3. Standardised parts

Wheels

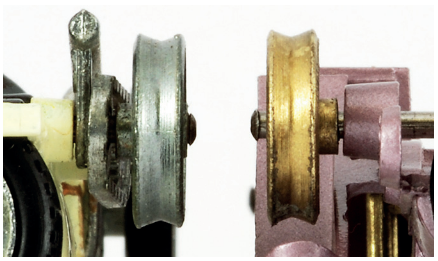
In the sixties, the decision to limit the Yesteryear range to passenger and racing cars led to the standardisation of the models' wheels. With only a few exceptions, from 1961 onwards Lesney only produced wheels that could be used for more than one type of Yesteryear model.

Until 1972, Yesteryear wheels were always cast from metal. Efforts to unify some components led to minor variations in the appearance of the models' wheels in relation to the real cars. For Yesteryear models that were a different size and shape, however, Lesney continued to produce several different types of wheel representing the real, mostly wooden-spoked wheels. In this way, the appearance of the Models of Yesteryear stayed fairly authentic.

From the early 1960s, different types of wheel were mounted simultaneously on several different models. We have, therefore, introduced a system to break them down into categories.

Even these wheels, however, were cast in bulk moulds each containing several inserts, so there can be slight variations between the castings. But these do not warrant being divided into further sub-categories.

The following categorisation also fails to take into account the variations and defects in the metal-plating of wheels that came about thanks to early failures of the plating equipment.



THE W1-TYPE WHEEL WITH ITS TRIANGULAR GROOVE is typical of the transition between the first and second periods of the Yesteryear series. It was taken from the Y-10A GP Mercedes for the Y-7B Mercer.

FROM THE OUTSIDE, THE W1 WHEELS OF THE Y-7B MERCER are almost indistinguishable from the later W4 types.

THE W2a SUB-VERSION IS SILVER-PLATED. These wheels with outlines of eight screw nuts on the circumference were produced for the earliest issues of the Y-15A Rolls-Royce.

W1-type

The oldest standardised wheels, which were mounted on more than one Yesteryear, come from the Y-10A Mercedes GP. For this "A" range model, workers cast different front and rear wheels with hubs of differing lengths. Their rims have an identical diameter of 11 mm, and a triangle profile for fitting the tyres. After 1961, all newer wheel types were produced with a rectangular profile instead.

The W1a wheels with their 6.4 mm-long hubs were mounted only on the front axle of the Y-10A GP Mercedes. The longer hubs compensated for the narrower front of the model's chassis frame.

Lesney's designers also used the W1b rear wheels with their 4 mm-long hubs in 1961 and 1962 for the oldest versions of the Y-7B Mercer. Unlike the Mercedes-Benz Y-10A GP, the Mercer had wheels with hubs of the same length on both front and rear axles. The Mercer wheels were also brass-plated. Silver-plated wheels – like those of the Mercedes GP – only ever appeared on the pre -production Mercers.

W2-type

For the Y-15A Rolls-Royce, Lesney designers developed exquisite wheels, each with twelve spokes. There were eight screw nuts protruding from the outer edge of the rim. The wheels are 11 mm in diameter, with 16.5 mm tyres.

The eccentric W2-type hub is 5.2 mm long. Designers strengthened the inner section with two opposing triangular struts. The wheels of the older versions of the W2a were silver-plated, and W2b brass-plated from 1962 onwards. The quality of the brass plating was still rather low; the surface quickly oxidised.

The oldest Y-15A Rolls-Royce models were fitted with silver W2a wheels, which closer resembled the real car. They were followed by the brass-plated W2b wheels, which were also used on the first versions of the Y-16A Spyker. On other models, they were only fitted by accident during assembly.

W3-type

For the Y-6B Bugatti, Lesney draughtsmen designed exclusive 11 mm diameter wheels to handle the model's 16.5-mm tyres. They were never used for other Yesteryear models because they were based on special wheels patented by Ettore Bugatti. They are characterised by eight wide, slanted aluminium spokes, which stream the air onto the brake drums.

The W3 wheels have an eccentric 4 mm-long hub, similar to the W1b type. We divide them into two versions, according to the shape and height of the wheel rim.

The older, W3a wheels have square-shaped rims which are 1 mm high. In 1965, designers made the Bugatti rims slightly rounded, and reduced the height from 1 mm to 0.5 mm, thus creating a new type, the W3b. These lower rims were better suited for fitting tyres. The original version with its square rims was, on the other hand, more faithful to the wheel of the genuine car. The oldest, rounded Bugatti rims occasionally appear as un-plated.

