

Magazine of the



Vintage Minor Register

Issue M 148

Winter 2013



A Very Merry Christmas to one and all!



They also serve who only stand and wait. A sad scene at RAF Downham Market. The owners of these cars - a Eustace Watkins Dayrona-bodied Wolsley Hornet AGT 221, a 1929 Wiltshire-registered M Type MW 6606, a Rover 10/25 of early 1932 NV 1051 (just possibly, a Standard of 10 or 12hp) and a 1935-registered Stuart and Arden supplied Morris 8 tourer AMU 347 - have been declared as missing, and most likely will never see their beloved cars again. Downham Market was a Pathfinder base, operating Mosquitos and Lancasters during 1944 and 1945. (Photo: Martyn Chorlton).



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Front Cover

'The Last Collection Before Christmas'. A delightful seasonal rendition by Kevin Walsh.

Rear Cover

Congratulations to John and JoJo Nagle. Their 1934 Minor 2-seater OW 4224 was voted runner-up Classic Car of the Year. Here we see John and JoJo with the car at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham with their car, which was also awarded the Vintage Minor Register's Sports & Vintage Cup at our Summer Rally. Well done guys!

The Small Print

The Vintage Minor Register Magazine is produced by and for enthusiasts. All articles, letters, etc., are included for enjoyment and are copyright. Views expressed may not necessarily be those of the Register. No responsibility or liability can be accepted by the Vintage Minor Register, its organizers or members.



From the Driver's Seat



Pre-War Prescott 2013 – the centrepiece of our Summer Rally weekend. John Newell and son Mark queue for the start line in their 1932 2-seater. Auctioned at Castle Combe in March 2011, it now lives in Oaksey, near Kemble in Wiltshire.

What a year 2013 has been for the Register! Jayne and I had a fantastic time in England in July. We flew into Manchester from Seattle and drove down through the Peak District to stay with Brian Maeers for the VMR Midland Weekend. This was without doubt one of the most enjoyable VMR rallies we have attended. Then we spent a few wonderful days in Loweswater, planning for our 2014 Lakeland Rally. We simply cannot wait for that one next year. And then we headed for the Cotswolds for our Summer Rally and Pre-War Prescott which was bigger and more enjoyable than ever this year. Around 200 vintage and pre-war cars descended on sunny Prescott for the weekend, and the Sunday Navigation Rally and Scenic Tour around the Vale of Evesham were also more popular than ever this year. Sincere thanks to everyone who has supported our events this year and helped to make them so enjoyable and successful.

Also, earlier this year, Lady Tanya Field graciously agreed to become our Register Patron and we very much look forward to meeting her and her family in England next year.



2013 was also the 80th Anniversary of the Gilg and Kay expedition in a 1933 Morris Minor from Liverpool to Cape Town, and thanks to Cameron's son Andrew, we followed the expedition – day by day – eighty years to the day after the fact. In 1976, television producer Barry Cockroft made a documentary about the expedition for Yorkshire TV. During the making of the documentary, Gilg and Kay were reunited for the first time since 1933 (see above). The programme shows the pair meeting at Gilg's country home and motoring in this 1933 Minor tourer - an identical model to that used in the expedition. It also includes many fascinating 16 mm cine film clips from the expedition. The programme, titled 'Turn Left - the Riffs have Risen', was shown twice on ITV as part of the 'Once in a Lifetime' series. We showed the programme at our Summer Rally this year in the Clubhouse at Prescott where it captivated the audience. We are delighted to announce that the Register can now offer DVD copies of this historic documentary for £20 including worldwide postage. Please contact the Register if you would like a copy.

2014 SUBS – VERY IMPORTANT! The cost of Second Class post for the new colour Magazine in the UK is 50p, but the addition of a subs reminder sheet would tip the weight just over 100 grams, and the cost then becomes £1-05! So this is your reminder and instructions for paying your 2014 subs – and sincere thanks for all of you have already paid. **Subs are due by 31st December.** The Register subscription is £25 (Australia \$Au45, New Zealand \$NZ55, USA \$US40). English members, please send cheques made payable to Ian Grace to the address on the index page. US members, please send cash or checks made payable to Ian Grace to the above address. Australian and New Zealander members, please send cheques made payable to Keith Montell, to 178 Hargreaves Road, Steels Creek, Victoria 3775, Australia. Alternatively, payment can be made by PayPal to kangamingo@gmail.com or if you would prefer to pay by direct bank transfer, please contact the Register for account details.

