

The Story of The Famous James

with Introduction

by F. J. Urry



THE EARLIEST "JAMES."

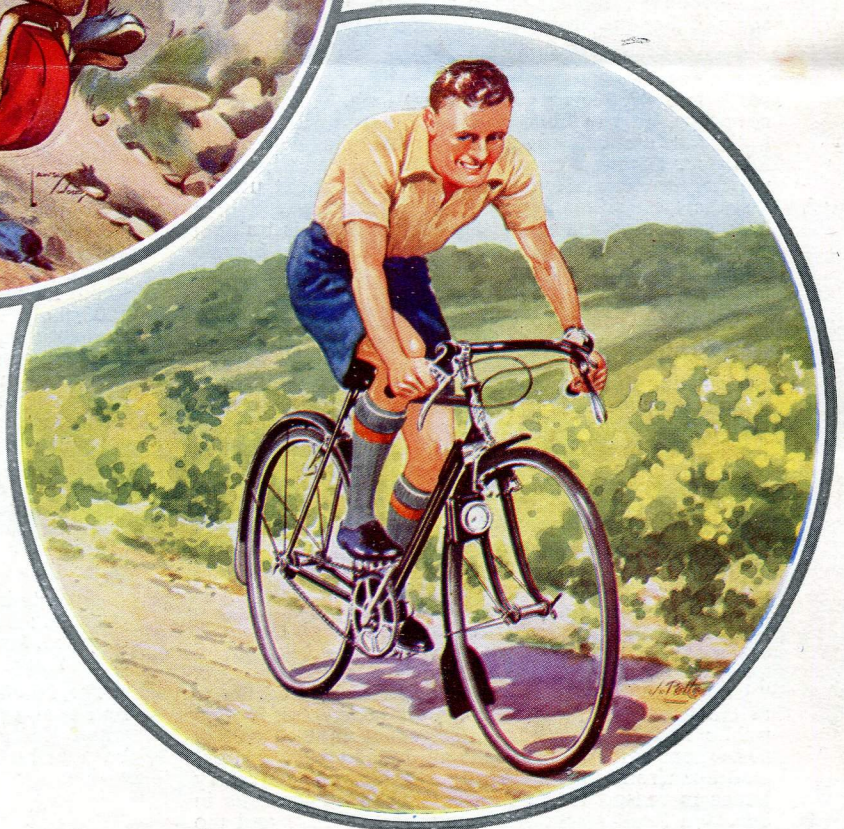
Certainly

"Distinctive in Design"

and to all appearances

"Dependable in Service"

even in those days!



THE LATEST "JAMES."

Health and Pleasure

ride together

When **"JAMES"** is on

the Wheel.

THE JAMES CYCLE CO LTD GREET, BIRMINGHAM
LONDON SHOWROOMS - 21 & 22, HOLBORN VIADUCT, E.C.1

The Story of The Famous James

IT seems rather appropriate that I should be asked to scribble this little introduction to a history of the "James," because my first serious and entertaining cycling was performed in the company of a "James" bicycle, and my first race won on its spinning wheels.

I was young and very enthusiastic in those days of 1898-9. Alas! I have lost my youth, but, thank heaven, have retained—and I think enhanced—my enthusiasm. This is not a personal story, and such a paragraph ought not to find a place in a more or less serious commercial brochure; yet these recollections come thronging and singing on the wings of memory, and refuse to be pushed aside. And—when you come to think of it—why should a bicycle catalogue be a serious and straight-laced affair of illustrations, prices, and equipment? Should it not depict something at least of the joy of the game, the freedom of the open spaces, this heritage that is ours, "A jewel set in the silver sea"? And memory brings me so much pleasure of wheeling recollections, and encourages me to consider the present and anticipate the joyous possibilities of the miles yet to be ridden—some of them, my masters, aboard a "James."

