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Written by Dawn Martin

Thornycroft has been associated with shipbuilding, marine engineering and other activities for over a century. The company was also a notable manufacturer of commercial and military vehicles, and also made a brief appearance in car manufacturing between 1903 and 1912 when the firm produced high quality cars at the Basingstoke factory.

The era began in 1862, when John Isaac Thornycroft designed a steam car. Two years later, he formed the Steam Carriage and Wagon Company, with works at Chiswick, London. However, the project stopped because of over-zealous legislation for road vehicles, and Thornycroft took up shipbuilding, also at Chiswick.

The company took up road vehicle work again in 1895, whilst continuing with the shipbuilding and marine engineering business, and built his first steam vehicle at the Chiswick works. The Thornycroft Steam Wagon Company of Chiswick put steam lorries and vans into production, and a new factory was set up at Basingstoke, Hampshire in 1898, to meet demand. The following year, Thornycroft steam wagons were supplied to the Army for the first time and London's first powered bus was a Thornycroft steam double decker.

Thornycroft's shipbuilding works transferred from Chiswick to Southampton in 1904, and the firm built on its success to become a world leader in the design and construction of ships.

Continuing success with steam wagons gave Thornycroft a solid reputation for producing road-vehicles, and it was natural that the firm should turn its attention to producing vehicles with Internal Combustion (IC) engines.

The first Thornycroft motor vehicle was introduced in 1902, a commercial vehicle with a 4 ton load capacity. The firm gave up building cars in 1912 to concentrate, for the next half century, on building its successful commercial vehicles; a field in which Thornycroft became world-class and a major employer in Basingstoke.

Thornycroft - Company Timeline 1862-1926

The firm's wide-ranging product line included commercial and military vehicles, high-grade cars, various types of boats and ships, marine engines, water-tube boilers and other items. This timeline covers Thornycroft's total activities from 1862 to 1926, in order to give context to the firm's lorry production.

1862

The Thornycroft era commenced when John I Thornycroft designed a steam road vehicle.

1864

Thornycroft formed the Steam Carriage and Wagon Company, with works at Chiswick, London. The project was stopped by over-zealous legislation for road vehicles. As a result, Thornycroft gave up road vehicles and turned, instead, to shipbuilding, also at Chiswick.

1864 to 1895

Although not part of the history of Thornycroft's vehicle manufacture, shipbuilding activities are covered to account for the 31 year gap between 1864 and 1895, during which Thornycroft disengaged from road vehicles.

Thornycroft launched his 60ft steam launch Miranda in 1871, a vessel which was noted for its high speed of 18 knots. John I Thornycroft & Co was set up the following year, and the firm became known for its small high-speed ships and launches. Thornycroft demonstrated his inventive skills by taking out numerous patents, the first in 1873, and totalling 50 by 1924.

Two years later the Spanish Navy's Thornycroft-built torpedo boat destroyer Ariete exceeded the then-high speed of 25 knots. In 1895, Thornycroft's torpedo boat destroyer HMS Desperate exceeded 30 knots, a phenomenal speed for a steam ship.

1895

Thornycroft continued his shipbuilding and marine engineering business, but took up road vehicle work again and built their first steam vehicle at the Chiswick works.

1898

The Thornycroft Steam Wagon Company of Chiswick became a producer of steam road vehicles, and demand for their vehicles led to the setting up of a new factory at Basingstoke, Hampshire.

1899

Thornycroft sold a steam lorry to the War Office, for experimental use by the Royal Engineers.

1900

The above vehicle, with three or four others lent to the Army by the company, took part on trial at the autumn manoeuvres.

1901

The original shipbuilding firm was registered as a limited liability company, which became J I Thornycroft Co Ltd, and the works were transferred from Chiswick to Southampton in 1904. The firm absorbed the Thornycroft Steam Wagon Company in 1904.

3 ton steam Lorries were ordered by the Government and handed over to the Army. The war office held a competition and attracted by the possibility of orders and a £500 prize for the winning vehicle, several firms, including Thornycroft, entered the competition held at Aldershot for the best type of powered vehicle for military use. The winner was Thornycroft's steam lorry, which was followed in second place by a Foden lorry - also steam driven.

