

# HENRY WHITLOCK, COACHBUILDER

I have written several articles about the Whitlock Automobile Co. of Holland Gate, London and have mentioned that the firm evolved from a coachbuilding business established in 1778. This article will elaborate on those coachbuilding origins.

The assumption has been that Henry Whitlock founded the business but our research has shown that Henry was not born until 1786-96 so the details relating to the date 1778 are still obscure. I have speculated previously that it may have been Henry's father, Robert who actually started the business and there is a possibility that Henry also could have taken over an existing firm. Further research will hopefully make this point clear.

The mid-nineteenth century was the heyday of coachbuilding and the Whitlock coaches were some of the best. A 1969 letter from Henry's great-grandson, Henry Cecil Whitlock may give us a clue to this success. Henry Cecil writes, "...I believe it was his patent springing that made the Whitlocks coaches so renowned. I have been told that the present Queen's state visitors coach, known as the 'Irish Coach' is one built by Henry Whitlock for Queen Victoria. There is a coach by Henry Whitlock in the Science Museum, West Kensington, London and another in the Norwich Museum, Norfolk, there's also another in use by the 'Royal Artillery' for special occasions at Sandhurst."

Henry Cecil's comments about the Whitlocks being coach builders to Queen Victoria are confirmed by a reference to the City Directories for the time which show the phrase "by Special Appointment to the Royal Family" as early as 1871. Also at the 1883 Sportsman's Exhibition Henry Whitlock, Carriage Builder is listed as operating from factories at Holland Park and Turnham Green still showing "by Royal Appointment".

The Henry Whitlock referred to in 1883 is the son, Henry John Whitlock as his father had died in 1863. The father's will was proved May 11, 1863 with effects under 7,000 pounds. At his death, Henry held property in Chiswick, Hammersmith, Walworth Road, Surrey and Margate, Kent and left his eight surviving children well provided for. The business he made famous continued to do specialized chassis work into the age of the automobile and despite being sold in the early 1900's the Cricklewood operation continued as The Whitlock Motor Co. until finally closing in 1990.