But we must get on with our story. As all old timers know, Harry James founded the Company that bears his name in 1897. Long prior to that time, in the middle seventies, he was building bicycles of world renown, for he was one of those studious mechanics who saw a future for this modern means of transport, and his commercial instinct was spurred by his personal enthusiasm for this then adventurous game. He graduated in a famous Birmingham wheel factory, so that his training was peculiarly fitted to match his genius in bicycle invention, and like many another clever mechanic of that time, he felt the need for scope.

So in 1880, as a very young man, he was making "ordinary" machines (so frequently called by the comparatively modern pseudonym of "penny-farthing") and a reputation that was finally to girdle the world. That year he built a 54 inches ordinary for the late C. A. Palmer, weighing 23 lbs. 10 ozs., when Charlie Palmer was at the zenith of his racing career, and on this mount the famous Midlander won many races.

These machines were mainly the skilled work of Harry James himself, and were turned out from a small factory at 121, Constitution Hill, Birmingham. Their grace, speed, and behaviour, brought him great praise and many orders, for he guaranteed every part of his products for twelve months, a revolutionary innovation in those days. But other revolutions were on the tapis, and the day of the ordinary was doomed—although many of us did not then believe it. In 1884 the first "James" Safety was patented, and like its forerunner of the tall wheel, was immediately successful, for the public now became more interested in the cycling movement with the acrobatic attributes largely eliminated therefrom. The demand for the products of Harry James increased to such an extent that new works in Sampson Road North were acquired in 1889 and the output thereby quadrupled.

These were the times when bicycles were sold on the testimony of satisfied customers, as indeed they are to-day, though perhaps not quite to the same extent.

The "James" album was full of compliments, and among the prominent ones are letters from Mr. T. W. Badgery, the present Chairman of the Company, Mr. F. S. S. Arter, a former director, and Mr. C. Vernon Pugh, who in due time made wheel reputation as the Managing Director of Rudge Whitworth. In the vintage year of '90 the first "James" Lady's Model appeared at the figure of £18, the forerunner among vehicles that have since emancipated women, brought sex equality, and given the younger generation—and for that matter the older—knowledge of make and shape, and cleanly understanding worthy of the age in which we live and the game we delight in playing.

The "boom" days were with us in the early and middle nineties. Everyone who could afford it, and possessing a kick in their legs, rode a bicycle, and the "James" was among the first quality of the world's wheels. Cold drawn weldless steel tubing gave lightness and strength to the bicycle, pneumatic tyres gave it speed and comfort, diamond frames and special front fork and chain stay design gave it distinction, and sound workmanship developed all these things into character and reputation. "Give me a 'James,'" wrote a Chicago rider in 1895, "I know it's English and can be depended on." Bicycles of the "James" quality were then in the price region of £28 each, yet they were selling in thousands, and the demand continued unceasingly. In 1897 the present Company was floated, and the capital introduced used for the purpose of extensions, the introduction of improvements in design and manufacture, including roller chains and double butted spokes.

In the last days of last century the new Company successfully perfected the free-wheel, substantially as we know it to-day, and thus added another chapter to the history of the cycle trade. Eight years later, in 1908, the present works were built at Greet, and occupy some ten acres. They were equipped with the most modern plant; but to keep up to date and ensure perfection in construction and production, plant must be continually improved and evolved. That is exactly what has happened in the "James" factory—continual careful reorganisation of plant to meet modern needs and preserve the character and reputation of "James" products. And the "James" was and is in the first flight; without the aid of absurd superlatives it is a good bicycle—as good as the next—to match the volume of its price ticket. It has a long line of ancestors, and blue blood tells when the stock has been carefully nurtured.

My taste in bicycles has been catholic, necessarily so perhaps; but I am going back to the old love this year of grace, for I like the look of the product it will give me. You cannot do better, and you may do worse.

Yes, I think the old slogan that "If it's a 'James' it can be depended on," is as true to-day as during the time when Harry James overlooked every machine, and because he loved them so was loath to let them go.

Frank J. Werry

Editor, "Bicycling News."

