

Fig. 2. The 'Uniflow' engine, showing how the working parts are completely protected.

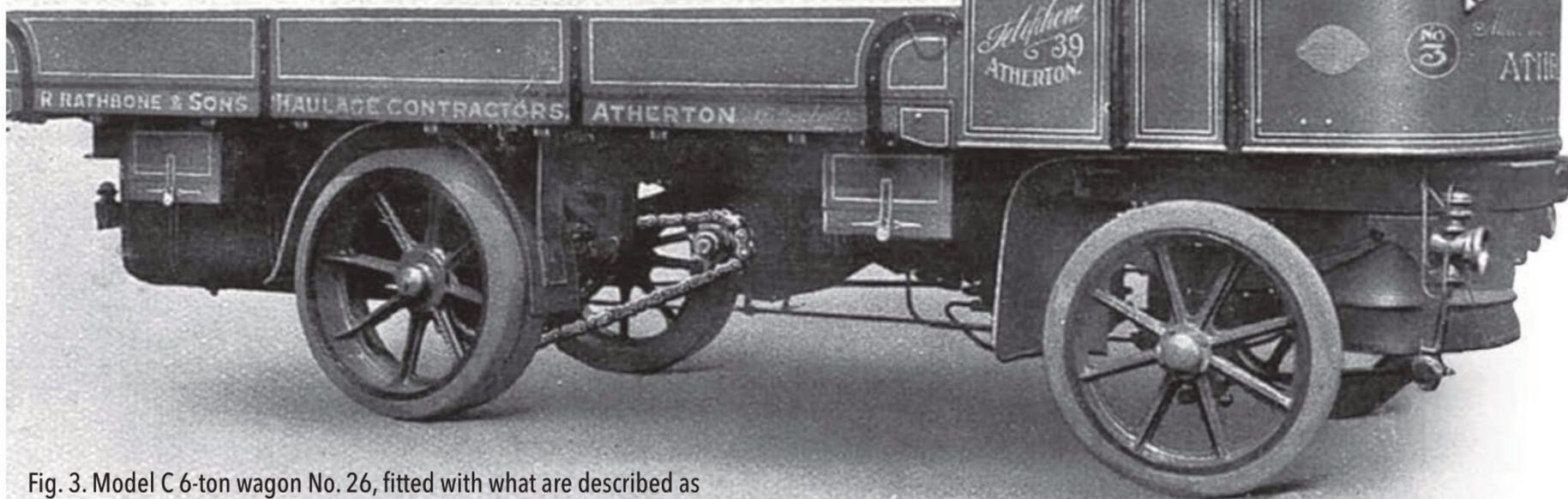


Fig. 3. Model C 6-ton wagon No. 26, fitted with what are described as 'portable sides', perhaps better known as 'removable drop sides.'

The Atkinson STEAM WAGGON

Frenchwood Works, Preston, Lancashire

Like so many of the company's featured in this volume, the Atkinson concern grew from humble beginnings. With his brother, Henry, Edward Atkinson formed Atkinson & Co Ltd in 1907, eventually taking premises in Kendal Street, Preston.

Here the business was built up by repairing broken-down vehicles, which in those days would have included many steam wagons. As a result, they built a very good reputation, especially with regard to Sentinel wagons, for which they later became agents.

The business prospered and a second repair depot was opened in Liverpool, but by 1915 they ceased to be Sentinel agents. They then decided to enter the market with

their own design of steam wagon, the first of which was a 6-tonner, Works No. 1, which appeared on Wednesday January 5, 1916. It was used for testing and development and probably the odd demonstration, before being sold to H&G Curwen Ltd of Preston in May 1916.

By 1918, the Kendal Street works had been outgrown and spacious new premises were acquired in Frenchwood, just outside Preston.

