



**VICTORIA**  
(INC.)

# NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NO. 8

VOLUME 32

AUGUST 1993.

CLUB ROOMS:- at the rear of "ALVISTA", EDGAR ST., MALVERN. Near Harold Holt Memorial Swimming Pool.

MEETINGS:- THIRD FRIDAY OF EACH MONTH (EXCEPT DEC./JAN.) AT 8 pm.

## \*\*\*\*\*EVENTS\*\*\*\*\*EVENTS\*\*\*\*\*EVENTS\*\*\*\*\*

**AUGUST. FRIDAY 20TH. CLUB GENERAL MEETING - AUCTION NIGHT.**

**SEPTEMBER. FRIDAY 17TH. CLUB GENERAL MEETING. G.N.O. Details inside.**

**OCTOBER SUNDAY 10TH. PUFFING BILLY FESTIVAL** Details on page 9 of July Newsletter - entries extended to 20th August

**OCTOBER FRIDAY 15TH. CLUB ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND ELECTIONS.**

**OCTOBER SATURDAY 16TH. CLUB ANNUAL DINNER.** Venue the same as last year - details next month.

**OCTOBER SUNDAY 24TH. MT. TARRENGOWER.**

**OCTOBER SUNDAY 31ST. GEELONG SPRINTS.**

**NOVEMBER FRIDAY 19TH. CLUB GENERAL MEETING.**

**NOVEMBER SUNDAY 21ST. CLUB RUN TO AILEEN & SIMON RAMSAY'S AT CASTLEMAINE.**

**DECEMBER. END OF YEAR BARBECUE.** Details September Newsletter.

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J. Leman-Bates



J. Leman-Bates



ALVIS AGNITIONS.

The Editor was unable to attend the Film Night held in July but has heard that there was a very good turn out on a cold and windy night. Many ladies were present but I do not intend to mention any, lest I omit one. I did that once and my ears have only just recovered. Well done ladies and thanks for your company. **DAVID FLETCHER** showed three 16 millimetre films concerning motor racing in years gone by. Unfortunately that's about the last of the 16 millimetre available. Much of the material is on video but the flickering clanking projector has been part of the fun of film nights since **RON WILSON** was in nappies. **BOB GRAHAM** is still battling with builders - to the point where work upon the cars is suffering. It's that serious! Any member with vintage Alvis steering problems would have taken note of the information regarding the Marles steering box which appeared in the last issue. Upholding its reputation of being of real service to members this Newsletter is proud to offer the supply of such a steering box - thanks to **PAUL REED'S** advert in this issue. See F.S.W. Paul was on the phone the other day and says that the 12/50 is running well and eager to meet other Alvises in Queensland at the end of August. There does not appear to be a big contingent going North from Victoria but it should be a good Rally all the same. The Editor is a bit worried about South Australia. **JOHN MURRAY** has put in a couple of long distance appearances in recent months and I think we heard from **VIC ELLIOT** recently but of the rest - not a thing! Has the whole State sunk? Or been sold to the Japanese? If so, would they please shove all the Alvises on to this side of the gang plank before towing it away? **RICHARD TONKIN** is in breach of contract for not supplying model answers to July's quiz but may be forgiven if the events he has listed on page one turn out to be as good as they appear.

ED.



WINTER QUIZ ANSWERS, CORRECTED & AMPLIFIED.

Further to the responses already given to Bob Graham's questions.

White lines (including double lines) were observed by N.S.W. Commissioner for Main Roads while in U.S.A. in 1937 and he arranged for the California State Highway Department to send over to Sydney the "essential parts of their latest linemarking machine". By June 1939 the roads from Sydney to Albury, Dubbo, Canberra and to a point well north of Newcastle were given centre-road linemarkings.

Warning signs for motorists were brought into some form of uniformity throughout Australia with the Standard Road Code produced in 1935 by the Standards Association of Australia, mainly for local government use.

No Crossing signs were introduced on the N.S.W. roads during the 1940s (not 1950s, as previously stated).

Traffic Lights were tried, experimentally, in Sydney with the installation of a 3-colour set at the intersection of Market and Kent Streets on 13th October, 1933. It was not until 1936 that a further four sets were installed at York and Margaret Streets, Erskine and Clarence Streets and two sets on Pyrmont Bridge Road.

Roundabouts were originally called something different: does anyone know what name was given to them previously? Some of us give some of these systems, and the ignorant motorists who use them, names of our own which are not printable. There are no hard-and-fast rules operating in N.S.W., especially in respect of signalling, so it is usually a case of "might it right".

ERIC CUNNINGHAM

HOW TO ORDER BEARINGS

When ordering a replacement bearing, proceed as follows: Give the name or make, model and year of car, and the position or location of the bearing; for example, if for the front wheel, state if it is the inner or outer bearing, likewise the rear wheel, transmission, etc.

Remarks on ordering New Departure ball bearings: There are markings on the outside of the bearing you remove, and this information should also be supplied as well as the name, model, and position information. Bearings and parts can be secured of United Motors Service, Inc., with general offices in Detroit, Mich., and branches in principal cities. The manufacturers are The New Departure Mfg. Co., Bristol, Conn.

Remarks on ordering Timken roller bearings: There are only two parts of a Timken bearing that can be ordered for replacement. One is the cone, cage and roller assembly complete; the other is the cup. Stamped on each cone and on each cup will be found a number. In ordering bearings, this number should invariably be given. But not only should the number be given, but also the location of the bearing, the model number of the car, and the year in which the car was built. Bearings and parts can be secured from The Timken Roller Bearing Co., Canton, Ohio, or from their branches in principal cities. (Note: On the new designs of Timken bearings, the ribs are omitted from the ends of the rollers and a wingless steel cage is used.)

Remarks on ordering Hyatt roller bearings: When ordering, supply the information as to the make, model of car, year it was made, and position of the bearing.

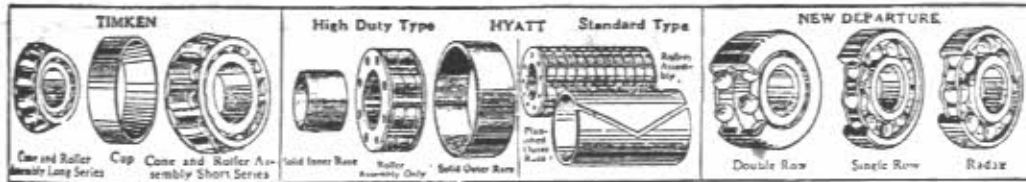
A roller assembly may be identified from a sample as follows: Split race and Hy-duty roller assemblies have ring numbers stamped on the end rings. These identify a bearing as to shaft diameter and roller diameter, but have no reference to bearing length. However, if your order specifies both a ring number and length of race, the bearing can be identified by the nearest service station. Should no race be available, measure the roller length, label and dimension "actual roller length" on the order, and forward it with the end ring number to the nearest service station.

