
Morris Cars

Series III Models

The 31st International Motor Exhibition at the new venue of Earl Court opened in October 1937 giving the general public the opportunity of seeing the latest Morris Series models on stand 147. The usual lunch for distributors and dealers had been held about seven weeks earlier when 1,800 guests had been entertained at Grosvenor House, London. Lord Nuffield surprised most of those present when he announced that, with the exception of the Eight, all models of the 1938 range would have overhead-valve engines and four-speed gearboxes, adding, 'And if you cannot sell them you ought to be boiled.' In the event nobody was boiled, not even his advisers who obviously forgot to mention that the 25hp version continued to have a three-speed gearbox!

Now the sole side-valve Morris car was the Eight which had been changed in detail only and became the 'Series II'. The Bradford City Police took delivery of new Series II Eight two-seaters (registered CKU783 to CKU788 and BKY738 to BKY743) to add to the fleet of Series I open models already in service. The Sheffield force also took delivery of thirteen Series II two-seaters. At least one of the Bradford fleet is said to still exist. In the south, the Hastings Police were also using Morris Eights.

The new model, designated Series III, comprised the four-cylinder Ten and Twelve, and the six-cylinder Fourteen and Twenty-Five. Except for the Twelve the changes were merely cosmetic; for example the Series III Ten body lines remained virtually identical to the model it replaced but there was a painted radiator shell; less noticeable was the reduction in wheel size for the 5.50-16 tyres. This new size of Easiclean wheel had been fitted for some time to the previous Series II Ten/Twelve export models, although with 5.75-16 tyres, a size which continued on the Series II Tens destined for overseas markets.

Three alternatives were offered, starting with the saloon model with fixed-head at the a basic price of £185 with the optional extras of a luggage grid for £1 10s, a metal Wilmot Breeden spare-wheel cover for £1 in black or £1 7s 6d in a matching colour, and the Jackall built-in jacking system which added another £5. In sliding-head form the saloon was presumably fitted with the appropriate wheel cover as the only extras to the list price were the Jackall system and luggage grid. The third model was a special coupe at £220.

The engine used in the Ten was a four-cylinder 1,292cc unit, type 'MPJM', with a bore of 63.5mm and a stroke of 102mm driving through the usual cork insert clutch and four-speed synchromesh gearbox. The overhead valves were of dissimilar diameter for inlet and exhaust. Other features included an AC cleaner and fume consumer, SU carburettor, and a pumped system fitted with a by-pass thermostat which provided the cooling for an engine giving 37.5 bhp at 4,500rpm. In 'MPJG' form the same engine was used in the contemporary MG 10hp Series II car; and with an appropriate W suffix, in the short lived Wolseley 10/40.

Colour choice for all the Ten models was black, blue, grey, green or maroon but it was not merely a styling feature that dictated a dissimilar shade of body colour from that of the wheels and wings. With the exception of the all-black models (which had stove enamelled wheels and wings and a cellulose finish to the body) the brighter models had a cellulosed body while the wheels and wings were finished in synthetic lacquer.

The Series III Ten had an extremely short production of only twelve months and if the chassis serial numbers (which continue on from the Series II Ten and Twelve) are a guide, something like 13,719 were produced. Of these, and including three special coupe models, thirty-four are known to be at present in the hands of enthusiasts.

FFC330 was the registration number of a Series III Ten sponsored by Morris Motors which entered as number 108 in the 17th Monte Carlo Rally in January 1938. Driven by the *Daily Mail's* motoring correspondent, W.A. McKenzie, in the company of J.E. Whitehead and F.H.S. Rasch of Morris Motors Publicity Department, the sliding-head saloon model was equipped with additional equipment such as windscreen defrosters, car heater, spot lamps, external mirrors, export-size tyres, together with snow chains and spades. One of five John O'Groats starters to arrive on time and without loss of points, the car was placed fourteenth in the 1,500cc class, gained some welcome publicity and was later displayed at Stewart & Arden's showrooms in London.

Of the new overhead-valve four-cylinder models the Series III Twelve-Four had the larger horsepower. In common with all the new Morris cars introduced at the time, the radiator shell and wheels were painted the same colour as the body. The body was a new design and although the same overall length as its predecessor (the Series II Twelve-Four) the wheelbase was some 4in shorter, putting the rear seats over the back axle, rather than forward of it, but still leaving space for the boot with external access. This boot lid, hinged at its bottom edge and fitted with supports, provided an extra platform for luggage in excess of the internal 10cu ft space. Immediately below as a removable number plate panel to allow access to the spare wheel which was now housed in a separate compartment. Aesthetic balance to the longer overhang at the rear was achieved by giving a more pronounced tail to the rear wings.

