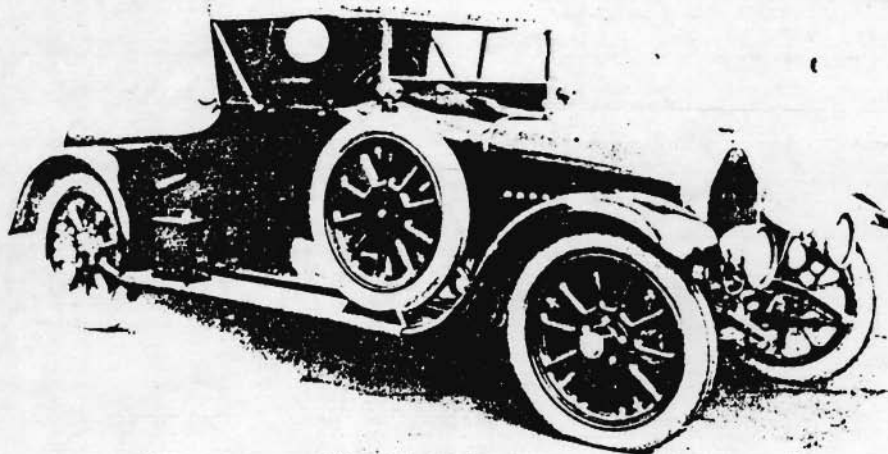
A Humber body not in the catalogue; a special 15.9 2/3 seater built for a Mr Sydney Powell in 1920

Further improvements in detail work were made late in 1921 for the 1922 season and can be seen in this 11.4 2/3 seater and

operated part of the brake layout) was such that very little indeed of the braking effort was on the front wheels. It is certain, in the light of driver's experiences later, that the transmission brake was much to blame, not only for the malodorous fires that Michael Sedgwick recalls but, more seriously, for the frequent break-up of back axles, particularly in the case of the fwb-fitted 9/20s and 9/28s. That old transmission brake was a long time a-dying and did not finally disappear until the demise of the 9/28.

What else was emerging from that pre-1914 pattern? For one thing it was very clear that it was the 'middle stream' models of the range that were again the mainstay of the production, and not the models at either the least expensive or the costliest ends of the range. Cars of around the 12 to 20hp bracket had featured in Humber's lists for many years prior to 1914. True, the Ten was, if one excludes the cyclecar-ish Humberette, the baby of the 1914 range, but the changed conditions of the post-war motoring scene soon made it obvious that a smaller quality light car would be well received, hence the 8hp for 1923. Production figures covering the 1920-1930 period show that whereas all the light cars (8/18, 9/20 and 9/28) over the period 1923-1930 totalled 6098, the six cylinder models (20/55, 20/65, 16/50 and Snipe) covering the period from late 1926 to 1930 totalled 8518, but the 'middle stream' cars, the 10.8, the 11.4, the 12.25, the 15.9 and 15/40 and the 14/40, from 1920/21 to 1928/29 totalled 14,024, more than twice the quantity of light cars and nearly twice that of the later sixes. This merely confirms the tendency, becoming clear in Humber's pre-war programme.

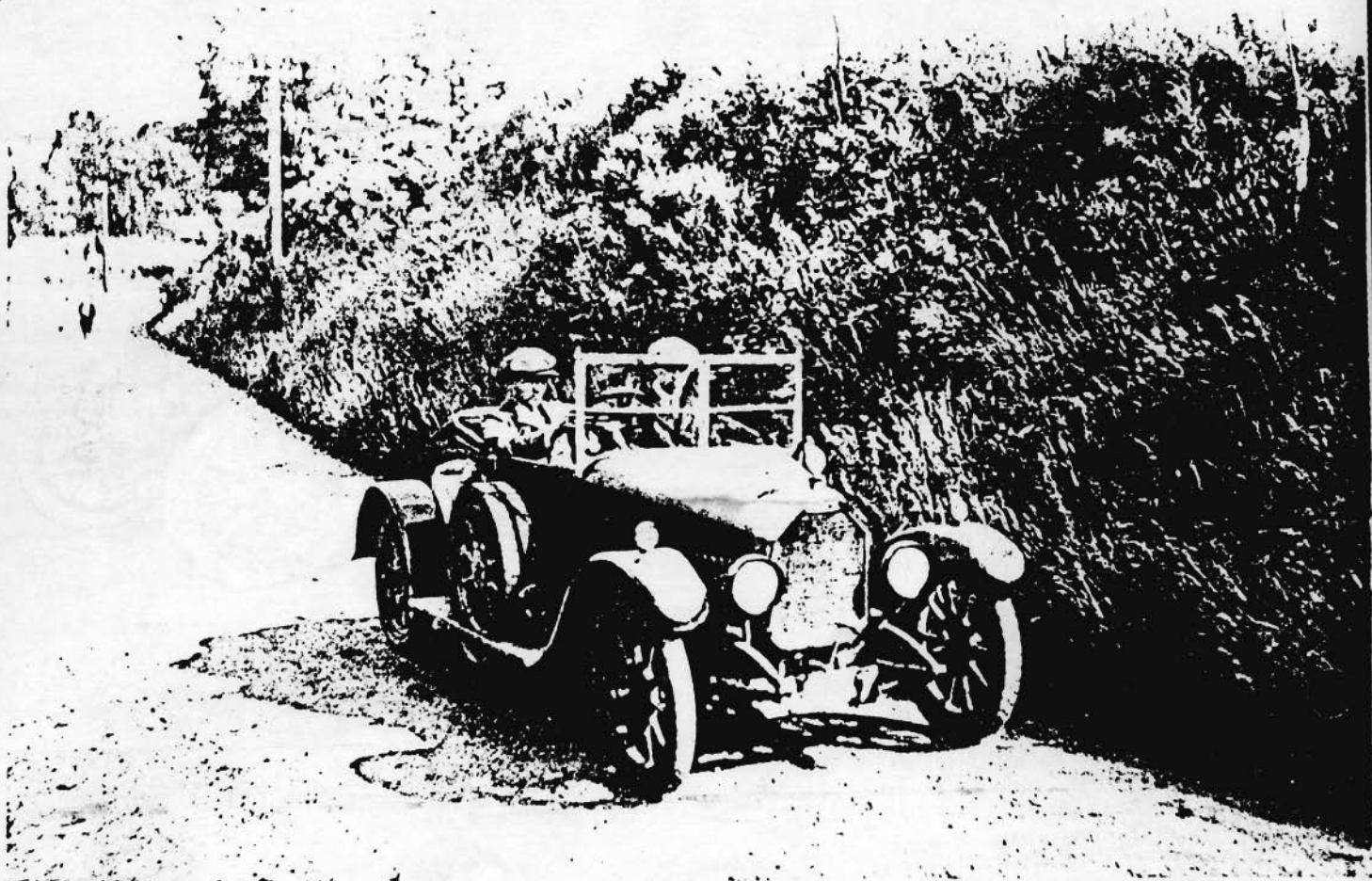
All Humbers of the period were beautifully made, the greatest attention was paid to detail, and in the realms of comfortable weather protection for all-weather touring in the open models they had no peer at comparable prices and few, if any, rivals regardless of price considerations. They were conservative in design, certainly, and not only in their reservations over fwb; they clung to trough and splash lubrication of the lower half of the engine longer than most. It has been said in recent times that the vintage Humber market comprised those who felt themselves to be above an Austin but could not aspire to a Sunbeam. From this it has been inferred that the Austin was an



