

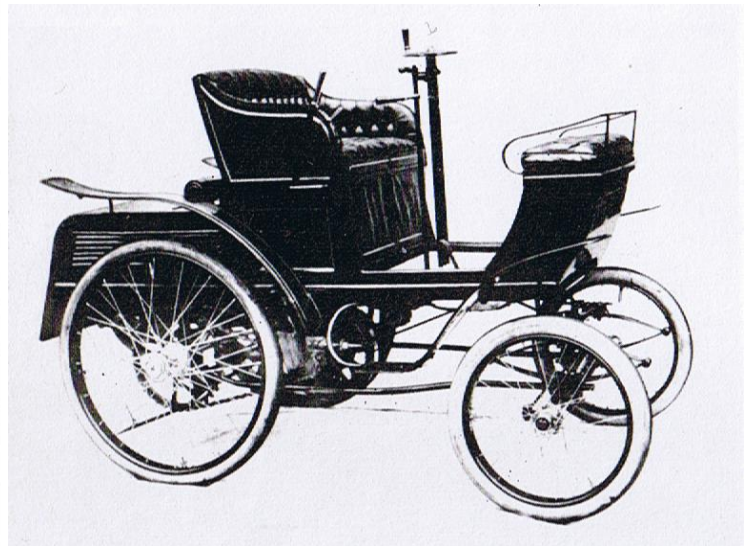
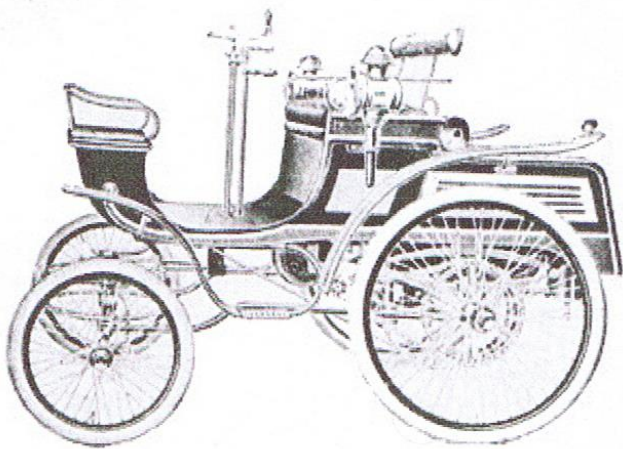
Auckland's First Motorcar

The "Star" Motor Car Company part of Jaguar's Heritage

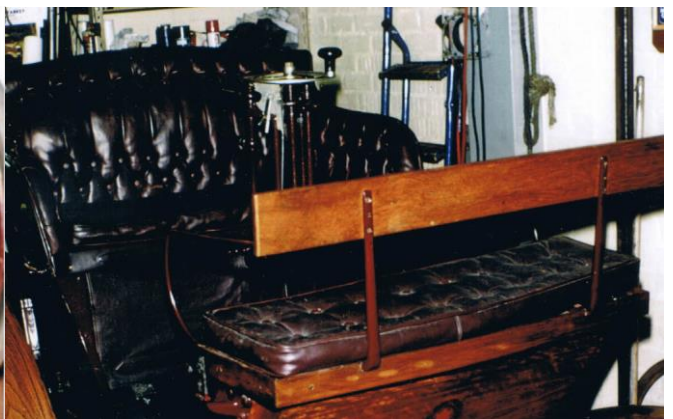
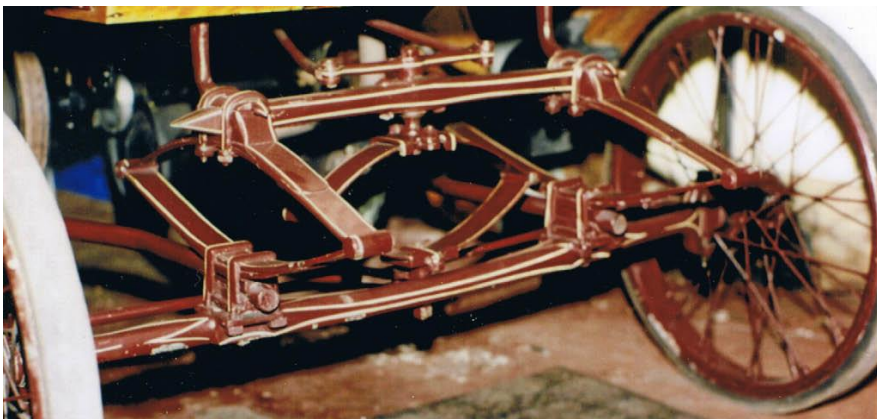
By Dr **John Osborne** FTC, DTT, PhD, MSAEA, MSAEL, MIAME, FSG