In ordering "new series" roller assemblies, specify the roller diameter, number of rollers, and roller length.

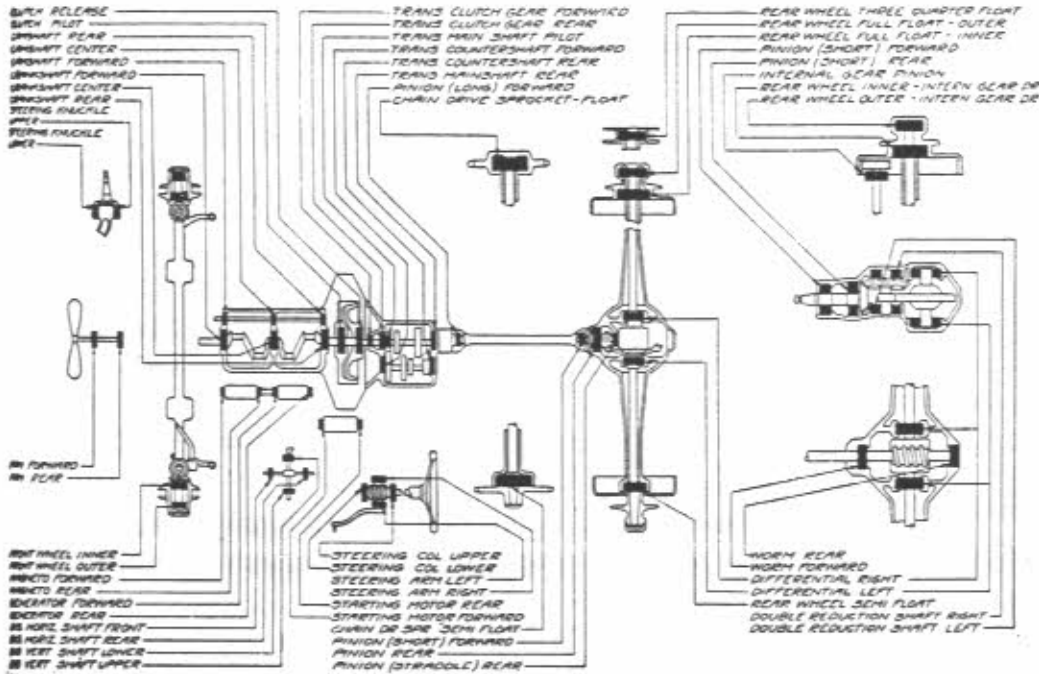
Split races have numbers stamped on the outside. Order them by these numbers. Solid races have no numbers on them, and should therefore be ordered by specifying the inside diameter, outside diameter, and length when the piece number is not known. Bearings and parts can be secured of United Motors Service, Inc., with general offices in Detroit, Mich., and branches in principal cities. The manufacturers are the Hyatt Roller Bearing Co., Harrison, N.J.

Note: Hyatt bearings built into cars in 1924 and later carry bearing numbers on each part of the assembly, and when ordering, it is only necessary to give the number as stamped on the part desired.

The usual cause of worn bearings is generally the fact that the bearing has been improperly mounted or housed, so as to permit the entrance of grit or other abrasives into the raceways, or the bearing has been overloaded beyond its rated capacity or not properly adjusted (if of the adjustable type).

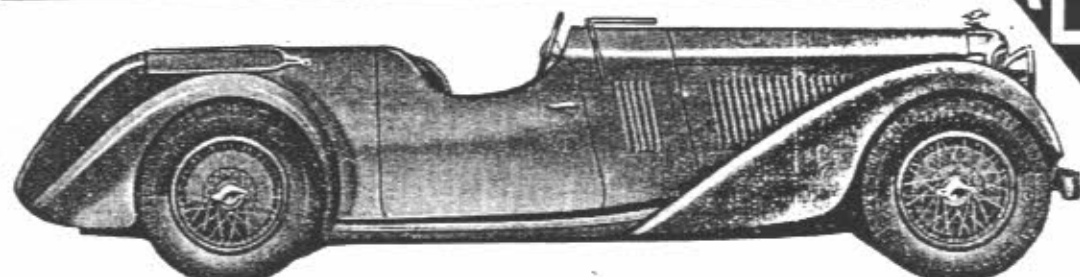


Parts of three popular makes of bearings: The Timken tapered roller type, the Hyatt roller type, and the New Departure ball type. The illustrations show the only way in which it is practical to order the parts of the different bearings.



Illustrations taken from a booklet, Supplement to the Service Catalog of New Departure Ball Bearings, published by The New Departure Mfg. Co., Bristol, Conn., manufacturers of the New Departure ball bearings, showing the position, or location and names of bearing.

