

PRE-WAR TRUCKS

The world's first gasoline-engined truck was produced in 1896 by German engineers: Gottlieb Daimler and Karl Benz. Within a few years, these had been introduced into the US by Alexander Winton. Prior to the building of the interstate highway network in the 1950's, trucks were used for transporting goods within localised areas. Long distance transportation of goods was reserved for the railroads. This is probably just as well since many of the cabs were of an open design, tyres were solid and suspension basic. This was a real problem with many of the roads being little more than dirt tracks. The poor reliability of the engines meant that the drivers were expected to fix any mechanical problems themselves. Low-powered engines and primitive braking systems also created problems for other road users.

Progress after the first World War was dramatic. The Cummins diesel engine started production in 1919 (a widely used and much respected engine in today's trucks). Pneumatic tyres were taking over from solid tyres by 1926 and by the 1930's most cabs were of a closed design. The US truck maker Kenworth was the first to produce torsion bar suspension in 1938. Many of the features that we associate with today's trucks were not available until

after World War II. These include single-piece, curved windscreens for greater visibility, synchromesh gearboxes, anti-lock brakes, fuel efficient engines and aerodynamic body styling.

It's great to see replicas of these early trucks at the show, but just remember... you wouldn't want to drive the originals !

