

The 4-4 Error or Morgan's Equivalent of the Unicorn - John Merton

One of the most persistent and now well-entrenched errors in the history of early Morgan 4-wheelers is that the cars which came to be known retrospectively as Series 1's were 4-4's before World War II and 4/4's thereafter.

It is almost incomprehensible how this belief came about, when the weight of available evidence shows otherwise. The most plausible explanation so far is that someone of some standing in Morgan circles decided on it without properly checking the facts, if at all, and, given his status, others accepted it unquestioningly. That various Morgan authors have also fallen into this trap has only served to spread and perpetuate the error.

So, let's have a better look at things.

Some very early publicity and magazine write-ups had the cars as "4-4's" but up to the Second World War they were described in a variety of ways, "4-4", "4/4", "4.4", 'Four Wheels Four Cylinders', and so on. By August 1937 "Light Car" was firmly in the "4/4" camp, while its competitor "Autocar" stuck to (4-4" both before and well after the War, even describing the Series II car in its September 1956 Road Test as a "Four - Four". So even just on the PR spin the claim we are examining is spurious.

But, it is axiomatic in any historical research, that the object itself, in its original form, is definitive. Where what the object reveals contradicts the written word or entrenched belief, it is the latter which is wrong and should be changed or discarded.

What do the pre-war cars tell us?

- the vehicle Identification Plate attached to the rear right hand engine block on most of the Coventry Climax-engined cars is stamped "4/4" in front of the chassis;



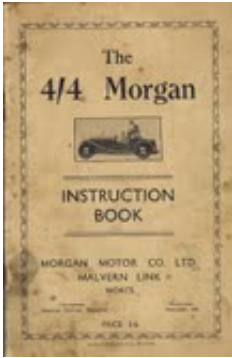
The Identification Plate on a pre-war Coventry Climax engine

- arguably the most common type of alloy bell housing used with the Coventry Climax engine has "4/4" cast into its outer rim;



"4/4" cast into the rim of a pre-war bell housing

- and the original kit issued with each new car included an Instruction Book (1937 edition pictured), authored by Morgan Motor Co. Ltd. Malvern Link Worcs., which from 1936-on referred to the cars throughout as "4/4's".



And there's more:

- the Factory build records, which provide virtually a forensic picture of the DNA of each car built, identify every car from the first prototype on as a "4/4";
- in an article in "The Morgan World", Issue 24, by Dr Jake Alderson on the first prototype with the Ford 8 hp engine, the driver of the car in a 1949 university procession claimed it was stamped with the chassis number "4/4/1";
- my early 1950's reprint of the 4/4 Instruction Book has the English four-wheeler club listed as the Morgan 4/4 Club, not 4-4 as seems to have crept into various publications more recently.

So there you have it!

The unicorn was often mentioned in mythology, but never seen. And despite the many references in Morgan lore, the Morgan Motor Company has never produced a Morgan 4-4 car. Not a single one!

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