..... in this 5-seated tourer version of the s.v. 15.9

inferior car and the Sunbeam a superior one, which, as a generalisation, does not hold water. Personal experience over many years of the 11.4 in side-valve and i.o.e. forms, the 14/40 and the 16/50 Humbers and also of a 1925 14/40 Sunbeam convinces me that the Sunbeam, or at least that model, is overrated. The 14/40 Sunbeam certainly had a slight edge over the 14/40 Humber in performance, but under give-and-take conditions this was largely

negated by the Sunbeam's wide ratios in a three-speed box. Detail work could be criticised, not only in the much inferior weather protection as against the 14/40 Humber, but in under-bonnet details too.



An i.o.e. 11.4 2 3 seater of 1924 samples the country lanes

Well-built, well-nigh indestructible though the worthy Austin Heavy Twelve was, it wasn't really aiming at the same market as the 'middle stream' Humbers, and until the introduction of the Austin Sixteen there was no other model in the Austin range that was in any way competitive with the backbone models of the Humber range. Using Bob Wyatt's figures published in *OLD MOTOR* Vol 9 No 2 one finds that the total production of the Heavy Twelve from its introduction until 1940 was a staggering 84,736. Taking a fairer comparison with Humber figures by restricting the dates to those between 1922 and 1930, one finds 1165 for 1922 rising to no less than 14,000 in 1927. In other words, one good year's production (1927) of Austin Heavy Twelves approximates to the total production of 'middle stream' Humbers over the years 1920/21-1928. Again, Austin Heavy Twelve figures for the three consecutive years 1925/6/7 comfortably exceeds Humber's total production over the years 1920/21-1930. Clearly then, Austin and Humber were not really competitors in the same field.

Alas, I do not have at hand comparable Sunbeam figures, but their range in the 1920-1930 period was diverse and complex, embracing fours, sixes and an eight, with

permutations between side-valves, push-rods and overhead camshafts, and a bewildering variety of body styles as standard. Only for a comparatively short time did they make four cylinder cars smaller than 16hp, the short-lived 12/30 and the rather longer lasting 14 and 14/40. Sunbeam's 14/40s were on their way out when Humber introduced their 14/40 and perhaps the rivalry, if it existed, was between the later six cylinder Sunbeams of around 16hp and the Humber 16/50 six from 1929 onwards. Humber's 20/55 and 20/65 range were cars of a more staid image than Sunbeam's various Twenties, most of which had a sporting, or at least semi-sporting air. Prices, too, placed Humbers well above Austin Heavy Twelves and below the roughly comparable Sunbeam models. The accompanying table shows full comparisons in the ranges of the three makes as at May 1924. If, as a motorist of the time who aspired to nothing sporting, I had been in the enviable position of making a choice between the three makes, I am sure I would have considered the 8hp Humber a better bet than the Austin Seven and I might well have fallen for the petite gracefulness of the little Humber 8 saloon, for all the lack of fwb. That 3-speed box, for example, would have put me off Sunbeam's 12/30 and 14, too, and even the option of six pots and additional flexibility on Sunbeam's 16/50 would have been

insufficient to overcome that model's lack of a fourth speed.

Despite its rear wheel brakes and trough and splash lubrication, the 11.4 Humber was a very sweet running car, its long-stroke engine enabling it to slog away manfully, its four speeds were of well chosen ratios and engaged very sweetly. Even the earlier side-valve 11.4 was not that much of a sluggard, in open-bodied form anyway, and by 1924 the choice of standard body styles available on the i.o.e. 11.4 range was much wider than that offered on Sunbeam's fours, and to my way of thinking they were better found, to use a nautical term. One could pay extra to get away from Humber mole for the open cars or royal or Nile blue 'with black wings and uppers' as the catalogue put it. If my choice favoured a more formal bodywork, then Humber's 15.9 landaulette was perhaps not the happiest style on that chassis, but one could get it for £915 as against £1235 for the first landaulette option in the Sunbeam range, on the 20/60 chassis, and that was a lot of 1924's money. Of course, I could have had my landaulette on the Austin Heavy Twelve chassis at only £525, but the lofty four-square appearance of the Austin version sat awkwardly on the 9ft 4ins wheelbase as compared with Humber's 10ft 3ins of the 15.9 and anyhow I should have had to wait until October 1924 for the fwb on the Austin, whereas a week or two more

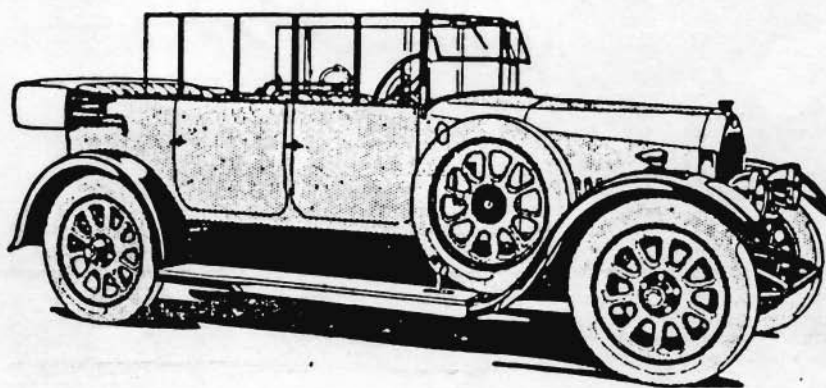
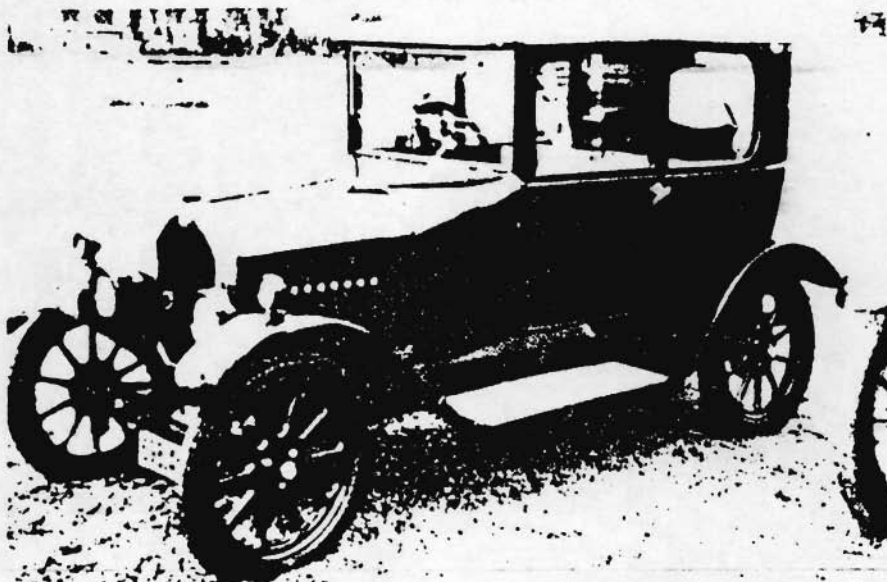
Snug baby: the saloon version of the 1924 8/18. The inlet-over-exhaust engine was now fitted to the whole range