Arthur Marychurch a mechanical engineer living in Auckland for the previous 10 years returned to England in June 1899 to visit his Parents and the Star Cycle Co.Ltd (makers of the first Star motor cars) of Wolverhampton, Staffordshire who were producing four seater vis-à-vis (passengers facing each other) motorcars similar to the Benz layout. Arthur purchased one of the first six cars made which were powered by a single cylinder open crank 4 stroke petrol engine of 1195cc (115mm bore and stroke), developing 3.5hp and fitted with electric ignition, a Star patent spray carburettor similar to that fitted to Daimler cars and water cooling to two radiators mounted either side of the engine and coupled up to a cylindrical transversely mounted header tank behind the main seats.

The driver sat on the right side to operate the car, turning the steering wheel rotates the two swivel levers connected by rods on the underside of the transverse spring to turn the 26 inch front wheels, column levers controlling the two speed pulley primary belt drive, chain final drive to wire spoked wheels fitted with Dunlop pneumatic tyres 2 ½ inches in diameter. Lever operated friction brake pads applied to front of the 36 inch rear driving wheels.



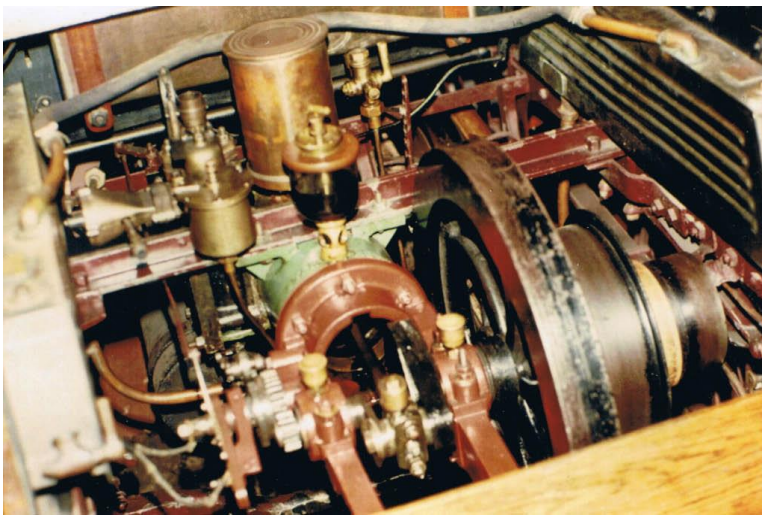
Photos; of the Wolverhampton Star Motor Car c1899 courtesy the Veteran Car Club of G. B.



