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Graces Guide - British Industrial History

Whitlock Automobile Co

The Whitlock Company, based in London, England, started as a carriage builder in 1778, moved into the car industry in 1903 and finally closed in 1991.

Joseph Whitlock had set up his company making coaches and carriages in Holland Park, London in 1778. They must have been successful as by the start of the twentieth century they described themselves as "Coachbuilders to the Royal Family".

in 1902 they were named Henry Whitlock and Co

In 1903 a move into the car business was made when they started to sell the Whitlock Century. They had not built this themselves however, it was a re-badged car from Century, a manufacturer in Willesden, London, but they may well have built its body. In 1904 the range was expanded with cars from the French Aster makers again probably with Whitlock's own coachwork.

A separate company was formed in 1905 called The Whitlock Automobile Company who continued to market the Whitlock-Aster cars which were well received but cannot have been a commercial success as the company closed down in 1906.

Meanwhile, another coachbuilder had been operating in Liverpool founded in 1870 by Jo Lawton and called J. A. Lawton and Co. They also turned to car body making and in the early 1900's opened a London works run by William Lawton-Goodman, Jo Lawton's nephew. Jo died in 1913 and left the company in his will to his brother leaving William with nothing so he started a new company Lawton-Goodman and took over the defunct name of Whitlock and moved to new premises in Slade Works, Cricklewood, North London. Two new models were announced, initially called Lawtons but rapidly changing to Whitlock but before production could be established war broke out. During the war years the company concentrated on building ambulances on both their own and other makers chassis and fuselages for De Havilland DH4 aircraft.



September 1902



February 1905



September 1905 Tourist Trophy Car



September 1905

1906. Whitlock-Aster. Produced 10-12 h.p., 12-14h.p. twin cylinder shaft drive and 12 h.p., 18 h.p. and 24 h.p. models but listed as of French manufacture. [1]

1913-1917 For a list of the models and prices see the 1917 Red Book

In 1924 a new range of cars was announced still using bought in mechanical components. The smallest was the 11, 12 or 12/35 built until 1925 and using a Coventry Climax(or Coventry Simplex) engine of 1368 cc or an Anzani engine of 1,496 cc. Larger was the 14, also called the 16/50, with a six cylinder 1755 cc or 1991 cc Coventry Climax built from 1924 to 1926 and bigger still the 20/70 with 6 cylinder 2,973 cc Meadows engine made from 1926 to 1930. The latter car had a radiator very reminiscent of their near neighbours Bentley. William Lawton-Goodman died in 1932 but his sons carried on the business turning to commercial vehicle bodies but continuing some car body work.

During the Second World War they returned again to making ambulances. With peace in 1945 they seem to have concentrated on making mobile shops and ice cream vans continuing to the early 1980's, after which they concentrated on repairs. In 1991 the lease on Slade Works ran out and the company closed.

One Whitlock car is known to survive.

See Also

- 1905 Motor Show (SMMT February)
- 1905 Tourist Trophy Race
- 1906 Motor Car Manufacturers
- 1906 Motor Show (SMMT)
- 1913-1917 Motor, Marine and Aircraft Red Book: Cars
- Aster
- Henry Whitlock
- Lawton-Goodman

Sources of Information

- 1.? The Automobile Vol. III. Edited by Paul N. Hasluck and published by Cassell in 1906.
- [1] Wikipedia

Whitlock - Victorias, Broughams, Dog Carts, Siamese Phaetons and Buggies

Whitlock

Whitlock

1778 - 1932

Country:

UK

Henry Whitlock, Carriage Builder

Though Whitlock were never an important car manufacturer, they were a persistent one, as the company was nominally active in car manufacture for around thirty years. However, the name of Henry Whitlock & Company dates back long before the motor era to 1778, when they were London coachbuilders.

At the 1883 Sportsman's Exhibition, Henry Whitlock, Carriage Builder, by now boasting the Royal Appointment, and operating from factories at Holland Park and Turnham Green, 'invited Inspection of Carriages of all kinds from the Four-in-Hand Drag to the Pony Carriage ... First of Style! Sound Work! Moderate Charges!' In fact the range of carriages offered by Whitlock were easily adaptable to the early motor chassis - Victorias, Broughams, Dog Carts, Siamese Phaetons, Buggies.

Mortimer's Patent India Rubber Tyres

The company was also one of the earliest coachbuilders to offer carriages with solid rubber tyres instead of iron, exhibiting a Brougham with Mortimer's Patent India Rubber Tyres at the 1887 Sportsman's Exhibition. Despite this indication of progressive thinking, the company was fairly tardy in entering the motor business: in 1903 they briefly offered a car named 'Whitlock-Century', though this was not made by them, just sold under their name.

However, they had already established a garage and motor agency at their Holland Park address, and at the 1903 Crystal Palace Show offered 'motor bodies built to order in wood and aluminium'. The first true Whitlock cars were exhibited at the Cordingley Show in the Agricultural Hall, Islington, in March 1904; known as the Whitlock-Aster, the new models had Aster Engines and chassis with Whitlock Coachwork. There were two twin-cylinder models, of 10hp and 12hp, both with armoured wood chassis, and two fours, with mechanically-operated inlet valves and pressed steel chassis.

