

'Ford motor charges a steam roller'

Mike Smith January 2025

"FORD MOTOR CHARGES A STEAM ROLLER" was the headline of a report into a collision between a Model T Ford and a steam roller by the *Cheltenham Chronicle and Gloucestershire Graphic* in their December 1st, 1917 edition.

The actual report is reproduced here along with the photographs that accompanied it:

"On Thursday night Nov. 22, about 7 o'clock, a Ford car driven by Mr Victor Wright, of Wellington-street, Gloucester, and with a friend, Mr. Frederick Smiley, landlord of the Greyhound Hotel, Gloucester, as passenger, while returning from Cheltenham to Gloucester crashed head-on into a County Council steam roller, which at the close of the day had been left on the grass verge by the side of the road. So great was the impact that the heavy roller was moved some 18ins., and the front of the Ford was practically telescoped. The occupants were thrown into the air, turned a somersault and fell in the ditch. Mr Smiley sustained a compound fracture of the knee, but Mr Wright, though badly shaken and cut, was able to process to his home."

The car was a Ford Model T 2-seater "Runabout" that has been fitted with a storage box on the back and the steam roller was one of Gloucestershire County Council's fleet of Aveling and Porter rollers, fitted with a Morrison scarifier for breaking up the road surface. The Morrison scarifier was a patent design manufactured exclusively by Aveling and Porter who claimed in a 1908 catalogue that "over 900 had been sold".



It's difficult understand how the car sustained such little damage or how its occupants survived the crash if the heavy steam roller moved 18 inches as a result of the collision. Cars were not fitted with seat belts and air bags in 1917!

My thanks to Mike Dodd from the Restoration and Archiving Trust, based at Toddington on the Gloucestershire and Warwickshire Railway, for discovering this interesting little item.