



# The Talbot

By Ian M. Johnston

A few years ago, in this very magazine, instead of my usual epistle dealing with the history of farm tractors, I indulged myself by writing an article about our sleek 1948 Riley Roadster. I kind of sneaked it in whilst our busy editor wasn't looking.

Anyway, judging by the feedback I received, it seems the story struck a favourable chord with our dear readers. Possibly it was a welcome relief from the perusal of global warming, gyrating commodity prices and banal politician's promises!

So here I go again. This time I am going to present you with the low-down on our Talbot, slipping it in whilst the editor's attention is distracted by his interest in the current rugby goings-ons in Europe.

## THE 1928 TALBOT 14/45 AD

Firstly a run-down on the history of Talbot. (This is a bit boring so I'll make it brief).

Around the turn of the last century, The Earl of Shrewsbury and Talbot decided that there had to be a better way of travelling around his realm than sitting in a carriage gazing upon the steaming rear end of a pair of horses. Accordingly, in 1903 His Grace established the business of Clement Talbot Ltd in London's North Kensington, for the purpose of importing and assembling Clement-Bayard cars from France.



This 1928 Talbot 14/45 is believed to be the only entirely original AD version of a Doctor's Coupé coachbuilt by Damyon Bros. remaining in the world. It is powered by a six cylinder ohv engine which develops 45 bhp and has a maximum speed of 106 kph but cruises comfortably at 85 kph. (Photo IMJ)

The French vehicles proved to be typically French (that is, temperamental, testy and occasionally volatile). Therefore in 1905 the firm introduced its own range and design of Talbot cars which were destined to become one of Britain's most

respected marques. The Talbot badge proudly mounted on the radiator depicted His Grace's family crest — a hound surmounted by a coronet.

Talbot cars were aimed at the nobility, but unlike Rolls Royce, included a selection of light to medium weight vehicles, eminently suited to driving around the gentlemen's clubs in London's West End.

The Earl astonished his rural conservative minded fox hunting and partridge shooting compatriots when in 1913 a Talbot achieved a world speed record at Brooklands. It was the first car ever to traverse 100 miles in one hour.

In 1919 Talbot was acquired by the Paris based Darracq Company and in 1920 joined forces with Sunbeam cars to form the new identity of Sunbeam Talbot Darracq Motors. The new firm continued to operate from the North Kensington premises. The Talbot brand remained distinctly separate from that of Sunbeam.

In the early 1920s, as a consequence of the influx of low priced Morris, Ford, Austin and other mass produced cars, the sales of Talbots declined alarmingly. The brilliant Swiss automotive engineer

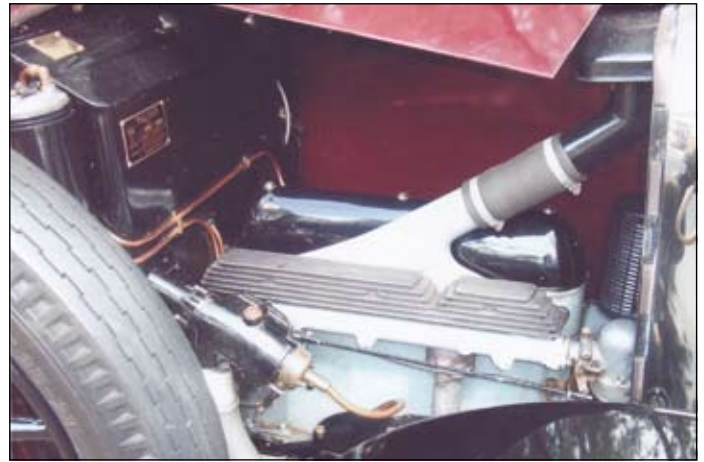
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The boot at the rear is immense, presumably to accommodate a visiting Doctor's paraphernalia. The rear fuel tank holds 60 litres. The fuel is drawn to the carburettor by a vacuum system. Interestingly, the Talbot 14/45 was the first car ever to be fitted with flashing turning indicators — and all that in 1928. (Photo IMJ)



The lush interior trim is rich Connolly leather, deep Wilton carpet and solid oak. The front windscreen opens forward and provides a good flow of cool air in hot weather. The centre of the steering wheel accommodates turning indicators, high low beam dipper, hand throttle and Klaxon horn button. (Photo IMJ)



The six cylinder ohv engine has both its intake and exhaust manifold on the right hand side. There is no fan or water pump, yet the thermal cooling works brilliantly. Even in hot weather the engine never overheats. Where the fan would normally be located is the Smith carburettor and the air cleaner. On the upper left of the picture can be seen the vacuum tank which very effectively draws the petrol from the rear tank. The petrol then gravitates to the carburettor. (Photo IMJ)

#### <43...THE TALBOT

Georges Roesch, was called in to urgently revitalise the Talbot operation.

Roesch immediately discontinued production of the entire existing Talbot range and in 1926 replaced it with a single all new model, the 14/45. Its release at the Olympia Motor Show of that year caused a sensation.

Hailed by motoring writers as being the most technically advanced British car of the time, its innovative features included an overhead valve six cylinder engine of 1666 cc which developed 45 hp at 4250 rpm.

Cranking the engine into life was achieved by a 12 volt Dynastarter. Somewhat remarkably this was permanently coupled directly on to the front of the crankshaft. It was totally silent and when the engine fired and attained 750 rpm the starter ceased being a starter and became a generator! There was

no fan or water pump, the engine being cooled by thermo-siphon.