A Flight of Historical Fancy

*Some (very) early impressions
of the Famous James*

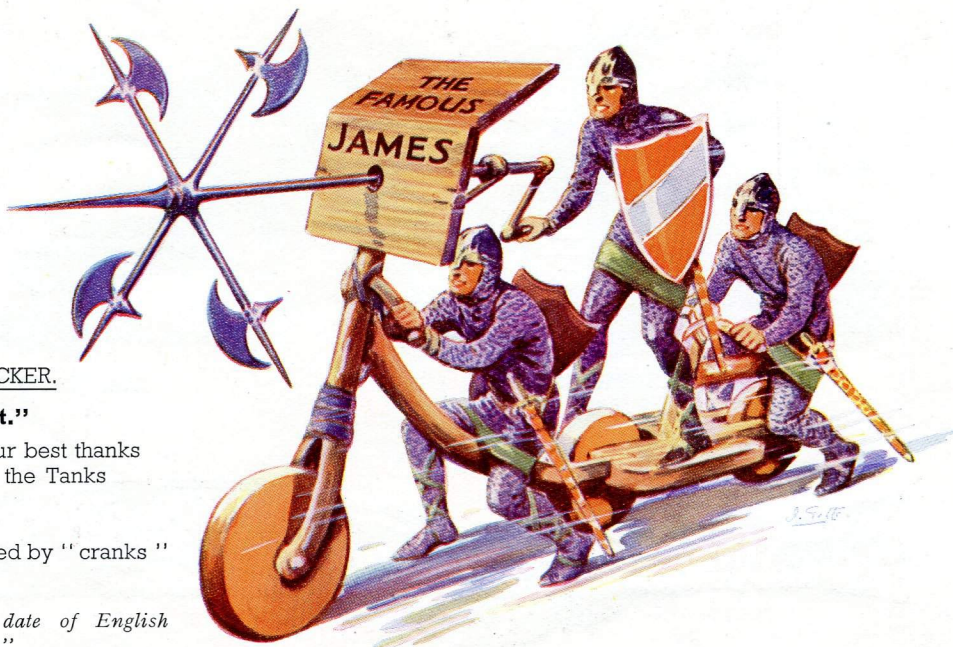


THE "BOADICEA CUTADASH."

Our A.D. 61 Ladykiller Model.

In the time of Queen Boadicea,
There were Girls like the one you see here,
We don't know their names
But they all loved their James
And compelled the invaders to clear.

"Boadicea was Queen of the Iceni in Britain, A.D. 61. The outrages of the Roman invaders caused her to lead an insurrection during which she is said to have slain '70,000' Romans." (Of course—with the help of her "James").

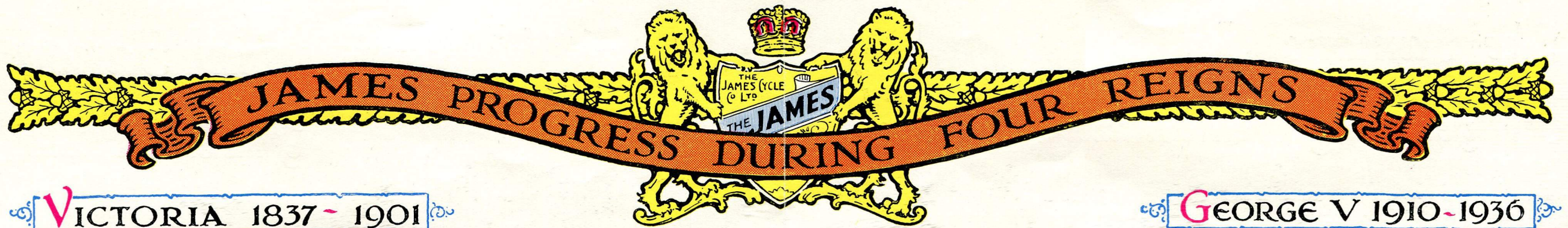


THE NORMAN NUTCRACKER.