of waiting would have given me a similar option on the 1925 version of the 15/40. I could have had more space in an Austin Twenty (four cylinder) landaulette or limousine and saved myself £65 into the bargain, but the increase in horsepower tax on the Austin would soon have offset that and I'll warrant the Austin was thirstier, too. Besides, the Humber and the Sunbeam at least kept some of their valves upstairs and the Austin was a flat-head.

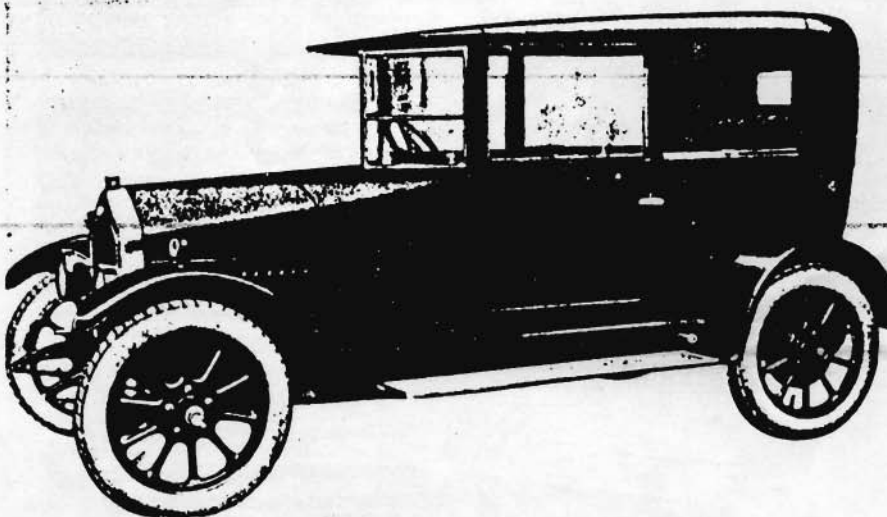
Humbers always achieved a skilfully balanced harmony of line in their range, the proportions being so well ordered that even to a practised eye it is not always easy to distinguish, say, a 12/25 from a 14/40 or a 14/40 from a 15.9, apart from details. To achieve this uniformly balanced appearance on wheelbases varying from 9ft 1ins on the 12/25 to 10ft 3½ins on the 15.9 called for perception, but it must be admitted that when the 8/18 gave way to the full four-seater 9/20 the result was not quite so uniformly happy, though strangely enough the effect was rather better on the saloon version. In its miniature fashion, the 8/18 in open and closed forms was a well balanced design.

Humber introduced their 20/55 six in July 1926 and this formed the upper crust of the range. The recipe was much as before and whereas the 20/55 could not match the performance of the 20/60 Sunbeam, its superlative bodywork and the superior weather protection afforded by the wind-up sidescreens of the tourer (a feature on all Humber tourers other than the Nines from 1927 until it was dropped for the 1930 range) made it extremely good value. One could, of course, raise objections that its V-screen and artillery wheels made it somewhat dowager-like when compared with the Sunbeams, and there was that infuriating transmission brake (in 1926/27 anyway) and trough and splash lubrication! By 1928 one could have the 20/55 with full pressure lubrication and without the transmission brake; in fact, one had Dewandre vacuum servo assistance, and for good measure a single-plate clutch in lieu of the inverted cone and in addition to a wider range of standard colours one could opt for the fashionable fabric coachwork on the long wheelbase saloon or limousine.

One is apt to think of the 14/40 as a replacement for the last of the line descended from the pre-war Ten, the old 12/25, as indeed it was, but one must remember that the 14/40 was introduced *after* the 20/55 six and was intentionally a four cylinder