1902

Thornycroft's winning steam lorry was bought by the War Office complete with trailer, and the firm also received orders for more vehicles.

London's first powered bus, a Thornycroft steam-driven double-decker, started running between Oxford Circus and Shepherds Bush. A canopy was fitted to prevent cinders falling on the passengers!

Continuing success with steam wagons gave Thornycroft a solid reputation for producing road-vehicles, and it was natural that the firm should turn its attention to producing vehicles with IC engines.

The first Thornycroft motor vehicle was introduced this year, a petrol-driven commercial vehicle with a 4 ton load capacity. Vehicles of similar design for 1.5 ton and 2 ton loads were introduced a year later, and the firm went on to become a noted manufacturer of commercial motor vehicles, including buses.

1903 (to 1912)

Car production took place at the Basingstoke factory, and they entered the market with a small 10hp two-cylinder model in 1903. Later on, the firm produced a large 45hp six cylinder car which, in some ways, was comparable to the renowned Rolls Royce Silver Ghost. Cars between 10hp and 45hp in size were also produced during Thornycroft's relatively brief time in car manufacturing.

Thornycroft recognised the value of competition for publicising its cars, and entered them in various events. A 20hp car won a gold medal in the 1904 Scottish Automobile Club Reliability Trials, and a 24hp car made the fastest time of any car entered in the 1905 Aston Hill Climb. In 1907, a 45hp car performed well in the Shelsley Walsh Hill Climb. Thornycroft cars were regular competitors in the Tourist Trophy races from 1905 to 1908.

1904

After gaining experience with steam Lorries; the War Office's next step was to call for a 5 ton lorry powered by an IC engine. Thornycroft's design, running on paraffin, was one of two designs selected. Unusually, the exhaust was discharged vertically via a steamer-like funnel, as, in the early days of IC engine Lorries, it was feared that a rear facing exhaust pipe would frighten the horses!

1904 to 1907

Thornycroft's commercial vehicle sales for these years included steam vehicles, motor coaches, single and double decker buses, vans, Lorries and chassis on to which commercial bodies were fitted by other organisations. The firm also sold two military IC engine tractors to the War Office (one with a two-cylinder engine and the other with four cylinders).

1907

During the summer, the RAC organised a thousand mile trial for commercial vehicles, and the War Office offered special certificates for IC engine vehicles suitable for military use. At least 27 firms entered the trials, such as Thornycroft, Tasker, Dennis, Maudslay, and Wolseley, to name but a few.

Thornycroft was awarded a certificate by the Army Council for Vehicle No. C.19, which was a 1.5 ton lorry powered by a 30hp four-cylinder L4 petrol engine of 5.21 litres.

1908 to 1912

Military opinion had swung in favour of wagons hauled by tractors rather than self-propelled army Lorries, and the War Office bought several Thornycroft tractors in 1908, all with four cylinder engines.

1913

Thornycroft was awarded a certificate of acceptance in January for the performance of its Type K subsidy lorry in the War Department's Subsidy Type Lorry Trials. This four cylinder 30hp lorry, with a 4.5 ton capacity, passed the prescribed tests to the satisfaction of the Mechanical Transport Committee. It was later sold to the well known Pickfords Company.

The famous J type lorry was introduced, later upgraded with a 40hp engine and a capacity of 4 tons.

World War 1 broke out in August 1914, and the War Office found itself seriously short of lorries which it could call up for service, due to the failure of the subsidy scheme. It obtained a large number of vehicles from manufacturers and private users all over the country. During the August Bank Holiday week, Thornycroft was busy delivering to a mechanical transport camp in Kensington Gardens, London, all vehicles which had been nearing completion at Basingstoke, and which could be completed quickly with temporary or permanent bodies.

Shortly afterwards, Thornycroft was instructed by the War Office to supply its entire output of J type Lorries for military use, the first batch being delivered on 8 September.

Later on in the war, Thornycroft was able to supply small numbers of J types to private operators while most of its production was absorbed by the War Office. About 5,000 J Type Lorries were built during World War 1 by Thornycroft.