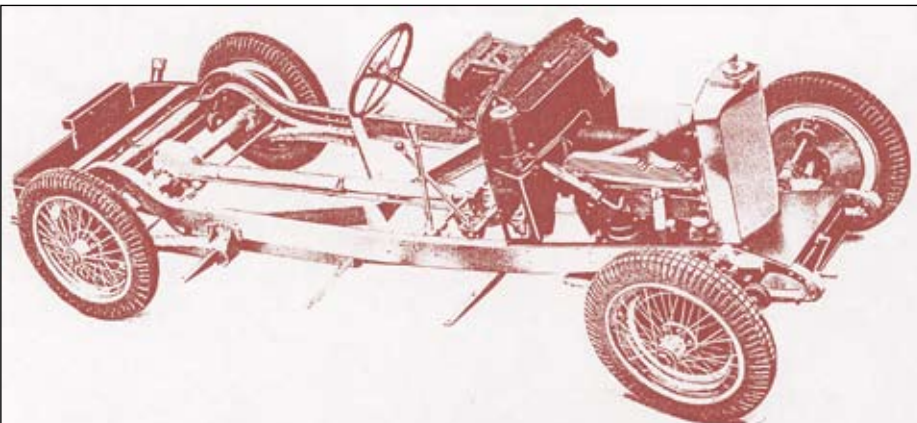
A four speed non-synchro gearbox, with the change lever located to the right of the driver, provided a well spaced range of speeds. Four wheel rod operated drum brakes gave above average stopping power.

The chassis was immensely strong, using advanced technology cross bracing, and well capable of supporting a wide range of coachbuilt body styles.

In 1935 The Rootes Group (Humber, Hillman, Commer and Karrier) acquired S.T.D. Cars and combined the names of Sunbeam and Talbot to create the new marque of Sunbeam Talbot.

#### OUR TALBOT

It is a beauty! I am utterly besotted by it, and so are all the other car freaks who have been fortunate to gaze upon it. "Look, but do not touch!"



This illustration shows the strength of the Talbot chassis with its extensive cross bracing. Note the cantilever rear springs and the front adjustable Halford shock absorbers. (Photo IMJ)

Yes, I know — to mere mortals we vintage car (and tractor) people tend to get a bit carried away with our treasures, but that is the way we are. Possibly slightly daft.

So now, permit me to justify why, in my mind, this particular Talbot is so special.

Firstly, following extensive research, I am convinced this is the world's sole remaining totally original Talbot 14/45 AD fitted with a Doctor's Coupé body, built by Damyon Brothers of Melbourne. Indeed, in Australia there appears to be only possibly six or seven 14/45 Talbots of any description in existence, of which not all are in driveable condition. At least two have been cobbled together out of parts from other cars.

In Britain there are around 30 of varying body types (but no Damyon built Doctor's Coupés). How many are in running condition is questionable. There is one open tourer in the USA, but believed to be only a remnant.

My conclusion therefore is that we (my wife Margery shares my interest in old cars) are privileged to own a unique original example of an outstanding early British motorcar.

The running chassis was purchased new from Talbot Distributors Pty. Ltd. of Elizabeth Street, Melbourne in 1928 by a prominent Collins Street architect named Werner Fick. Damyon Bros. of St. Kilda were commissioned to build the Doctor's Coupé style body.

Unlike nearly all coachbuilders worldwide who used ash timber for their frames, Damyon Bros. utilised well seasoned Tasmanian hardwood. This proved to be an

excellent choice because the body timber in our car is still the original and is as sound as the day it was fitted. Ash bodies of this age are either falling apart or have been renewed.

The interior is all plush Connolly hide leather, rich Wilton carpet and solid oak timber trim. (Even our grand old Mercedes coupé can boast only wood veneer in its eloquent dashboard and trimmings). The Talbot's cavernous boot is capable of holding around eight golf bags, or several cases of London Gin, or even enough formal wear for two weeks at Balmoral.

In the intervening years, since 1928 the car has changed hands eight times yet has travelled a documented distance of a mere 82,000 plus miles! It has never been restored but each owner has diligently maintained the vehicle and effected body and mechanical repairs where necessary.

Climbing up into the cockpit is rather like boarding a Melbourne tram. First it is necessary to mount the platform-like running board and then arrange one's legs and torso through the narrow door. Rotund gentlemen would find it a bit squeezey owing to the lack of any adjustment to the seat and the large intrusive steering wheel.

A degree in physics would help to un-

ravel the complexity of the array of knobs and levers clustered around the Klaxon horn button in the centre of the steering wheel.

The gear lever takes a bit of finding. It is located out of sight to the right of the driver. Having found it, several years experience in driving Tail End Charlie or a Mack Thermodyne truck would assist in one's ability to change the non synchro four speed gears up or down, without the accompaniment of an embarrassing cacophony of grating gears. You see each change requires a double clutch action and stereophonic ears tuned to the engine revs.

The hand brake resembles the type of lever one associates with railway signal boxes. It too is hidden somewhere to the right of the driver.

To be honest, the biggest problem when driving the Talbot is returning the hundreds of waves and toots from admiring wide eyed fellow motorists. Even 'P' drivers and hoons seem to respect the old lady and understand that she can only proceed at a leisurely pace in a dignified manner.

During its 79 years the Talbot has won several awards, including the coveted Bay to Birdwood Concours d'Elegance. It is currently on concessional vintage plates

and starts and runs faultlessly. The cruising speed is a comfortable 85 kph.

Car club enthusiasts are in general agreement that all collectable British cars over 20 years of age leak at least some oil. The Talbot does not!



## IAN'S MYSTERY TRACTOR QUIZ

**QUESTION:** This is the control centre of which 1919 tractor?

**CLUE:** The tractor is American and it is front wheel drive.

**DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY:** It would be easier doing the Sydney Morning Herald cryptic crossword.

**ANSWER:** See page 56.



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