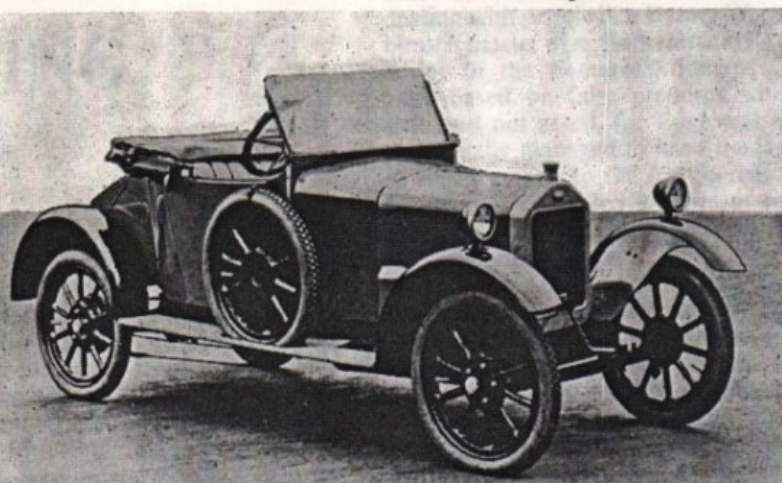


A LESSER-KNOWN WOLSELEY

By MAURICE A. HARRISON



1922 Wolseley Seven.

Photo: Morris Motors (B.M.C.).

WOLSELEY CARS of years gone by had an enviable reputation among others of their class, for they were robust, extremely reliable and capable of working hard for very many years. They were not by any means the cheapest vehicles of their type and size but the higher cost of a Wolseley was always justified, and its owner invariably remained satisfied with his purchase years after it was bought; although not intended for the poorest, nor the wealthiest, the Wolseley was indeed a quality car.

Some interesting models were offered to the buying public just before World War 1 and they sold fairly well. Production dwindled down as the company turned its attention towards the building of military equipment on a very large scale with aircraft engines high on the manufacturing programme. The cessation of hostilities brought world trade down to chaos and many automobile manufacturers had to close their doors almost immediately; a few lingered on into the 'twenties and gradually weathered the storm, sometimes cutting the quality of their products to suit a post-war market. Wolseley, whose chequered history has been written elsewhere, were as badly hit as most other manufacturers but the

company did not try to economise by throwing quality away but they did introduce other measures to save money.

In order to sell, despite the financial conditions prevailing Wolseley decided on producing a small car intended for the motorist of limited means, and in doing so they misjudged the possible demand for such a vehicle. Taking the Jowett as an example, the Wolseley concern designed and marketed their Seven in 1922, a light car designed down to a price but constructed to the usual standards of Wolseley quality.

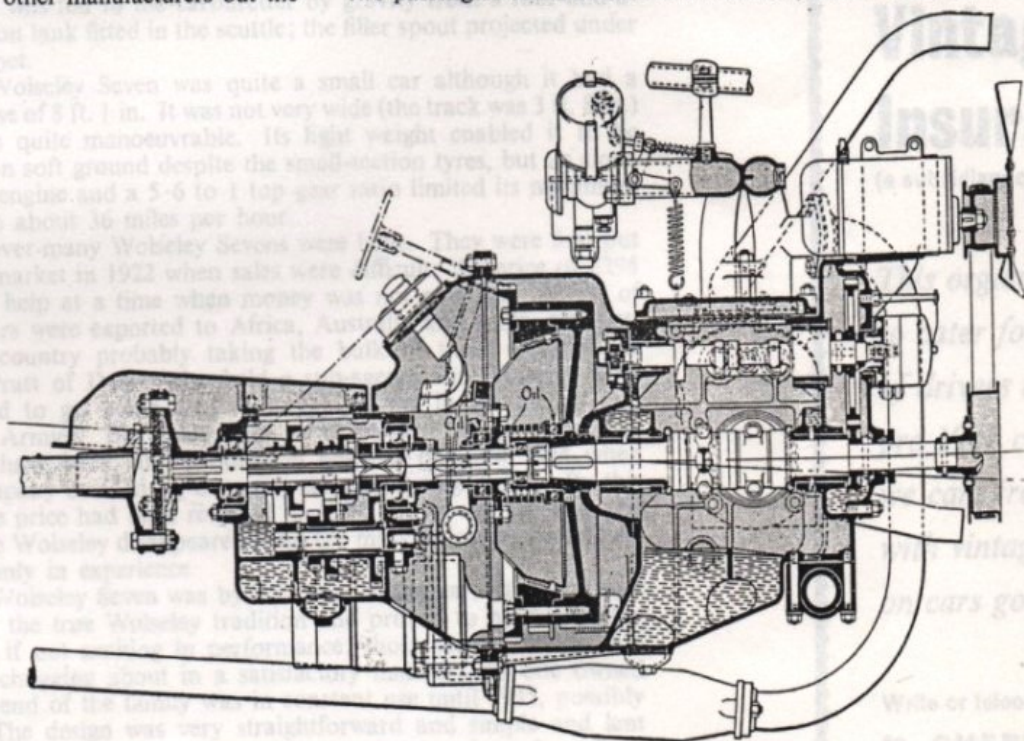
The Wolseley Seven was a small two-seater car with a horizontally opposed twin-cylinder side-valve engine of 82.55 mm. x 92.075 mm (986 c.c., rated at 8.5 h.p.) constructed as a unit with a three-speed gearbox. Cooling was on the thermo-siphon principle with a typically Wolseley radiator assisted by a fan mounted on the dynamo shaft; lubrication was by splash with a pump to feed troughs for the two main bearings and the camshaft. An early type of S.U. carburettor was fitted and ignition was by coil and battery with the distributor driven by the end of the camshaft. The engine was mounted at three points, lugs on either side of the flywheel housing being bolted to the chassis side members and bearing at the front of the engine was carried on a tubular cross member.