1919

The Basingstoke works employed approximately 1500 people and produced heavy IC engine vehicles and IC marine engines. By this time, the company had discontinued the production of steam powered vehicles.

1919 to 1922

After World War 1, Thornycroft continued production of its four proven pre 1919 models, including the 2 ton BT, 3 ton X, 4 ton 40hp J and 5 ton 40hp Q type models. Later on, these types were joined by the 6 ton 40hp W, Thornycroft's first post war lorry design.

1922

Equipment for the production of producer gas as a fuel was fitted to a 40hp J type lorry, and the vehicle was sent to France for trials. However, Thornycroft continued producing petrol driven Lorries.

1923

Production of the previous year's model range continued. However, the new 50hp BB/4 engine became available for use in some Lorries instead of the 40hp unit.

1924 and 1925

Thornycroft maintained production of the previous year's lorry range, supplemented by the following new models:

- 0.5 ton A1 in 1924, built to meet War Department subsidy requirements, carrying a subsidy of £120;
- 2.5 ton BX in 1924;
- articulated versions of the J, Q and BT in 1924. Thornycroft claimed that the BT artic was particularly suitable for service overseas, where axle loads were limited by local regulations or road conditions;
- lwb version of the Q in 1925 with capacity of 6 tons.

The company's complete lorry range offered a load capacity ranging from 1.5 tons to 10.75 tons. However, the J and BT artics were short-lived as they were dropped from the range in 1925, as were the X and BT models.

1925

The Hathi heavy four wheel drive tractor was introduced, designed for heavy haulage of lumber, etc over difficult terrain. It could cross gullies with 3ft high vertical banks, exert a steady drawbar pull of 9,000lb, haul a 10 ton trailer up a gradient of 1 in 10 at 7mph, and travel through soft sand. Its built in winch had a pull of 5 tons. The British Army acquired a number of Hathi's for artillery transport. The vehicle was powered by a giant 11.33 litre six cylinder engine developing 100bhp.

1926

Thornycroft continued producing its 1925 range less the 6 ton W, with five additional new models comprising:

- two rigid six-wheelers with off-road capability (A1RSW and A3RSW);
- 2 ton A2, which was similar in design to the 1.5 ton A1 subsidy vehicle introduced in 1924;
- 3 ton KB to replace the BX 2.5 tonner
- 4 ton forward-control PB for use in restricted areas.

A 1.5 ton A1 lorry won the Stanton Trophy in the three day reliability trial of the Transvaal Automobile Club.

By now, Thornycroft had become a major firm whose extensive product range included motor vehicles for goods, passenger transport and municipal service, cargo and passenger ships up to a length of 450ft, shallow draft vessels, oil tankers, destroyers, ferries, tugs, yachts, marine and stationary engines, motor boats capable of up to 40 knots (74kph), water tube marine boilers, etc. In addition to its London premises and its Basingstoke and Southampton works, Thornycroft had several depots and branches both at home and overseas.

Thornycroft Lorries 1919-1926

Thornycroft expanded its heavy vehicle range, and its 4 ton Type J lorry became a famous workhorse in WW1, during which around 5,000 were delivered for military use.

The war ended in 1918, and by 1919 the Basingstoke works employed approximately 1,500 people and produced heavy IC engine vehicles and IC marine engines.

The product range, manufactured in Basingstoke and Southampton, went on to include motor vehicles for goods, passenger transport and municipal service, various types of boats and ships, and marine power plant. They also had depots and branches overseas.



A Type BT

Thornycroft Lorries 1927-1932

The Thornycroft Company was well-established and respected by 1927, producing commercial vehicles, ships and other engineering products.

In many ways the company's progress in lorry design was far more impressive between 1927 and 1932 than it had been from 1919 to 1926. All Thornycroft's Lorries were powered by four cylinder engines during the earlier period and had spark ignition.

However, the need for more load capacity without loss of performance resulted in their most powerful lorry engine having around double the output of the previous era's best. The requirement for more power meant larger engines, leading to the introduction of six cylinder units.