Living and working in Seattle, we really appreciate that we are truly spread across the globe and the Register plays a vital part in bringing us all together as a community of kindred souls. So, to all, those members in Australia, New Zealand, India, the USA, Canada, France, Spain, Holland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Japan, Northern Ireland, Scotland (including the Orkneys!), Wales, Eire, Germany, Switzerland and South Africa (apologies if I left anyone out!) Jayne and I wish each and every member and their families around the world a wonderful Christmas and prosperous and safe New Year.

Register Ramblings



Philip Butland recently took delivery of CMS Minor UY 8391 from Roger Lucke. This is the ex-Harry Edwards car. The CMS joins Philip's Morris 8 and Hundred Pound Minor project in Hailsham, Sussex.



With this issue, we welcome the following new members and their cars:

457	Eddie Torr, Rotherham, South Yorkshire	1932 Minor saloon
458	John Olley, 10 Walters Mead, Ashtead, Surrey	1933 Minor saloon
459	Kenny Moffat, 49 Sannox Drive, Motherwell, Scotland	1933 Minor saloon
460	Mick Roberts, 2 Elmhurst Drive, Southwoodford, London	1932 Minor 2-seater
461	Peter Oliver, 5 Main Road, Long Hanborough, Witney, Oxfordshire	1933 Jensen Special



Spot the difference! David Hinds sent in this photo of two M Type manifolds. Note that the outer/front curves are distinctly different – so much so that when the lower manifold is fitted to the M head, it prevents removal of the restrictor pin. Can anyone throw any light on why there are apparently two M Type manifold designs? Does anyone else have one like the lower one in the above picture?

A quick reminder about the VMR forum. Every December, we open a ‘Virtual Christmas Pub Meet’ on the forum, where members can pop in for a virtual pint (!), meet other members and generally socialize and exchange seasonal wishes. Please do log on over the holiday period and say hello. With our membership spread far and wide across the globe, the forum provides a very effective way of communicating, asking and answering questions and generally keeping everyone informed on restoration progress, and so on. If you have never used the forum before, registration via the home page of the website is simple. If you have registered in the past, but have not logged on for a while because you have forgotten your username and password, simply e-mail me and I can sort you out very quickly. It would be wonderful to see many more members online over the holiday, but of course, actually driving your car on New Year’s Day should take precedence over sitting at the computer!

The Tailpiece article in this issue is re-printed from M 114 – our Winter 2003 Magazine which was published exactly ten years ago. It is not our practice to repeat articles, but there have been several enquiries regarding YF 15 in recent weeks and so a re-print in this case seems justified – particularly as I didn’t have any other Tailpiece story to insert! This Magazine is **your** Magazine and I can only work with the input I get from you guys. There is only so much I can write from my own resources! As soon as I complete this issue, I’ll be starting on M 149, so please send in your copy by the end of January. This reminds me that our Summer 2014 Magazine will be our 50th issue – what a milestone! A bumper issue is already being planned.



Another Minor on the move. New member John Olley has recently acquired John Pallister's 1933 saloon. Here we see the car wrapped on collection day in Crook, County Durham before its trek south to Ashted, Surrey. Below we see the same car in springtime conditions in the Dales – conditions not likely to be encountered in Surrey, we sincerely hope!





Above Ewan Lambess reports great progress with his Australian export chassis Y329.
Below This is half of what he started with!



The 2013 Midland Weekend

Some more photos from our superb Midlands Weekend. I only wish I had 20 more pages for more!



Above Rallyists begin to assemble at Manor Farm. **Below** Col Schiller arrived in his newly-acquired Morris Major. The photo was taken before the engine bay fire that took out the hoses, electrics and burned the paint off the bonnet of this very original car, which is currently being repaired in Sussex.