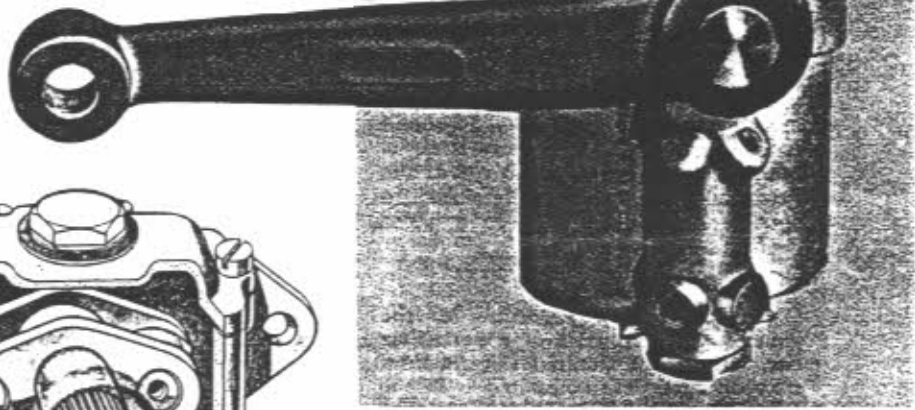
THE SPEED TWENTY



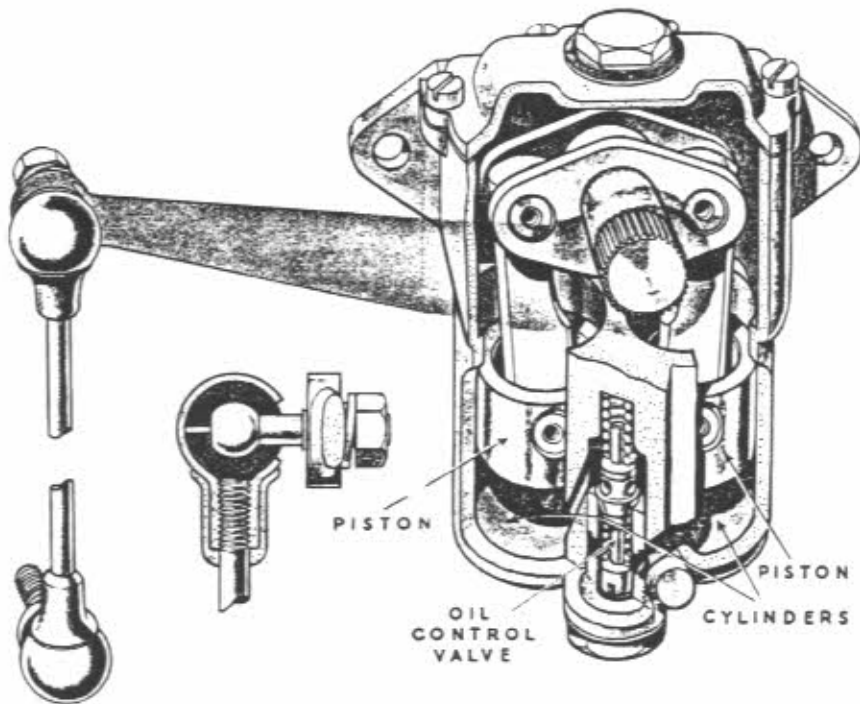
... is a favourite among racing drivers

# Armstrong Hydraulic Shock Absorber

*Hydraulic Control by Fluid Transfer: Pre-set Differentiation Between Bump and Rebound*



A well-finished exterior is a feature of the Armstrong shock absorber. The cylinder bores have no detachable plugs and no external joints are subject to high pressure, hence no leakage is likely to occur.



A clean pressure die casting forms the body of the Armstrong shock absorber. The external lever and internal crank are rigidly pressed on to serrations on the main spindle.

**T**HE name Armstrong has been associated with shock absorbers for a great many years and the makers have been intimately concerned with the automobile industry since the days before World War I. In 1913 the founder of The Armstrong's Patents Co., Ltd., of Beverley, East Yorkshire, Mr. Gordon Armstrong, manufactured a cycle car, as the very light air-cooled two-cylinder-engined four-wheelers of the day were known; the older generation of motorists may remember the Gordon, which performed in the reliability trials of those times.

About the same period Mr. Armstrong ran a Model T Ford and the problem of controlling its undamped transverse leaf spring suspension led

to his devising a simple type of friction snubber which was so successful, within its limits, that quite a business developed in producing sets for this then very popular car. In turn the results led to interest from other car manufacturers and the Armstrong shock absorber became more widely known.

Experience indicated that something more positively controllable was desirable and thoughts turned to hydraulic mechanisms; much later a new Armstrong device was developed of the two-cylinder type in which fluid passed from one cylinder to another through an adjustably restricted orifice so that violent bump and rebound were both resisted and dissipated, while there was suitable damping of minor

spring oscillations. These shock absorbers became standard equipment on many cars.

Before 1939 a new type was developed with the object of providing for a more accurately controlled differential action as between bump and rebound shocks; at the same time the design was planned for great reliability and long life without need for fluid replenishment, and with pre-set adjustments to actual operating conditions for the type and characteristics of the car on which it was installed. Furthermore, extreme simplicity of detail was worked out so that the conveyor system of assembly could be adopted to produce large quantities which could be guaranteed to be identical and which could be tested by an indicator against a master diagram for any particular vehicle, under actual load conditions, before being passed off assembly.

#### In Large Production

World War II halted production, although this type was made during the war for certain military and essential civilian vehicles and the production methods became well established. Now the latest Armstrong shock absorber is again in large production.

Shock absorber requirements are generally fairly well appreciated. During the relatively slow and easy movements of the axle under normal riding conditions the control of the



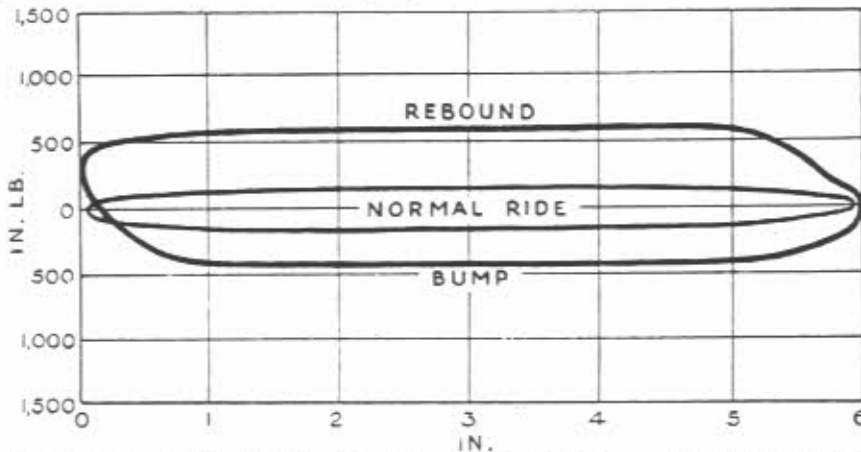
6

spring action requires to be at a minimum although it is desirable to damp out the minor vibrations, without, however, causing the suspension to be hard. When a violent bump is encountered the function of the shock absorber is in effect to stiffen the spring to resist complete and sudden closure, so preventing the buffer pad usually fitted above the axle from striking the chassis frame. During the period of a bump a great deal of energy is stored in the spring and the moment the load is relieved the tendency of the spring is to return rapidly to, or beyond, its normal position. This action may result in fore-and-aft pitching, or may produce a violent upthrow of the chassis. Rebound control is therefore as essential as bump control, for it has to retard the "unwinding" of the heavily closed up spring.

#### Suited Requirements

Quite obviously, according to the general characteristics of a particular car, a different damping of rebound may be needed as compared with the bump control and in this respect the Armstrong can be set to give any desired reaction in either direction, while the normal ride damping can be fixed to cover a greater or lesser range at each side of the normal static condition, as desirable. For a sports car, for example, the normal ride should be quite firm in the interests of good cornering at high speeds, but for a touring car the springing needs to be only slightly damped, or soft, over a wider range, plus probably more control of rebound than of bump.

The design of the shock absorber and its action are quite simple. Two equal-sized cylinders have steel pistons which are reciprocated through short connecting rods coupled to a rocking beam fixed on a spindle oscillated by an external lever connected to the axle by a link. An upward bump causes one piston to descend, so building up



Typical torque diagram showing resistance of shock absorber for corresponding axle movement. The performance of all shock absorbers is tested on a special rig to trace a curve over master diagrams of this type.