However, it was only a matter of time before they, too, had to introduce fuel efficient diesel Lorries in order to stay competitive. Thornycroft was not the first British manufacturer to offer diesels, and the company appeared reluctant to do so, waiting until 1931 to introduce a lorry diesel engine.

Once on board the diesel bandwagon, Thornycroft demonstrated that it lagged behind no one in applying the new (for Lorries) diesel technology. Larger, six wheeled, vehicles were introduced to cope with greater weights, and Thornycroft introduced vacuum servo assisted brakes as well as all wheel braking, superseding the rear wheel brakes fitted to an earlier generation of lorries. In summary, the 1927 to 1932 period was an era of more rapid technological advance in lorry design than before, both for Thornycroft and its competitors.

Road haulage expanded from the 1930s, in some areas competing with railways for the carriage of freight. Thornycroft lorry sales news items were spread over a wide area of operators both at home and overseas.

Thornycroft Lorries 1933-1939

Thornycroft survived financial problems during the 1930s to maintain its position as a major British manufacturing company, producing a wide range of products. If the era 1927 to 1932 was one of technical development, the era 1933 to 1939 was one of improvement and refinement.

During this era, Thornycroft produced a wide range of vehicles, all with class names which, for the most part, reflected muscular competence. There were four wheelers, six wheelers, artics, small Lorries through to large ones, Lorries with off road capability, four cylinder and six cylinder engines, diesel and petrol engines, the latter being fitted with side valves or overhead valves depending on the engine. The company also built Lorries for civil and military use. Towards the end of the era, six wheelers were withdrawn temporarily from the UK market, although they were still exported.



Speedy normal control petrol tanker looks rather car-like forward of the cargo tank.



A bonnet extension indicates a six-cylinder engine for this forward-control Trusty.

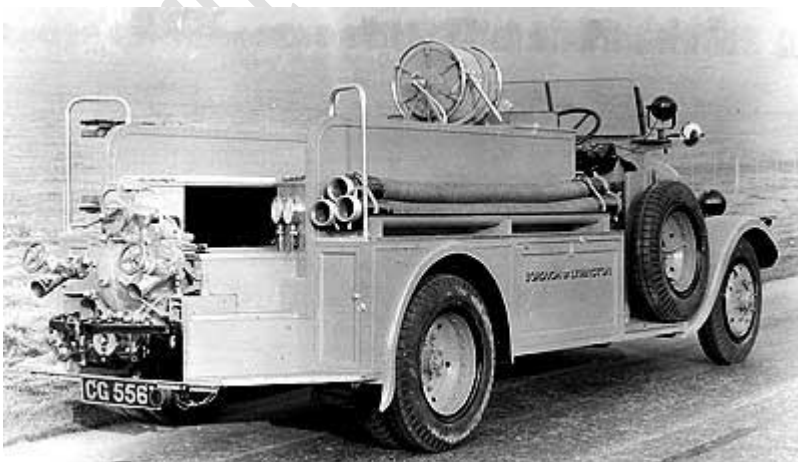
Road haulage expanded during this period, complementing, and competing with the railways for the carriage of freight, resulted in tensions between advocates of road and rail transport. It was also a period when the UK was feared to be falling behind other countries, notably Germany, the USA and Italy, in providing a road system able to handle the increasing traffic, and wiser heads than those who ruled, called for a national motorway system.

Thornycroft lorry timeline 1933 to 1939

By 1933, John I Thornycroft & Co Ltd had been well established as a major commercial and military vehicle manufacturer for many years. Products from the Basingstoke factory served in home and export markets, earning a reputation for reliability and competence.

1933

Thornycroft offered four wheel and RSW Lorries with load capacities ranging from 2 tons to 12 tons. In addition, new capacity options included 2.5, 3.5, 7.5 and 10 tons. Type names were carried over from 1932, and new ones included the four wheel Bulldog (2.5 tons), Beauty (3.5 tons), and the short lived Jumbo RSW (11 tons to 12 tons). The Taurus four wheeler (6 tons to 6.75 tons) had a bonnet projecting forward of the front axle, known as a 'snout', giving the required weight distribution and increased accessibility.