Above Tourers lined up outside the Bruntingthorpe hangar containing two English Electric Lightnings. Rallyists were given the rare opportunity to sit in the cockpits of these historic fighter jets.
Below Brian Maers' early SV 2-seater readies at the start of one of the driving tests on the farm.





Above There was plenty of glorious heavy metal in evidence over the weekend.
Below Who says vintage motoring is an old man's sport?





Above Lengthening shadows on Saturday evening. Pre-BBQ drinks at Manor Farm.
Below Stuart Clark couldn't make it on Saturday but joined us on Sunday at Gaydon with his ex-Alan Selby, ex-John Seddon 1929 saloon WD 1430.



See you all in Loweswater next July for the Lakeland Weekend!

The 2013 Summer Rally



Further to the report in M 147, here's a selection of photos from our Summer Rally that hopefully captures the essence of this fantastic weekend in the Cotswolds. (All photos Gracefoto)





Above Once again, there was a spectacular MMM turnout this year.
Below Among them was David Hinds in his 1930 M Type.





Above The vintage tourers of Peter Stubberfield and Clive Hamilton-Gould rest as Colin Lee heads for the start line in his 1930 saloon. **Below** Ronald Trumpi queues in traffic.





Above - A pair of two-seaters – but whose spare wheel is angled correctly?
Below A brace of D Types and Roger Burnett's M Type Sportsman's Coupé.





Above What the weekend is all about! **Below** Automobile photographer and reporter Peter McFadyen's Hyper Lea Francis at rest at the top of the Paddock. Peter wrote a superb report on the day.





Above The scene in the evening – the perfect end to an idyllic day and the BBQ gets under way on the hill. **Below** Sunday - Paul Critchley's 1932 Minor saloon at Stanway House in the company of a brace of Flatnose Morris Specials. See you all next year!





Quality over quantity! Two Minors turned up at the Phoenix, Hartley Wintney for our autumn pub meet. Pat Guthrie-Jones (left) and Peter Hills in their vintage models. Pat is a local man, but Peter drove down from Putney for the meet. Peter's 'Out of Africa' 1929 tourer is named Chiriappala (which is Bemba for the one with no hair, i.e. a tourer!). A milestone was recorded, DS 9936 passing the 5,000 mile mark since restoration, which, Peter says, may not seem much since 1992, but the car was off the road for a few years with a damaged diff. and then spent the last nine years garaged while Peter was in India. Peter reports:

“As you mentioned, the VMR pub meets are seldom well supported at this time of the year; only two cars pitched up at the Phoenix Pub. There was FW 1096 belonging to Patrick Guthrie-Jones and DS 9936 of yours truly.

At 08:00 in Putney, London it was very overcast and drizzling but by 10:30 our planned departure time, it was sunny and fine so we fired up Chiriappala and drove straight down the M3. A little hairy but nice and flat so able to do 40+ most of the time with a little rain near the turnoff at Fleet. We arrived just before 12:00 and ours was the first car there. As it was Sandy and my first VMR meeting we started to

wonder if we had the right day and place! However, Ken Allen was in the pub looking for a Minor Saloon to buy. Then Patrick Guthrie-Jones with Brian Bibby pitched up in his nice clean 1930 saloon. Actually numbers attending did not matter much as it gave us time to get to know each other over a beer and discuss, apart from Minors, wine, mathematics and physics of light, etc.

Sandy and I had an excellent lunch at the Phoenix but had to wait for a table cancellation. They do not do bar snacks and I suggest in future you give the pub phone number so those wishing to eat an excellent Sunday roast can book a table. [Ed. Thanks for the tip Peter – it is 01252/842484.]

We departed at 15:30 and were home in an hour but could have been quicker except for the traffic.

I did promise to send you a write up about how I inhibited and restarted DS 9936 for 9 years (while I was in India) and then got it running again (first time). The key take away for members (I got the advice from Jim Peacop of the former Mouldsworth Museum) is before turning the motor over (having stood for a long time), remove the tappet cover and squirt oil on the cams and drives. Crank over manually then apply more oil. I also removed the plugs, squirted oil in each cylinder and then turned the engine until the oil pressure reached its maximum. After reassembly and ensuring the carburettor is clean and all old petrol is drained off then with fresh petrol and the choke on full it fired up straight away. Of course do not forget to fill up with water.

