BUYING GUIDE

Standard 8, 10, Commercials and Pennant, 1953 on.

This is one of a series of buyers guides on Standard cars

The intended audience is someone who is looking at a prospective purchase.

This guide does not cover looking for all the usual issues when buying any car, such as oil pressure, lack of compression, oil in water, noises, rattles, do the electrics work etc, etc, since it assumes all those normal checks will also be done. The guide is intended to identify the good and bad points of these models, in particular. This is issue 1, so may be updated over time.

Phil and Lynda Homer have run a Standard 10 for more than 35 years. They describe this range of cars from a simpler Motoring age.

In the early 1950's the only small car in the Standard -Triumph range was the Triumph Mayflower. This sold just 34,000 over 3 years. Standard needed a simpler, cheaper offering to address the lower end of the market, not covered by the 2 litre, six-seater Standard Vanguard. Spiritually they needed a successor for the diminutive 2-door Flying 8, introduced in 1938 and revived from 1945 - 1948. The design needed to be cheap and cheerful, and that brief was fully delivered by 1953. Indeed, when the new Standard 8 was launched, ousting the Mayflower from the production line at Canley, it was for a time the cheapest car on the UK market.

The customer got quite a lot for his or her money. There was no reworking of old components, the design was fresh from stem to stern and technically right up to date. And the 4-door body was quite commodious.

Body Styles

There was a 4-door saloon, either with or without a boot-lid, a 4 door Companion (Estate Car), a 2 door 6 cwt Van and Pickup, plus later, a modified saloon, called the Pennant. In "bootless" form the luggage compartment was reached via a split folding rear seat, whilst the spare was inserted through a slot in the lower rear panel. There was never a 2-door, nor a Convertible.

The monocoque construction employed used only a couple of rigid box sections, the majority of panels, except the structural sills, were of single thickness.

The early models were missing fully trimmed doors, heater, brightwork, hubcaps and only a single wiper and single sun-visor. All those things could and were easily added as dealer options.

Mechanics

The first Standard 8 of 1953 sported an 803cc overhead valve engine, designed specifically for the job and a brand new 4-speed gearbox. Eight months later came the 948cc 10hp, achieved by boring out from 58 to 63mm. Both heads were given higher compression and improved breathing later on so give more power. The Goldstar 8 for instance gives only one less bhp than an early 10.

The new front suspension was independent with wishbones and telescopic dampers. Braking was by 7" Girling drums all round and there was a hydraulically operated Borg and Beck clutch.

A Laycock de Normanville overdrive was an option on Standard 8, 10 and Pennant and the 2-pedal Automatic, called Standrive, was available on the 8, 10 and Commercials. Standrives easily go out of adjustment but are simply remedied if the instruction manual is followed to the letter.

Model Development

Those early cars have now become known as Basic 8's for obvious reasons. It didn't take too long for the short-comings to be addressed. Soon there were a plethora of better equipped saloons and estates as described here:

First the Basic 8 was provided with a stablemate, a De Luxe model that featured wind up windows and, after the first few, flashing indicators. Also, there was the first 10 with the same refinements and an opening boot. Later there were Super 8s and Super 10s with enhanced chrome, improved trim, heaters, courtesy lights on all doors, main beam warning and trip milometers. One had to pay extra for the blue jewel light!

Family 8s and 10s were made available, still both without boot-lids but with improved interior trim.

Various models of 10 Companion (estate Car) models were produced in parallel, including Family 10 Companions and Super 10 Companions with trim mimicking the Saloons. Then the 8, 10 and Companion were produced in Phase II specification which was essentially Super 8 and 10 spec. but with the addition of external side chrome stripes. These are of dubious benefit as they tend to trap water.

In 1957, all received Higher compression heads in versions known as "Gold Stars" and different trim internally and externally. For the first time the 8 received an opening boot-lid and the Companion's double cargo doors were replaced by a single door.

The Pennant was introduced in October 1957 to boost flagging sales. The extended rear wings and the front wings with headlight peaks make them easily identifiable. There was additional chrome all round, a new steering wheel, improved instrumentation and a remote gearchange. At the same time a Triumph Ten was introduced in left hand drive, aimed specifically at the North American market. Both cars were available in a wide range of twin-tones. There were even 242 Triumph Pennants made. The saloons were replaced by the Herald 948 in 1959 but the Companion was built until April 1962, receiving Pennant style front wings from late 1959.

6cwt Vans and Pickups, available from September 1954 until early 1962, persisted with minimum niceties, but cheaper, as they did not attract purchase tax. Later examples after 1959 received Pennant front wings, and from 1962 1147cc engines as fitted to the Herald 1200 and uprated to 7cwt. The last were made in January 1965.

Potential buyers may be confused by so many variants. Please don't be. Bear in mind that, save for boot-lids, all the bodies are essentially the same, so it is relatively easy to swap chrome, interior trim, carpets, etc from another example to liven up or improve your own. Not many cars have the original specification or wear the trim that they did when they came out of Canley. Likewise, overdrives and Standrives, heaters and carpets may well have been retrofitted. Unless you are an absolute purist, you should concern yourself with the actual condition of the car's bodywork rather than it conforming to any of the above specifications.

What goes wrong and what doesn't

These cars are reliable. Engines and gearboxes, which were used as the basis for much more powerful cars to follow, have proven to be just about unbustable. They, and the live rear axle, will do a high mileage without much attention beyond servicing. Then the first trouble that occurs, usually rough running or idling, can often be cured by a replacement Solex carburettor, as these wear prematurely,

and then a replacement distributor. Both of these are readily available. Original oil filters are rare, expensive and of dubious quality internally. They are best replaced by an adaptor kit.