W4-type

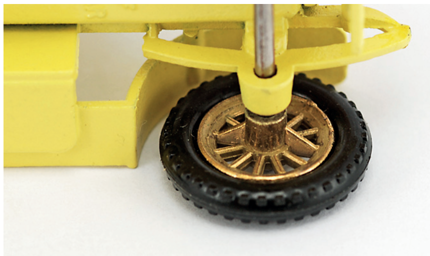
In 1963, different wheels with 11 mm-diameter rims appeared on the 1963 Y-2B Renault. These are similar to the W1b. The hubs – with a length of just 4 mm – were not yet reinforced by internal struts. The inside of the rim, however, already boasts a rectangular profile.

These wheels were usually brass-plated, but problems with the plating equipment in the mid-1960s led to some being left as bare metal.

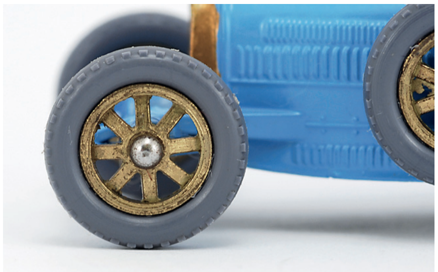
W4-type wheels were also mounted on newer versions of the Y-7B Mercer. In the years that followed, Lesney also used them on the Y-3B Benz and finally the Y-14B Maxwell. In exceptional cases, they were also fitted to the Y-15A/6, Y-15A/7 and Y-15A/10 versions of the Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost. Because of their shorter hubs, these variants of the Y-15A have a narrower wheelbase.

W5-type

Lesney's first 'wire-spoked' wheels are a textbook example of the masterful art of zinc alloy die casting technology. In 1962, W5-type wheels appeared on the Y-5B 4½ litre Bentley and a year later also on the Y-10B Mercedes-Benz 36/220. The wheels themselves are beautiful, but paired with the balloon-shaped tyres they do little to add authenticity to the model.



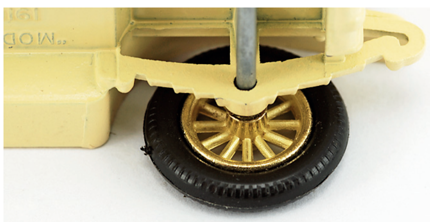
FOR THE Y-16A SPYKER, WHEELS WERE ALREADY BRASS-PLATED. The W2-type is reinforced from inside with the aid of two bars.



W3a WHEELS WITH HIGHER SQUARE RIMS were combined with grey and later black knobbly-tread tyres.

ONLY FINE-TREAD TYRES were fitted to W3b wheels with their lower rims.

FROM THE OUTSIDE, W4 WHEELS ARE SIMILAR TO THE W1b, but their rims have a rectangular groove.



THE W4 WHEELS ON MOST OF THE Y-3B BENZ models are not reinforced from the inside by triangular struts.

THE 'WIRE-SPOKED' W5 WHEELS were first mounted on the Y-5B 4½ litre Bentley.

The W5 types were the first to feature symmetrical, 3.5 mm-long hubs. This simplified the assembly process, because the wheels could be placed either way around on the axle. The rim's diameter is 9 mm.

W5 wheels were silver-plated and were also fitted to the No 66b Harley Davidson from the Matchbox Series. Rare versions of the Y-5B 4½ L Bentley and Y-10B Mercedes-Benz 36/220, on the other hand, occasionally feature wheels taken from the little No 4c Triumph motorcycle from the 1-75 series.

THESE WHEELS APPEARED IN THE YESTERYEAR SERIES RATHER RANDOMLY. Originaly, they were manufactured for the Matchbox Series model No 4c Triumph. They ended up on the rare Y-10B/5 Mercedes-Benz 36/220 variation due to problems with W5-type wheel supplies when the parts got mixed up in the Lesney assembly workshops.

W6-type

In 1962, the Y-8B Sunbeam Motorcycle & Milford Sidecar received a beautifully proportioned set of 'wire' wheels. Their 13-mm diameter rims and 18.5 mm tyres corresponded to the model's large scale. The fine mesh of spokes consists of 26 'wires'. The Sunbeam wheels are silver-plated, but less distinctly so than the glossy 'chrome' effect of the motorcycle and sidecar themselves. Later, brass-plated W6b wheels were mounted on the Y-13B Daimler and the Y-2C Vauxhall.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Lesney's R&D Department also began using the W6 casting moulds to produce plastic wheels. They were tested on the Y-9B Simplex, Y-2C Vauxhall and even the Y-13C Crossley that was in development at the time. The narrow, subtle W6 plastic wheels, however, were eventually replaced with the wider chrome wheels that Lesney introduced for Models of Yesteryears after 1972.

W6A WHEELS WERE PLATED WITH LESS SHINY SILVER METAL than the main Y-8B Sunbeam castings.

BRASS-PLATED W6B WHEELS were mounted on the Y-13B Daimler and then on the Y-2C Vauxhall.