Drive was taken through an inverted cone clutch with a Ferod facing to the gearbox, which was conventional with the usual right-hand control. An open propeller-shaft with fabric disc universal joints by Spicer Hardy drove through a bevel pinion and crown wheel.

The frame was of two short sections of channel steel with three main cross members; the rear half of the engine acted as a fourth cross member.

Suspension was by quarter-elliptic springs all round and torque reactions were taken by extra leaves at the rear; these were bolted to the top of the chassis frame and were anchored above the rear axle. Braking was reasonably efficient, each brake drum on the rear wheels carrying four Ferodo-lined shoes; one set was actuated by the foot pedal and the other by the brake lever. Adjustment for the foot brake was by means of a turnbuckle under the car and the hand brake was adjusted by multiple-holed adjustment bar at the rear. No form of brake compensation was provided.

The standard two-seater body was not as austere as was found on some post-World War 1 light cars and was surprisingly spacious: two passengers could be carried in comfort, and the boot lid, when



Cross-section of Wolseley Seven twin-cylinder, horizontally-opposed engine (showing angle of installation).

WOLSELEY—*continued*

adapted to provide a dickey seat (not a standard fitting), gave extra seating for two children.

The instrument board carried a switch panel with switches for side bulbs and tail, main bulbs and tail, and ignition, and was provided with an ammeter. An oil pressure gauge, auxiliary jet knob and ignition and throttle levers completed the equipment on the instrument board. No speedometer was provided.

Standard equipment included electric lighting with combined head- and side-lamps, but a starter motor was an optional extra. A fairly comprehensive kit of tools accompanied the car. 26 in. × 3 in. tyres were fitted on Sankey steel wheels.

Petrol was fed to the carburettor by gravity from a four-and-a-half gallon tank fitted in the scuttle; the filler spout projected under the bonnet.

The Wolseley Seven was quite a small car although it had a wheelbase of 8 ft. 1 in. It was not very wide (the track was 3 ft. 8 in.) and was quite manoeuvrable. Its light weight enabled it to be driven on soft ground despite the small-section tyres, but its slow-revving engine and a 5·6 to 1 top gear ratio limited its maximum speed to about 36 miles per hour.

Not over-many Wolseley Sevens were built. They were first put on the market in 1922 when sales were difficult; the price of £295 did not help at a time when money was not plentiful. A few of these cars were exported to Africa, Australia and India, the last-named country probably taking the bulk of these exports, for T. R. Pratt of Delhi (who held a sub-agency for Wolseley cars) managed to get some sold to junior officers in the Indian and British Armies. But sales were nowhere near as good as they should have been, and production lingered on until 1924 when the company decided on dropping this interesting model. By this time the price had been reduced to £199, but it was too late and the little Wolseley disappeared from the market, leaving its makers richer only in experience.

The Wolseley Seven was by no means a bad car. It was solidly built in the true Wolseley tradition and proved to be thoroughly reliable if not exciting in performance; those seen in India were always chugging about in a satisfactory manner, and one owned by a friend of the family was in constant use until 1935, possibly later. The design was very straightforward and simple and lent itself admirably to owner-maintenance and repairs, when these became necessary, and were easy to carry out without the use of sophisticated tools and equipment.

This lesser-known Wolseley deserved a better reception than it got, and were it not introduced at the wrong time it might have lasted on the market for a much longer time and many surviving examples may have existed to this day.