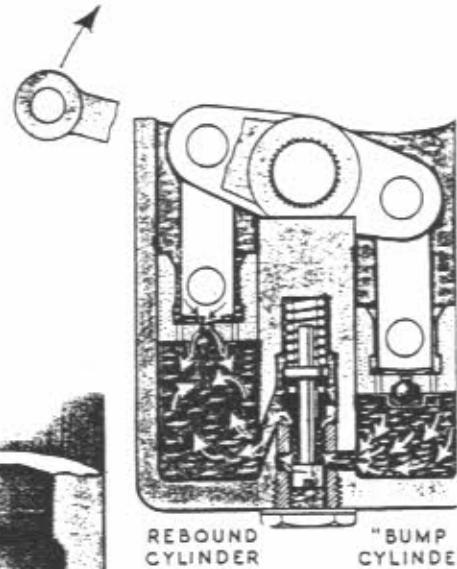
## Armstrong Hydraulic

pressure on the fluid in that cylinder. This pressure is transferred through a port to a valve chamber and according to the predetermined strength of a spring above a shoulder on the valve spindle a conical valve is forced off its seating, thus allowing oil to flow through a further port to the other cylinder, the piston of which rises as the "bump piston" descends.

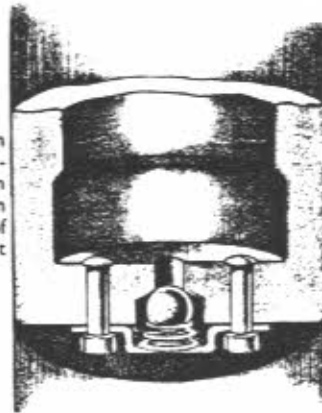
When the axle returns violently, or rebounds, after a heavy bump the raised piston descends with great rapidity and pressure is built up in its cylinder and is transferred back to the valve chamber; in this direction the fluid flows into the hollow conical valve through radial holes and impinges upon a flat valve seating against the smaller end of the cone, against which it is held by another spring on the lower end of the valve spindle. This rebound valve then opens and the fluid passes back through the port to the "bump cylinder." The resistance to sudden movement depends on the strength and adjustment of the two valve springs.

Under smooth road conditions spring deflections are of insufficient speed and

amplitude to force either valve off its seating and the suspension would therefore be exceedingly solid unless special provision were made; a groove or leak path, therefore, is cut across the face of the flat rebound valve, with the result that slight movements of the axle which transfer only slow and limited oscillations to the shock absorber spindle are reflected in short and gentle reciprocation of the pistons. Sudden high pressures are not built up and the fluid flows backwards and forwards as the pistons move from one cylinder to the other by way of the leak path or bleed. The dimensions of this leak groove are a critical factor in the



When a bump occurs the piston on the fluid on that side increases and is held by the conical bump valve; the oil on the high-pressure fluid passing through the leak path past the rebound valve.



Recuperating ball valve in the piston crown. A recuperating ball valve in the crown of each piston provides for the return of fluid which may leak past the pistons.

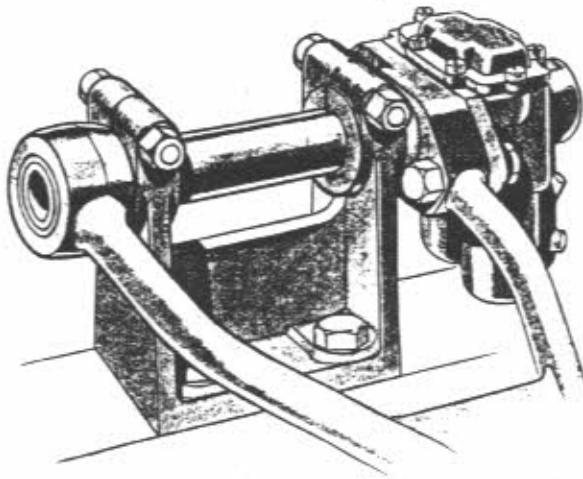
performance under normal conditions, for by correctly resisting the gentle fluid transference it smooths out or damps the minor spring oscillations.

There are thus three variable elements in the control valve assembly to give the required characteristics. First there is the top spring of predetermined strength but subject to adjustment by varying the thickness of the washer at the head of the screwed plug which retains the complete valve assembly. Secondly there is the lower spring which loads the rebound valve; this is adjusted by a screwed collar on the valve stem. These settings are adjusted to give the required readings under actual fluid pressure against an hydraulic gauge during assembly.

The best settings for most popular cars are, of course, known and when the gauge reading is correctly obtained the collar is permanently locked on

# Shock Absorber—Continued

An example of the Armstrong shock absorber embodied as an integral part of a wishbone assembly in an independent suspension system, the main spindle being extended to form the wishbone pivot.



for the spindle of the operating arm is at the top and it has a rubber seal at its one external bearing orifice. Any slight internal fluid leakage past the sides of the pistons is made good by downward transference of fluid from the upper chamber through non-return valves in the piston crowns; this is low-pressure recuperation and ensures that cylinders are always full.

It is intended that these shock absorbers shall function without topping up for at least 50,000 miles, and although a filler plug is fitted this can be regarded as a gesture to convention; actually the makers would prefer to fit a non-detachable sealed cover.

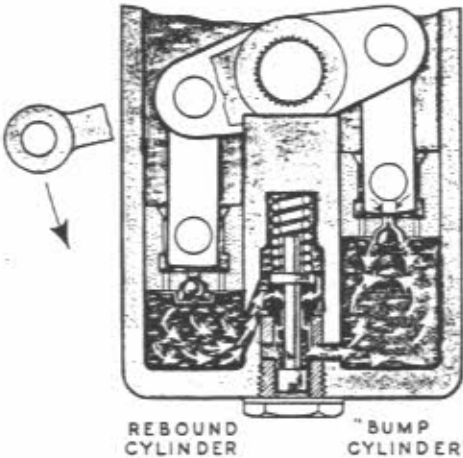
A particularly interesting feature is the construction of the connecting link between the axle and the shock absorber lever. This link is built up in such a way that the ends may have any desired angular relationship as required by the axle and chassis layout but, like the shock absorber itself, it is made up and permanently aligned to suit the make of car to be fitted. At each end of the link are spherical pressed steel housings, each of which contains a rubber ball. Into holes in these rubber bearings ball-ended studs are pressed and a final operation closes the steel shell more completely, so that the pin cannot be disengaged from the rubber. As compared with a cylindrical rubber bush the rubber ball in conjunction with the ball-ended pin permits of considerable angular movement of the connecting link without any tendency to distort the rubber or to wear it to one side.