1926 15/40 tourer

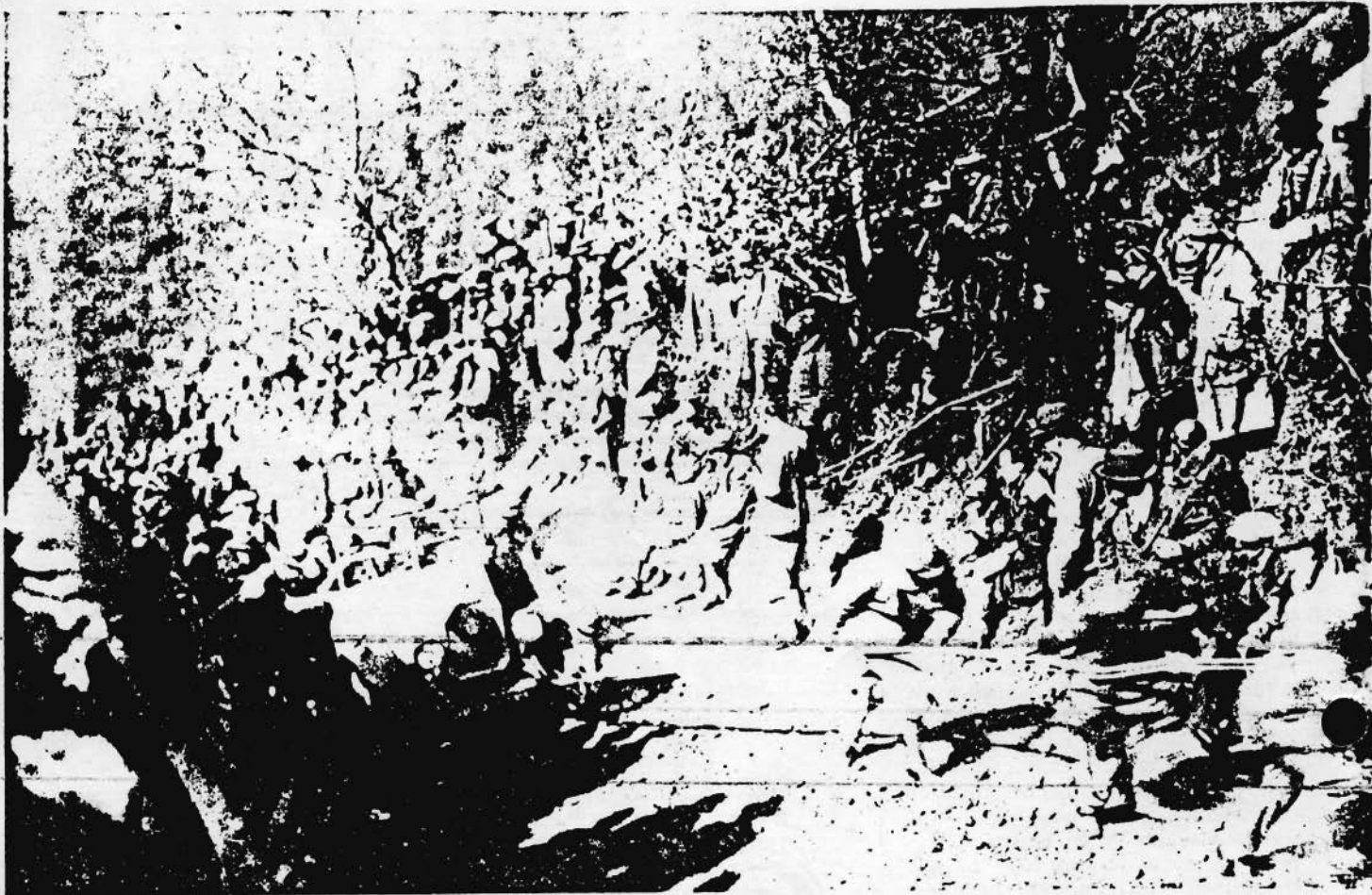


A catalogue shot of what purports to be a 1925 12/25 all-weather, the only year in which this body was offered on the 12/25. In fact, it is a rather badly 'doctored' photograph of the 1923 11.4 version. The added height to the radiator has been badly fudged, completely spoiling the outline, and a suction-operated screen wiper has been 'added'

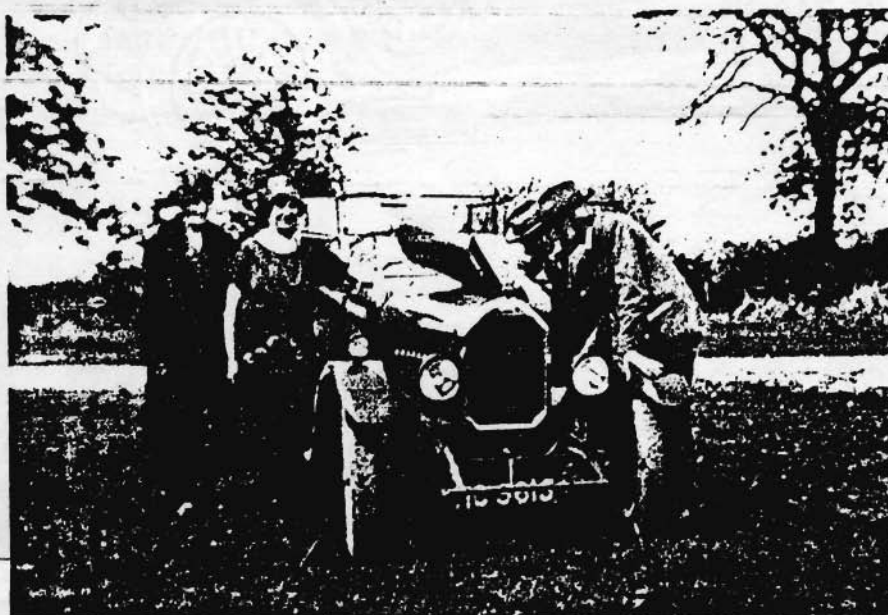
version of the 20/55 rather than an overblown 12/25. Many mechanical and chassis components were interchangeable between the two models.

In the 14/40 one had, perhaps, the belle of the 'middle stream' range, particularly if one waited until 1928 to gain the advantages of full pressure lubrication, no transmission brake and a single-plate clutch. In my experience it was, in 1928 form, a much more pleasant car to drive than the 16/50 of a year later.

For 1929 the uprating of the 20/55



This 12/25 came to grief on Beggar's Roost in 1927

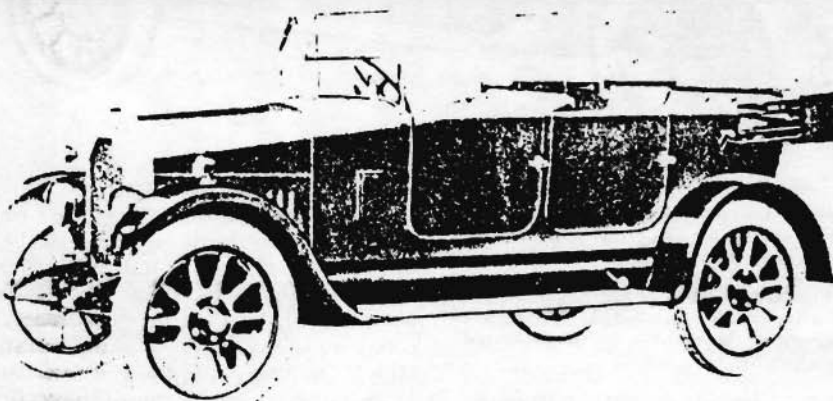


The new toy: admirers gather round a 1926 9/20 tourer

Another 1925 catalogue shot, this time of the 12/25 tourer

to the 20/65, the arrival of the 16/50 six as a replacement for the 14/40 (though these were offered at lower prices in that year) effectively shifted the 'middle stream' Humber image somewhat up-market. At the same time, the 9/20 was given a considerable face lift to become the 9/28, but despite this the gap between upper and lower levels of the range was widening, and this, with other considerations, paved the way for the inevitable axe that fell on production of the Nines after the 1930 season, by which time the 16/50 and the Snipe had taken over as the entire output, the Pullman of 1930 being only a long wheelbase version of the Snipe for more formal bodywork.

