

# MOTORING MATTERS

## NODDING DOGS & VINYL ROOFS

The weird world of quirky car accessories

Stephen Vokins

OUT NOW!

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Nodding Dogs & Vinyl Roofs by Haynes explains everything you need to know about quirky car accessories. Being knowledgeable about exhaust flamethrowers, tiger tails and bolt-on fins is an essential prerequisite of leading a fashion revival.

Author Stephen Vokins has trawled the weird world of motoring add-ons to produce a fantastic collection of everything from acetylene lamps to windscreen wiper kits – passing through gradient meters and pop-up spoilers. Acetylene lamps are from a bygone age but advertising hubcaps are a recent invention. Cleverly, the centres do not rotate even when the vehicle is moving – so you can always read what they say. Boot luggage racks were a practical addition and, arguably, significantly raised the value of some of the rusty old sports cars to which they were fixed. Will they be popular again? Probably only with owners of rusty old sports cars.

A definite deterrent to ‘tailgaters’ is the exhaust flamethrower. It’s undoubtedly impressive after dark but singeing pedestrians’ shoes may

not be such a good idea. Much more sensible are fluffy dice – still popular after all these years. A great complement to ‘tiger-skin’ seat covers and hairy steering wheel covers, if you feel at all embarrassed about fluffy dice choose ones with air fresheners inside – and laugh them off as a practical accessory. Or how about the Navirobo, currently only available in Japan? This little gem is an animated teddy bear that gives directions to the driver in place of a boring old screen...

Many of the accessories featured in Nodding Dogs & Vinyl Roofs were actually considered clever when first introduced. There’s the Collite illuminated magnifier for reading maps whose age is apparent from the 20 shillings price tag. Kiddyproof door handles were another clever idea in the era before childproof locks – and good value at just 30 shillings each.

The list goes on. Do you remember matt black bonnets, air horns that played a tune and kits for powering windows? Read Nodding Dogs & Vinyl Roofs and enjoy a good laugh but be forewarned, when the tiger tail craze returns (as it inevitably will) there’ll be panic buying. Better get yours now...

Author Stephen Vokins has worked at the National Motor Museum, Beaulieu, for 25 years, as manager of the film and video department, and now also Corporate Relations Manager. His spare time is devoted to writing and broadcasting about cars, he has been a presenter on Granada’s Men & Motors, writes motoring columns for a variety of publications, and lives in Beaulieu, Hampshire.

## CORONA TO PRIUS: TOYOTA QUALITY SPANS THE DECADES

Today a car in which seatbelts are a luxury option and anti-pollution measures are non-existent wouldn’t even make the drawing board. But just over 40 years ago just such a model made its UK market debut. The Corona saloon may have been a worthy product in its day, comparing it to a modern hybrid power Toyota Prius reveals just how far Toyota and the auto industry have progressed.

The Toyota stablemates appeared side-by-side recently in an event organised by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders to illustrate how cars have evolved and the challenges faced by the industry in improving safety and emissions, while delivering the comfort and convenience customers demand – all at an affordable price.

Back in 1966 a new Corona would set you back £777, the equivalent of more than £7,500 at today’s prices - in those days not much less than the average annual wage. The 2007 Prius range starts at £17,777, a price tag that includes an eight-year warranty on the hybrid system components. The Corona’s “silent cruising” was a key message in the original advertising copy, which also trumpeted the car’s 90mph top speed and up to 35mpg fuel consumption. Where Prius is concerned, silent running is fact rather than flannel, thanks to its ability to run purely on power from its electric motor at low speeds. Like Corona, there is a 1.5-litre petrol engine under the bonnet, but as part of the hybrid power system, it is capable of giving acceleration to 62mph in 10.9 seconds (more than two-and-half times quicker than the Corona) and 65.7mpg in combined cycle driving.

Emissions didn’t enter the argument in ’66, owners simply filled up with a tank of lead-rich four-star. Safety, too, was of little concern: Corolla owners had to spend another £10 for seatbelts, while Prius drivers have the benefit of built-in crash protection, airbags and a suite of sophisticated braking and handling control systems, developed through multi-million-pound research and development programmes. Then as now, however, quality and reliability were essential factors. “Double Checked a Hundred Times,” the Corona’s advert proclaimed, just as the 21st century Toyota range benefits from production methods that ensure superior quality throughout.

