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Written by Dawn Martin

The Early Years



1930 Foden 5 ton Steam Lorry

[Foden Trucks](#) date back to 1856.

Edwin Foden was born on 5th August 1841 in Smallwood, Cheshire. He began his career at the age of 15, as an apprentice to an agricultural equipment company of Plant & Hancock, near Sandbach in Cheshire. He left them for an apprenticeship at Crewe Railway works, but later returned at the age of 19. He quickly rose through the ranks and in 1866, he became a partner in the company, and the name changed to Hancock and Foden.

The company later became Edwin Foden Sons & Co Ltd.

During the 19th Century, the railways had established a near monopoly of land transport within the UK and competition from road transport was suppressed by a series of punitive parliamentary acts that limited the speed and operating hours of self propelled road vehicles.

Against this background, Foden concentrated their efforts on power plants for industrial and agricultural machinery. Most agricultural engines were horse drawn as they circumvented many of the restrictive parliamentary acts.

In 1878, the legislation affecting agricultural use was eased and as a result, Foden produced a successful range of agricultural traction engines. The perfecting of the compound traction engine in 1887 gave a significant marketing advantage and later proved invaluable to the development of the steam lorry.

1896 saw the restrictions affecting road transport ease, which permitted vehicles up to 3 tons to travel at up to 12mph without a red flag. The time was right and Foden produced a series of four prototype wagons. The experience gained from this, enabled Foden to build a 3 ton wagon for the 1901 war office self propelled lorry trial.

This design was consistently faster and more economical over the arduous road trials but was placed second overall as it was claimed that the [Thornycroft](#) entry had better off road performance, but many commentators at the trials regarded the Foden as the clear winner. The model was the basis for a highly successful line of vehicles that were produced over the next 30 years.

Edwin died on 31st August 1911, and was succeeded by his sons William and Edwin Richard.

By the late 1920s, it became obvious that however good the product, steam was giving way to the internal combustion engine, Edwin Richard; saw the future lay in diesel power. He resigned from the board of directors, following years of bitter arguments, and subsequently retired (he was 62 at the time). However, his son Dennis, could not afford to resign, but he was not prepared to let things carry on as they were and with financial input from his family, a new company was set up to design and produce diesel lorries and was known as [ERF](#).

Despite this, the first Foden diesel was produced in 1931 using a Gardner 5L2 engine. The vehicle, which has covered well over a million miles, is in the Science Museum collection at Wroughton. Production turned almost exclusively to diesel but the company was still struggling until in 1935, William Foden returned from Australia. His presence stimulated new confidence and he produced the DG range which transformed the company's fortunes.

The DG production continued throughout World War 2, as a military version had been developed.

The later Years

After World War 2, Foden re-introduced some old models with some improvements, and they entered the bus chassis market in 1946. By 1950, they had developed a rear engine model, which predated the Leyland model by 7 years.



An example of a 1953 Foden Bus Chassis fitted with a Lawton body

By 1954, what proved to be a rugged and successful dump truck design was produced and the two-stroke engine was becoming very desirable for marine applications.

In 1958, Foden introduced lightweight glass reinforced plastic into their cab production and this led to the manufacture of the first British built, mass produced tilt cab in 1962.

It is difficult to list the vast number of diverse designs that Foden produced during the 1950s and 1960s, which included single and double deck buses, mobile crane chassis, heavy haulage tractors, timber tractors and the innovative 'twin load' concept.



1959 Foden S20 Dropside

1964 saw another change in regulations, which favoured articulated vehicles over the older rigid designs. Foden designed a new model, which was to compete in the 32-ton market.



1967 Foden S36 Flatbed

In the early 1970s, Foden developed a huge new production facility adjacent to the Foden Works. However, a combination of this expenditure and the economic downturn of the period saw the company hit rock bottom in December 1974, and saw the company receiving Government money to bail them out.

The home market continued to be depressed and it was not until 1977/78 that saw Foden return to a reasonable profit. Large Ministry of Defence contracts to supply military vehicles helped the company in its recovery.

1980 saw Foden become acquired by the American company [PACCAR](#), and are now a division of that company. PACCAR acquired DAF Trucks in 1996, and after PACCAR acquired Leyland Trucks in 1998, Foden production ceased to make way for [DAF](#) trucks that were to be rebadged as Foden, these trucks had the option of either having a CAT, PACCAR or Cummins engine.



2004 Foden Alpha 3000

In 2005, PACCAR announced that Foden production was likely to cease in 2006, as it would release manufacturing capacity at [Leyland Trucks](#) to allow for the increased volume of DAF Trucks.

The last Foden was produced in July 2006 putting an end to the 150 years history of Foden Trucks. The final vehicle to roll off the production line in Leyland was an 8x4 rigid, which was delivered to a nearby museum.

There is a society called the Foden Society, which is dedicated to Foden Trucks. <http://www.thefodensociety.org.uk/>

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