Our plan is to spend the summer in UK and the same in Cape Town, so I have to prepare the car every six months. A great investment has been the CTEK trickle charger and battery reconditioner. I first fitted it to a new battery in August 2011. A further check in October 2012 and then when we arrived back in UK in August 2013, there was no perceptible loss of battery water (I did fill it as full as much possible) and the battery seems in great condition. For a modest investment, about £35, it protects your £150 battery!"



We are delighted that Sarah Gibson has relocated her McEvoy VK 6518 to the UK from Spain. Here it is at the White Hart VSCC meet in Atworth, between Melksham and Corsham. (Photo Chris Dunster)



Ewan Lambes reports from Australia: "Last July I took my 1930 Minor two-seater (M24068) to an all British day in Newcastle. The local Morris club had a Morris Centenary display. The Minor won a trophy for most desirable Morris." Congratulations Ewan!



The 2015 VMR Two Hemispheres Rally



Last things first! The historic Boeing Red Barn is the building where the Boeing story began. It is now located at the Seattle Museum of Flight and contains a wealth of early Boeing exhibits. It will be here that we hold our Grand Farewell Banquet at the conclusion of the Two Hemispheres Rally.

As of the beginning of November, we now have 25 members interested in this unique and very special event and expect more as time progresses. Thanks to those of you who have already expressed an interest. During September, Jayne and I have been busy making provisional plans and started to carry out reconnaissance trips in the local area.

Our first rally recce was to Spada Lake which will be our first outing once rallyists arrive and have had a couple of days to get over jetlag and be reunited with their cars. Spada Lake is a large man-made reservoir which supplies fresh water to the north Seattle metropolis far below. Spada Lake was formed when the Culmback dam was built in 1965. The dam measures 262 ft high at the crest. During the summer, when the water level is at its lowest, the stumps of the original forest trees become exposed. The lake offers dramatic and remote scenery and the rare visitors are provided for with picnic areas. We'll be bringing a picnic with us to this stunning wilderness location.

To get to the lake from our house, we turn left out of our drive and climb for about five miles up into the forest to find a right turn. After about five more miles, the road becomes a dirt logging trail which winds and climbs for a further ten miles up into the remote Cascades backwoods. Shortly before reaching the lake, there is a halt area where visitors must complete a chit providing their car details and expected time of departure – so that mountain rescue services know who is in the area.

We'll be heading up Rolling Creek Road, then following the track which roughly follows Olney Creek to the Information Station in Olney Pass where we will register our vehicles. We will then follow the track anti-clockwise around the lake to the South Shore Boat Ramp where we will picnic. The round trip to the lake will be around 40 miles, climbing steadily from an initial elevation of around 360 feet to somewhere around 1,600 feet up at the lakeshore.



[Spada Lake and the picnic site.](#)

But you are probably mainly interested in car shipping details and an overall cost estimate at this point, and we are working hard on this. We're also planning that a number of the activities during the three weeks will be optional, so that you will have some cost flexibility if need be. We hope to have the first rough estimate, along with an idea of car shipping costs ready shortly.

So now you have a little more information on the first and last events of the rally! We're actually very excited about the Grand Farewell Banquet at the Seattle Museum of Flight. We have made a provisional booking with the Museum for the Red Barn for the final evening and are also in contact with museum's exclusive caterers McCormick & Schmick who have provided us with menus and details of bar facilities that they will be providing for us. This will be a private dinner in this immensely historic building where the very first Boeing aeroplanes were built almost 100 years ago.



[The Boeing Red Barn at Boeing Field, Seattle.](#)

Jayne and I also carried out a recce to Vancouver Island during September, taking a cruise ship overnight from Seattle to Vancouver, then the British Columbia car ferry to Vancouver Island and Victoria. The rally will be taking different ferries to reach Vancouver Island via San Juan Island but the scenery in the entire area is simply breathtaking.

The next thing after rough cost estimates is dates. We're thinking that we need to ensure that the rally concludes in good time before schools return and so we're looking at the last three weeks in August, with cars shipping in late July in order to make sure that they have arrived and cleared customs in advance of the drivers turning up! We hope to have firm dates in place in time for the November Newsletter.