### To Avoid Twisting Stresses

One of the ball-ended pins is secured to the axle and the other to the shock absorber lever, and it will be clear that as, by the nature of things, the up and down movement of the axle connection and the angular movement of the shock absorber lever are not always in the same place, the ball-ended pins and the spherical rubber bushes permit a considerable degree of accommodation for out-of-line motion between the respective parts without undue stress and wear of the connecting bearings themselves and without transferring twisting stresses from the axle to the shock absorber or its mounting bracket.

For the increasing number of independent wheel suspensions a modified type is being developed. The internal mechanism of this is the same, but the spindle carrying the rocking beam which reciprocates the pistons is extended to form the axis for the upper wishbone of this type of suspension and the two arms of the wishbone are fixed directly on to it. In this arrangement there is no necessity for a separate flexibly jointed connecting link, as the upper wishbone directly oscillates the extended shock absorber spindle; it becomes, in fact, an integral and essential part of the suspension layout.

resistance to bump. Alternatively the exact reverse can be provided or there can be any desired variation of the relationship between the two conditions. Again, for easy riding conditions there can be either little or much damping within the range covered by small or slow movements of the connecting arm and this in turn is independent of the bump and rebound settings. It will be recognised



REBOUND CYLINDER

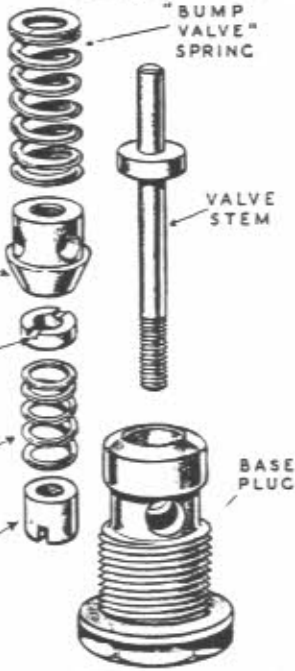
"BUMP CYLINDER"

CONICAL "BUMP VALVE"

REBOUND VALVE WITH BLEED

REBOUND SPRING

ADJUSTING NUT FOR REBOUND SPRING



Combined bump and rebound valve, which is a complete assembly screwed into the body of the device. The groove in the rebound valve face controls the normal ride.

the valve spindle. The third point of variation is in the cross-sectional area of the leak path across the face of the rebound valve, but this is not an adjustment other than that the groove is machined to suit the characteristics of the particular car to which it will be fitted. Thus there are a damping resistance to normal spring vibrations, a fixed resistance to bump conditions, and a fixed resistance to rebound. Any or all of these can be pre-set to meet a particular suspension system.

With these variables available a shock absorber can be set up to give high resistance to rebound with little

that this adaptability does not take a form suitable for owner adjustments.

The whole internal mechanism is submerged in the fluid but the operative or pressure zone is at the base of the chamber and as the cylinders are inverted there is considerable latitude in the angle at which the shock absorbers can be fitted. There is no possibility of loss of fluid by leakage,

This article was kindly contributed by Alister Cannon. These shockers were not popular for long, were they? They were soon replaced by telescopic ones.

ED.

Dear John,

I have just read the March Newsletter. I must concur with Ron Wilson about some of the entry fees for some of the high profile rallies. I have just competed in the 1993 FIVA Rally here in Tasmania. The entry fee was \$100.00. The Targa Tasmania entry fee is actually \$2,600.00 for Tasmanians or \$2,900.00 for others. Not the \$1,000.00 quoted by Ron. You may care to quote that there were only three Alvises in the rally - Tasmanian Andrew McDougall's 12/50 Cross & Ellis four seater which is very similar to my car. A 12/50 Ducksback from New Zealand and John Hanns FWD supercharged car from Victoria. My wife had brought our newly created Austin 20 sports Brooklands replica down from Queensland.

Does anyone know the address of the Armstrong Siddeley Car Club in Victoria? I would like to obtain some information from them. I flew across to Phillip Island with a group of car buffs from Launceston and spoke to Geoff Hood and Des Donnan. Des took off to Melbourne with my back pack, sweater, Drizabone and cheque book - but that is another Irish joke.

Regards.

ROB. ROBINSON

*My apologies for the delay in publishing this letter. I am not sure where it got hidden in the system but it has at last re-emerged!*

*ED.*

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#### ROTOR BUTTONS.

I might be getting somewhere at last. I need one for the Speed 20's BTH JD6 distributor. One for a Nissan Patrol will fit when it has been sleeved. That is one project in hand. Another is that D.E.S. Engineering in U.K. are in the process of making a prototype with a view to a small production run. So by one method or another perhaps tamed sparks are not far off.

But what of the wider problem? Peter Black was unable to help me and says that there are several A.O.C. members in U.K. who are either stuck or have no spare. I wonder how many P.V.T. 6 cylinder cars used the BTH JD6? Come to that how many 6 cylinder engines were there in use in the 1930s in Britain? Lagonda. Meadows. Rolls/Bentley. Rover. Riley. Wolseley. A.C. Humber. Triumph. Alvis. I may have missed some out, but not many and it strikes me that not many of those makers or buyers would have had large production runs. So who used the BTH JD6? It is unlikely that BTH would have made such a complex piece of machinery just for Alvis. Has anyone got any ideas?

Incidentally, I had always thought that "BTH" was frightfully British but was brought down a couple of pegs to learn that Houston was an American. I am not sure of Thompson's nationality but I am sure somebody will tell me that he wasn't English either!

ED.

<b>SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER</b>
<b>COPY DEADLINE</b>
<b>WEDNESDAY 1ST SEPTEMBER 1993</b>



# Ultimate Alvis

Hugh Clarkson relates how he came to lust after the big 4.3, finally realizing his dream years later . . .

If you own an Alvis motor car in the United States, people will ask you what kind of car it is. Once informed, they will tell you they have never heard of it. Or worse, they will call it an Avis or even an Elvis! Certainly an Alvis is a rare bird in the US. But, in its native Great Britain, it is a well known and respected marque, backed up by a successful racing history.

For when Mr. T.G. John, an outstanding marine engineer, with an aeronautical background, commenced the manufacture of Alvis motor cars in 1920, he set out to build a quality car. Quality should not be read as 'conservative,' for John did not turn his back on innovation.

The first model to emerge from the Job's Lane works, in Coventry, was a straightforward, sturdy little vehicle known as the 10/30. It came in two- and four-passenger form and was propelled by a well designed four-cylinder L-head engine of 1460cc. This was soon followed by the 12/40 with a four-cylinder, pushrod, overhead-valve engine as an option and later by the 12/50 and 12/60, with the overhead-valve engine as standard and engine capacities ranging from 1598cc to 1645cc, depending on the model.

All of these cars gave sporty performance, for their day, and with the standard four-speed gearbox - unusual for the time - 60 mph was attainable in third gear on some models.