A Speedy fire

Diesel engines, introduced to commercial vehicles about six years previously and often referred to as oil engines, had gained acceptance. In May 1933, 12 diesel engine manufacturers, including Thornycroft, offered diesel engines on the British market for commercial vehicles. Eleven of these firms were British and one was German, most of them were vehicle manufacturers while the others were engine manufacturers.

After entering the diesel field late, Thornycroft offered diesel options for its heavy four wheelers, namely the Taurus (6 tons to 6.75 tons) and Iron Duke (7 tons), as well as for its larger RSWs, the Amazon (6 tons), Dreadnought (10 tons to 11 tons), Jumbo (11 tons to 12 tons) and Mastiff (7.5 tons).

Thornycroft produced two diesel engines, both announced in 1932, the four cylinder 7559cc rated at 82bhp @ 1800rpm, and the 11,339cc six cylinder giving 123bhp, also at 1800rpm. Both these diesels had indirect injection, so that fuel was injected into a separate chamber in the cylinder head, each chamber being connected to its cylinder via a passage.



Taurus

Diesel engines were in the minority compared to petrol engines and, for 1933, Thornycroft's range of petrol engines included three 'sixes', the 4259cc SC6 giving 75bhp, the 7749cc AC6 (99bhp) and the vast 133hp NED6 of 11330cc – Thornycroft's most powerful lorry engine at that time. Four cylinder petrol engines comprised the ageing MB4 giving a leisurely 60bhp from 6976cc, and, also inherited from previous years, the 3625cc FB4 whose 40bhp put it way behind the 55bhp from the newly-introduced GD4 of the same capacity.

The firm made a loss of approximately £84,940 for the financial year.

1934



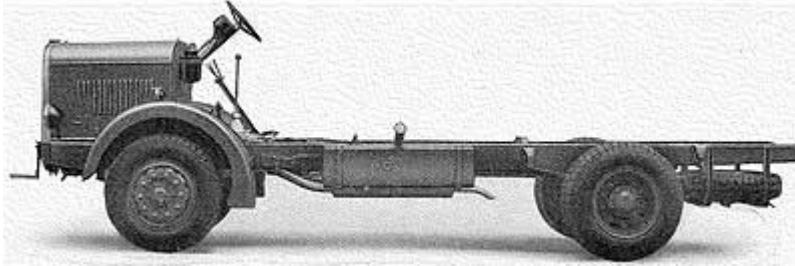
A Stag RSW tanker

Thornycroft's range of Lorries for this year covered load capacities from 2 tons to 12.5 tons, little changed from the previous year (2 tons to 12 tons). This was achieved with the following Lorries:

Eight four wheel models, the same number as for 1933, but incorporating the new 2 ton Handy, the 3 ton Bullfinch, which was essentially a diesel Bulldog, the 4 ton diesel Steadfast and the 7.5 ton to 8 ton Trusty. The latter had the greatest load capacity of the four wheelers, and its type name would become one of Thornycroft's best known. The Bulldog 3 tonner was upgraded from its 1933 capacity of 2.5 tons, with improvements such as chassis modifications and stiffened suspension.

A severely pruned range of RSWs, down to three models from the previous year's six, comprising the new forward control Stag (10 tons to 12.5 tons) as well as the existing Amazon (6 tons) and Tartar (increased from 3 tons to 3.25 tons). All RSWs had eight forward speeds, obtained with normal four speed gearboxes and two speed Thornycroft or Maybach auxiliary gearboxes, the latter being German. Both rear axles of the Amazon and Tartar were driven, while the Stag had one driven axle.

A new range of articulated Lorries, a type of vehicle not offered by Thornycroft in the UK in 1933, with tractive units named after the four wheelers on which they were based, the Handy (4 tons), Beauty (5 tons), Speedy (6 tons), Steadfast (6 tons) and Taurus (10tons).



A Trusty OE/DC6 normal control rolling chassis powered by a six-cylinder DC6 diesel.