I do not think that even the most ardent Humberphobe could honestly say that Humbers ever made an absolutely vulgar motor car in the vintage years (that, or something near it, might be levelled at some of the later efforts), and only very seldom indeed did they pander to the whims of fashion. Far more often, as we have seen, they were conservative in the extreme. But fabric bodies were all the rage in the 1927-29 period and in one of their rasher



Portrayed when in the author's ownership, this 1928 14/40 Model B poses outside a Herefordshire country house

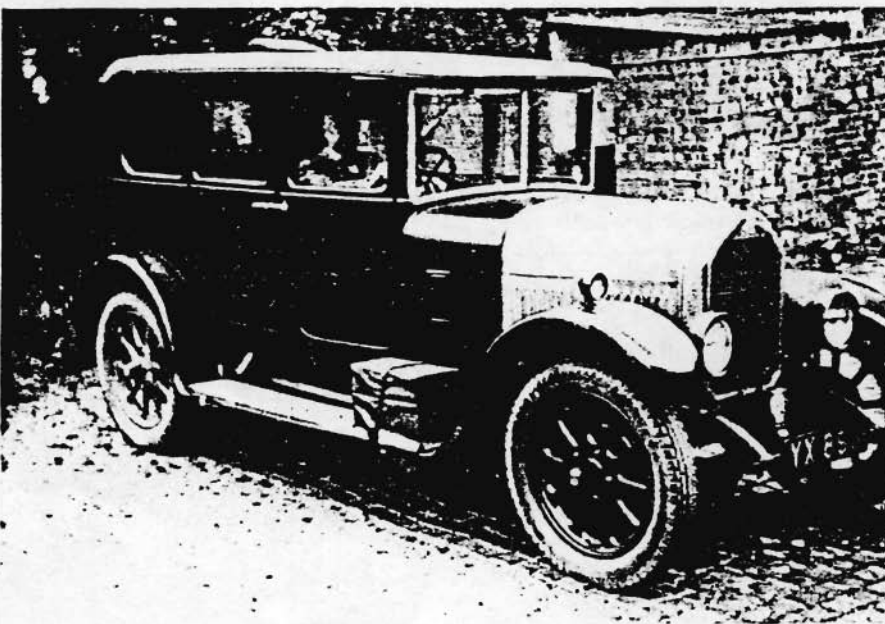
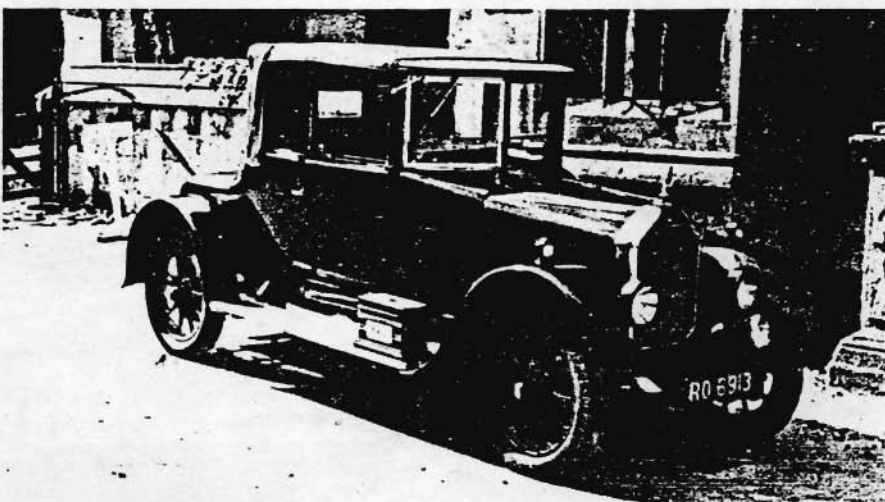
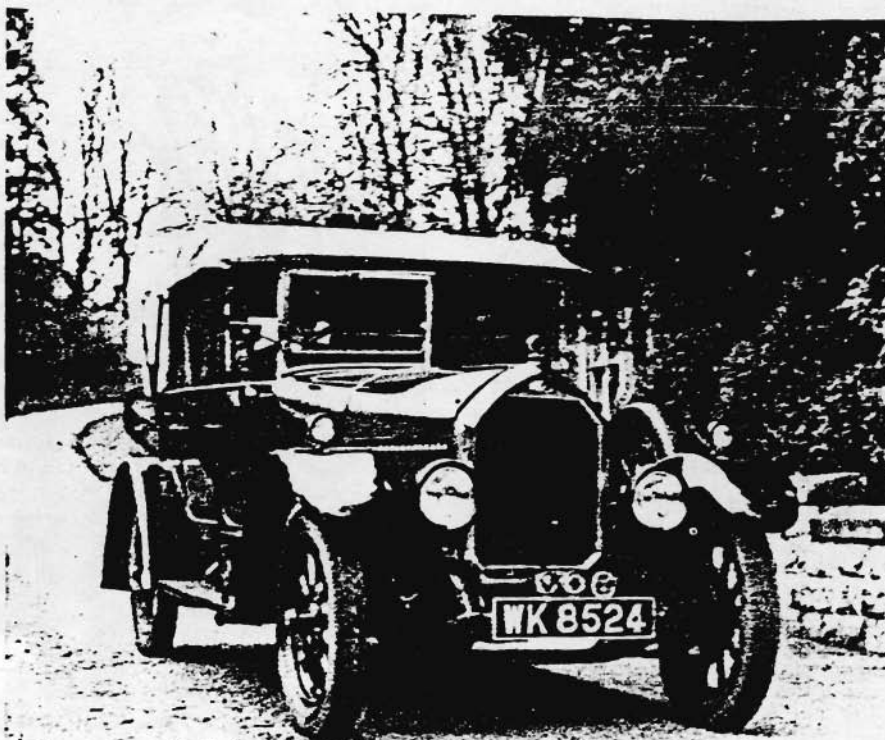
The 14/40 was the last chassis type to carry this 1.6-coupe body, in this instance a 1927 example

moments they did produce fabric saloon options on all the 1928 range, and in my opinion, and at the risk of displeasing the owners of the few survivors, it was an unhappy venture.