Saloon versions only were listed and these came in four-door form with, or without, sliding-head. For £215 the new owner had a car in the choice of black, blue, green, maroon or grey (although the latter was later replaced with beige body/brown wheels and wings) upholstered in leather. Internal fittings included a folding arm rest on the rear seat, large door pockets, parcel shelf under the fascia panel, sun visor, pillar pull-cords and a remote control rear blind. Pivoting rear quarter-lights, hinged front windscreen with centre control, scuttle side ventilators and glass louvres over the front door windows helped to provide controllable ventilation. The Jackall hydraulic jacking system came as an extra on both models. Surprisingly, the lack of sliding-head and replacement of real leather by Karhyde only gave a £10 reduction in the listed price of the fixed-head version.

Under the bonnet the 'TPBM' four-cylinder push-rod ohv engine with a RAC rating of 11.978hp (thus cleverly fitting onto the £9pa Road Fund Tax bracket) gave a maximum 40.8bhp at 3,800rpm. The capacity of the 69mm × 102mm engine was 1,550cc. A feature not shared with the other Series III cars was the use of a dry clutch, in this case a Borg & Beck A6 type, 8in diameter, with a release bearing of carbon graphite. Because of rationalisation within the Morris Engines Branch the previous year, it is not surprising to find that the same engine in 'TPBW' guise was in the Wolseley Series III 12/48 and the 'TPBG' version in the MG 12hp Series II car.

Immediately prior to the war some small changes were announced for the Twelve which included improved springing by the introduction of an increased number of thinner leaves to the front springs and a change from six to seven leaves at the rear, new type shock absorbers, bucket-seat back-panels deeper by 2in and improved waterproofing.

The new Sixes came at the Fourteen-Six and Twenty-Five-Six – gone was the in-between Eighteen – the engine, wheel size and colour presentation had changed, of course, but it was still the same basic body design that carried the new overhead-valve engine. A sliding-head saloon body was the only type listed for the Fourteen-Six and although the price was up to £23 10s on its predecessor many features were so similar that the Morris Oxford Press were able to use some of the original Series II photographs in the new catalogue! Detail improvements were made internally, for example, the figured walnut fascia board now boasted lids on the glove compartments and the semaphore arms were self-cancelling. Right-handed smokers almost certainly appreciated the new ergonomic approach which had moved the ashtray to the right-hand side of the sprung steering wheel. The double windscreen wipers had an independent control on the left side while, for the comfort of the rear passengers a folding arm rest had been added; in original form, this must have been a nuisance when lifting the back for access to the luggage compartment.

Perhaps one of the best known Series III Fourteen-Sixes to Morris enthusiasts is that owned by Arthur Peeling of London. Questioned about the anomaly of the chromium-plated radiator shell on his saloon, he explained that the vehicle is an ex-ministry car and that he had been told by one of the original ministry chauffeurs that the non-standard parts were the result of a 'costing' exercise. It appears the normal vehicle issue to eligible officials was that the contemporary Wolseley 14/56 Saloon which at £275 was more expensive than the £248 10s for the Morris Fourteen-Six, so the Morris version was issued. However, to retain the dignity commensurate with the official's rank, chromium-plated headlamps and radiator shell, together with an opening boot, at an extra cost of £65, was specified. The result of this was, according to Arthur Peeling, a Morris which cost the taxpayer more than its Wolseley counterpart and, incidentally, appears to have triggered off the provision of an external opening boot lid on the standard models, commencing at chassis number S3/FS60573.

In February 1939, three Halifax business men set out on an ambitious venture; a 5,000 mile journey which included a 3,000 mile trip across the Sahara Desert, always a popular challenge in the 'thirties. The car used was a Morris Fourteen-Six Series III saloon (registered JX7294) towing a small caravan which (to judge by the period publicity photographs) had such narrow section tyres, that it must surely have become bogged down in the desert sand. The three men were Mr. George Boulton, Councillor J. Milton Stead, and Mr. J.S. Hargreaves.

A landmark for Morris came on 22 May 1939 when the millionth Morris car made drove off the production line at the Cowley works, making it the first British factory to manufacture a million vehicles (Fords of America had, by contrast, reached the figure as early as 1915 and by 1939 were assembling their twenty-seven millionth car at the Richmond, California, plant. On the other hand it took Austin 40 years, between 1906 and 1946, to reach a million.) Lord Nuffield presented the car, a Series III Fourteen-Six sliding-head saloon, to the Ladies Association of Guys Hospital to be offered as a prize in a special draw. It had taken William Morris 26 years to reach the one million mark and only twelve years later (six of which can be discounted due to the war) the two-millionth Morris left the works.

