



DRIVEN AT HEART

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For immediate release

Morgan - 100 years

A successful Morgan design has a lifecycle of about 30 years, except in the case of the Morgan Plus Eight, which reached the ripe old age of 40! Of course there are minor improvements to each design made every few years or so but the basic concept of a Morgan design remains much the same.

The first Morgan design was of course the famous Threewheeler. HFS Morgan designed a fun car, the Morgan Runabout, for people with little money but a sense of adventure. The car was a great success and in the 1920's the Morgan factory in Malvern was making 2500-3000 cars a year with a smaller number being built under license in France under the Darfont Morgan brand. Nevertheless each year production always sold out in advance as customers were desperate for small cars in this period. The Morgan was popular because it was one of the most reliable light cars you could buy. But stripped down a Morgan Threewheeler also made a successful racing car. In 1914 a Morgan Runabout won the French Cyclecar Grand Prix and at Brooklands in the 1920's the JAP V twin engined Morgans were as fast as a Blower Bentley, completing laps of the famous banked circuit at average speeds of over 100mph. Numerous records were broken in Morgan Threewelers, notably by Gwenda Stewart at Brooklands and Monthlery. In spite of this competition success on the racetrack, during the 1930's Morgan Threewheeler sales declined and by 1935 there were only 300 new orders for the Threewheeler cars. The reason for this was the arrival of mass produced popular cars from Ford, Morris and Austin costing a similar price but offering more features for the money.

HFS Morgan had to come up with a new design. He did this in 1936 and announced the Morgan Four Four, a light sports car with four wheels and a four cylinder Coventry Climax engine. HFS had established the Morgan design philosophy with his Threewheeler and subsequently the four wheel Morgans followed the principle of simple effective engineering. For the next 100 years Morgans had a high power to weight ratio and a well balanced chassis. Morgans have always been fun to drive and capable of winning races in their class in the hands of amateur drivers. Right from the start the Morgan Four Four was making its name in competition and finished well at Le Mans in 1938 and 1939.

With the interruption of War the second Morgan era began in 1940 and lasted until 1970. These were Morgan's "Heritage Years", when the company established its reputation as a successful sports car manufacturer. The slogan was, "race on Sunday, sell on Monday" and the Morgan was successful in Rallies and Races in more or less standard form. The Morgan was typical of a breed of cars built for motoring enthusiasts who wanted to combine a car to get to work in with a bit of

motor racing at the weekend. In the right amateur hands the Morgan could take on International competition and notably achieved a class win against the works teams at Le Mans in 1962. The Morgan achieved great success on the track in the USA which led to many sales of the Morgan Plus Four. The end of this period saw the birth of the Morgan Plus Eight, a light car fitted with a small capacity aluminium V8. The Plus Eight was the perfect example of a “wolf in sheep’s clothing” with its long bonnet and elegant flowing wings but rumbling exhaust. The car became a best seller in Germany and achieved iconic status in the sports car world.

Although the Morgan Plus Eight was an enduring design, only ending production in 2004, the third Morgan era really began in the 1970’s when the increasing importance of making vehicles safer, more economical and more efficient forced Morgan to make many changes to the design of its chassis and powertrain. Between 1970 and 2000 the company met demanding new standards on a modest budget with the help of a talented and flexible workforce and the support of loyal suppliers. During this time most of the low volume car manufacturers failed to meet this business challenge and slowly disappeared.

Morgan also began to improve the quality and the efficiency of its manufacturing processes. The Japanese car makers in the 1970’s and 1980’s were proving that quality and efficiency were synonymous. Car makers that failed to learn this lesson had a hard time surviving. Only a few of the 50 British independent motor manufacturers that were in business after the war have survived and of course Morgan is one of them.

The end of this era saw the birth of the Morgan Aero Eight. Testing and development of this car led the company into many new technologies such as sophisticated electronic engine management, superformed body panels and an adhesively bonded aluminium chassis. The Aero Eight was the first car to use Alcan’s Aluminium Intensive Vehicle technology to create a strong, stiff, reliable chassis. This system has subsequently been adopted by most of the luxury sports car industry to create a stiff but lightweight structure. The Aero Eight also marked the start of a successful collaboration with BMW giving Morgan access to some of the most advanced powertrain technology in the world. In spite of the cost of developing a new car the company kept some of its racing spirit alive and the Aero Eight production car was originally developed on the race track. The Morgan Aero Eight has competed at Le Mans in 2002 and 2004 and a three car race team AutoGT is now competing in the International FIA GT3 Series, frequently coming in the top ten finishers.

In 2009 during the Centenary year a new era for Morgan begins. Environmental responsibility is the key message for the future. In some ways Morgan has a head start with some existing green credentials. The modest weight of all Morgan sports cars make them economical and low polluting. For example the current Morgan Four Four emits only 139 gms Co2/km which already puts it under the imposed limit for car manufacturers of 140 gms Co2/km in 2012. Simple and efficient design using the latest Computer Aided Design software, the use of recyclable raw materials and water based paint all give Morgan a very low carbon footprint. Morgan also uses the latest electronic technology and fits efficient engines and gearboxes from Ford and BMW to give the lowest pollution levels. The AeroMax is the lightest V8 coupe in the world and emits just 260 gms Co2/km in spite of accelerating to 60 mph in 4.2 seconds and reaching a maximum of 170mph. With the LIFE Car Morgan is proposing a potential design revolution, a zero emission high performance sports car.

Morgan is now a vibrant exciting company with a great history behind it. The company can definitely learn from this history and the philosophy of HFS Morgan continues to be relevant for the 21st Century. In the last 100 years Morgans have created passion and love. Morgan has made a big contribution to the history of the sports car. The company intends to continue to do this in the future by being innovative, independent and exciting, just as it has been in the past.

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