



TYRES, OIL AND PETROL

It would be hard to find anything more boring than these three items and yet they crop up every time the cars are discussed. Ad nauseam!

In order to help you decide what to use on your car I have outlined all the information below.

TYRES

When they were new MKVI's and R's were sold with 6.50" X 16" cross ply tyres. These are still available from specialist suppliers and are expensive, short lived, have far less grip in the dry and are dangerous in the wet, unless you travel so slowly that you are a nuisance to other road users. They also "tramline" so that the car is steered by overbanding, white lines and road surface irregularities. They seem okay new, but deteriorate rapidly as they wear.

Tyres have improved dramatically since the early fifties!

Until recently most owners have been fitting 6.50" X 16" Michelin XCA's and they are a dramatic improvement over the original cross plies. The only disadvantage was that they are heavier than the originals and they make the ride a tad jittery. Therefore it pays to overhaul your shock absorbers as per the instructions also on this site. However production has ceased now and suitable alternatives are needed.

In the nineteen fifties Radials began to replace Crossplies as original equipment on new cars and sizes were introduced to fit existing cars. In the case of our cars, Jaguars and Aston Martins, these were 185 – 16 and Michelin, Pirelli and Avon still make them and they are available at quite a price from Classic tyre dealers. Michelin are the best choice for grip, steering weight, stability and longevity and Avon the worst because they wear oddly and make steering very heavy.

185x16 Radials are wider than 6.50" but 80% aspect ratio, so improve grip but they reduce the diameter of the wheel by about 8% on an already under geared car. Otherwise they are better than the Michelin XCA's. Most fit a higher axle ratio to their cars now, so it's best to opt for a Continental 3 to 1 rather than a 3.4 to 1 if you intend using this size. Standard gearing is 3.727 to 1, which is what you get with 185 x 16 and a 3.4 to 1 axle.

Some people have used Range Rover 205 X 16 because they are the same diameter as 6.50 x 16 cross plies but 8" wide. They might rub on something at full lock and it's wise to buy a good make, but users like them a lot and they are cheaper than 185 x 16 Michelins.

More recently van tyres have appeared that are 195/75 X 16 and these are roughly the same size as the 185 X 16 supplied by the specialists but about half the price!

Van tyres and Michelin truck tyres tend to have a maximum speed rating of 95-105 mph so should not be used on the Continental model.

To sum up, quite a few have had to remove Avon 185 x 16 because of heavy steering, odd wear patterns and because they seem puncture prone, but both Michelin and Pirelli are pretty good, but will require much higher pressures than the originals, so a process of experimentation is needed.

Good quality Range Rover 205 x 16 are still readily available and quite good value, but buy a good make and experiment with higher tyre pressures, probably 30 and 32 psig or more.



PETROL

Rolls-Royce has said that all their cars are suitable for use with unleaded petrol and so most owners run on Premium unleaded without apparent problem. However on a number of engines I've seen in bits lately, the exhaust valves are quite low in the block so I feel that if you are having the engine rebuilt, it would be a good idea to have hardened seats fitted at the same time.

All the research that was done on unleaded petrol in old engines suggests that provided engine speeds are kept below 3,000 rpm, valve seat recession was minimal. On all but the last R Types and the Continental this equates to 66 mph. Cars fitted with Norman Geeson's axles and some of those exported to Australia have a slightly higher final drive ratio so that 74 mph is 3,000 rpm.

OIL

Some time ago an article appeared in the RREC bulletin in which it was stated that R-R are now supplying all new cars with Esso Ultron 5-50 fully synthetic oil and that they now recommend for all their cars after an engine rebuild. If your engine has not been rebuilt then 15-40 semi-synthetic is recommended. They are worried that detergent in fully synthetic oil might loosen detritus in the engine and block an oil way. This seems illogical to me because there is detergent in semi synthetic oil too.

Sometime later in Spares Corner it was suggested that modern oils were too thin and that Castrol Classic oils should be used because they were thicker!

Company recommendations make sense in that modern oils are far better than what was available when the car was new and synthetic oils are a major advance that cannot be ignored. R-R actually stated that you might never need to rebuild your engine again if you used it.

The stated advantages of fully synthetic oils are:

That is thinner when cold and reaches everywhere in an engine more quickly on start-up than old oils.

That it maintains its viscosity at far higher temperatures than conventional oil and will mean better oil pressure.

That it sticks to surfaces for longer than conventional oil so increases protection of infrequently used engines.

That it is more reluctant to dissolve in petrol than conventional oil and therefore protects the engine better from excessive flooding or when the choke is out.

That it withstands greater temperatures and pressures than conventional oils. This is important in our engines because cam profiles are not as wear resistant as modern ones and the tops of the bores wear more on long stroke engines. Both should be better protected.

I've used fully synthetic oil in very worn engines and rebuilt ones and, as you might expect, can detect no difference between it and the cheapest oil you can buy. What has convinced me to continue to using it is that oil experts confirm that it is major advance and there is anecdotal information from major manufacturers to support these claims. BMW for instance, tested it for 1,000,000 miles in a 3.25i and found the engine was still in spec when dismantled.

Its introduction has caused near hysteria in some traditionalists and all sorts of stories are in circulation about oil leaking from everywhere, engines seizing up, you name it and someone has a barmy story about it. None are logical or borne out by the facts.