

WOLSELEY

The Wolseley marquee spanned 80 years - from 1895 until 1975 - which almost spans the complete history of the motor vehicle. It's vehicles have ranged from a three wheeled, two cylinder contraption to a swift and silent "wedge" suspended on nitrogen gas. Wolseley's were beloved by Police throughout Britain for many years and the famous illuminated grille badge is one of the most distinctive features of any car in the world.

Wolseley were not only car makers during those 80 years. They produced among other things, marine engines, sub-marine engines, the caterpillar tractors used by Captain Scott of the Antarctic, railway coaches and a whole series of aircraft engines, the most famous being the V8 Viper.

Among the other types of vehicles they produced over the years were buses, fire-engines and curious vehicles for the British Vacuum Cleaner Co Ltd designed to stand out-side houses with their vacuum pipes up through the windows doing the spring cleaning. Their most famous "one-off" was the Gyro car, built in 1912 for the Russian lawyer Captain Peter Schilowsky to his design. Looking like a giant motor-bike with a motor-coach body, it was kept on its feet by a gyroscope.

What follows is a (very) brief history of the Wolseley marquee with several significant vehicles noted.

- 1837** Frederick York Wolseley was born.
- 1887** Wolseley Sheep-Shearing Machine Co Ltd formed.
- 1895** The first Wolseley, a three wheeler, was made. This vehicle was designed by Herbert Austin and featured a 2hp horizontally-opposed twin cylinder engine, belt driven three speed transmission and tiller steering.
- 1896** The first Wolseley was offered for sale.
- 1899** The death of Frederick Wolseley.
- 1905** Herbert Austin resigns to form his own company. 'Vehicles are called Wolseley-Siddleys until 1909.
- 1912** The Gyro car was made.
- 1914-18** Wolseley switched to wartime production of air craft engines, shells, gun sights, propellers and later complete aircraft.
- 1926** Wolseley was declared bankrupt owing i2M. William Morris purchases company for £730,000.

- 1930** The Wolseley Hornet was introduced featuring a 1271cc OHC four cylinder engine and a 75mph top speed.
- 1935** The famous illuminated grille badge was introduced.
- 1939-1945** Wolseley once again switched to wartime production. Nearly £500,000 worth of damage was done to the factory by 176 German air raids during the war. 1948 The Wolseley Four-Fifty and Six-Eighty models were introduced. They featured OHC four and six cylinder engines respectively and independent torsion-bar front suspension.
- 1949** Production shifted to Cowley, Oxford.
- 1952** The British Motor Corporation was formed.
- 1961** The first front wheel drive Wolseley, the Hornet, was introduced.
- 1962** The Wolseley 24/80 was introduced on the market. It featured a unique to Australia six cylinder version of the B Series engine. This was the last Wolseley built in this country.
- 1975** In April the Wolseley 2200 (Wedge) was introduced with a transverse OHC six cylinder engine and front wheel drive. In November British Leyland decided to rationalise and so all variants of the 18/22 series, which included Austin and Morris versions, were incorporated under the Princess name. Wolseley thus disappeared from the price lists.