

TRANSPORT DIFFICULTIES IN MALTA'S NARROW STREETS

Extracts are here reproduced from an article on "Scarab Island", which appeared in the January issue of the *Leyland Journal*, dealing with the transport problems of Simonds-Farsons-Cisk, Ltd., in Malta.

Extensive users of the Scarab mechanical horse in the island of Malta are Simonds-Farsons-Cisk, Ltd., the only brewers, 90 per cent of whose local deliveries are effected with this type of vehicle.

The fleet run by Simonds-Farsons-Cisk includes eleven Scarab 6-tonners, two of the old-type MH.6 mechanical horses, and seventeen semi-trailers. The MH.6 models, together with two standard Scammell 22-ft. long drop-frame trailers, have been in service since 1946, and these are engaged full-time in carrying raw materials and

plant and machinery chiefly between the harbour and the brewery, which lies three miles west of Valletta.

According to Mr. J. E. Hctor, who is in charge of the fleet, these two outfits have "on occasions been savagely ill-treated, carrying loads of over 10 tons when no heavier vehicle was available". In view of this report, and the fact that the machines concerned have already been in service for eleven years, it would appear that British Railways were unduly pessimistic in first estimating the life of the Scarab as five years. Admittedly, since then

Delivering in one of Valetta's narrow streets.





Emerging from Strait Street is a tricky operation.

they have extended this period, in stages, to 10-12 years.

The brewery's Scarabs have been in operation only since 1951. These run in conjunction with one 15-ft. straight-frame semi-trailer and fourteen of a special design. The "specials" were the culmination of a visit paid to Malta in 1949 by a Scammell representative. At that time, Simonds-Farsons-Cisk employed vehicles mainly to carry raw materials from the docks, most of the distribution being handled by agents.

With their experience of the MH.6 model, the brewery decided that they could make their own deliveries economically with the aid of the mechanical horse. But there were problems, chief of which were the extremely narrow streets and steep gradients common in Valletta.

After an on-the-spot investigation Scammell Lorries, Ltd., produced the design for a covered-top 16 ft. 6 in. long drop-frame trailer with a capacity of 250 two-dozen-bottle beer crates,

representing a load of just over 6 tons. The low frame eased the work of unloading, and the low overall height ensured that the trailers would not foul the numerous hanging signs outside business premises.

The problem of manoeuvrability was also solved, as the complete outfit could turn round in 19 ft. A substantial initial order was placed for Scarabs and the special trailer, and these were so successful that the number was soon increased.

Having overcome the difficulty of delivering in narrow streets, Simonds-Farsons-Cisk were then in a position which would turn the faces of brewers the world over green with envy. Strait Street, Valletta, is a delivery man's paradise. Although only 12 ft. wide, and with steep transverse gradients at every crossing, there is a compensating factor in the existence of no fewer than 80 bars in a distance of 220 yards—surely the wettest furlong in the world!

This, however, is only one side of



The deliveryman's nightmare—negotiating the narrow streets and awkward corners of Malta. The vehicle on the right is not about to descend the steps: it is in the act of turning into a narrow street on its left.



the picture. Many of the bars consist of only one small room and have no storage space. A reasonably brisk trade necessitates a daily delivery service to these places.

Altogether, there are in Malta some 4,000 outlets for the brewery's output, which includes mineral waters and the bottling of wines and spirits. Apart from the bars that are served daily, there are some that regularly take delivery either twice or once a week and others even less frequently.

The longest delivery run in this island of 140 sq. miles and over 300,000 people is about 30 miles, the shortest being 10 miles. Not all of the

company's annual production of some 30 million bottles is consumed at home, however; there is a substantial export trade to Tripoli, Benghazi, Cyprus and England.

So as to avoid disruption of their delivery schedules, Simonds-Farsons-Cisk carry a spare Scarab. If a repair job on a motive unit is likely to take more than a few hours, the spare is substituted. Complete overhauls are effected outside the peak period, the vehicles taking their turn to go into the garage for checking. During the summer, the Scammell vehicles average about 200 miles a week, the annual mileage being approximately 5,000.

H. & G. SIMONDS' NEW KARRIER "BANTAMS"

H. & G. Simonds Ltd. have recently acquired two of the 2-3 tonner Karrier "Bantam" vehicles, each having been fitted with a platform body measuring 11 ft. 5 in. by 6 ft. 3 in. built and fitted in Simonds' own workshops. This floor area permits a lay-out of four tiers of 30 two-dozen cases. One, stationed in the Oxford area, has done 8,000 miles with a fuel consumption of 16½ m.p.g., and the other, at Torquay, has done 3,000 miles with a similar consumption.

Drivers are particularly pleased with the cab comfort.