During the month, we were contacted by Richard Allom who is looking at the possibility of flying in from Australia with his family early so that they can hike the dramatic West Coast Trail on the rugged Pacific coast Vancouver Island. We're working with him to provide personal air transport to and from the island and looking after the bulk of their luggage during their hike. If anyone else is thinking of extending their stay in the US around the dates of the rally, please let us know because we would be very happy to facilitate your plans and logistics in any way we can.

Next up is media coverage. Apart from local news coverage during the rally, I am in contact with Public Broadcast TV channel KTCS9 here in Seattle whose producers of their documentary series 'Pie' are looking at the possibility of following us and making a TV programme covering our exploits. More on this exciting development anon.

In other news, we're planning to provide not only clear and full route instructions for our tour routes but also all local maps as part of the rally pack, so that if you do inadvertently get off the route, you will be able to navigate back onto the route. Most of the time we will be in convoy, but not all of the time. There will also be a briefing on local driving rules and regulations at the start of the rally – we don't want any tickets! Also, we're looking at communications options, providing everyone at the start with a Tracfone (pay-as-you go) mobile phone so that we can all stay in contact at all times during the rally. We want to make very sure that everyone has an enjoyable time without the stress of getting lost or breaking down out of contact!

Well, I think that's about all the news so far. I hope to have much more in the way of cost estimates and dates for the M 149. If you think you might be interested in joining in, please let me know so that I can add you to the list of potentially interested parties. If you have any questions, suggestions or concerns at all regarding the rally, please contact us and we will do our very best to answer them.



Two BC car ferries pass in a narrow channel in the Gulf Islands, just north of San Juan Island, where we will be spending three nights. Photo taken on our recce last weekend.

The Gilg Expedition

As we continue to bring you artifacts from the Gilg expedition archive, here we have an article penned by Gilg for the Vacuum Oil Company of South Africa's house magazine 'The Gargoyle'. Vacuum had supported the Gilg and Kay expedition – see lower picture on the next page and the matching Gargoyle logo painted on the Minor's door. There will be more fascinating expedition material coming in M 149.



The Gargoyle

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VACUUM OIL COMPANY
OF SOUTH AFRICA LIMITED

From LIVERPOOL to the CAPE -



Heavy going for a well-laden 8 h.p. car—a scene on the Great North Road, Kenya.



The Morris at Arusha. As the sign on the door indicates, this is Half-way House on the Cape to Cairo route.

GILG EXPEDITION
TRAVELS 13,000
MILES WITH A
MORRIS MINOR

* *



A dramatic meeting in the middle of the Sahara—Gilg and Kay encounter another Morris Minor en route to England from Nairobi.

"The Mighty" and "The Atom." This Pegasus tanker at Johannesburg, makes a fitting background for the Minor.

For the full story of the Gilg Expedition, please turn to page 4.

PEGASUS & Mobiloil



GALVIN & SALES LTD., CAPE TOWN.

Allies that conquered the Desert

*Morris Minor and Mobiloil successfully
tackle the Sahara crossing*

WHAT! Motor across Africa in a baby car? Impossible! You'll never do it. So quoth a friend.

It is just a year ago since I first thought of the possibility of a trans-African run in a baby car.

Having had excellent service from Morris cars, I decided to back my old choice. The next problem was that of a partner. Many "would have liked to come," but none would take the plunge. And then one day I was told of "Just the very man for you." New Year's Day, 1933, saw me in London and meeting "Just the very man"—Walter Kay, commercial air pilot with five years' experience of Africa. Within a few minutes of meeting, we had maps out—flying maps, motoring maps, all sorts of maps.

Plans were soon well under way, and by February 1st we were "all set." Surrounded by a sea of Liverpool unemployed, who swamped our friends, the little blue car stood, her nose pointing southwards, ready for whatever lay before her.

GETTING UNDER WAY.

"Let's get going," said Walter. I depressed the self-starter, and slowly navigating our way through a host of trams, we gained the open road. We were off at last.

