

*unstoppable*

## ANGLO-GERMAN HYBRID

The Ford Transit revels in its eclectic origins. It started off very different from what we know the Transit to be today.



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**APOLLO TYRES**



Unlike the British-built Transit 'family', the first production Ford to wear the "Transit" badge was a van built in Ford's Köln (Cologne) plant in Germany. It was introduced in 1953 as FK 1000 (Ford Köln carrying 1000 kg). From 1961, this vehicle was called the Ford Taunus Transit. Production of this model ceased in 1965. The German vehicle was not widely exported, and the "Mark 1" tag has commonly been applied, retrospectively, to the 1965-75 British model.

Ford had a manufacturing plant in Cork City, Ireland up until the mid-1970s. Just after World War II, the proprietor of the local Ford Garage, "The Transit Garage", built a Ford Special, a 2-seater sports car, to compete in the local Cork 20 Rally. This car won the race and was known as the Ford Transit. The name was established, and noted by the management of the local factory. When a name for the commercial van was being sought, the already established name "Ford Transit" was readily available.

The first Ford Transit proper was introduced in October 1965, and has been in continuous production in three basic generations to the present day. The van was produced initially at Ford's Langley facility in Berkshire, England (a former Second World War aircraft factory which had produced Hawker Hurricane fighters), but as demand outstripped the capability of the plant, production was moved to Southampton, where it has remained ever since. Transits have also been produced in Ford's Genk factory in Belgium and also Turkey. The Transit is also produced in China for the Chinese market.

The Transit was introduced to replace the Ford Thames 400E, a small mid-engined Zephyr-based forward control van noted for its narrow track which was in direct competition with similar looking vehicles from Rootes's Commer range. In a UK market segment then



## APOLLO TYRES LTD. *unstoppable*

**Never wary of progress, never skeptical about success,  
Never scared of challenges, never tired of trying,  
Every step of the way we travel with our customers,  
On the "unstoppable" journey to success.**

dominated by a Bedford offering, the Thames failed to win over company users in sufficient numbers, so Ford went back to the drawing board and switched to a front engine configuration, along the lines pioneered during the 1950s by Bedford with their well-regarded CA series vans. Henry Ford II's revolutionary step was to combine the engineering effort of Ford of Britain, and Ford of Germany together to create a prototype for the Ford of Europe of today — previously the two subsidiaries had been in direct competition with each other.

The Transit was a huge departure from the European commercial vehicles of the day — its broad track and American-inspired styling gave it a huge advantage in carrying capacity over comparable vehicles of the day and revolutionised light goods transport. Most of

the Transit's mechanical components were adapted from Ford's car range of the time. Another key to the Transit's success was the sheer number of different body styles: panel vans in long and short wheelbase forms, pick-up truck, minibuses, crew-cabs to name but a few. The engines used in the UK were the Essex V4 for the petrol engine version in 1.7 L and 2.0 L capacities, while a 41 bhp (31 kW) diesel unit sourced from Perkins was also offered. The Perkins diesel engine was too long to fit under the Transit's stubby nose section, which had to be restyled for the diesel version. Producing just 40 bhp (30 kW), the Perkins unit was not popular, and was replaced by Ford's own "York" unit in 1971. For the mainland Europe the Transit had the German Ford Taunus V4 engine in 1.7 or 2.0 litre versions.

The long nose front was also used to accommodate the Ford 3.0 litre V6 which was ordered by police and ambulance services. In March 1978, a facelifted version — commonly known in some markets as the "Mark 2" model — debuted with a restyled nose section, new interior, and the introduction of the Pinto engine from the Cortina in place of the Essex V4. High performance versions intended for police or ambulance use used the 3.0 L V6 version of the Essex engine. In 1984, the York diesel engine was redesigned into the 2.4 L "DI" (direct injection) unit. Late in its life this generation received a minor facelift including a black rubberised front grille with integrated headlamp surrounds, which had previously been body-coloured.

The next few generations of the Transit oozed 'modernity', with the new version (Ford nomenclature V347 [FWD] V348 [RWD]) winning the International Van Of The Year 2007 award despite tough competition from several all-new rivals.

But we do not discuss new-born vehicles in this piece!