

Alfred Charles Morrison of Quorn - Pioneer of the electric milk float!

As Sue Templeman researches the history of Quorn, she is constantly surprised at what emerges. A chance remark led to the discovery of a former village resident who was an extraordinary engineer and inventor.



A Morrison milk float from 1936



Alfred Morrison and his wife Mary moved to Quorn late in WW2, and bought a house known as Four Gables or 76 Woodhouse Road, which today fronts on to The Pingle. Alfred was an exceptionally gifted inventor and electrical engineer who had a remarkable career.

Early days

Alfred Charles Morrison was born in Leicester in 1902, the eldest of five children. His father had started an engineering business in the 1890s, making bicycles and going on to make some of the first powered vehicles, including motorcycles. When his sons were old enough, they joined him as 'A E Morrison and Sons'. Alfred (junior) was extremely intelligent and learnt many skills from his father, but it was his talent for electrical engineering that soon set him apart and influenced the direction in which the firm developed. Eventually the name of the company changed to Morrison Electric and they made generators, chargers for vehicle batteries and radio accumulators, as well as branching out into the manufacture and installation of cinema equipment.



Alfred Ernest Morrison, Alfred Charles Morrison's father

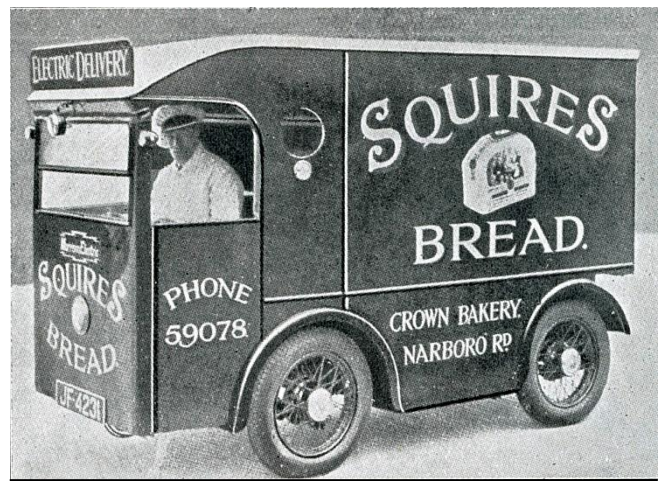


Alfred and Mary on their wedding day

During 1928 Alfred married Mary Rotha Hubbard and the couple settled in in Leicester.

Electric vehicles

In the early 1930s Alfred was playing golf with local Leicester baker, Mr Squires, and said he could produce an



The first Morrison electric delivery vehicle

electric vehicle that would be half the running costs of a horse drawn van. Mr Squires said if Alfred could make it, he would buy it. Within a very short time Alfred had developed the electric van, the first one was registered in 1933 and they started producing them in large numbers. The vehicles had many uses, but are perhaps best known as milk floats and bread vans. They were soon being exported to many different countries in all parts of the globe. Morrison Electric became the largest supplier of this type of vehicle in the world. See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morrison->

[Electricar](#). Russ's Dairy at 11 Nursery Lane Quorn were one of the Quorn dairies that used Morrison Electricars.

Wartime

When the second world war broke out, the government redeployed all the employees of Morrison Electric on to war work. Some went to the Brush in Loughborough, but Alfred was given the honorary rank of Major (even though he was a civilian), and was sent to London. The 1939 Register records him and Mary living at 20 Elms Road, Harrow and Alfred is described as a Consulting Electrical Mechanic Engineer. His family knew that he was working for the war/government, but nothing more. They also found it surprising that towards the end of the war he could afford to buy a property the size of Four Gables. At that time the house was bigger than it is today and had a very large garden and paddock.