A regular feature of the day-to-day working at Cowley about this time was the constant passage of groups visiting the factory to see the cars being assembled. Morris encouraged this obvious good publicity for his cars. Indeed, in 1938 and 1939 the Southdown Motor Services ran special excursions to Cowley for a return fare of 15s 6d which included tea! It is interesting to read Southdown's description of what a visitor to the production lines would see: '... thousands of men working – thousands of cars are taking shape. From the various specialised Morris factories, the parts arrive at Cowley continuously. Engines... bodies... wings... axles... chassis frames... radiators... wheels... a constant stream is arriving, to be instantly sorted out for assembly. Then the chassis frames move slowly along the conveyors, various parts are assembled at different points along the line. Everything happens with clockwork precision. Men and machines are synchronised. From out of the maze of separate parts, complete cars emerge. They grow before your eyes. It is a spectacle worth travelling

hundreds of miles to see; a symbol of modernity and progress; an experience you will value all your life'.

Contemporary road tests gave a figure of 8 seconds to 30mph from a standing start for the Fourteen while 'the needle could be taken up to 75mph in favourable conditions.' The engine type 'QPDM' with a 61.5mm bore and 102mm stroke (1,818cc) was rated at 51.25bhp at 4,200rpm maximum. In another form ('QPDC') and fed by a Solex carburettor the engine was used in the Morris Commercial G2-SW, or 'Super Six' taxicab.

With a Road Fund Tax of £18 15s per year, increasing to £31 25s in May 1939 when the Chancellor of the Exchequer raised the tax from 15s to 25s per hp, it is not surprising that cars of the 25hp rating formed a small percentage of sales in Britain. How many of the Series III Twenty-Five-Sixes were made is not known, Morris Motors Ltd included the chassis numbering in with the Fourteen-Six sequence. A total production of 5,419 Fourteen and Twenty-Five cars combined provide the basis of a reasoned estimate of 20 per cent, or approximately 1,000 of the larger vehicles. Certainly of those made, a considerable number were, together with other makes of large car, modified at the start of the war to provide ARP ambulances. At the time of writing only two examples exist within the membership of the Morris Register (UK), while the few known examples of the earlier Series II versions appear to be in Australia where the model was known as the Morris 6/25.

A major new innovation on the Series III Twenty-Five, engine apart, was the provision of a boot lid at the rear, making the luggage grid superfluous. It altered the lines of the body a little, but the retention of the spare wheel mounting position made for a weighty bottom-hinged lid. Some time later, about September 1938, a Morris badge incorporating a reflector was added to the boot lid. Most of the changes made in detail and equipment were the same as those mentioned above in relation to the Fourteen, but one new feature not shared was the telescopically adjustable steering column added to the new Twenty-Five. Countering the additional paint finish surfaces at the front were styling strips between the bonnet louvre groups, while inside a luxury touch was the provision of corner cushions at the rear and adjustable pneumatic cushions for the small of the back, built into the front seats.

Two models were available. A saloon with sliding-head listed at £320 (which was an increase of £40 on the Series II version) and a special coupe (£5 cheaper than the earlier version!) which in a choice of overall black, grey, or 'Sports Blue', boasted twin fog lamps and horns as standard. With the addition of these electrical components and the twin SU petrol pumps the substitution of the old winter/summer charging arrangement for the constant voltage control system in conjunction with a 60 amp-hour 12-volt battery was desirable.

The 'OPEM' engine in the Twenty-Five (which continued after the war as 'OPEW' to power the long-wheel base Series III Wolseley 25) contributed considerably (780lb) to the unladen weight of the saloon which weighed over 32cwt exclusive of fuel. This car was the most powerful production Morris of pre-war years, the engine producing 95.4bhp at 3,800rpm.

When introducing the new Series III models in August 1937, Lord Nuffield had some strong words to say about the 'ramp' in the continued advance of steel prices in this country. Of the steel manufacturers he said '... an absolute ramp - big cigars and nothing to do!' Despite this, the list price for all Series III models had remained constant throughout the peacetime production period which, in the case of the Twelve, Fourteen and Twenty-Five was two years. The smaller Ten-Four as mentioned earlier had a shorter life before being superseded by the Series 'M' Ten.

Specifications

Series III Models. Chassis Numbers	
The chassis numbering series for the Series III Fourteen-Six and the Twenty-Five Six were shared.	
Series III Twelve-Four	S3/TW101-S3/TW19565
Series III Fourteen-Six	S3/FS57532-S3/FS62940
Series III Twenty-Five-Six	S3/TF57532-S3/TF62936

For further details please refer to *The Morris Motor Car 1913-1983* by Harry Edwards
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