Buying Guide - Standard Vintage Nine 1927 - 1930

1. Introduction

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 the Vintage Nine. This is issue 1, so may be updated over time.

2. Commission Numbers

The Commission Number is found in the centre of the steering wheel

90001 - 92940 Short Wheelbase 1153cc 60mm x 102mm

93101 - 102150 Long Wheelbase 1257cc 63.5mm x 102mm

3. Background and Model History

The Standard Motor Company needed a more affordable car that would sell in the difficult trading conditions in the later 1920s. It had to maintain the dependable, solid and reliable character of the larger Standards of the time. All the current range had been developments of pre WW1 designs and this was the first all new design after the war. The Nine, which went from initial drawings into production in just six months. had a new design of side-valve engine. The first model to be launched, at the Motor Show in October 1927, was the fabric-bodied 'Falmouth', a four-door four-light saloon. The 'Fulham' followed early in 1928, with an opening roof. There were also a small number of two- or four-seat touring saloons, but few if any seem to have survived. Gordon England made a two-door sports saloon and an open Sports two-seater on the same chassis; these, too, are extremely rare.

The first saloons were rather square in appearance, but from August 1928 the chassis was lowered by two inches and the corners of the body made more rounded. The next month a long wheelbase version of the chassis was launched, with an enlarged engine. The fabric body was extended towards the back, still as a four-light saloon, but with lots of legroom in the rear seats. This new model was called the 'Teignmouth'; most of the surviving vintage Nines are of this type. The open four-seater on this chassis is the 'Selby', the bodywork for this was made by the New Avon Co. of Warwick.

From September 1928 all factory saloons had the opening roof. Generally the Teignmouth replaced the short-wheelbase models, although they were still available. In 1929 the Teignmouth became a six-light saloon, the body style staying much the same otherwise. A steel-bodied Teignmouth was introduced in 1929, to the same design as the fabric body.

The vintage Nine continued to be built into 1930. Later in that year it developed into the Big Nine, which saw the traditional shouldered radiator replaced by a new shape.

4. Chassis Description:

All vintage Nines have a separate chassis incorporating two main chassis rails running fore and aft, with four transverse cross sections. The rear axle is underslung and has a worm drive. The front axle is a conventional solid item. Each axle is suspended by two multileaf semi-elliptical springs. There are friction dampers on the front axle but no dampers (shock absorbers) on the rear axle. The propshaft is of one section. with front and rear universal joints.

5. Engine:

All models are fitted with a Standard designed and built four cylinder side valve engine with cast iron block and removable iron cylinder head. It is mounted rigidly on the chassis, so some vibration is inevitable. The short wheelbase models have an 1131cc unit, the long wheelbase a 1287cc version. The car is fed by a side-draught carburettor mounted on the right of the engine and attached directly to the block. There is no air filter. The valves are operated directly by a camshaft in the block turned by a chain from the crankshaft. This chain also drives the dynamo and, through it, the magneto. These are mounted on the left of the engine. The oil pump is also on the left of the engine. Water circulation is by thermo-syphon; there is no water pump.

6. Magneto

Several makes were used. Timing adjustment is achieved by altering the position of the coupling to the dynamo.

7. Clutch and Gearbox.

A friction clutch drives a three-speed gearbox with sliding mesh engagement of the gears. These are straight-cut in the vintage manner and the gearbox will give out a typical vintage whine. This is normal, and in fact is one of the pleasures of driving these cars, as is mastering the precise timing of the double-declutching needed to avoid crashing the gearchange. It may be called a 'crash' box but the gearchange should be silent.

8. Steering

There is a conventional steering box

9. Ignition and Electrics

Cars have 12-volt electrics, with a battery under the driver's seat, with a negative earth. There is an electric starter, which is mounted on the right side of the engine. The starter button works the motor directly. There are separate sidelights and headlights at front, with no provision for dipping. A single rear light was the original fitment, but many cars have had a second light fitted. There are no stop lights or trafficators.