W7-type

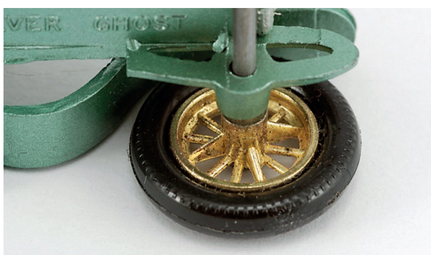
W7a wheels, more or less a simplified version of the W2, appeared on the Y-11B Packard in 1964. The rims have the same 11 mm diameter, but the outer edges lack the outlines of eight screw nuts.

Like the W2, the W7a is reinforced from the inside by two bars. At first glance, the W7a wheels are easily confused with the older W4s. However, they have different shaped rims, which, unlike the W4s, are reinforced on the side facing towards the axle. The spokes of the W7, therefore, are shorter than those of the W4. The hubs of the W7 are 5.2 mm wide.

The simplified W7a wheels were also mounted on newer versions of the Y-15A Rolls-Royce and Y-16A Spyker. Older Yesteryears could feature both older and newer types of wheels. W7a wheels also appeared on the Y-14B/5 version of the Maxwell, which usually sported W4s. The wheelbase of this version of the Maxwell is noticeably wider; the wheels end almost at the outer edge of the mudguards.

Over time, the reinforcement of the W7's hubs with two opposing struts proved to be insufficient. In 1969, therefore, designers strengthened their interior with another two triangular reinforcements. These newer W7b wheels were gradually fitted to all Yesteryear models that had previously sported W7a wheels, i.e. the Y-15A Rolls-Royce, Y-16A Spyker and

THE W7-TYPE WITH ITS SIMPLE RIM FITTING HAS SHORTER SPOKES than the similar W4 wheels.



W7B WHEELS ARE REINFORCED FROM THE INSIDE by two upper and two lower bars.

Y-11B Packard. You can of course find all of these models with a combination of W7a and W7b wheels, depending on how old and new stocks were mixed up during the transition period.

W8-type

It was the new Y-1B Ford T – released in 1964 – that proved a harbinger of the new, larger Yesteryear models. These new models needed bigger wheels with a diameter of 13 mm. A 3.5 mm-long symmetrical hub was designed as standard, to make mounting the wheels as simple as possible. The wheel has 12 spokes, and the inner side of the older version of the W8a even has a valve modelled on it. These wheels were used for a whole range of Yesteryear models; the Y-4C Opel, Y-12B Thomas Flyabout, Y-6C Cadillac, Y-7C Rolls-Royce, Y-9B Simplex and Y-5C Peugeot.

In 1971, the W8b appeared, which in many ways was a simplified version of the W8a. The diameter of the rim and the length of the hub are identical to the W8a; only the diameter of the hub is 0.2 mm wider, which makes the spokes ever so slightly shorter. On the W8b type, there is no valve, and the castings are noticeably thicker. These wheels were mounted on newer versions of models until the dawn of 1973. You will also come across them on plated Yesteryears as well as on transition versions such as the gold painted Y-7C Rolls-Royce or the Y-12B Thomas with the black roof and white seats.

W8A WHEELS WITH THEIR DETAIL OF A VALVE were also mounted on the Y-12B Thomas.

ON THE W8B, WHICH WAS PRODUCED AFTER 1971, there is no longer a valve.

W9-type

In 1969, Lesney's workers began fitting new W9 wheels to the Y-8C Stutz and the Y-10C Rolls-Royce. This wheel type is similar in appearance to the W8a, but their rims and tyres are 1 mm less in diameter and also have no valves.

It is surprising that engineers decided to produce wheels that were so similar to one another. The great similarities between the W8-type and W9-type led to the smaller W9 wheels being fitted on rare occasions to the several variations of the Y-1B Ford Model T, Y-4C Opel Coupe, Y-6C Cadillac and the Y-12B Thomas Flyabout. The confusion occurred in Lesney's workshops most likely due to supply problems.

THE MEDIUM-SIZED W9 WHEELS – introduced in the late 1960s – were the least used of all the wheels.

W10-type

The very last distinctive type of metal wheel was developed by Lesney in 1969 for the Y-15B Packard Victoria. Its size and shape was an attempt to adapt to the new generation of larger Yesteryear models. The W10 wheels are considerably larger than their predecessors and their authentic appearance and thicker tyre profile place them firmly in the world of 1920s and 1930s automobiles.

The 'wire-spoked' W10 wheels are similar to the W5a, but their diameter had grown to 11 mm; with a huge 18.5 mm tyre. They feature 24 "wires" and their symmetrical hubs are 3.5 mm long. In 1972, the same wheels were used for the Y-16B Mercedes -Benz SS and Y-11C Lagonda Drophead.

THE WIDEST WERE W10-TYPE WHEELS. The interior of their thick tyres sometimes left plastic burrs on the W10 rims.