In 1926 the effects of the Depression were beginning to be felt and the firm's finances were giving cause for concern. To help alleviate the situation, that year they formed a partnership with an engineering firm in Wigan - Walker Bros (Wigan) Ltd - the

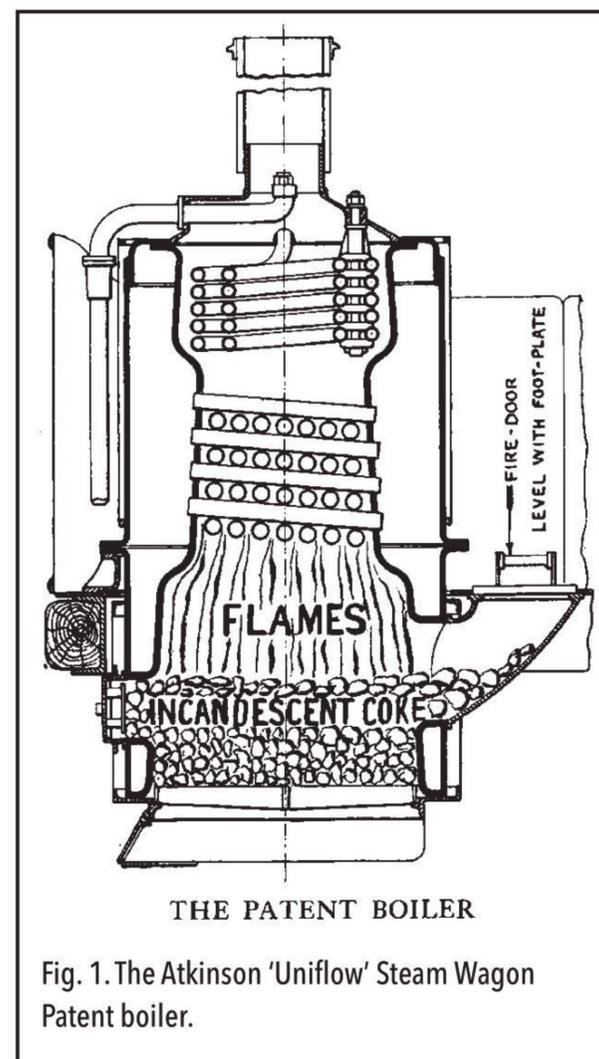


Fig. 1. The Atkinson 'Uniflow' Steam Wagon Patent boiler.

new company becoming Atkinson-Walker Wagons Ltd.

Sales were still very difficult, with only 35 wagons being built from 1926 until the last one, No. 545, left the works in 1929. Steam of course had had its day apart from a few faithful operators of Foden and Sentinel products.



Finally, Walkers decided to leave the partnership with Atkinsons going into voluntary liquidation in 1930. Having paid off the bank with the sale of certain assets, the company was sold in 1933 and a new company, trading as Atkinson Wagons (1933) Ltd, came into being. This does not concern us as they were only involved with internal combustion wagons, with which they met considerable success.

So how many wagons did the original company build? The works range of numbers ran from No. 1 to No. 545. The works register shows around 145 blank, or missing, numbers which, when deducted from 545 would seem to indicate that 400 wagons were built. Most manufacturers' records left a lot to be desired so I don't suppose that we will ever know the true figure for certain.

The different types of wagons were built with model numbers as given below:

- Model A 2½ ton with flat platform
- Model AT 2½ ton with end tipping body
- Model B 4 ton with flat platform
- Model BT 4 ton with end tipping body
- Model C 6 ton with end platform (10 ton with trailer)
- Model CT 6 ton with end tipping body (10 ton with trailer)
- Model D 8 ton with flat platform (12 ton with trailer)
- Model DT 8 ton with end tipping body (12 ton with trailer)
- Model E 6 wheeler to carry 12 tons
- Model ET 6 wheeler with end tipping body

Our first illustration (Fig. 1) shows a diagram of the Patent Atkinson boiler, quoting the manufacturer: "A boiler must be simple, strong and durable and easily cleanable, inside and outside. It must have no stays whatever, no screwed tubes, and

few or no rivets at all, because it has to stand enormous variations in temperature and pressure without developing the slightest leak."

Fig. 2 shows the 'Uniflow' engine. "It has no eccentrics, link motion or slide valves. The dry high-pressure steam is used in two simple cylinders provided with special non-sliding valves to resist water and high temperatures. The valves are simply large glass-hard steel balls operated by cams, positively and copiously lubricated."