10. Brakes, Wheels and Tyres

All cars have four-wheel brakes. Earlier cars had all brakes worked by rods, but later cars have open cables to the front brakes. The centre mounted handbrake also acts on all four wheels. Adjustment is simple, and consists of nuts at the end of the cables or rods, combined with an adjustment of the pedal to cross-shaft connection, which can be accessed under the bonnet.

Careful setting up and adjustment of the brakes is essential to safe and efficient working. The drop levers from the front wheels should point slightly forward in the off position, so that maximum force can be applied by the cables, as they operate at 90 degrees to the levers when the brake shoes start to bite. Cars have artillery wheels with four or five studs and brass wheel nuts that should not be overtightened. The 19" tyres are available but are pricey.

11. Body Construction

The body has an ash frame with fabric or steel covering. There are separate, steel, bolted on front and rear wings.

12. Mechanicals.

The cars are over-engineered and are quite robust. The two main bearing crankshaft can cause trouble. Listen carefully for bottom end wear on the engines (low rumbling from worn main bearings, a knocking from big ends). The engine itself should idle and run quietly, though the rigid engine mountings mean that there is more engine noise inside the car than in a later Standard. The bearings have to be white-metalled and line-bored, but there are specialist engine companies to do this. Tolerances are greater than on more modern engines; an engine rebuilt too tightly may seize temporarily when hot. The exhaust manifold is of cast iron and the down pipe fits into it, which may cause cracking. The club can supply a new remanufactured manifold from the Big Nine, in which the down pipe fits outside the manifold. It is otherwise identical.

There are no particular faults with the transmission. The gearbox should give out a whine in first and second but this should not be raucous. The rear axle should be silent. It is equipped with phosphor-bronze bearings so care should be taken with the type of oil used. A reputable oil company will advise.

13. Interior

These cars were very well appointed internally, but most will have had the trim replaced. It is not cheap to retrim one of these cars, and some of the items are difficult to find if you insist on exact replication of the originals.

14. Other potential weak points

The fabric bodied cars were not as robust as steel-bodied models. The material becomes punctured and this lets rain inside, which rots the woodwork. The main concern when buying a fabric-bodied car should be the framework. Look down the sides of the car - a slight sag in the roofline, perhaps echoed by the way the doors hang, is a sure sign of a rotted frame. On a drive you may well detect slight movement of the bodywork, particularly around the windscreen and at the front of the roof, though this in itself is not necessarily a sign of rotten wood. The joints work slightly loose after a while. In fact those cars that have survived may well have been rebuilt. Some rotted cars had van bodies built on the chassis, using just the forward section of the original body.

Buyer beware, though! It is not easy rebuild the framework - no B&Q here - but it is possible for an amateur with suitable gifts and a lot of time to rebuild a rotten car.

There are no particular rust spots on the fabric bodied cars.

15. Headlights

These do not dip and the provision of a dipping mechanism would not be simple. The charging rate should cope with continuous use of headlights but it has little margin. To avoid dazzling other drivers the lights should be set in a 'dipped' position. Although not as bright as modern cars, the headlights are perfectly adequate.

16. Tail lights

Original fitment was only a single tail light, which also lights the number plate. It is possible to fit a second tail light with an extension to the wiring system.

17. Stop lights

No stop lights were fitted to these cars. Stop light switches, actuated by the movement of the brake pedal, can be fitted easily to the chassis, and suitable stop lights fitted. There is no ignition circuit, as the magneto provides the spark, so it will be necessary to wire the stop lights so that they are extinguished when the car is parked with the parking brake applied, as the latter works on the same cross shaft as the brake pedal.

18. Sunroofs

All later saloons have a sunroof, and these should be checked for leaks. Staining on the headlining is an obvious clue. Make sure that the drain tubes are not blocked and that the rubber tubes under the wings are not perished or missing.

19. Further Information

The Standard Motor Club has a number of ' Fellow Owners' and a Comprehensive Spares Scheme for its members. For more information go to **www.standardmotorclub.org**

Please note that this buyer's guide only highlights certain facts and is not exhaustive. If you intend to buy a Standard car, whether as a running vehicle or a restoration project, always ensure that it is inspected by a qualified person before driving it on the road.

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