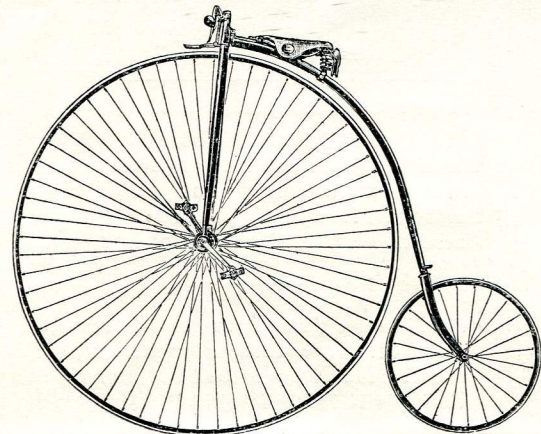
"1066 and all that."

To the Normans we owe our best thanks
For having first thought of the Tanks
The Model shown here
Was made in the year
When axes were first worked by "cranks "

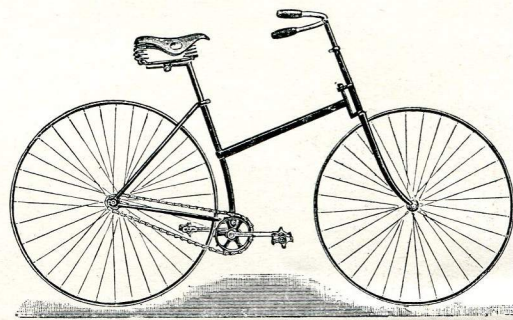
*"1066 — The foundation date of English
Progress and Development."*