Fig. 3 depicts 6-ton Model C wagon No. 26 of June 11, 1917, which sold to Rathbone & Sons of Atherton, Lancs. Registered CK 3019, it became No. 3 in their fleet. In 1926 it was sold to Leonard Stubbs & Co Ltd of Runcorn, Cheshire (presumably scrap dealers) where it was cut up the same year.

Fig. 4 shows Model C 6-ton wagon No. 38 of November 23, 1917, which sold to



Fig. 4. Model C 6-ton No. 38, fitted with a sack-hoisting engine.

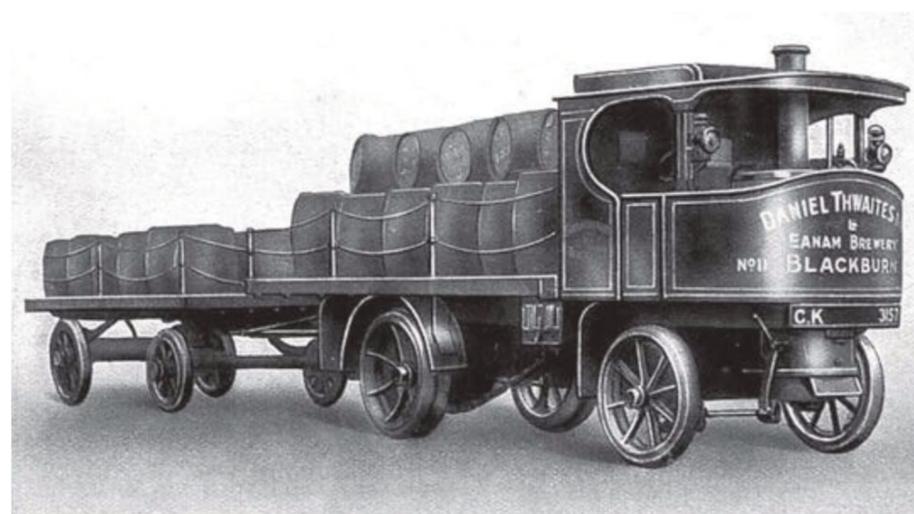


Fig. 6. Wagon No. 192 - ready for making a delivery.

LEFT: Fig. 8. 4-ton tractor No. 266 is photographed alongside the Liverpool Overhead Railway on Monday May 5, 1947, about to start the first delivery of the week for owners J Bibby & Sons.

BELOW: Fig. 11. Model C 6-ton No. 482, well-loaded with an equally well-laden trailer c1925.



