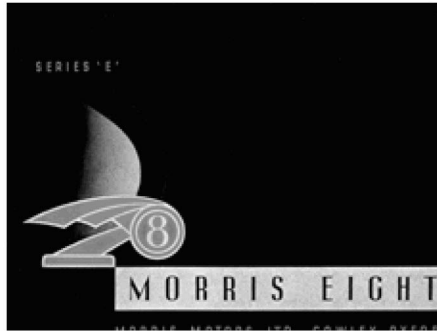


OUT FOR THE COUNT

Rob Symonds

The fifth part of an occasional series on Morris Eight numbers, dealing with pre-war Series Es and the open cars in particular

As a prequel to the research on Morris Eight Pre-series, Series 1 and Series 2 which was printed in Morris Monthly during last year, I also carried out some counting of pre-war Series E numbers. This was done before I developed the rapid data capture technique used for the earlier cars, so is somewhat less comprehensive. At the time, my main preoccupation was 2-seater Series Es. I had never seen one in the flesh and all the Register worthies



I spoke to couldn't shed much light either. The nearest I got was from the venerable Michael Taylor who remembered local milk deliveries taking place from a 2-seater. Register records were scarcely more forthcoming as only a couple of 2-seaters were listed. On contacting one of these, in Scotland, via the good offices of Ronnie Johnson, it turned out to have been mis-reported anyway.

As luck would have it, however, whilst I was pontificating on the Register stand at the NEC, at the precise moment I referred to Series E 2-seaters, a voice piped up from behind me saying that he had just such a car! The then owner was Neville Gerry, from Dorset, and I was subsequently able to see his car and take pictures at the Centenary Rally at Cornbury Park in 2013. Now under new ownership, this car, ABW 135, would seem to be the only 2-seater known to the Register.

After that, safe in the knowledge that 2-seater Es actually existed, it seemed worthwhile to check out the numbers at Gaydon, and the overall pre-war numbers are shown in the table below.

A few interesting points emerge. Firstly, some editions of Harry Edwards' "The Morris Motor Car" show the first chassis number as E542, whereas, consistent with other models, it actually started as E101, in September 1938. The most popular saloons were the 2-doors, accounting for more than half of overall production, with the sliding head model significantly more popular than the cheaper fixed head.



Look - no back seat. ABW 135 at Cornbury

This was even more true for the 4-door saloons, where more than twice as many sliding heads were produced than fixed heads.

Although a couple of each of the open cars were made in late September 1938, presumably with the Motor Show in mind, in that year no more 2-seaters were made and only 59 more tourers. It was only at the end of January 1939 that significant numbers of the open cars began to emerge, in preparation for

Spring.

I had always imagined that serious production would have ceased almost immediately on outbreak of war, but this was not the case, with production continuing largely unabated

almost until the end of 1939 and then slowing to a halt in May 1940. That wasn't the finish however, and a burst of production began in October 1940 and then trickled on until April 1941. For some reason the end of July/start of August 1941 saw a final batch of 4 door sliding head saloons. Since I didn't record much more information, I can't say whether the war time cars were specifically for the military or not. In any case, the very last of a mere 972 2-seaters in total emerged in

May 1940, with the last of the 2776 tourers in February 1941.

With a 2-seater to tourer ratio of about 1:3 it is interesting to speculate as to why so few of the 2-seaters seem to have survived to the present date. My personal theory is that

some surviving cars we now label as tourers actually emerged from Cowley as 2-seaters. After the war, a combination of car shortage and growing families might then have led to the obvious solution of adapting the back seat from a saloon to fit into a 2-seater. Only a precise check of chassis numbers of existing tourers against the Progress Books could confirm whether they were originally 2-seaters. Anybody fancy taking this job on?



SERIES E	4 DOOR FIXED HEAD	4 DOOR SLIDING HEAD	2 DOOR FIXED HEAD	2 DOOR SLIDING HEAD	TOURERS	2- SEATERS	CHASSIS		
								TOTALS	%
Sep 1938 to Aug 1941	4988	11753	9902	17589	2776	972	6595	54575	
	9.1	21.5	18.1	32.2	5.1	1.8	12.1		