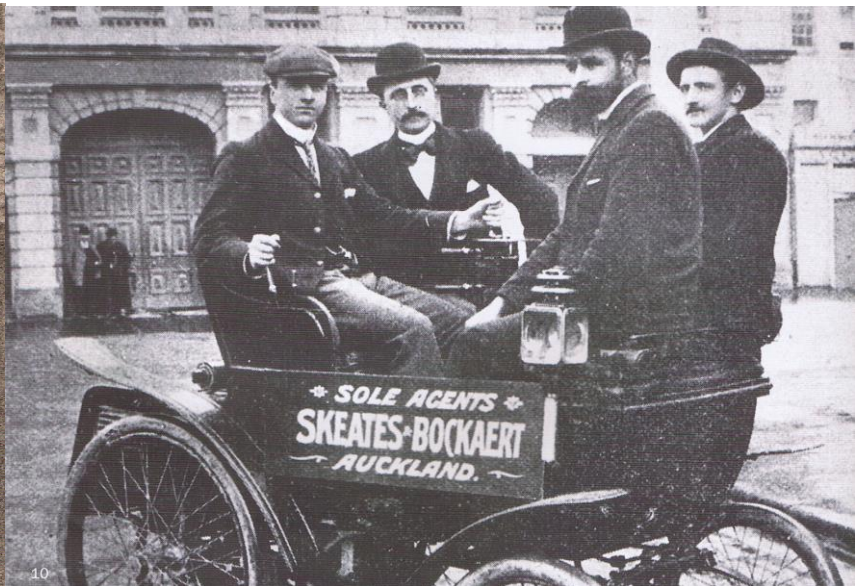
Photos: of one of the first six Stars made in 1899 showing the front axle, suspension, steering and seating arrangements. Courtesy David Evans, Star Register, England

The retail price of the car was £175 but Arthur negotiated a £40 discount and obtained the New Zealand Agency for these English Wolverhampton Star Motor Cars.

After receiving about 4 miles of driving instruction Arthur drove a further 26 miles to Oxford gaining competence in the driving skills.

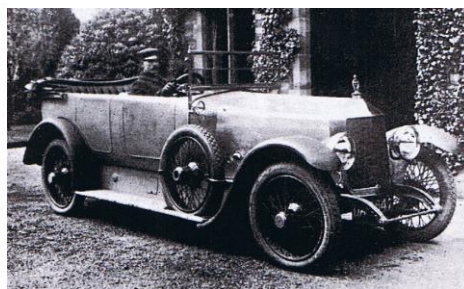
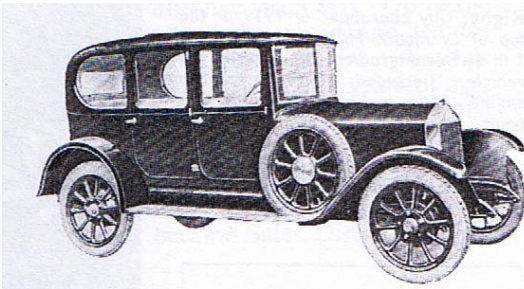


Photos: of one of the first six Stars made in 1899 showing the horizontal engine with oilers on the open crank big end and main bearings, the flywheel and transmission crowned flat belt pullies, and the final chain drive to the rear wheel. Note this wheel is fitted with a solid rubber tyre. Courtesy David Evans, Star Register, England

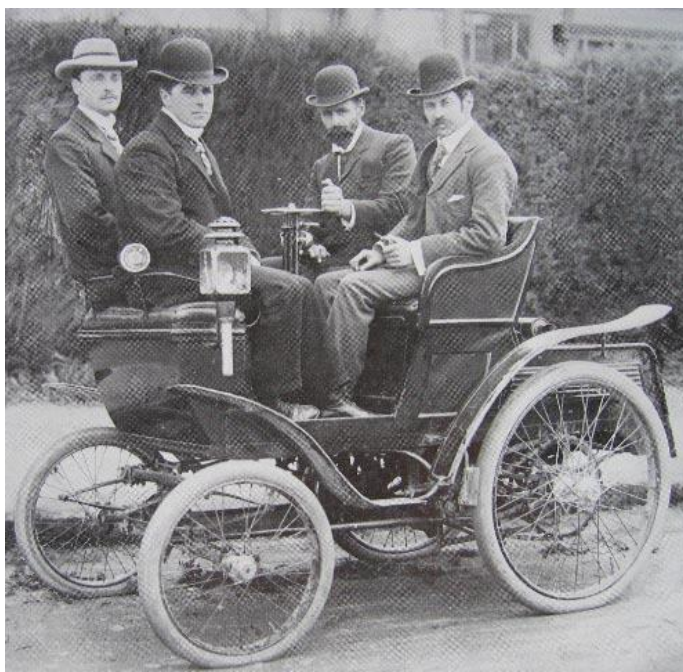


**Auckland 1899 left Image: clockwise Messrs JE Skeates, PR Skeates, A Marychurch (driving the car) E. Bockaert, courtesy Mrs Ellen Subritzky, daughter of Arthur Marychurch.
Auckland 1899 right image: clockwise Messrs PR Skeates (driving the car) E Bockaert, A Marychurch, JE Skeates' courtesy Mrs Ellen Subritzky, daughter of Arthur Marychurch.**