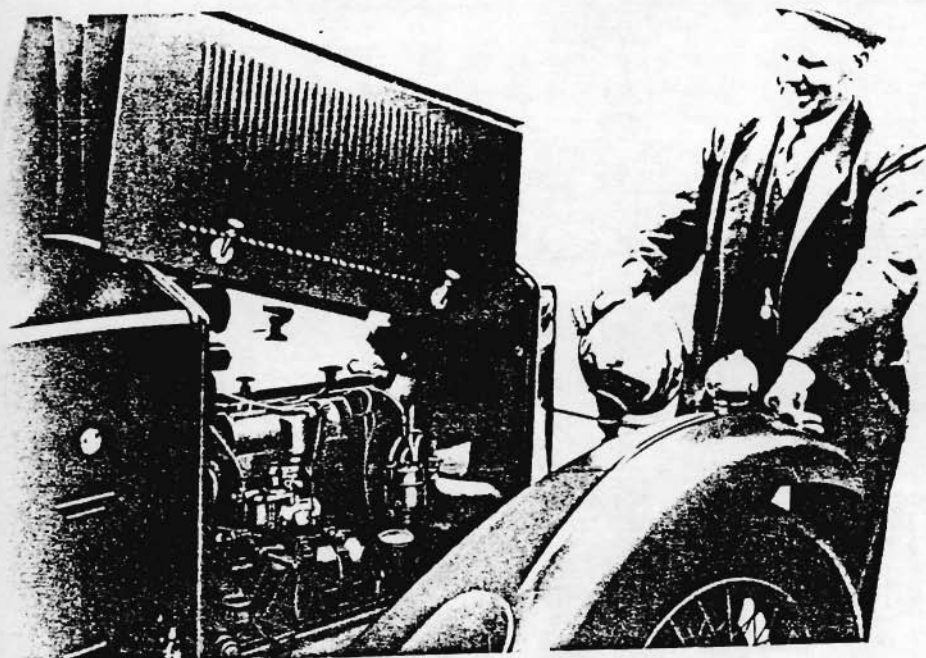
Fashion, too, can only have been the aim in the production of an overhead camshaft version of the well-established 2½hp motorcycle. But first let me explain that though Sunbeams had started, as had Humbers, in the world of quality bicycles (discounting Sunbeam's japanning origins for the moment), and had then gone to motor manufacture and later still to motorcycles, the changes that followed grand old man Marston's death in 1918 had resulted in Sunbeam's cycle and motorcycle enterprises being separated off from the car production. Humber, on the other hand, had been continuously in the cycle business since 1868 and this had gone on alongside the later car and motorcycle production. By the time Humber motorcycles ceased production after the 1930 season (there being no one willing to take them on, apparently) and the pedal cycles had come under Raleigh's wing, Humber had been making cycles, motorcycles and cars together for longer than most. Humber, in addition, had taken over Commer commercials in 1926 and Hillman came under their wing in 1928. An amusing comment on this contiguous motorcycle and car production is that on the 14/40 Humber a vibration damper was fitted to try to prevent the engine vibrations from communicating themselves to the occupants. This device was none other than a motorcycle steering damper and was stamped 'motorcycle' in proof of it!

To revert to that ohc motorcycle: a number of motorcycles were coming on the market with ohc engines around the time Humber introduced theirs for the 1928 season, but since Humber had long since forgotten any aspirations to TT laurels, and only comparatively few of the ohc versions were produced, one can only put this venture down to a wish, for once, to be in the fashion! However, it was a beautiful little machine, every bit of it proudly showing true Humber quality, and was a much happier sally into the realms of current fashion than the fabric bodies episode of the same year.

Can one conveniently slot the vintage Humbers into a partnership,



A 1928 14/40 saloon

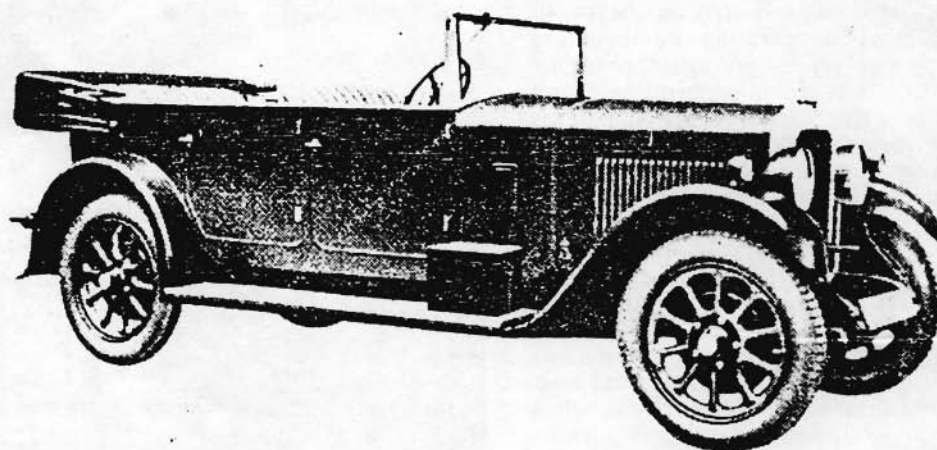
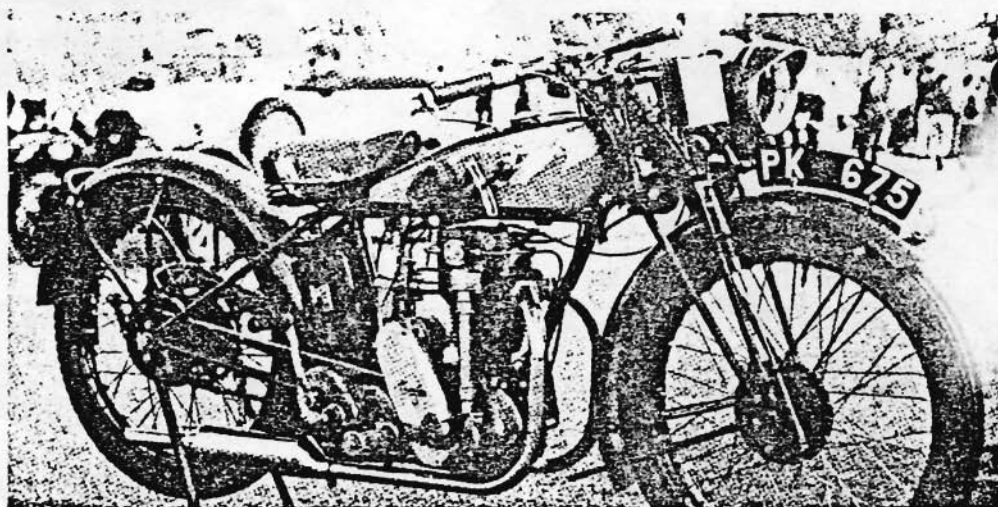