Anthony Cove, who was a schoolboy in Quorn during WW2, remembers being told that Mr Morrison was involved in important government work, and this is confirmed in Alfred's obituary in the Loughborough Echo in 1971, which stated "...during the last war [Alfred] was engaged on secret work for the Department of Scientific [and industrial] Research". Anthony also has a hazy recollection of it being said that Churchill and Field Marshal William Slim visited Alfred at Four Gables. Alfred's nephew, Ernie Miller, could not confirm this exact incident, but remembers that Alfred showed him an exceptionally small generator that he had developed for the military, saying that it was particularly designed for use in the jungle and mentioned Malaya. It was extremely small, very reliable and relatively quiet. These pieces of information could fit together, as Field Marshal Slim was a commander in both Malaya and Burma. An extract from the Loughborough Echo dated 13th April 1945, ie before the war ended, certainly indicates that Alfred was no stranger to meeting important members of government and industry:

"Mr A C Morrison of Four Gables, Quorn has produced an electric vehicle of twice the ordinary mileage and twice the speed of ordinary electric motors. Twelve months ago the Government allocated materials for its production and prototypes have been built and proved satisfactory. They will be officially inspected by Mr Noel-Baker on 23rd April, representatives of the Ministries will be present; also representatives of 60 of the largest transport users in the country."

Philip Noel-Baker was a Labour MP and during WW2 he was a parliamentary secretary at the Ministry of War Transport.



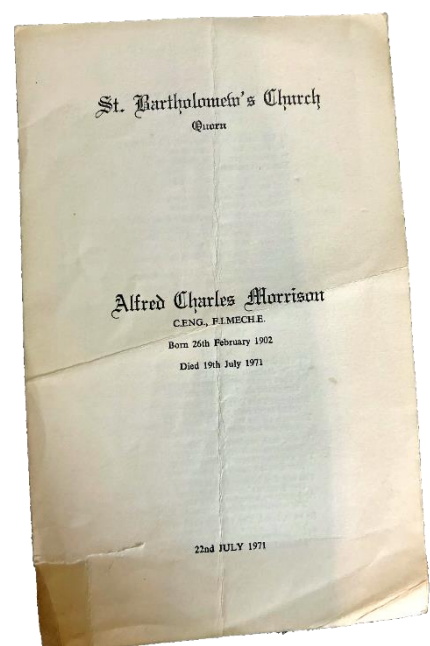
Alfred Charles Morrison in the 1930s

Later years

After the war the family sold Morrison Electric and Alfred set up two successful businesses of his own, Morrison Pumps Ltd and A C Morrison Generators Ltd. Alfred was not only an extremely talented electrical engineer, inventor, developer and manufacturer, but another exceptional characteristic was the speed with which he worked. His obituary states that during his engineering career he took out more than 100 patents for pumps and other equipment. One can only imagine the progress he would have made with today's technology!

Alfred and Mary never had a family of their own, but adopted two older children. Alfred died in 1971 and his nephew Ernie recalls being surprised by

how many people attended the service in St Bartholomew's Church. They included local dignitaries and many people from Loughborough University. In 1972 Mary provided pews in St Bartholomew's Church in memory of Alfred's life. A brass



plaque can still be seen on the end of the seating today. The text says:

"The pew seating in this church was given in loving memory of Alfred Charles Morrison CEng., F.I. Mech.E., M.I.A.E., M.S.A.E. 26th February 1902-19th July 1971 by his wife Mary Rotha Morrison July 1972"

After Alfred's death Mary moved to a bungalow on Soar Road. After she died in 1987, their adopted daughter Anne Deatker moved in, and continued to live there until she passed away in 1997.

This article was produced by Sue Templeman on behalf of www.quornmuseum.com. Thank you to Anthony Cove for bringing Alfred Morrison to my attention and to Ernie Miller for sharing so much interesting information about his uncle. If anyone has any more information about Field Marshal Slim (or any other important figure) visiting Alfred in Quorn, it would be great if you could contact me to add to the story. Also if you have any photographs or documents relating to Quorn in days gone by, (even in poor condition), I would love to hear from you. Please contact sue@quorndon.com or 01509 412112 or pass a message through the Parish Office.