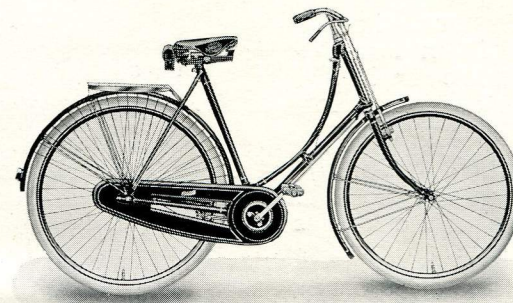
VICTORIA 1837 - 1901



THE JAMES ORDINARY
Made in 1880



THE JAMES SAFETY BICYCLE
Made in 1887

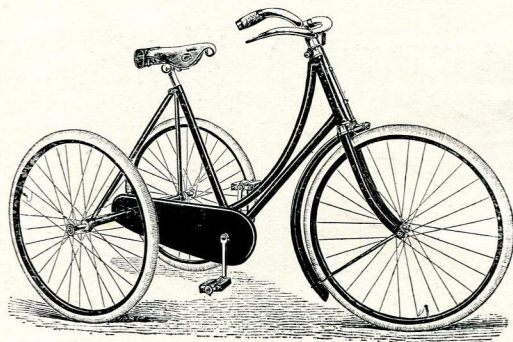


THE JAMES LADY'S MODEL DE LUXE
Made in 1927-28

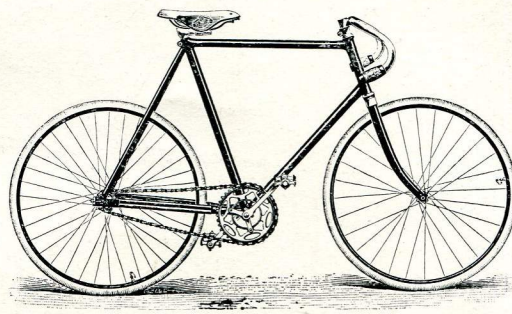


THE JAMES ROAD RACER
Made in 1932-34

EDWARD VII 1901 - 1910



THE JAMES TRICYCLE
Made in 1901

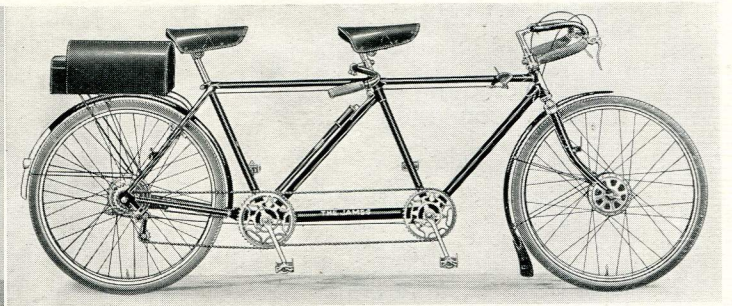


THE JAMES RACER
Made in 1901

EDWARD VIII



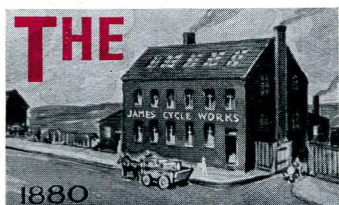
THE JAMES SUPER SPORTS
Made in 1936



THE JAMES CLUBMAN TANDEM
Made in 1936

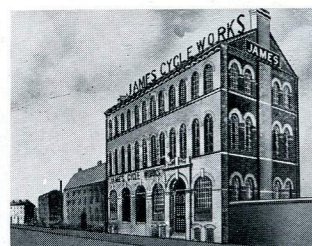


The Famous James from 1877 to 1937 *60 years of remarkable Progress*

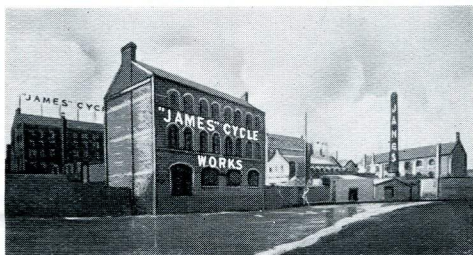


evolution and growth of the James Cycle Company during the last 60 years is an outstanding example of the progress that has been made in the history of Cycle building during the last half century in Great Britain.

Just as "Big Oaks from little Acorns grow," so this Company, having its origin in small but nevertheless sound beginnings, has grown slowly but surely into a flourishing and substantial business with connections established in every country of the world.



1900



1907

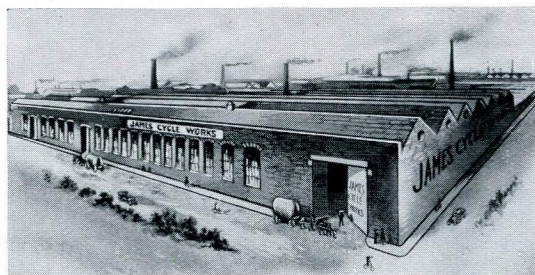
became evident that larger works would be necessary; additions and extensions very quickly reached their limits, and, in 1907, the Company decided to acquire the necessary land and build a new and up-to-date Factory at Greet. An illustration, taken at Greet in 1908, is shown.

A view of our present Factory will be much more convincing than any lengthy

The James "Works" at Constitution Hill in 1880, during the Victorian Era, form a striking comparison with our present factory.

The other views on this page also, by comparison in size and design, serve to illustrate the growth of our business during the last half century.

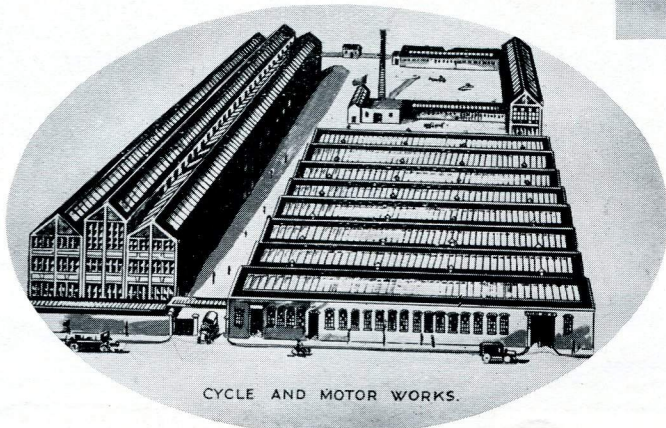
The James Building in 1900 showed signs of advancement and progress, and here it was also that modern Bicycle design and manufacture really began to get into its stride, but it soon



1908

description of it. Here is a reproduction from an aerial photograph which shows its extent and capacity. Year by year the works area has increased until it now covers several acres.

