

ACCURATE WORKMANSHIP, PERFECT MATERIAL

(Supplement to the Illustrated London News, 17 July, 1909)



Many motor-cars in the making: Inside one of the great Erecting Shops.

The scenes in the shops are particularly remarkable when it is remembered that as recently as 1896 the Red Flag Act was still in existence, and the motor-car had to take rank with the traction engine that rolled the roads.

When the repeal of the old "Red Flag" Act in 1896 swept into oblivion the antiquated restrictions on mechanical road traffic, thus opening up to English manufacturers the possibilities of the motor-car industry, it was inevitable that Birmingham, the home of engineering enterprise, should play a prominent part in the development of the new vehicles. England owes much to those early pioneers, whose steadfast faith in the future triumphed over all the difficulties of the beginning, and culminated in the production of the autocar as it is today.

It is no mere figure of speech to say that the modern autocar is a masterpiece of decorative art and of engineering skill. And in the work of bringing it to this high standard, none have behind them a more honourable record of achievement than the Wolseley Tool and Motor Car Company, of Adderley Park, Birmingham, which has to-day a worldwide fame.

The present company, which is a branch of the great firm of Vickers, Sons and Maxim, Ltd., was established in 1901, taking over the works and the business of an older Wolseley company. As the title indicates, the intention was to combine the manufacture of machine tools with that of motor cars, but successive years have seen the motor business increase so rapidly that now it practically monopolises the whole of the immense works at Adderley Park, which cover nearly twenty acres and employ upwards of three thousand men.

There is really little cause for surprise in this, for nothing could have been more favourable to the evolution of a perfect chassis than the extreme precision and accuracy which are essential to the making of machine tools. One effect of this accurate construction is seen in the silence and smooth running of the cars manufactured by this company - a characteristic which has passed into a motoring proverb. Another factor, which has conduced largely to success, is that the parent company, Messrs. Vickers, Sons and Maxim, Ltd., are renowned for the production of high-grade steels and metals, and their invaluable experience in this has always been at the service of the motor-car branch.

Even before the formation of the present company, the old Wolseley company had experimented with motor-cars, and their first car, Wolseley No. 1, together with one or two early successors, is now on display in the historical section of the International Exhibition. Very ingenious and interesting too, are these old exhibits, but it is a far cry from them to the superb and reliable cars of today. It is doubtful if any previous mechanical invention ever attained a point so near perfection in so short a period as the automobile. Years of patient experiment and unremitting endeavour have thus had their reward.

Another very interesting branch of this company's business, which is growing by leaps and bounds, is the production of marine engines, launches, and auxiliary motor installations. The recent victory of Wolseley-Siddeley II, which beat all previous records in the International Motor-Boat Races at Monaco this year, will still be fresh in the public memory. It was a triumph of design, which only engineers can fully appreciate, to install 700 h.p. in a 50-foot boat, and nowadays, when so much is heard of the national decadence, it is gratifying to find an English firm proving its pre-eminence over American, French, Italian, and other rivals.

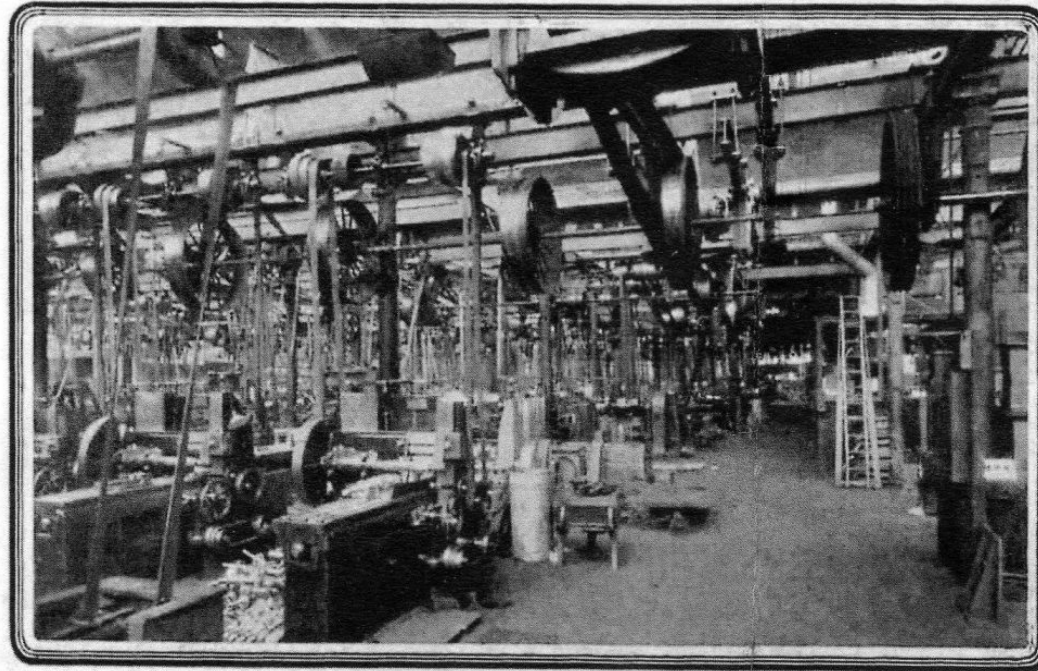


The gathering together of the parts of a perfect whole: The Assembling Shop



Nearing the last of many processes: One of the great Erecting Shops.

The speed attained by the Wolseley-Siddeley II. (or Ursula, as it was subsequently named by the Duke of Westminster) was 34.5 knots - a record figure, giving the Wolseley Tool and Motor-Car Company the distinction of having built the fastest boat in the world. And now another record will have to be put to their credit. The Swiftsure, a superb motor-yacht, built by this company to the order of Prince Sheremetieff - has voyaged under her own power from Cowes to St. Petersburg, a distance of sixteen hundred miles. This is the longest voyage ever attempted by a motor-boat.



*A maze of belting in the Machine Shop.
Some idea of the size of the works may be obtained when it is said that they cover some twenty acres of ground, and that over three thousand men find employment in them.*

A salient feature in the history of the Wolseley Company has been the steady annual increase in the volume of orders received. Extension after extension has been found necessary and the Directors have reason to congratulate themselves on the foresight which rendered it easy to make these additions whenever growth of trade demanded greater facilities for output. The immense establishment at Adderley Park, splendidly organised, and equipped with the

most modern appliances, is a standing testimony, to the excellence of the company's productions and to the acumen and business skill of those who have guided its fortunes. The plan of the works is on the lines of economic efficiency. There is a long range of modern offices in which the clerical staff is accommodated. The trial track, where every car undergoes a searching test, is in the foreground of the building. Behind the office buildings are the works, which present a hive of industry full of living interest.

The varied processes which go to the making of an autocar, and the devices adopted to ensure something very like perfection, cannot here be dealt with. What will be clear from the foregoing is the pre-eminent position attained by the Wolseley Tool and Motor-Car Company in the difficult art of motorcar construction. Nor can one set a limit to the possibilities that lie before a firm which has already taken so strong a lead in what is, after all, a comparatively young industry.