The most desirable, to many enthusiasts' minds; are the two seaters, 'Ducks Back' and 'Beetle Back' models, although the four-passenger open tourers and sports saloons, some with 'V' windscreens, are also highly prized. All of them were robustly constructed and had a well earned reputation for reliability. The fanatical owners of these cars usually belong to the 12/50 Register and some of them barely acknowledge the existence of the much bigger Alvis Owners Club, one of the largest one-make clubs in Britain.

About 1926, Alvis started development of a new model featuring very advanced design. It had front-wheel drive and independent suspension at all four wheels. The engine, taken from the 12/50, was later replaced by a beautifully made single-overhead-camshaft unit of 1500cc. With racing in mind, a companion model was manufactured, featuring an inline DOHC eight-cylinder engine of the same capacity. Two- and four-passenger open cars were listed for sale, along with a saloon, but although the eight-cylinder cars achieved several successes on the racing circuits it is doubtful whether any were sold to the public.

During the vintage years, Alvis gained an enviable reputation on the racing circuits, both with the 12/50 and FWD models. By the end of 1930 the racing program could no longer be financed. At the same time production of the FWD cars was discontinued as this advanced

concept did not catch on sufficiently with the motoring public. However, manufacture of the 12/50s and later 12/60s was continued until 1932.

In the meantime, the company had begun to build some six-cylinder cars which, in 1932, developed into the highly regarded Speed Twenty. This was a low-slung vehicle, equipped with a 3-carburettor, pushrod OHV engine of 2511cc and later 2762cc. By 1933, these cars featured independent front suspension by means of a massive transverse leaf spring. The result was not very independent - by modern standards - but was, nonetheless, a definite improvement over the old fashioned beam axle. The later cars also featured a lovely four-speed transmission with synchromesh on all four gears - a development years ahead of its time. Cars came in open and closed form, a few of them limousines, but most of them with sporty lines, making the most of the long, low bonnet, set off by two huge Lucas P100 headlamps sitting high in front of the radiator.

Alvis confined itself to the manufacture of the chassis and bodies were built by a variety of coachbuilders. Most of the closed bodies were made by Charlesworth, and the open ones by Vanden Plas and Cross and Ellis. With an open, or any reasonable closed body, these cars were capable of 90 mph and gave rocksteady cruising to the order of 70 mph.

When I first obtained my drivers license in 1933, I remember seeing an Alvis at a garage near Norwich, England, where we kept the lowly family Hillman. It was a long, low Charlesworth saloon and when I heard that the car's owner, a doctor, routinely covered the sixty miles to Cambridge in sixty minutes, I straight away became an aficionado of the marque.

The Speed Twenty was followed by the Speed Twenty-Five, basically the same car with a 3½-litre engine. Acceleration was improved and maximum speed increased to about 95 mph. The new engine was also equipped with a fan, improving a cooling system which had been perfectly adequate for normal conditions but unlikely to cope with heavy traffic in really hot summer weather.

In 1937 Alvis introduced an even more luxurious version of the Speed Twenty-Five, the 4.3-litre model. Its three carburettor pushrod OHV engine had the same stroke of 110mm as the Speed 25, but bore was increased from 83mm to 92mm. The 127-inch standard chassis was three inches longer than the Speed Twenty-Five. Bodies were mainly by Charlesworth, Offord, Vanden Plas and Cross and Ellis and the price ranged from about \$5,000 to \$6,000, depending on the coachwork.

The Speed Twenty-Five was continued alongside its larger brother until 1940 when hostilities brought Alvis car production to a standstill.

In the Spring of 1954, I was reading Ralph Stein's book, *Sports Cars of the World*, and came across his next-to-closing statement on the marque. "Alvis did make a really sensational machine before the war, the 4.3 litre. It had a 3-carburettor, pushrod, ohv engine, would do over 105 mph and went from 0-70 in 16 seconds." These were pretty heady figures - even in 1954 - and I thereupon was determined to own one of these cars.

The specific model referred to was the short chassis sports tourer. I could never understand why builders would bother to chop three inches off the standard chassis until I learned that this model was actually built on a Speed Twenty-Five chassis, hence the minimal difference.

In addition to several sports tourers, at least one convertible, with body by Whittington, and one or more of the sedans with Charlesworth bodies were produced on the short chassis.

A Charlesworth sedan was tested by *The Motor* in June 1938 and recorded a mean top speed of 103 mph. Acceleration to 60 mph was accomplished in 11.3 seconds and to 70 in 15.1 seconds. "It was found," stated *The Motor*, "that the Alvis maintained an effortless cruising speed of between 70 and 90 mph on any reasonable stretch of open road and did so in a manner which made the latter figure appear much like the former. It is essentially a safe car," they noted, "because the speed is backed by acceleration which has seldom been bettered by any super sports car." *The Autocar* in a similar test described riding in the car as akin to gliding, "... as it swept effortlessly along, taking curves and hills in its stride." The magazine described the performance figures as the best yet recorded by any standard motor car tested by them.

The tourer was the car I was determined to acquire. I already subscribed to *Motorsport* whose classified ads ran to many pages each month and where cars of this sort were most likely to be advertised. From the early part of 1954 my eyes were glued to these ads every month. As other fanatics know, reading these ads was an adventure in itself because they were not listed alphabetically. You had to hunt all the way through them and you would see lots of interesting things on the way. However, my searching failed to turn up a 4.3 Tourer.

In the summer of that year I was in Britain for several weeks and continued the search, letting my fingers do the work in *Motorsport* and using my legs in addition. I located a Speed 25 tourer, "maintained by an engineer," and one of the London dealers was expecting a 4.3 drophead, with body by Offord, which was being driven down from Scotland. But I was not prepared to settle for either of these, although at the prices they commanded then I wish I had bought them both!

Then, foolishly perhaps, and quite irrationally, I fell in love with a 1939 MG SA 2.3-litre four-passenger drophead which was in immaculate condition. Disappointed at not finding the right Alvis, I capitulated and bought the MG. In the long run I never regretted that purchase. The MG gave me years of faithful service and delightful motoring.

But, after I returned to Pennsylvania, I was skimming through *Motorsport* when all of a sudden the words *Alvis 4.3* jumped out at me. Here was a 1938 tourer with two-tone blue and bronze paint. No price was stated but that was academic! I had blown my meager resources on the MG.

I never saw, or heard, of another 4.3 tourer until March, 1958 when a friend of mine in the auto business telephoned to say he had seen one advertised in one of the antique car magazines. A car museum in Silver Springs, Florida, was turning over its stock and had the Alvis among several other cars for sale. The magazine was far from a current issue and I suffered the torments of the damned, thinking the car might already have been sold. In bed with some kind of virus, I nonetheless summoned the strength to get on the phone to Florida. "Yes, the car was available, it had not yet been sold."