STEAM WAGONS

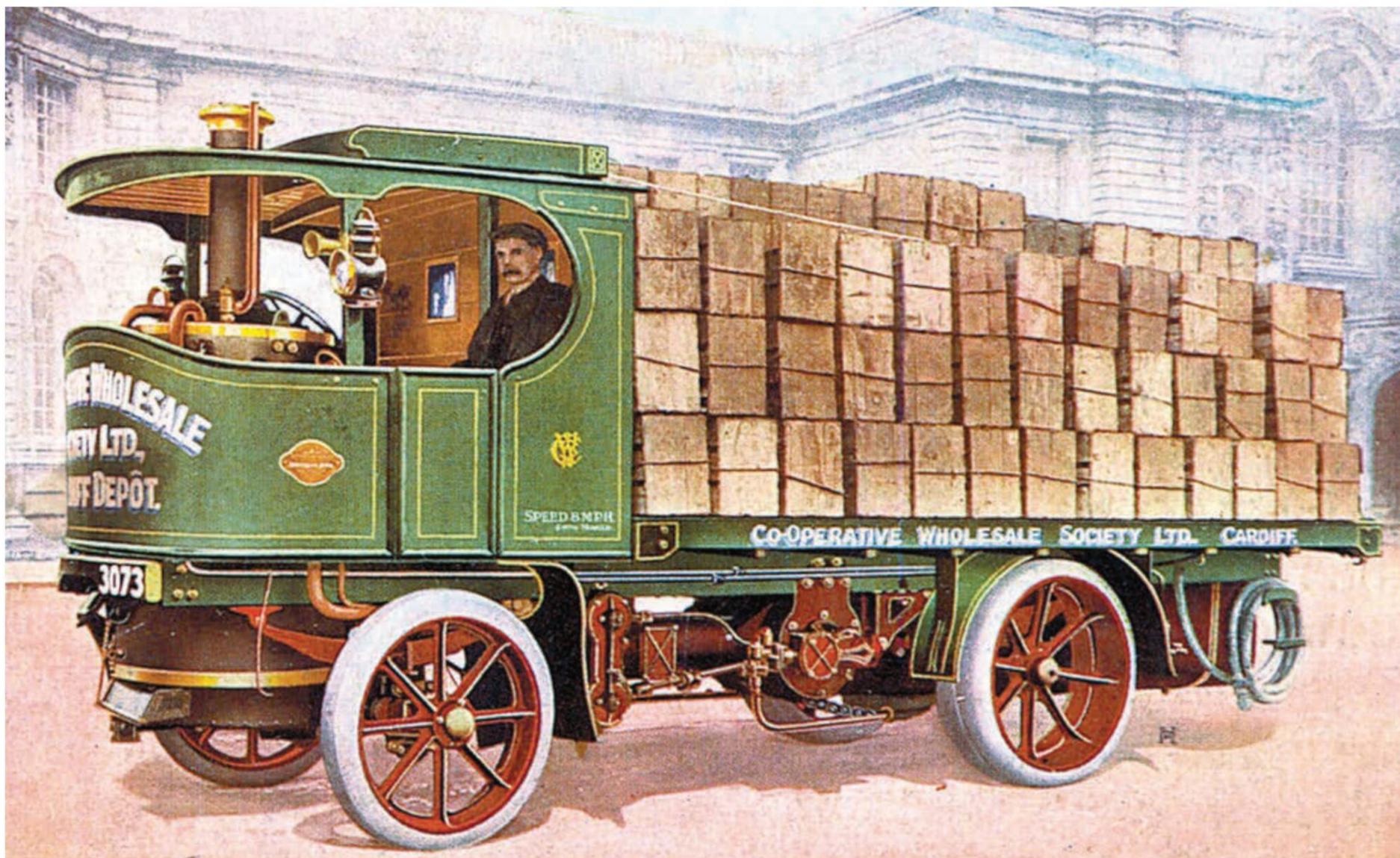


Fig. 5. A nicely coloured photograph of Model C 6-ton No. 99 about to set out to deliver what looks like a load of tea chests.

James Blackledge & Sons Ltd of Bootle, Lancs, where it worked until last licensed in November 1935, after which it was cut up.

Fig. 5 shows 6-ton Model C wagon No. 99 of December 30, 1918. It sold to the Co-operative Wholesale Society (CWS) Ltd's Cardiff Depot and received the registration CK 3073. It was last licensed in July 1927 and was sold for scrap the following year.

Fig. 6 depicts 6-ton Model C wagon No. 162

of December 11, 1919. It was new to Daniel Thwaites & Co Ltd, brewers of Blackburn, Lancs, having been registered CK 3165 and became No. 11 in their fleet. It spent its working life with this concern, delivering beer until last licensed in December 1922. By March 1923 it had been cut up.

Fig. 7 shows 6-ton Model C wagon No. 164 of January 1920, which sold to the Co-operative Wholesale Society Ltd in London,

where it was registered CK 3169. After working for the Co-op, it was sold in 1926 to J.J Prior Ltd of Lime House, London, where it was last licensed in 1928.

Fig. 8 depicts 4-ton tractor No. 266 – built as a Model C 6-ton wagon in December 1920 and sold to J Bibby & Sons Ltd of Liverpool. It was registered CK 3382 and became No. 19 in its fleet. This wagon was the last to be delivered of a batch of four (Nos. 263-6). All four were later converted into tractor units with shortened chassis, carrying a large water tank and fitted with pneumatic tyres. Bibbys had owned in excess of 23 Atkinson wagons, which had all been well-maintained, as is borne out by the fact that wagons 263 and 264 worked until last licensed in 1948, with Nos. 265 and 266 preceding them by only a year.