Here we make The Famous "James" Cycles and other productions from start to finish. We are proud of our history and its traditions, and we are proud of the high esteem in which The Famous "James" products are held throughout the World.



1936

Some of our 1937 Productions

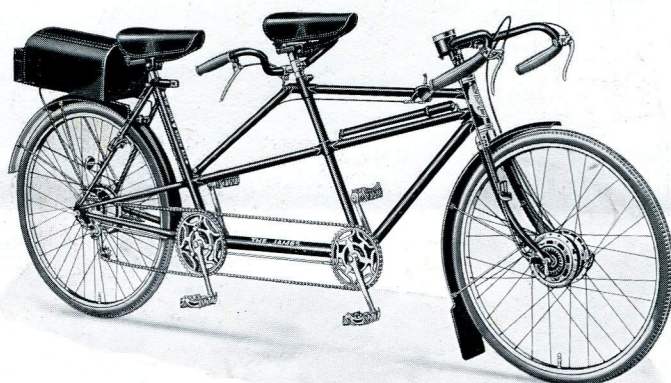


"ARROW ACE"
A Super Sports Model
Price **£7 19 6** Cash



"ROYAL LIGHTWEIGHT"
A Superb Lightweight
Price **£8 10 0** Cash

OTHER MODELS FROM **£4 19 6** CASH



"ARROW ACE" TANDEM
A Touring Tandem of Finest Quality—Convertible Lady Back
Price **£17 17 0** Cash



"BROWNIE"
Price **£2 15 0** Cash



"SAMSON"
Price **£4 19 6** Cash



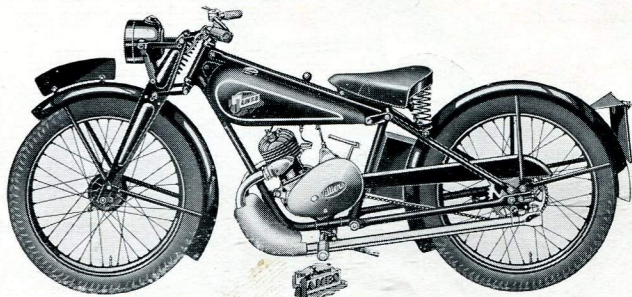
"PIXIE"
Price **£2 19 6** Cash

Ask Your Dealer for fully descriptive List, or apply:—

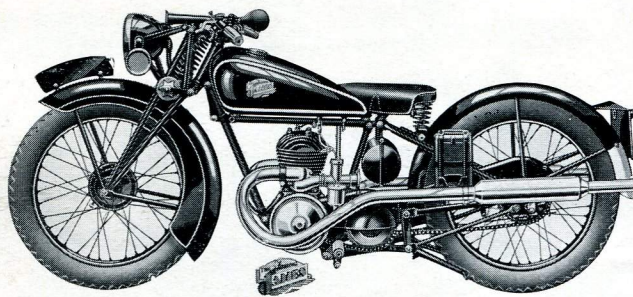
THE JAMES CYCLE CO LTD GREET, BIRMINGHAM
LONDON SHOWROOMS - 21 & 22, HOLBORN VIADUCT, E.C.1

Some of our 1937 Productions

THE JAMES FIRST FINE QUALITY LIGHTWEIGHT MOTOR CYCLES



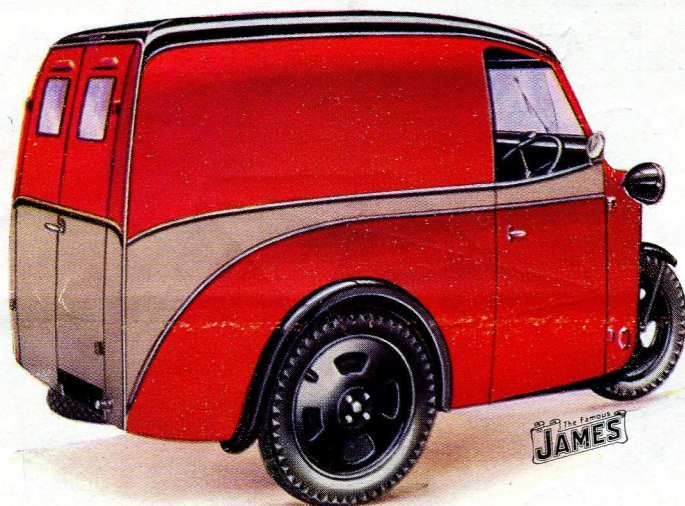
A 125 c.c. Ultra Lightweight
Price **£21 10 0** Cash