Only very high mileage cars will require an engine rebuild. Rather than do that it is common to replace the 8 with a 10 or indeed a later 1147cc unit as they will drop straight under the bonnet. More ambitious upgrades are possible, but care should be taken with fitting bigger engines as these also should be done with a lower ratio back axle and, importantly corresponding brake upgrades. Beware that later twin carb manifolds necessitate the clutch master cylinder to be relocated.

Phil states that in early cars, the clutch operating arm can break, this must be replaced with one with a "double thickness" arm, as fitted as standard in later cars.

The car uses a substantial subframe that sits across the car and carries the independent front suspension. It can be removed by releasing just 4 nuts. Unlike later Heralds, Spitfires and the like, which used a similar design, those later components are sealed for life and did away with the grease nipples that were a feature of the 8 and 10. Nothing wrong with grease nipples of course, provided all 21 (!) of them are attended to every 1000 miles, and you don't ask Lynda to do them. Don't buy a car that has been neglected. The bottom trunnions are becoming difficult to source but the Club has had the screwed fulcrum and trunnion bushes remanufactured. The telescopic shock absorbers can be replaced without the need to compress the coil springs.

Steering is by Burman Douglas worm and nut and this can become heavy, especially if radial tyres have been fitted (as they should be). "But I have driven some marques that are much heavier, a TR7 comes to mind" says Lynda. If a car starts to wander this is best addressed by first eliminating wear in the steering idler and replacing the two "metallastic" bushes in the front tie bar, as well as the 4 track-rod ends, before the steering box needs to be addressed. The club is investigating replacement boxes, but presently these need to be rebuilt or replaced with a rack and pinion set up.

Another cause of steering inaccuracy can sometimes be diagnosed to weak semi-elliptical rear springs and the lever arm shock absorbers - so don't always blame the front end. Rebuilt shock absorbers are available and springs can be re-tempered by Commercial specialists. There are 3 different types of rear springs fitted so be sure to order the correct matching set of hanger bushes.

Lucas 12v electrics are the same as fitted to most British cars of the era, so use a Dynamo not an Alternator. Trafficators are fitted on just the Basic 8 and some very early 8 De Luxe and 10 models but all later cars have stalk operated indicators. These light the dual filament in the sidelight bulbs which can be confusing to other drivers at night. A single red stoplight is built into the number plate housing in the centre of the bootlid/rear panel. Both of these arrangements were quite legal when the cars were built and continue to be so under continuous use regulation. Some cars will however have been modified to show separate indicators and stop lights. All Pennants and later Companions and commercials have twin brake lights and orange rear flasher lenses.

Brakes were modified in 1957 by fitting cheaper wheel cylinders, they must be replaced like-for-like. Late brake shoes can be fitted to early cylinders, rears also fit the Herald and are readily available. Both early and late front shoes are quite rare and will require re-lining. 7cwt Commercials used 8" brakes at the front.

Bodywork and Trim

Although mechanical spares are mostly available and cheap, the same can't be said for bodywork. If on the lookout for a car it is therefore much more important to look for good bodywork, rather than good mechanics, which can be comparatively easily replaced anyway.

If left to their own devices, the cars will rot in roughly the following order:

- Sills, starting from the rear
- Bottom of front wings
- Trailing edge of front wings
- Around front edge of bonnet
- Around bottom edge of bootlid
- Around headlights
- Around windscreen corners
- Seams between rear wings and body tub
- Floors, starting from the front corners, including the boot

If the car is further gone in all these places it is best avoided, unless you are adept with welding.

The only body parts readily available are the inner and outer sills and repair panels for the bottoms of the front wings.

Note that front and rear wings, bonnet and bootlid are removeable, making welding repairs easier/more accessible.

Lynda reminds us that early bonnets tend to split along their side due to flexing, ours has a later bonnet with the re-enforcing strip.

It is rare to find a car with good chrome, especially bumpers, radiator trim and particularly the chrome side stripes on the Phase II cars and Pennants. This is always in demand and rarely available. Bonnet and boot hinges, which frequently are broken, are available new, as are hubcaps for all cars and new door handles for all but the earliest 8's. Window, rear screen and windscreen seals are available though there are 2 different types, early and late. Rubbers for the early sliding window 8's are not available.

Driving a Standard 8, 10 or Pennant

The cars are light, under 15cwt, and had a reputation for being lively and handling well in their day. If you doubt that, then I have to tell you that a 10 won the 1955 RAC rally outright! Phil admits that car did have twin carbs, uprated cam and exhaust, but was still just 948cc!

The top speed of an 8 is quoted as 62 mph but a 10 or Companion is good for 68 mph.

It is worth noting that all cars from April 1957 on have both opening boot-lids and rear fold down seats, so are almost as practical as a modern hatchback. "We also have older cars, but the 10 is by far the most useful to drive and to own today" says Lynda.

You might find an un-modified early 8 a little pedestrian to drive but a Gold Star 8, 10 or Pennant is capable of keeping up with A-road traffic, if a tad too low-geared for prolonged use on today's motorways. That isn't the purpose of one of these cars anyway.

Values

Condition 3: £500 - £1500, Condition 2: £1500 - £3500, Condition 1: £3500 - £5000, Concours: £5000 - £7500 or more. Slightly less for Standard 8, Slightly more for Pennant/Companion. The Van and Pickup are so rare they seldom change hands, and prices seem erratic

Conclusions

The Standard 8 and 10 are worthy competitors to a contemporary Morris Minor, Ford 100E or A30/35, but much rarer and more interesting to own. Seek out a Goldstar 8 or later more powerful 10s and ones with good or well repaired bodywork.

Acknowledgements

My thanks for additional material from members of the Standard Motor Club, which is also a primary source of spares: www.standardmotorclub.org