The diesel version of the 7.5 ton to 8 ton Trusty was fitted with Thornycroft's newly introduced 5258cc DC4 diesel engine, a four cylinder unit giving 65bhp @ 2200rpm. This was an indirect injection engine, in which fuel was injected into a short cylindrical chamber in the cylinder head, connected by a passage to the cylinder, for causing swirl to promote good mixing of air and fuel. A Dorman diesel engine was bought in to power the new 4 ton Bullfinch four wheeler as Thornycroft did not produce a diesel matching Dorman's relatively small 3055cc four cylinder 4DS (48bhp @ 2500rpm). Also, Dorman's 4148cc four cylinder 4JUR diesel (58bhp @ 2000rpm) was specified for the 4 ton Steadfast four wheeler.

Tom Thornycroft, a director of John I Thornycroft Ltd, left the firm while working as general manager of the Basingstoke works. He was, at the time, chairman of the Research and Standardisation Committee of the Institute of Automobile Engineers.



This Handy coal lorry is displayed at the Milestones Living History Museum.

Thornycroft made a loss of £51,110 after allowing for depreciation in the year ending 31 July 1934. Although large, this figure was an improvement over the previous year's loss. When interest, director's fees, etc were included, the total deficit was £66,980. The firm increased motor vehicle sales by 64 per cent compared with 1933, and the management of the motor vehicle side had been reorganised.

1935

Thornycroft continued producing the four wheel range introduced the previous year, with additional Trusty options. However, the Amazon and Tartar RSWs were no longer listed for the British market, leaving only the forward control Stag (10 tons to 12.5 tons) to represent the RSW sector, offered, as previously, with the 7749cc 104bhp AC6 petrol engine or the vast 11339cc 123bhp CIND6 indirect injection diesel. Both these were six cylinder engines. Although not listed for sale in the UK, Tartar and Amazon RSWs were exported.

The range of articulated lorries continued as for 1934, with the addition of the 12 ton Amazon artic offered with petrol and indirect injection diesel engines, the former being the six cylinder AC6 engine used in the Stag and the latter the four cylinder CIND4 giving 82bhp.



Amazon

During the Summer, the 3 ton Bulldog petrol engined chassis was cleared for a 33.3 per cent overload, transforming it into a 4 tonner. Also, the firm introduced the Dandy 3 tonner, closely following the successful 2 ton Handy in design, with stronger axles and springs. As with other Thornycroft lorries, the Dandy was offered in alternative forms; and in the Dandy's case there were four versions, short and long wheel base, normal and forward control.

Thornycroft introduced an updated version of its four cylinder 65bhp DC4 diesel. The DC4/1, as the new engine was called, gave 85bhp, an increase of no less than 31 per cent. This power increase was all the more impressive for being achieved without an increase in rpm.

The engine was governed to 2200rpm; however it was capable of giving more power at increased rpm, and had been run on test for long periods at 100bhp. Modifications included the Ricardo arrangement of indirect injection in which fuel was injected into a spherical chamber in the cylinder head, one chamber per cylinder, connected by a passage to the space above the piston – this Ricardo system replaced the system of indirect injection (possibly of Thornycroft design), which used a cylindrical chamber in the cylinder head.

Also, an impressive 25 per cent power increase from the four cylinder petrol FB4 engine was obtained, rising from 40bhp @ 1800rpm to 50bhp @ 2300rpm, by means of a Ricardo cylinder head giving a higher CR (5.2 to 1), and revisions to port, valve and camshaft design. These modifications improved breathing, and probably thermal efficiency. The updated engine was redesignated FB4/1 and was remarkably free revving for a commercial vehicle engine of its time, reaching a heady 3350rpm when taken up to 34mph in third gear during a road test of a four wheel Dandy 3 tonner.

1936

The diesel powered Bullfinch 3 tonner was dropped and, instead, the petrol driven Dandy represented Thornycroft in the 3 ton four wheel class.

The Sturdy class name was re introduced after an absence of two years, as a 4 ton to 5 ton petrol driven four-wheeler. For its other four wheel contenders, Thornycroft continued with the Handy, Bulldog (4 tons), updated from 3 tons in 1935, Steadfast (4 tons), Beauty (4.5 tons to 5 tons), Speedy (4.5 tons to 5 tons) and Trusty, the latter being available as a 6.75 to 7 tonner or an 8 tonner.

