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# Lea-Francis Gallery

*George Leek, circa 1935.*

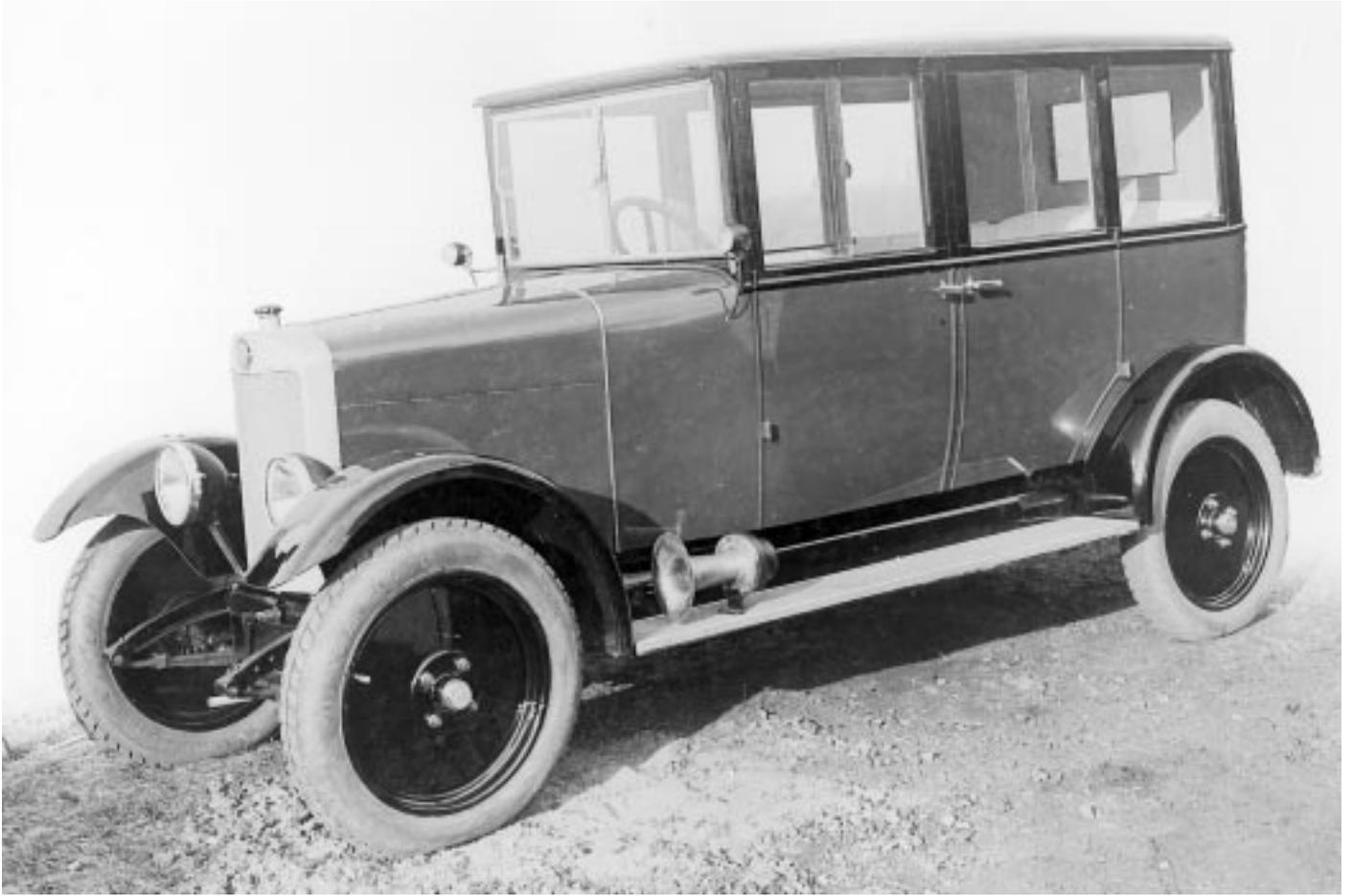


*Isabella and Hugh Rose in the fifties.*



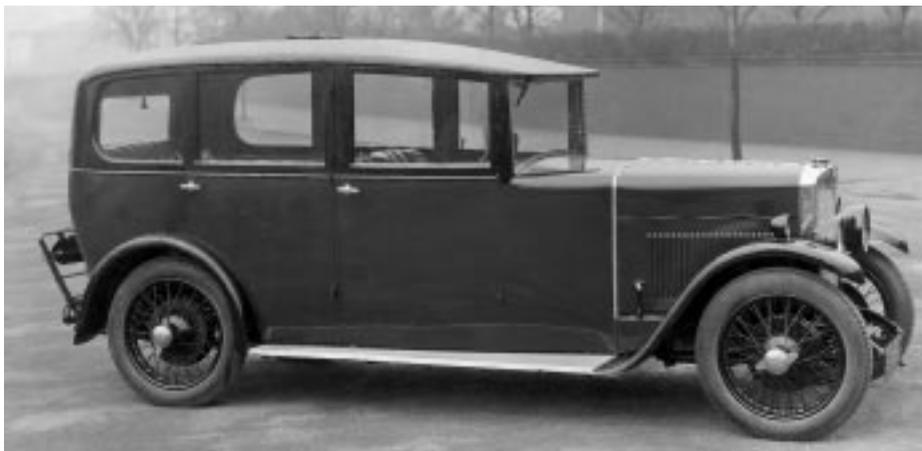
*Test day at Lindley Aerodrome, later to become the MIRA test centre. L-R: Directors Leek, Rose and Ward. The 'Eighteen', chassis number 500 clocked 95mph on a measured stretch.*