The 14hp had a special dropped frame which made it suitable for Brougham or Landaulette bodywork, while the 20 hp had forced lubrication and 'all controls on steering wheel', as well as 'luxurious body and coachbuilding'. Now known as the Whitlock Automobile Company, the firm made its first and only venture into automobile competition in the 1905 Tourist Trophy, with the entry of a 12/14 hp model, which turned in an underwhelming performance to finish 22nd. At the 1906 Olympia Show the company showed 12/14 hp and 18/22 hp four-cylinder models, the 12/14 having shaft drive, the 18/22 hp chain drive, dual ignition and internal-expanding brakes.

The bodywork on show included single and double landaulettes, a seven-seated tourer and a 'Special Doctor's Coupe, driven from interior', which sounds like one of those curious bodies which were only practicable when the roads were virtually traffic-free, with more blind spots than visibility. By the time Olympia came round again, however, production of the Whitlock-Aster had ceased. Around 1914, the Whitlock Automobile Company was taken over by another firm of coach builders and motor agents, J. A. Lawton, with branches in London and Liverpool. They announced two new four-cylinder cars, a 2413 cc 12/16 hp, priced at £295 in chassis form, and a 4398 cc 20/30 hp (£495), which were marketed under the Lawton name in 1914 and as Whitlocks in 1915, though it's doubtful whether many were sold.

1928 Whitlock 20/70 saloon

1928 Whitlock 20/70 saloon.

Lawton-Goodman Limited

The company, by now trading as Lawton-Goodman Limited, with premises at 28 Brook Street, London, W1, and a factory at Slade Works, Cricklewood, London NW2, did not reappear as car makers until 1922, when a light car with a 12 hp Coventry-Climax power unit of 1496 cc was announced. Selling at £375. in two-seater and dickey form (painted Whitlock Blue), the new car was a totally conventional assembled vehicle with cone clutch, three forward speeds and pressed steel wheels, and as such was expensive compared with cars such as the Morris-Cowley, which offered almost as much at about half the price.

In 1923 Lawton-Goodman announced a new Whitlock model, the 14 hp, with a 1753cc ohv engine and a vee'd, Bentley-like radiator. It cost £495 with sporting torpedo coachwork, which was a more reasonable proposition. That same year, internal expanding four-wheel brakes were available on all Whitlock models at an extra cost of £30, while balloon tyres were fitted to some 1924 Whitlocks. Whitlock sales were pretty nominal at the best of times, but the company were consistent exhibitors at Olympia during the 1920s: their 1924 exhibit included Three-quarter coupe, Two-seater and Dickey, Three-seater and Dickey, and Four-seated Touring coachwork, all on the 12 hp chassis, at prices ranging from £375 to £550.

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The chassis was now available in two wheelbase lengths, 8ft 6in and 9ft 6in, prices being £295 and £325 respectively. At the 1925 Show, the exhibit consisted of three of the new 16/50 models, basically the same as the old 14 hp six, but bored out to give a swept volume of 1991 cc; chassis price was £450, to which a saloon body could add another £50. The 1926 Olympia Show saw a new Whitlock model, the 20/70, with a six-cylinder Meadows power unit of 2972cc, with overhead valves and twin Solex carburettors. Wire wheels gave the car a more sporting appearance than its Coventry-Climax engined predecessor. Chassis price of the new model was substantially increased, at £600, while the standard touring car cost £795.

The 1928 'Coupe d'Interieur'

The company made much of easy-to-erect hood fittings for their open models, the folding mechanism of the Whitlock being fitted with spring assistance. At the end of 1927, cylinder capacity of the 20/70 hp was increased to 3301 cc, and centralised chassis lubrication was standardised, though chassis price remained at £600: a rose-pink coupe was an eye-bending feature of the company's ritual Olympia exhibit. A modern touch was evident in the company's 1928 'Coupe d'Interieur'; cloth inserts were let into its leather upholstery to increase seating comfort and other models were upholstered in 'special anti-dust cloth'.

The company really went to town for its last appearance at Olympia, in 1929: there were no fewer than seven cars on the stand, of two different chassis types. Chassis Type A (£650) had a 4ft 4in wheelbase, Dunlop stud-fixing wire wheels and 31 x 5.25in tyres, while Chassis Type B had a more sporting specification, with an 11ft wheelbase, wider track, knock-off Rudge-Whitworth wire wheels and 32 x 6 in tyres, and was priced at £700. This year the Coupe d'Interieur had two-tone leather/cloth upholstery in beige and black, and was based on the Type A chassis, while the new 'Tourist' Sporting Saloon was on the Type B chassis, and was 'specially designed for good visibility and comfort and luggage carrying capacity for the tourist'; like all closed Whitlock models, it had the company's own design of sliding sunshine roof and safety glass in all windows. The 'Tourist' sold at £900 fully equipped.

Though the Whitlock was in theory produced until 1932 - some sources even say 1936 - it's likely that the marque's very limited output came to a halt late in 1930. At Show time, Lawton-Goodman were offering a 'Sportsman's Coupe, 1931 modifications, 20/70hp Whitlock, sliding roof, Bendix Perrot brakes, very fast and guaranteed,' for £450 in the Used Car small ads in *The Autocar*, a fifty per cent reduction over the new price, which seems to indicate that they were trying to clear their stocks. However, this was not the end of Lawton-Goodman, just of the Whitlock marque, as the parent company continued actively as builders of specialised commercial vehicle bodywork for many more years.