Passing through France without event, we came to Spain, country of which rumour had spread grim tales—no motoring at night, always carry arms. No mis-

By
A. CAMERON GILG.

hap, however, attended our passage, though there were many evidences of the unsettled state of affairs. A general untidiness prevailed, and we were glad to leave this country of foul petrol—there are no proprietary brands in Spain, petrol being a Government monopoly.

After unstable Spain, the Rock of Gibraltar came as very welcome security.

At Algiers, we received further valuable help from the Vacuum Oil Company, and found that there was a bus crossing the desert in ten days time. We decided to travel in company with this bus.

It was now March 12th, and I consider that this date marks the real commencement of the trip across Africa. We travelled nearly 300 miles and at the end of the day we had left civilisation behind. We were not to see another city for over three months!

SANDSTORMS IN THE SAHARA.

The next day we reached a village called Bauktaub, where the road proper ended. Before us stretched a plain of sand and stones bounded by arid black hills. This was the beginning of the desert.

We awoke next morning to find a sandstorm raging, but decided to proceed. As soon as we left the shelter of the buildings, we got the wind broadside on. Sand came in through every cranny. Walter was fearful of the effects of sand in the engine, and several times we had to ride on the adjacent railway line, as there were big drifts of loose, soft sand on the road.



Dependability is everything in the Desert—

We sheltered for twenty-four hours at Beni Ounif and then, the storm abating somewhat, carried on to Colomb Bechar, advance headquarters of the Foreign Legion and jumping-off place for the desert crossing.



Negotiating a river-bed in Tanganyika, and (above) Johannesburg welcomes Messrs. Gilg and Kay. Picture on opposite page shows the Morris approaching the desert.

We attempted to take photos of a penal battalion of the Legion at work, but our films were confiscated by the military authorities.

Space does not permit the telling of all we saw and heard of this much-discussed modern mercenary army. Suffice to say that the tales usually told are somewhat tall.

March 19th saw us at Reggan, where we made contact with the bus and signed an agreement with the Transsaharienne Company. In the event of our non-appearance at Gao within five days, they would send a car to search for us. We paid a deposit against this contingency and also engaged an Arab guide, one Bakkik. To make room for him, we transferred our suitcases, etc., to the bus. As it was, the car was crammed to its utmost capacity—the load consisting of three people, 15 gallons of petrol, two gallons of Mobiloil "BB," 40 litres of water, food enough for five days, mineral water, spirits, guns, planks, shovels and ropes, besides maps and small articles.

THE CROSSING FOREDOOMED!

At three in the morning the tiny car passed out of the fort into the desert

night, after a general handshaking, during which the kindly French gave us the impression that we were doomed to failure, and the big bus rather pointedly followed close behind us.

The first hour was a nightmare, as the sand was very soft and constantly the car sank with its heavy load, but always the gallant little engine just managed to pull through, revving terribly. After a time we ran on to a beautiful surface, hard and flat, and soon we were going merrily along at 40 miles per hour. Daylight came presently and we felt much better. Stopping only to refuel, we carried on, anxious to reach the other side. It was terribly monotonous driving, as wherever one looked there was nothing to be seen but an endless expanse of sand—not a hill, nothing to break the flatness except the big white indication signs every 10 kilometres.

A REMARKABLE COINCIDENCE!

After several hours driving, we espied a car travelling towards us. This was an unusual enough experience, as few cars traverse the desert—say twenty a year, not including the buses. But more amazing still—there were *four* cars, a Chevrolet, two Fords and then, of all things, a Morris Minor. Never before had a baby car crossed the Sahara, and here were two of the same make attempting the trip at the same time. Truly a fact stranger than fiction. We stopped and chatted and exchanged views for a few minutes. We were glad to hear later that our fellow-pioneers reached England safely.

At Bidon Cinq, we found two buses rigged out as sleeping cars. Two Arabs,

(Continued on page 15.)

—The Morris depends on MOBILIL.

Allies that Conquered the Desert—(Continued)

who keep charge of the place, doled out petrol to us at 10/- per gallon. Water was obtainable at 5/- per gallon.

We left Bidon Cinq at two the next morning and had been going for about an hour when Bakkik made us stop. He was very excited and, getting out of the car, began to examine the ground. A few moments passed, then "We have lost the track," he said.