Engine Department of the 1930 16/50

as Michael Sedgwick has done with the post-vintage ones? I do not think one can. Humber's vintage clientele were not the equivalent of Sunbeam's, certainly not of Austin's. Neither can I think of any British, or even American or Continental make that was truly an equivalent. For one thing, I feel that with the Armistice of 1918 accomplished, and faced with the need to take a long hard look at the prospects ahead, Humber alone of the three makes we have considered in detail had a firm and clear vision of what their aims were and they adhered to that for the entire vintage period. Edgar N Duffield of *The Auto* makes this clear when he wrote in 1926: 'I should guess that Humber Ltd have made fewer 'signal departures' in their career than have any other firm in the British automobile industry. Particularly since the present directorate took office, their policy has been remarkable for its evidence of a determination not to get their lungs in a knot'. Apart from a few desultory appearances by Sam Wright and other works riders in motorcycle events in the 1920's, in order to boost the 4½hp flat twin or the 2¾hp single, the firm resolutely turned its back on competition. Austin started with a one-model policy, the Twenty, and as is well-known, nearly sank in the process, the worth of the Twelve and the appeal of the Seven pulling them round. But they, too, were still enslaved to the competition world, seeing in their miraculous Seven a greater potential for success than had ever been realised by the old 1908 Grand Prix monsters (which, by the way, whatever their subsequent registration numbers may

By contrast, I do not think Sunbeam had any clear vision of what their post-war policy was to be. Tied to the ramifications of the STD combine, with Coatalen deeply obsessed with racing and eventually spending more and more time out of the country, with a range of models covering a multiplicity of types and styles, they more or less muddled their way through the 1920's, only to become an increasing liability when the slump of the 1930's hit them, to decline slowly until emasculated under the Rootes banner.

As for Humber, let Edgar Duffield be our guide. For all his distrust of four-wheel brakes, Col Cole knew where he was going, and furthermore Humber never followed will o' the wisps straight eights, miniature sixes and so on, as some did, and right to the end they never cheapened their image. That came



Flirting with fashion: one of the rare overhead camshaft 2½hp Humber motorcycles

The last year of those cunning wind-up sidescreens: a 1929 16/50 'dual purpose' touring

have been, were originally registered as AB983 on 2nd May 1908 and AB1010, AB1011 and AB1012 on 26th May that year, in Worcester-shire).

later! Sir Herbert Austin had his feet too firmly on the ground to consider Humber a real rival in the market places; he was much keener not to be diverted from his much more direct rival, Morris. Coatalen had been a Humber man himself years ago, but as long as Sunbeam could be allowed to build racing cars he probably didn't mind, anyway. To revert to H G Wells: Humbers were never highly fashionable and certainly never absolutely vulgar. The vintage Humber was in a niche of its own. Hence, perhaps, the cult.

Riding a Cressida down carmakers' memory lane



Motoring

Peter Burdon

FASTEN your seat belts. This could be a rough ride. Why is the Toyota Cressida the best priced car in this country, keeping in mind that if it hasn't a tin roof and four doors it is not a motor car? A good question. How long have the Europeans got left out here? Another good question. (I would say about five years, but there is a fair case for saying they are just about down the tubes now.)

I will modify the answer to that last question. There will always be room for the odd Rolls-Royce and Jaguar, a thin handful of Mercedes, maybe one or two BMWs and a Ferrari and a Porsche. Let's say a dozen cars a year. This modification is made in the light of the fact that today, yes today, the first Rolls-Royce costing more than \$500,000, the Mulliner Park Ward Silver Spur II, will be unveiled in this country.

Back to the Toyota Cressida. I have been driving the Grande model. (It's pronounced "Granday" as though the final "e" has a French accent on it, but what the hell.) This one is \$43,400 compared with the normal Cressida at \$37,500.

Well, that's a bit of a price rise, but you get leather trim (not really a smart idea in this country), a sun roof, ABS brakes and a limited-slip differential. You also get very nice Japanese home building. Not a bad car. Let's modify that one as well. Just the best car your dollars will buy. And I might as well throw this in, a remarkable car at a not unreasonable price.

(If it were me, I would buy the lower priced standard Cressida and spend the balance of the money on one last fling for half-a-dozen or so, including chilled Krug at \$135 a bottle. Splendid thought.)

And now for the rough ride, the tightened seat belts and what went wrong. I will start by saying that motor cars are absolutely fascinating, the only true mirror in which mankind can view its follies. Motor cars would be enormously valuable even if they were incapable of propelling themselves from one place to another. Look, and see yourself truthfully.

Let's wind the clock back. It was once thought, and I am now talking about the early 1900s, that since

motor cars were desperately expensive things only those with a lot of money could afford them. A nice logical thought that plays forwards and backwards with the smoothness of a Newtonian equation. Enter the elder Henry Ford.

Ford went along with the money logic thing, but saw immediately this limited the market. At any given moment, there are only a handful of people with lots of cash. Certainly there are never enough to sustain mass production of anything you care to name. Yet Ford believed if he could make huge numbers of cheap motor cars the market would open up. The first one in, and Ford intended this to be himself, would reap unparalleled riches. Needless to say, Ford's fellow directors were appalled. Needless to say again, Ford went his own way and changed the face of this century.

What happened? The cheap Fords drove out the expensive cars. Not completely, and not all at first, but the mass market was for cheaper cars and the more expensive specialised ones lost ground, fell by the wayside, or just disappeared.

Who remembers Auburn, Cord, Duesenberg, Packard, Pierce-Arrow or Stutz? You remember them when there is a well-publicised auction and an outstanding example makes several million dollars. But the history of expensive motor cars is a catalogue of largely forgotten makes.

Mass production was the first arrow reality fired into the making of motor cars. The next arrow, and a particularly wounding one, was the impact of technology. Up to about 1930 (this isn't completely accurate, but it is near enough) all motor cars were largely hand crafted. The panels were pressed, they were erected on a frame, and the lot was attached to a chassis. There were short cuts, and Ford had certainly found them. But what if... what if we could do away with the chassis and frame completely? What if we could make the all-steel car?

This is precisely what happened. But the development of this technology was a body blow to the few surviving specialist car makers. For one, setting up for all-steel production was a fearfully expensive process. For another, it was really only suitable if you were making motor cars in millions or if you were prepared to make virtually the same car for a decade or longer.

The lesson was not really learnt in Europe which stumbled on until the start of World War II in 1939 having gained nothing or forgotten nothing. (To be fair, Citroen in France went the all-steel way but went broke.)

Time rolls on, as they say. Putting the manufacturing sector of the

Western world back together after World War II was a considerable and ingenious feat, but there is a lingering doubt today about whether we did ever get it right.

Motor cars. We are talking motor cars. I don't want to stir up a hornet's nest, but late in the 1970s Daimler-Benz in Germany seemed to have things more right than most. We in the West had discovered automation on the production line, but Daimler-Benz had also discovered it could run one set of panels down its production line to make one type of motor car, swing it out into a holding bay, then run another set of panels down the same line and make an entirely different motor car. It was doing this at a rate approaching 500,000 cars a year. Doing it well.