Initially the Star was made with a vis-à-vis body, but was soon offered as a three seater Royal Star and the four seater Imperial Star. In 1900 Star turned the front seats round to face forward. In 1926 the Star Motor Co Ltd was taken over by Guy Motors Ltd, Wolverhampton, (which used British Daimler sleeve valve engines in some of its large commercial vehicles). Jaguar Cars Ltd bought Guy Motors (Europe) Ltd in 1961



**1923 Guy 13/36 4-cyl saloon c1925 Guy V8 touring car c1926 Star Saloon
Images: Courtesy Jaguar Daimler Heritage Trust – from “Case History” Jaguar Cars Ltd, May 1968.**



**Left: Original photo, September 1900 from left: Messrs PJ Skeates, A Pirie, JE Skeates (driver) and R Yarrick
Right: Colour image of the Star Motor Car produced in 1968 by the Sanitarium Health Food Company,
Courtesy Mrs Ellen Subritzky, daughter of Arthur Marychurch**

The Marychurch Wolverhampton Star Motorcar was shipped on board the steamer “Whakatane” arriving Auckland in September 1899. Arthur found the Star Motor Car performed well on Aucklands level roads and reached estimated maximum speeds of 8mph in low and 20mph in high, but the Star Motor Car had great difficulty in climbing Aucklands steeper hills. It was necessary to get up to maximum speed on the flat or to gain more momentum by climbing an opposing hill as high as possible doing a U turn then rush down the hill and up the other side hoping not to have to push the car too far to the top.

After three weeks of testing and promotion Arthur sold the car and the New Zealand Agency to Messrs Skeates and Bockaert who also paid the outstanding freight and Import duty charges of £90.

Mr Skeates took the Wolverhampton “English Star” to the Christchurch Jubilee Exhibition in October 1900 where it proved quite an attraction. (not to be confused with the Coventry made “English Raglan” in Southwoods Motor Museum Wellington) imported in November 1900 by Nicky Oates of the Zealandia Cycle Works of Christchurch and a French made motorcar owned by the Adams Star Cycle Co, Christchurch, which Adams named “ French Star” The NZ Wheelman Magazine reported that the “Wolverhampton (English) Star” was to be auctioned in the Tonks Norton and Co’s rooms on 25th November 1900 (the first car offered for sale by auction in NZ). The car sold for £135 to Wardell Brothers, Grocers in Christchurch.

The Canterbury Times, 5 June 1901 listed the Wardell Wolverhampton (English) Star as one of seven cars in Canterbury at that time. Wardells sold the car to Mr Swift who later swapped it with a Mr McDonald for a quarter acre section. The car was finally sold to Professor A.W.Bickerton who eventually retired the car and used the engine to drive a merry-go-round and later a shooting gallery at “Wainoni” his well known Christchurch Amusement Park until the 1930’s Alexander William Bickerton (1842-1929) bought a 30-acre property parallel to Pages Road. Bickerton Street now runs through the centre of the property. Bickerton created woods and gardens out of a sandy wilderness. After 1902, when he retired from the University of Canterbury, he turned the area into a pleasure garden, Wainoni Park, which was one of the marvels of Christchurch in the early 1900s.

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Special Thanks and Acknowledgements to**

Mrs Ellen Subritzky, retired farmer of Kaitaia, daughter of Arthur Marychurch

David Evans, Star, Starling, Stuart & Briton Register, www.localhistory.scit.wlv.ac.uk/museum/transport/cars

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NZ Herald, 28 December 1935, article “Motoring Pioneer - Arthur Marychurch”

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