The news was enough to get me out of bed in a hurry. I called a friend in Florida and arranged for an inspection. Waiting for it seemed interminable. Finally we got an okay, and my wife and I were airborne, destination: Tampa, Florida. Upon arrival there we made our way to the Greyhound station and were soon on our way to Silver Springs. As we rode along I kept agonizing whether the car was still unsold and imagining how it would be driving back in such a tremendous vehicle.

Miss Shirley Day, the business manager of the museum, greeted us when we arrived. The car had been taken out of the showroom, she said. It was in a field behind the museum and was available ... if we still wanted to buy it!

Actually, when I saw the car sitting rather forlorn in the field I was a little disappointed. It was not quite as large as I had imagined. But, as soon as I sat behind the wheel, and looked down that long hood, with the radiator shining between the huge headlights, pent-up excitement surged back in a rush.

The all-aluminium body, painted green and cream, and the green leather interior were in showroom condition. Driving the car added to my enthusiasm and we were soon back in Miss Day's office, completing the sale. She mentioned that Mr. Jarvis, the museum's owner, had bought the car in London in 1954. I casually asked her if the car had then been painted blue and bronze. "Yes," she said, "that was the color combination when it arrived here." Here was the same car I had missed four years previously!

It was not long before I had her on the road, headed for a nearby motel. Our friends who had arranged the inspection joined us and all four of us set out for dinner in the Alvis. It was dark by now and I switched on the big headlights. It seemed as though you could see for a mile down the road.

The next morning trouble arrived. My wife and I were all set to leave on our way back to Pennsylvania. I went to the car, set the ignition back, advanced the throttle, pulled out the starter control and pressed the starter button. The engine

sprang into life - uproarious life! The backfiring, banging and clattering were deafening. The valves were obviously sticking or badly out of adjustment. The only answer seemed to be to drive it back to the museum.

The in-house mechanic was a helpful individual and about an hour later everything was back to normal and running smoothly. I just hoped history would not repeat itself on our 1000-mile journey home. I was also concerned about the tires, as the walls were crazed and far from healthy looking. We had one spare wheel and no hammer, so the mechanic provided us with a heavy brass rod which, rather optimistically, we hoped would prove effective if called into service.

Thus equipped, we set off and were soon heading North on US 1. I kept the speed down to 50-55 mph as best I could because of the tires, but it was not easy. With the high-g geared back axle the engine was only turning at about 2000 rpm. Progress at those speeds seemed painfully slow. The weather was beautiful. We stopped for a roadside picnic and then travelled on until evening and a night's stay in a motel. The next day was more of the same, as well as the next, and in the dark of the third evening we rolled triumphantly into our own driveway. The prize was now conclusively in our possession.

The Alvis, equipped with new tires, has given us splendid everyday motoring, with easy cruising at the 70-mph limit at one time in force on the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

The all-synchromesh four-speed box, driven from the clutch by a short shaft and universal joint, is a delight to use, while the servo-assisted mechanical brakes, operating through 14-inch cast iron drums, give powerful and progressive stopping power. The high geared Marles steering with lignum vitae (a rare wood) inserts at all linkage connections is very accurate as well as surprisingly light and the stable ride with independent suspension at the front by transverse leaf spring with exceptionally long semi-elliptics at the rear, is very comfortable over all but the worst surfaces. The ride could be further adjusted to conditions by means of a lever on the dash which activates Luvax oil-controlled shock absorbers.

Some other niceties include a built-in hydraulic jacking system operated from under the hood, and most lubrication points are taken care of through a Luvax 'Bijur' one-shot system. This system is operated, at 100 mile intervals, by a pedal on the passenger side.

No parts or factory service were available in the US, but the Alvis Service Department, in Coventry, more than lived up to their reputation for service par excellence. A small part, ordered by airmail, would be received within ten days. Of course, the mail service was a bit faster in those days of propeller-driven planes!

I remember one time I ordered a new windscreen wiper motor. Alvis regretfully informed me that the electrical equipment was not of their manufacture and no stocks were held by them. However, they promised to look out for a good used motor and would forward it to me as soon as it was located. It arrived the day before their letter!

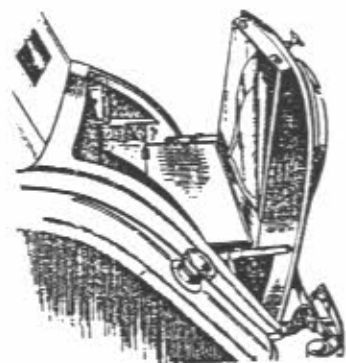
Not only did Alvis provide remarkable service, they also continued to produce excellent four and six-cylinder cars, in small numbers, for just over twenty years after the Second World

War. But, to my mind, they never produced anything quite as outstanding - for its day - as the Speed Twenty-Five or the 4.3.

In 1965, Alvis ran into temporary financial difficulties and a merger was arranged with Rover - seemingly a very suitable marriage. Unfortunately, the new partnership must have looked like a very tasty morsel, because it was gobbled up by British Leyland. Under the new ownership, Alvis continued to produce highly regarded armored vehicles and aircraft engines, but the last Alvis car, a lovely 3-litre with a Graber-conceived body built by Mulliner Park Ward, left the works in 1966.

The company sold their parts and service department to their manager and associates. The Alvis Red Triangle radiator badge served to provide the continuity, the department being reformed under the name, 'Red Triangle Autoservices Ltd.' Today, it goes on giving marvelous service in the tradition of the old Alvis company. Many mechanical parts for other than the later post-war cars are difficult to find, as are body parts, but Red Triangle, the Alvis Owners Club, and the Alvis Register, between them, do a remarkable job of filling the gaps. With their help the large following of dyed-in-the-wool Alvis enthusiasts keep their cars on the road and the Alvis name alive. □

This article was given to me by the author, Hugh Clarkson. It was originally published in "British Car" Feb. 1991. DFY 798 is shown from various angles which show the attractions of the short chassis very well. Unfortunately my copy is a photocopy, so the pictures will not reproduce well. Thank you, Hugh. ED.



"The End"

**FOR SALE & WANTED.**

National Alvis Spares offers this month:-

Vintage.  
Geoff Hood,  
37, Thomas St.,  
E. Doncaster,  
Vic 3109.  
Tel.03 842 2181.

**HEAD GASKETS.**

P.V.T.  
Austin Topp,  
8, Wimba Ave.,  
Kew. Vic. 3044.  
Tel. 03 817 5183.