People came from all around the world to gape at the wonders of Singelfinden, not the least of them Japanese engineers. Dare I say it? Daimler-Benz could make several models on a particular line, but what if... but what if computer control was pushed further so more models could be made, and what if this control was pushed even further to eliminate inventory stocks, to bring about "just in time" assembly?

I will hand the prize to Toyota, but certainly Nissan was in there as well. Toyota discovered it could make as many as half-a-dozen different cars at once, assure 100 per cent quality control, and at the same time slash its operating costs. It took making motor cars from being a clever even a "smart" industry, into a high technology industry of previously unthought of proportions.

This is a nutshell presentation and I have had to skim over a few points. But read it and weep. And as far as we in the West are concerned, the penny took an awfully long time to drop. Some don't believe it has.

I will end things with possibly an apocryphal story about a US manufacturer which wanted a large number of small units machined with a defect rate of three in 10,000. Only a Japanese company would take on the job. It sent the US company the order with the note, "Please find your 10,000 units. We don't understand why you want three defective units, but have sent three un-machined ones in a separate package."

Back to the Cressida. This is a very conservative looking car that goes about its job with wonderful aplomb. Just the thing for those of us who are tired of flash and of being milked of our hard-won dollars by ridiculous prices. I don't know how it can be sold in this country at a price that is virtually the same as that of some locally made cars with half as much in them. If that doesn't scare people, I don't know what will.



PRAYER OF A POOR PEDESTRIAN

O God, who filled all heaven with stars
And then all earth with motor cars,
Make room within thy cosmic plan
For me, a poor pedestrian.

Spread Thou before me, I entreat,
A threadlike pathway for my feet;
And do Thou watch me lest I stray
From this, Thy strait and narrow way.

Give me an ear alert, acute,
For each swift car's peremptory hoot:
Teach me to judge its headlong pace
And dodge it with a nimble grace.

When drivers' looks and words are black,
Restrain me, Lord, from answering back:
O bless me with a nature meek
To bear with smiles each narrow squeak.

And if one day Thy watchful eye
Should be withdrawn, and I should die,
One boon I crave, upon my knees:
Exonerate the driver, please.

A. M. L.

VW 'Beetle' is Mexico's buzz

LIKE the hardy insects that are predicted to survive a nuclear war, the Volkswagen "Beetle" may never die.

Loved and then lost by car owners from Heidelberg to Houston, the venerable VW bug flourishes again, this time in the teeming city streets and remote rural highways of Mexico.

Thirteen years after the last new Beetle rolled off the sales lot in the United States, the design has become an essential, ubiquitous element of Mexican life, claiming one-fifth of all new vehicles sold in the country this year.

Polished to a fare-thee-well as an executive car, fitted with red lights and siren as a police cruiser, topped with luggage racks as a family model, or stripped of its right front seat as a taxi, the bug swarms over Mexican roads with the same humble implacability that brought it worldwide fame and affection for two generations.

It is the indestructible family relic that virtually every Mexican teenager first learns to drive, the inescapable favorite of Mexican students and single workers, the inexpensive first car for new and poor Mexican families.

By MARK A. UHLIG,
Mexico City

Part of the Beetle's success here is that it is made locally at a giant, German-owned Volkswagen factory in Cuautlancingo, about 75 miles south-east of Mexico City.

The plant, the only one in the world that still produces the design, is the largest automotive factory in the country and has made Volkswagen parts so abundant here that they can even be found in grocery stores.

But Mexico's love affair with the Beetle, or Bochito, as it is nicknamed here, received its official ratification last year, when the Mexican Government invited car manufacturers to compete for the right to produce inexpensive cars under a special program to provide affordable transportation for Mexico's poor and middle classes.

The Government offered the winning manufacturer of the Auto Popular, or People's Car, as the program was called, special tax breaks for commitments to produce the car at fixed low prices.

The winner was the Volkswagen, which was first designed in 1934, as just such a car for the masses, and whose name, by propitious coincidence, means "people's car".

The new Government designation, which with tax breaks and the manufacturer's commitments cut the Beetle's price tag by nearly 25 per cent, has since caused a nationwide run on Mexico's 232 Volkswagen dealerships, which have an average waiting list of three to four months for new bugs.

The Volkswagen factory here, which formerly employed 14,000 people, has hired more than 6000 new workers, added a third shift, and invested millions of dollars to more than triple its Beetle production from about 120 a day to a current pace of 450 a day.

"The demand has been incredible," said Fernando Mendez, a spokesman for the factory. "We have always been the lowest-priced car, but this has made it possible for almost everyone to line up and buy one."

As part of its contract with the Government, Volkswagen agreed to limit any increases in the Beetle's price to conform to increases in Mexico's official minimum wage, a bargain that has left the car's current price at \$5300.

The model is basically the same unpretentious design to which Americans bade farewell when safety and environmental regulations, with changing marketing strategies, took the Beetle from US showrooms in 1977.

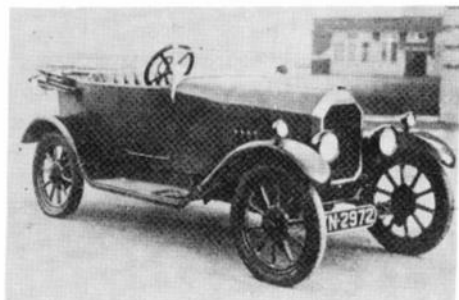
The Mexican model has the trademark flat windshield, and a 1600-cc engine with manual transmission.

Volkswagen experts continue to refine and improve details of the design, and recently changed to an electronic ignition system. The 1991 Beetle will have a catalytic converter to meet new Mexican emission standards.

— New York Times

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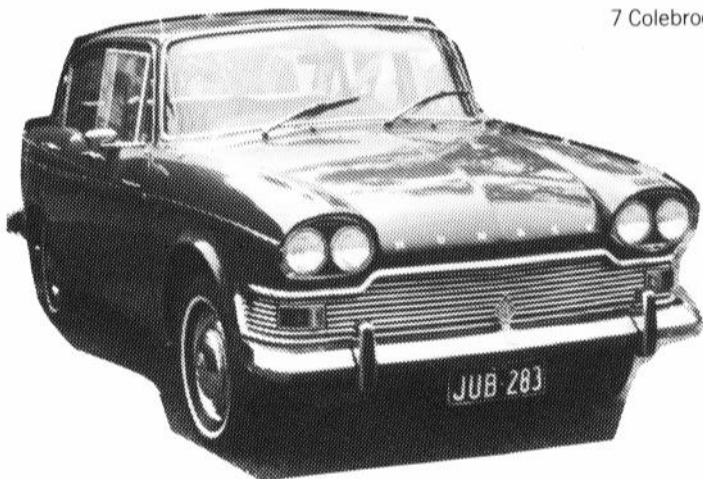
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