



Abridged Version

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Written by Dawn Martin

[Scammell](#) began when the wheelwright, George Scammell of Spitalfields, London developed his business. Later on when the name of the company became G Scammell & Nephew, they were involved in the building and repair of craftsman built carts and vans. In the early 1900s, they had built a substantial business by selling and maintaining Foden steam wagons and small trucks.

The outbreak of war in 1914 presented itself as a turning point in road transport history. Mechanical transport was seen to work, proving its vast potential beyond doubt to such forward thinking companies such as Scammell.

George Scammell's great nephew was injured and invalided out of the army and he was able to apply the practical experience he had gained during the war and began developing the articulated six wheeler, which began production in 1920.



Early articulated six wheeler

In 1921, a test vehicle pulled a load of just under 8 tons up West Hill in Highgate in second gear and managed 18mph on the flat.

The new company acquired land in Tolpits Lane, Watford and built a new factory for the construction of the new articulated six wheeler.

An early and consistent customer was Shell-Mex, whose fleet Number 1 was an early-articulated six wheeler, which led to Scammell obtaining a patent in 1926 for the world's first frameless tanker.

By 1927, Scammell had strengthened their position by launching its first cross-country vehicle that was called the Pioneer.

1929 saw the introduction of the articulated "hundred tonner" heavy haulage vehicle and only two of these vehicles were produced and the first one was used for the transportation of steam engines to Liverpool Docks.



Scammell were also looking for new markets, and diversified into four and six wheel rigids. The 'Rigid Six-wheeler' found some success and, with its balloon tyres, at last permitted sustained high-speed long-distance road operation.

The early 1930s saw the production of the three-wheeled "Mechanical Horse", however, the depression affected the firm badly and it was in a poor financial position in 1934. Watford Council had helped by ordering a pair of fire engines, but it was not enough, and it was Shell-Mex that injected capital, but in return, they insisted on a management shake up which saw Alfred Scammell deprived of his Managing Director post.

During the Second World War, Scammell made a massive contribution to the war effort by building large numbers of tank transporters, gun tractors and heavy recovery vehicles as well as fire pumps.



Early Pioneer Tank Transporter

1937 saw the introduction of a new forward control rigid 8 wheeler to join the rigid 6 lorry, and this was the first of a long line of Scammell Eights.

The first new post war product was the famous "Showtrac" of which only 18 were built. Thankfully, the majority of these survive today.



1939 Scammell Showtrac

In the late 1940s, Scammell produced the Scarab, which replaced the "Mechanical Horse"; the Scarab had similar features but had a less angular cab.

In 1955, Scammell became part of the Leyland Group and this provided ready access to the Leyland engines, gearboxes and axles. A gradual replacement for the lightweight range by new models using Leyland engines were the 4x2 Highwayman MU, the Routeman 8 wheeler and a 4x2 forward control MU called the Handyman.

A new dump truck range comprising the Sherpa and Himalayan was also launched.

The beginning of the 1960s saw the introduction of the new Michelotti designed glass fibre reinforced plastic cab for the Routeman, Handyman and the new twin steer Trunker.



Routeman

The 6x4 Contractor was initially intended to compete in the American dominated territories overseas, went into production in 1964 and found great success as a tank transporter and heavy haulage tractor. It had a choice of the Leyland 24 ton or Scammell 30 or 40 ton bogies, which were to feature on all the future Scammell heavies. With a coach built cab and semi automatic gearbox, the Contractor was popular in the UK for 240 plus ton GTW operations.

Over the next few years, further designs were introduced, and in 1969 the 6x4 Crusader appeared, initially as a high power, high-speed motive unit with a modern steel cab. By this time, the divisional reorganisation within the Leyland Group had resulted in the name becoming Scammell Motors, and the closure of Transport Equipment (Thornycroft) in 1972 resulted in the Thornycroft Nubian range transferring to Scammell, together with the LD55 dump truck.

The late 1970s saw a surge in development and the birth of the Contractor Mark 2 heavy hauler with an 18 litre, 425 hp Cummins engine and automatic gearbox and the first Commander Tank Transporter for the British Army was produced. A new range of 4x4 and 6x6 rear engine airfield crash tenders replaced the Nubian range.

Two developments by Leyland Motors at the end of the 1970s benefited Scammell. Leyland wished to develop two new heavy vehicle ranges, the overseas bonneted Landtrain and the UK forward control Roadtrain that would feature the new C40 tilt cab.

In view of Scammell's expertise, Leyland tasked them with the development of the Landtrain and they were able to use the same cab and bonnet for the replacement for the Contractor. The new range, the S24 was available in 6x4 and 6x6 formats. The full weight range was 40 ton to 200 ton GTW.

In July 1988, the Watford factory closed. The S24 and the Nubian ranges, together with the rights to the Crusader and Commander were sold to Unipower Ltd, who opened a new plant in West Watford.

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