There was nothing else to do but follow our own tyre tracks back till we reached the main track. Had it not been for Bakkik, we might not have found out our error for some time, and the consequences might have been serious.

Having regained our course, we drove steadily on in vain pursuit of the bus, till at seven-thirty in the evening we reached Tabankart, first outpost of the south. We had been travelling practically continuously for seventeen and a half hours and had covered 363 miles. We were safely across the Sahara, but were too tired to appreciate the fact.

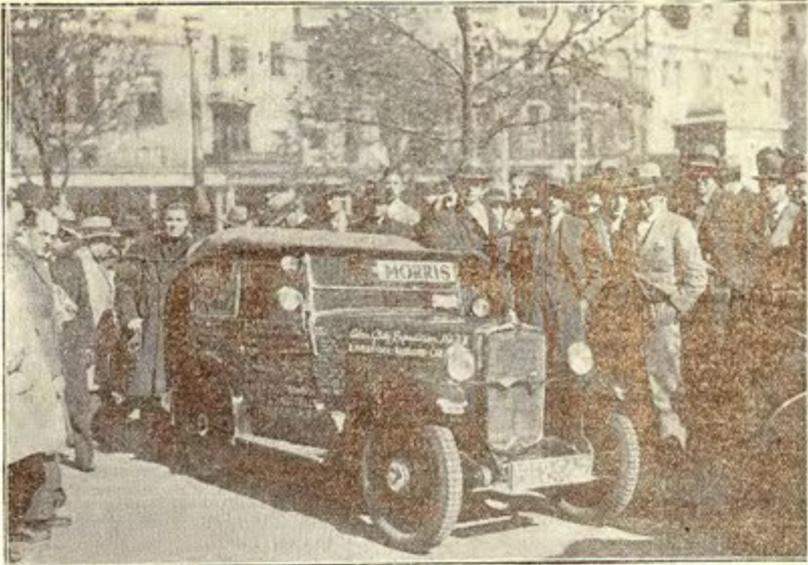
From Gao there was a long, arduous run through equatorial Africa, days of almost unbearable heat and nights ^{alive} alone with mosquitoes. From Kano in Nigeria to the Belgian Congo, a distance of nearly 2,000 miles, there are no hotels, so we slept each night on the ground, a prey to marauding armies of insect life.

And so through to Uganda. British territory again, and we were as pleased as schoolboys at end of term.

One of the essentials of success in a test of this nature is correct lubrication, and I attribute the fact that our engine never missed a beat and behaved perfectly throughout the trip to our unflinching rule of using only Mobiloil "BB" as recommended. Walter was always most careful about the oil supply, and consequently his unremitting attentions, coupled with this oil which stood up to the most gruelling heat, have brought us safely through, with the car a striking testimony to the value of always using the best.

(Note Gilg's correction of the word 'alone' to 'alive'.)

BURG, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 1933.



12,300 Miles in a Baby Car: Scene at the Johannesburg City Hall last Monday when Messrs Gilg and Kay were welcomed after traversing Africa from Tangiers in their Morris Minor.

The Morris Minor Genome



Morris Minor production in full swing in 1933. A batch of chassis are nearing the end of the line.

It was mentioned in the last issue that we have finally completed the Morris Minor Genome – the name we have given our chassis production register assembled with data from the original Morris Motors Morris Minor production Progress Books. Production data for the SWB OHC chassis was completed in 2001 and reported on in M 105 – our Autumn 2001 Magazine and in our 2004 Yearbook. More recently we have been able to capture data for much of the SV production which was reported on in M 144. And now we have completed data capture for the remaining SV chassis as well as the LWB OHC chassis, thus completing the entire Morris Minor production record. All of this data is available to members in the Members' Area of the website. So now we are in a position to prepare overall production statistics for the entire Morris Minor production between 1828 and 1934. The table below summarizes the OHC Minor production, including the LWB cars:

Season	1929	1930	1931	1932
Saloon	9,274	10,987	5,547	
Tourer	2,150	1,303	389	
Van		1,253	871	
2-seater			744	
Family 8				4,029
Sports Coupe				445
SWB chassis	1,212	721	134	
LWB chassis				22
Unassigned	2		3	4
Totals by season	12,638	14,273	7,688	4,500

When it comes to the SV cars, there is a complication. Unlike the OHC Minor production, the SV chassis numbering sequence intermingled SWB and LWB chassis. And since the chassis were laid down in batches, the Progress Books only record the chassis length for the first vehicle in each batch, so it is not possible to filter the data in spreadsheet format in order to count the SWB and LWB chassis. Because of this, an additional column has been added to the SV Genome, indicating L for long wheelbase chassis, so that filtering on the column can be used to gather the statistics we are interested in.