A 250 c.c. Sturdy Two-Stroke
Price **£37 10 0** Cash

This Vehicle is
Ideal for all
deliveries up to
its full capacity

Note these facts:
Tax **£4** per ann.
Load **8** cwt.
Capacity
75 cu. feet
Engine **10** H.P.



Made to suit all
Trades. Finished
complete with
all Equipment,
including
Electric Starter.

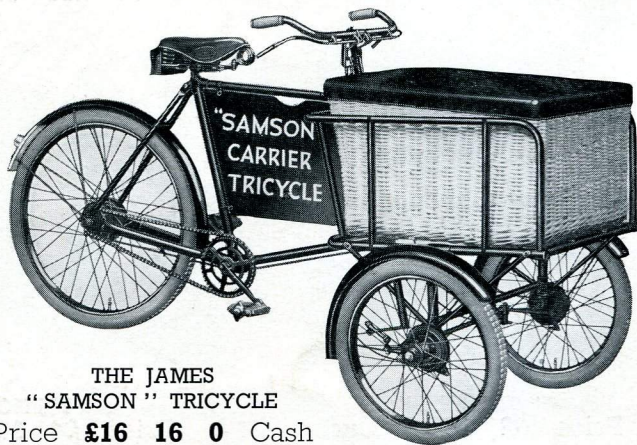
Ready for the Road

Prices from
£106 10 0
Cash

THE JAMES HANDYVAN



THE JAMES "SAMSON"
CARRIER BICYCLE
Price **£6 10 0** Cash

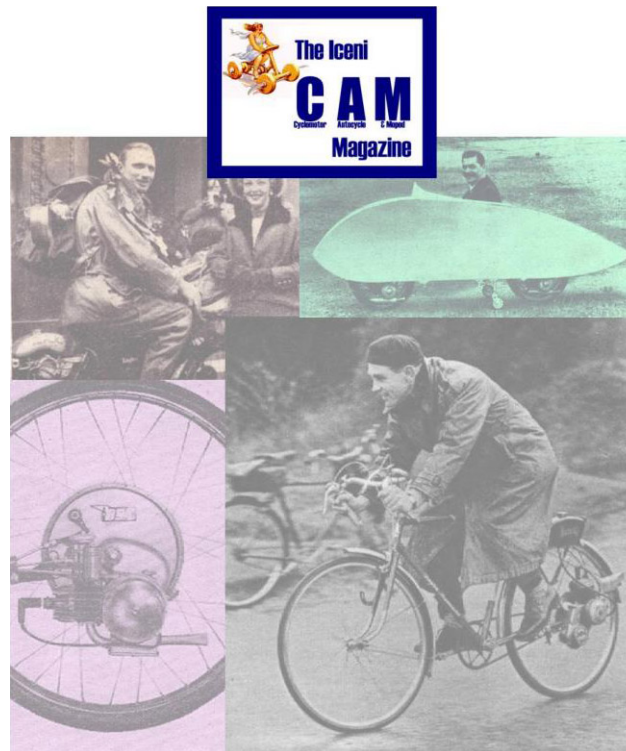


THE JAMES
"SAMSON" TRICYCLE
Price **£16 16 0** Cash

Ask Your Dealer for fully descriptive List, or apply:—

THE JAMES CYCLE CO LTD GREET, BIRMINGHAM
LONDON SHOWROOMS - 21 & 22, HOLBORN VIADUCT, E.C. 1

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