The seemingly wasteful duplication of models in the 4 ton to 5 ton class was partly offset by the 4 ton Steadfast which was the only diesel option in the load class, and the Speedy, which offered a performance advantage thanks to its six cylinder engine. Thornycroft recognised the need for rationalisation which evidenced a pruning of the model range for 1937.

The RSW category was represented by the 10 ton to 12.5 ton Stag. The Taurus artic was not listed for 1936, resulting in the demise of the Taurus name, and artics comprised the petrol Dandy (4 tons to 5 tons), petrol Bulldog (5 tons to 6 tons) and diesel Steadfast (5 tons to 6 tons).

1937

The model range was pruned for this year. There was no longer a 4.5 ton category and, of the four wheelers, gone were the Bulldog and Steadfast 4 tonners, as well as the Beauty and Speedy 4.5 to 5 tonners. The four wheel class was represented by the Handy (2 tons), Dandy (3 tons), Sturdy 4 tonner, Sturdy 5 tonner and Trusty ranging from 6.25 tons to 7.75 tons.

As usual, there were alternatives within each class name (forward control, long wheelbase, etc), with the greatest number of alternatives bearing the Trusty name - increased to 24 from the previous eight. The Handy and Dandy options were all powered by the four cylinder FB4/1 50bhp petrol engine with the Ricardo cylinder head, the ten Sturdy options all had the four cylinder TC4 60bhp petrol engine, while the Trusty variants used various four and six cylinder diesel and petrol engines ranging in power from 76bhp to 125bhp.

With the demise of the Stag, no Thornycroft RSWs were offered for 1937 in the UK. However, RSWs were still exported, e.g. Amazon. The Petrol driven Dandy (5 ton and Sturdy (6 ton to 8 ton) articulated six wheelers were listed for the British market, and a diesel powered Tartar ten wheeler export 'special' was produced for carrying mining equipment. This vehicle had off road capability. A powerful six cylinder Trusty tractive unit was introduced in July, available in petrol or diesel form, with a load capacity of 13 tons.

1938

Lorries in the 2 ton to 13 ton load range were offered. The four wheel range continued as for the previous year, except four of the Trusty options which were dropped. Similarly, RSWs were not listed in the UK, but were available for export. Articulated lorries were represented by the Sturdy 6 tonner and the 13 ton Trusty, both carried over from 1937, while vehicles not listed in the UK were exported (e.g. Amazon ten wheelers). The Dandy 5 tonner was discontinued for 1938.

The new Dreadnought forward control RSW 10 tonner was displayed at the Scottish Show towards the end of the year, as part of Thornycroft's home market range for 1939. Instead of having, as before, two rear axles, the Dreadnought now had two front (steering) axles and one rear axle. Also at the Scottish Show was the new four wheel Nippy 3 tonner, also intended for sale as part of the 1939 range.

1939

The Dandy 3 tonner was replaced by the new Nippy of the same capacity, shown at the previous year's Scottish Show. The Handy 2 tonner was dropped, and Thornycroft did not replace it with another vehicle in the 2 ton class. The number of variants in the Trusty range was also pruned. Thus, Thornycroft's four wheel range comprised the Nippy (3 tons), Sturdy (4 tons), Sturdy (5 tons) and the Trusty (6.5 tons to 8 tons).

The twin steer Dreadnought RSW 10 tonner, displayed at the Scottish Show the previous year, was the sole Thornycroft RSW offered on the British market. This vehicle was powered by a Dorman NF/5LW 85bhp diesel engine.

World War 2 started on 3 September 1939, at 11.15am, when British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain announced that the UK was at war with Germany. During the six year conflict, the production capacity of engineering organisations was used to support the war effort. Among other things, Thornycroft produced parts for guns and aero engines, complete guns, exploders for bombs, depth charge throwers, and vehicles for military and civilian use including lorries and armoured tracked vehicles etc, and torpedo rudders. Lorries built for civilian operators included Trusty, Nippy, Sturdy and the Dreadnought RSW. Due to its lack of success, the Dreadnought did not enter production until after the start of the War, when operators were willing to take any available vehicle. Thus, a small number of Dreadnoughts was built from existing components between the end of 1939 and early November 1941.

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