*'E' type chassis number 5553. Another angular saloon, the only one by Cross & Ellis.  
Below & overleaf: The first experimental 12/40. Chassis number 5700.*





*A 1928 'P' type saloon photographed at Southport.*



*A 1929 'P' type saloon. Note the front valance: a feature of that year.*

convenient position while the ignition, timing and hand throttle levers, were positioned above the steering wheel. The whole car was finely engineered with extremely neat detail work reminiscent of continental practice. Every part was perfectly proportioned, and thoroughly sound in design, with the possible exception of the rear hub and axle shaft arrangements. Van Eugen was a staunch believer in semi-floating rear axles, but it was a fact that the spline fitting for the hubs was prone to wear, and eventual breakage with loss of a wheel, due to the difficulty of

keeping the retaining nut tight.

The ignition and throttle hand controls were brought to the top of the steering column and operated via concentric tubes passing through the column in place of the previous type which was by external rods and levers placed below the steering wheel. The 'new' system was, in fact, a revision to the original design evolved for the 12hp car of 1920 (a detail for which R H Lea was responsible) and complete with one black and one ivory knob, the latter a material for which Lea had a well-known fondness!

The Alvis 12/50, always a direct rival of sporting Lea-Francis models, appeared heavy and clumsy in comparison with regard to the chassis, although both cars were often fitted with similar coachwork, Cross & Ellis supplying both firms.

The new Lea-Francis cars, ready in good time for the 1928 season, were as follows:

- 12/22 Type 'U' chassis 16000 up
- 12/40 Type 'P' chassis 13000 up
- 12/50 Type 'O' chassis 12000 up
- 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>-litre S/charged Type 'S' chassis 14000 up
- 14/40 Light Six Type 'T' chassis 15000 up

The first drawing for these cars is dated 27 January 1927 (Stub axle, Type 'O') and the first cars were completed and on road test by July.

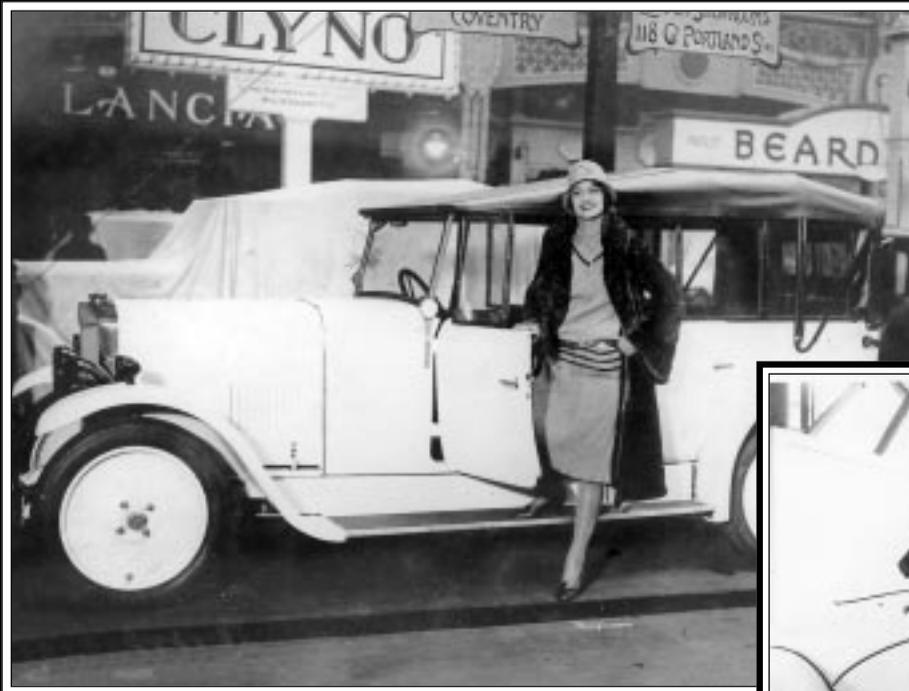
Development of the most famous Lea-Francis of all, the supercharged 'S' type, which took place at the same time, is covered in detail in another chapter. Touring models with 4EB and 4EC two-bearing engines were now being made in smaller numbers and production emphasis was switching to the 4ED-powered 12/40 car, although the former types were continued in small batches until late 1930.

Production of the new low-chassis cars got underway quickly and a sizeable batch of all models was despatched to Olympia and the Kelvin Hall for exhibition and demonstration. A short delay occurred in the delivery of the new bevel gear differentials which were 'bought out,' produced by either ENV of Willesden or the local firm Gulson Engineering Ltd. Some early cars were fitted, perforce, with the old spur gear unit inside the new axle casings, while a few 12/40s in the first batch were built with cone clutches, possibly to utilize old stock.

By the end of 1927, a total of four 'O' type 12/50s, eleven 'S' type Hypers, sixty five 'P' type 12/40s and seventy five 'U' type 12/22 cars were delivered, all with standard coachwork.

The financial year ending 31 August 1927 indicated a profit figure slightly improved over the previous year and the best result ever achieved

## Lea-Francis Ladies



*Left: The feminine influence in advertising: a 1928 'U' type, chassis number 16,000.*

*A 1938 12.9 Corsica Sport at the 1938 Motor Show.*



*Below: A 1938 12.9 Avon drophead coupé, chassis number 53.*