Fig. 9 shows Model A 2½-ton end tipping wagon No. 320 of August 11, 1922. It sold to James H Martin of Preston and was registered CK 3477. This wagon was a new innovation, building one of only 2½ tons. It was the only one built and was considered a failure. Mr Martin returned it to the works in 1924, complaining that it was too heavy on fuel for the small load that it could carry. It was then used as works transport until last licensed in December 1926 and was cut up during 1929.

Fig. 10 shows 4-ton tractor No. 410, a Model C 6-ton wagon of 1923 and sold to



Fig. 7. This 6-tonner is shown with a 4-ton capacity trailer.



Fig. 12. The manufacturers' representatives seen at Olympia, where the publicity tour ended on November 17, 1927. Sidney Harrison was Burrell's representative, being fourth from left, sporting a bow tie.

William Brown & Nephews Ltd of Wigan, Lancs, where it was registered EK 3392. By 1932 it was sold to J Bibby & Sons, becoming No. 5 in the Liverpool fleet. In the same year it was converted to a tractor.

Fig. 11 depicts Model C 6-ton wagon No. 482 of June 1925, which sold locally to Edward Hankins of Preston and was registered CK 3679. It possibly didn't live up to the owner's expectations, for just over a year later, in September 1926, it sold to

Shephard & Heugh Ltd of Birmingham, where it was last licensed in February 1930 and then scrapped.

In November 1927 *Commercial Motor* tried to further the sales of the steam wagon by organising a nationwide tour, visiting many of the important towns and cities. Twelve wagons were entered by the leading manufacturers and Fig. 12 is taken in front of an Atkinson 'Uniflow' wagon with the manufacturers' representatives at London

Olympia on Thursday November 17, 1927 where, with the co-operation of all the drivers, they managed to finish the tour at the same time for the final inspection.

The late Sidney Harrison was Burrell's representative (who gave me this photograph). He told me that the tour had convinced him that steam had had its day and could not compete with the petrol and diesel engine. Unhappily he was right! ■

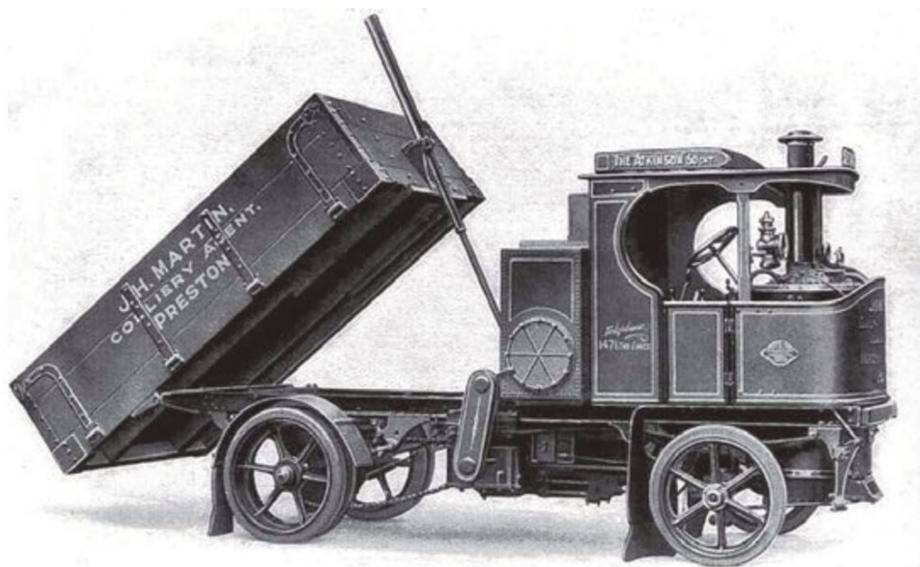


Fig. 9. Model A 2½-ton end tipper with combined hand and mechanical tipping gear.



Fig. 10. 4-ton tractor No. 410 converted from a 6-ton wagon. The crew appear to be getting their delivery instructions from the gaffer.