12/50 .....	\$35.00 each
Speed 20.....	\$55.00 each
Speed 25.....	\$55.00 each
4-3 .....	POA
TA 14 .....	\$35.00 each
TA 21 .....	\$55.00 each

TA 14  
Bob Graham,  
15, Clarke Ave.,  
Caulfield,  
Vic. 3182.  
Tel 03 571 3886.

THREE LITRE  
John Ball,  
P.O.Box 26,  
Marthon,  
Vic. 3610.  
Tel 058 282 518.

MOREBOOKS BY ROYBOOKS. TA 14 Handbook \$25.00. TA 14 Spares list \$20.00. Both these books are available.

Required for copying: Speed 25 SB 25.63 and SC 25.63 Handbooks. Contact Roy Henderson, 47 Fountain Drive, Fountain Gate. Vic. 3805. Tel. 03 704 7549.

**PRIVATEERS.**

FOR SALE. Alvis 12/50. 1925 four seater tourer. Rebuilt engine, clutch and brakes. New radiator, tyres and hood-bow. Needs hood and upholstery. Goes well. Has been in one family for over 45 years. \$28,000. O.N.O. Bob Bayliss, 503 St. Michael Street, Deniliquin. N.S.W. Tel. 058 811 664.

FOR SALE. TYRES. 500 x 20. Five new tyres. 3 Goodyear 6 ply diamond pattern and 2 Dunlop 4 ply plus tubes. \$100. each. Max Kennedy. Tel. 07 268 6608 or 018 876 1642 or 074 944 575.

FOR SALE. TA 14 1948 Two tone blue. Seen at the Echuca Alvis Rally. Car is in very good condition having been completely refurbished and resprayed, new tyres. Has attended several vintage rallies in Queensland and N.S.W. Priced to sell \$20,500. O.N.O. Tel. Peter Young 075 732 352.

FOR SALE. Four wire wheels to suit TC 21/100. Completely reconditioned by "Neway Wheels" in Melbourne, resprayed silver grey. Would prefer to sell as a group. Price \$800.00 Tel. Peter Young 075 732 352.

FOR SALE. 12/60 Beetle Back ex. Arthur Brown car. Total restoration in 1966. Done around 20,000 miles since. Comes with spare engine. Price \$45,000. Tel. Brian Hemming

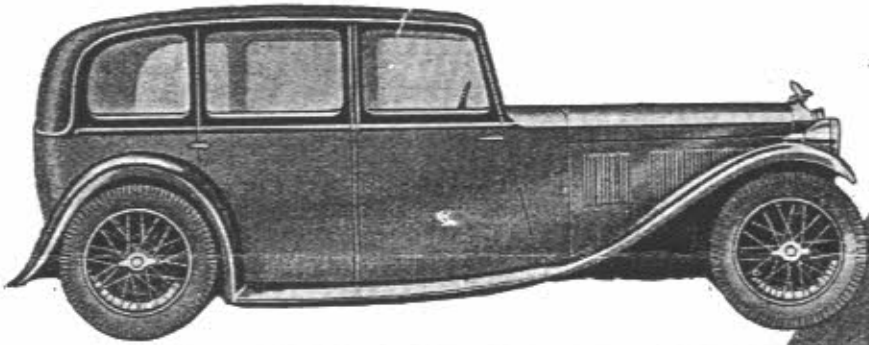
FOR SALE. Marles Steering Box. Ex 20/60 Vauxhall. Adaptable to Alvis. Column, wheel and drop arm all there. Needs reconditioning. \$150.00. Paul Reed. Tel. 07 201 0969

WANTED. Push Rods for six cylinder 14.75 engine. Telephone Eric Nicholl 03 754 5412.

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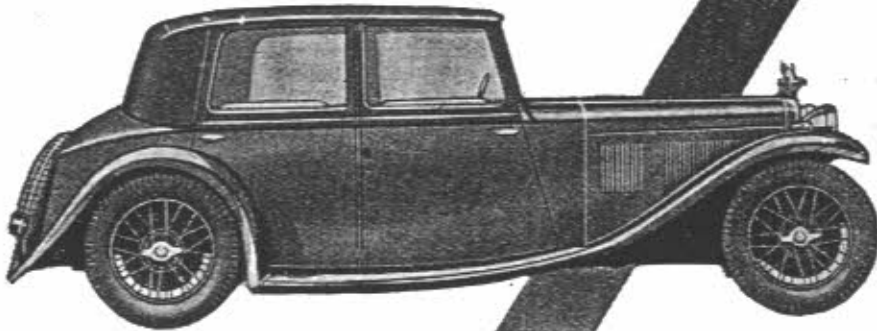


# THE FINAL CHOICE



The new 16 h.p.  
Six Light Saloon

**£595**

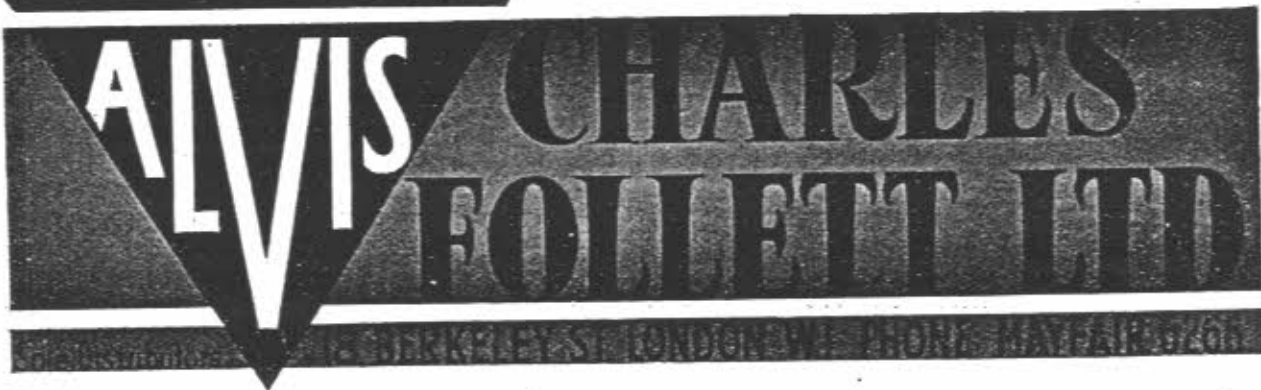


The Firefly "12"  
Four Light Saloon

**£510**

The New Light Six Saloon is fitted with all synchro-mesh all silent four-speed gearbox, noiseless change under all conditions. The Firefly is fitted with Wilson Pre-Selective self-change gearbox.

We will be happy to place any model at your disposal.



LONDON SERVICE STATION: JUBILEE PLACE KINGS ROAD, CHELSEA, S.W.

KINDLY MENTION "THE MOTOR" WHEN CORRESPONDING WITH ADVERTISERS.