

April 2022



Dear Club Members,

75 years ago Henry Ford died. He's famous as the man who revolutionised factory production, and made motoring cheap enough that it was accessible to the masses. One hundred years later we're starting to think about the consequences of that, and just as the arrival of the car changed lives, so this next iteration of transport for the masses will bring about change faster than any of us can imagine.

The Model T was brought to market in 1908, and was soon manufactured at the first moving assembly line. This meant the car could be built more efficiently, reducing costs. The car was also built with user maintenance and reliability in mind, famously Ford used stunts to promote the vehicle, such as driving it up the steps of the Tennessee Capital building, and driving it to the top of Pikes Peak. By the 1920's more than half of the registered automobiles in the world were a Model T Ford. Production finally came to a close in 1927.

The Model T was a huge success because it had easy to learn control, and was easy to maintain, it was even supplied with its own toolbox. Post-purchase add-ons and adaptors sprung up, with the option to fit your Model T with off road metal wheels, and a plough, complete with a fan set up to stop the engine over heating. It could also be set up as a stationary power source, using a belt and pull to drive a generator, threshing mill, saw, or a water pump. In a world where horses still dominated agriculture, or the only alternative was a steam traction engine the Model T must have felt astonishing.

The Model T is the machine that is the first to be made on a production style factory land. Each worker does the same task over and over again on each vehicle as it passes down the line, rather than a group of men working on a car from start to finish. This reduced production time for a single vehicle, what previously took over 12 hours, now took just 93 minutes.

On the outbreak of war Ford supplied chassis and parts to the military, but was not directly involved in producing military vehicles. However, the Model T was used in many areas during the war, principally as an ambulance, but the Polish army also adapted them to create a very early armoured car. Around 40,000 vehicles were used by the French and British forces, but when America entered the war in 1917 the American Army ordered 390,000 Model Ts.

For the many ways in which the Model T changed the lives of many for the better, Ford used its popularity to promote his Anti-Semitic views. In 1918 Henry Ford used the money he'd made from the success of the Model T to buy his hometown newspaper The Dearborn Independent. When a Ford Dealer sold a Model T they were contractually obliged place a copy of the newspaper on the front seat of the vehicle. Ford used the newspaper to promote articles that claimed there was a Jewish conspiracy infecting America. His publicising of these views to such a wide audience gave them legitimacy, Henry Ford was regarded as the big American hero, a man who had invented something and made his fortune making and selling it. His writings and thoughts became

so well known that Hitler compliments him by name in Mein Kampf. In addition Ford tried to socially engineer the lives of his employees. Production line work was monotonous, so many workers would leave, creating problems with needing to retrain the workforce regularly, which slowed down production speed. In 1914 Ford raised wages to \$5 a day, however it was only \$5 a day if your home life was arranged in an approved manner. Wives had to stay at home, houses must be cleaned to a required standard, they weren't allowed to take in lodgers, and weren't allowed to drink or gamble. He was opposed to unionisation, and used his own private police force to suppress protests, killed 4 people in 1932.

Famously Ford said "Any customer can have a car painted any color that he wants so long as it's black," which isn't quite the case. Black was the only colour on offer from 1914-1925 for reasons of efficiency, but outside those periods you could also have one in blue, red, green and grey. All these colours are used in your fibre this month, along with a synthesised fibre, created by Ford for use in car upholstery. Soya Silk is made from Soy bean protein, the fibres are chemically dissolved and then squeezed out through microfine nozzles to create this soft and shiny fibre. Soy silk wasn't used in the upholstery of the Model T, but Ford did own a suit made from the fibre. Overtime it fell out of use due to the rise of the petrochemical industry, but also because it's not very stable under UV light, not ideal for cars that spend a long amount of time parked in the sun. In hindsight Ford is one of the pioneers of the hunt for an alternative to oil produced plastic. He stated that he was looking to "grow cars rather than mine them" and worked to create a plastic-type sheet from soybeans that might replace the metal body work in his cars. World War II halted development and the idea just seemed to disappear.

Happy Spinning

Katie

Fibre Content- In case your parcel is missing the label

25% Soyasilk

25% BFL

25% Merino

Further Reading-

The Model T

<https://corporate.ford.com/articles/history/the-model-t.html>

<https://silodrome.com/history-model-t-ford/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8ObnK8RSU0>

Driving and Starting a Model T

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QxfHMTga2d8&t=1s>

Ford and Soyabeans

[https://www.soyinfocenter.com/HSS/henry\\_ford\\_and\\_employees.php](https://www.soyinfocenter.com/HSS/henry_ford_and_employees.php)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art\\_silk](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_silk)

Henry Ford

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/henryford-witnesses/>

Henry Ford- Anti-Semite

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/henryford-antisemitism/>

<https://www.history.com/news/henry-ford-antisemitism-worker-treatment>

<https://thejewishnews.com/2020/07/28/its-time-to-truly-face-the-hatred-of-henry-ford/>