



Skinners Union

If you were asked in a quiz what is the connection between Carburettors and Footwear you might be tempted to answer leather, but it goes much deeper than that. The Skinner family was involved with the well-known footwear retailer Lilley & Skinner and the family wealth was instrumental in keeping the SU Company alive during some of the difficult years in the early 1920s prior to its purchase by William Morris. The history of SU is set out in a book by Mike Harvey with the title Skinners Union published by the SU Carburettor Co.

Nic Houslip found the book is a comprehensive and well researched history of the design of a unique type of carburettor from inception to production that we still know today, the SU variable venturi carburettor. Technical and non-technical readers alike will benefit from this book, especially if they own a car fitted with SU carburettors, particularly the MGB and the MGBGT V8.

From humble beginnings in 1910 following the development of an early version of the carburettor by Bert Skinner, whilst he was still a director of Lilley & Skinner, the early models of the carburettor were manufactured as an aftermarket device to improve the motorcars of the time. The success fed through to the car makers and in 1911 Rover was the first company to use an SU design in production. Although Rover manufactured the carburettor, many internal components were supplied by SU. By the end of WW1, the market

wanted improved starting characteristics and by 1918 Wolseley had a cold start enrichment improvement to their SU patent carburettor.

SU were also instrumental in the design and development of aircraft carburettors for Rolls Royce, Napier and others, but notably the earlier versions of the Rolls Royce Merlin engine, From Mk 66 they benefitted from a Bendix developed fuel injection, however the Merlin Series 100 engines from 1944 had an SU single point fuel injection system.

The continued development of the SU carburettor fitted as OEM to many cars, for example Morris, MG and Wolseley, continued for many years to the peak with the HIF and similar marks into the late 1970s when Fuel Injection arrived. That had superior emission control characteristics and became the norm, first for high performance cars and later for all petrol engined cars.

Nic feels the book is a comprehensive and well researched history of the design, from inception to production of a unique type of carburettor that we still know today,

Skinners Union by Mike Harvey, published by The SU Carburettor Co. Hardback with 320 pages and many black & white and colour illustrations. ISBN 97834234-0-6.

You can see further details of the book on the Burlen website where you can buy copies. The book is advertised at £20.00 with UK P&P including VAT at £4.74, so a total of £24.74. As a hardback with 320 pages it's clearly quite a heavy book and overseas buyers may need to contact Burlen to get details of the P&P costs for mailing to their country.

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