

## *The Life of Riley*

The Riley family progressed to Motor Car Manufacturing by way of:

Weaving....weaving machine maintenance & repair....weaving machine manufacture....Bicycle manufacture....detachable wheels for road vehicles.... Motor bikes....Motor tricycles and finally motor cars.

The above embraces a period from the latter part of the 19th century to 1905.

Bicycles were made at King Street, Coventry.

Motor bikes, tricycles & motor cars were made at fresh and larger premises in King Street by Riley Cycle Co. at their City Cycle Works.

The Riley Engine Co. was formed in 1903 by three Riley sons and located in Castle Works. It removed the need for RCC to buy engines externally.

In 1906 REC moved to larger premises in Aldbourne Rd, off Widdrington Rd.

Detachables wheels on the Riley designed system were made in premises at St Nicholas St, around the corner from RCC's King St Works.

The manufacture of wheels became so lucrative, (purchased by some 183 other motor manufacturers) that Riley Cycle Co. ceased car manufacture.

The Riley sons, wishing to continue with motorcars, then formed the Riley Motor Manufacturing Co. & took over the car interests of Riley Cycle Co. Works adjacent to Riley Engine Co. were obtained in Aldbourne Rd.

Riley Cycle Co. then changed its title to Riley (Coventry) Ltd. Independently, the oldest Riley son, Victor, had formed the Nero Engine Co. By 1913 there was a 10hp car from Nero, and a larger 17hp car from RMMCo, both to be exhibited at the 1914 Motor Show which was cancelled owing to the outbreak of war.

The four oldest brothers were directed to remain in Coventry to deal with work allocated to their Works by the Ministry of Munitions - the youngest son, Cecil, enlisted.

With the assistance of the Ministry of Munitions, Victor's Nero Engine Co. Ltd. was able, in 1916 to occupy land at Foleshill and the bays of a new works were built for further manufacture of war materials. This marked the beginning of what became the main Riley Works.

By the Armistice in 1918 Riley (Coventry) Ltd. had ceased wheel manufacture, absorbed the Nero Engine Co. and moved to the Foleshill site. RMMCo. meanwhile changed its name and direction to Midland Motor Body Co.

The elements were now Riley (Coventry) Ltd, Riley Engine Co. & MMB Co.

There were five Riley brothers:

Victor, the oldest and accepted leader  
Percy, the innovative engine designer  
Stanley, both chassis & body design

Allan

Cecil, Army, then an RFC pilot

Running Riley (Coventry) Ltd.  
Running Riley Engine Co.  
Working with Percy in the  
Engine Company  
Running Midland Motor Body  
Co.  
Development Engineer, Design  
Office  
Competition Dept Organiser &  
Driver.  
Assessor of Export Market  
Potentials.

Throughout the 1920's and 1930's the Company's high quality engineering and corporate integrity produced a universal renown. It rightly claimed to be "As old as the Industry, as Modern as the Hour".

However, in common with many other motor manufacturers, by the mid-1930's a combination of factors imposed financial difficulties which proved to be insuperable. Thus, in 1938 the firm of Riley (Coventry) Ltd. was purchased by William Morris, soon to be ennobled as Lord Nuffield. He retained, however his life-long friend Victor Riley as M.D. of the re-formed Company within the Nuffield Organisation.

Riley manufacture was moved to Abingdon in 1948, and with the merger of the Nuffield Group with the Austin Motor Company Riley became part of British Motor Corporation which in turn became British Motor Holdings and then British Leyland.