Here are the SV production results:

Season	1931	1932	1933	1934
Saloon (SWB)	2,816	8,553	5,890	6,457
Tourer	153	486	384	495
Van	852	2,450	2,248	2,173
2-seater	1,455	2,756	1,884	1,508
Family 8			2,452	2,075
Special Coupe			181	47
SWB chassis	156	511	279	684
LWB chassis			151	139
Unassigned (SWB)	3	2	8	3
Unassigned (LWB)			1	1
Totals by season	5,435	14,765	13,447	13,554

(Note: 263 1933 model 2-seaters were built prior to the official start of 1933 season production at chassis SV20301, but are included in the 1933 production statistics above. See next page for details.)

Combining these two tables into a single grand total Minor production table, we have:

Season	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934
OHC SWB	12,638	14,273	7,688			
OHC LWB				4,500		
SV SWB			5,435	14,758	10,693	11,320
SV LWB					2,785	2,262
Totals by season	12,638	14,273	13,123	19,258	13,478	13,582

So the grand total Morris Minor production, from 1928 to 1934 was 86,321 vehicles. And to this we need to add about a dozen prototype 1928 fabric saloons. But then, of course, there were the later GPO hybrid vans built on Minor chassis and fitted with Morris 8 engines – but that is a story for another day!

The Notes column of the Progress Books is very revealing. We have noticed in the past that 1934 season Minor chassis are drilled for both RHD and LHD steering box mountings. And now we learn from the Progress Books that LHD Minors were, in fact, produced at Cowley for the export market. The first one was a 5 cwt. van, chassis SV36296. There were 113 examples – all saloons, apart from 7 vans (so there was no such thing as a LHD 2-seater, although there are a large number of cars annotated, “2-seater – export”, suggesting that their specification was different from the home market examples in some way.).

Torben Valerius in Denmark owns a genuine LHD chassis, number SV46297, and the Progress Books confirm that this chassis left the works as a LHD saloon. So far, this is the only known surviving LHD Minor in captivity. Congratulations, Torben – you have a unique Morris Minor survivor!

Chassis SV41564 is of great significance. Laid down 2nd February 1934, and despatched 19th February 1934, it was an engineless 2-seater. The remarks column notes: “M. MINOR 2 SEATER Less Engine. Chassis on permanent loan to SU, used by Miss B Skinner for racing & presented to her as wedding present from Lord Nuffield.” This of course, is the chassis that became the Red Minor, currently nearing the completion of an heroic restoration by David Baldock.



Chassis SV46297, owned by Torben Valerius in Denmark, clearly showing the LHD steering box casting riveted to the front chassis cross-member and the spare holes on the right side.

Another interesting discovery is that fixed-head saloons were manufactured. 236 examples were produced during the 1934 season, starting with chassis number SV38470, and 7 of these were LHD examples. Unfortunately, none appear in the chassis register of surviving Minors.

Then we come to the driving chassis. 1,920 SV chassis were produced in total (1,630 SWB, 290 LWB), many for export and some of these were described as 'unassembled'. And of these 185 went to the GPO for bodying as GPO vans. We also learn that 5,047 LWB chassis were produced between 1932 and 1934, of which most were Family 8 saloons, but 228 were Special Coupes.

Other interesting notes include a large number of cars that have the comment "Engine fitted with a Special Ransome & Marles roller bearing to Crankshaft", and others, "Engine fitted with Hoffman Crankshaft Bearings". Chassis SV11866 which is annotated "Experimental Shop. 15/8/32 2str (War Office)". Then there are a further 93 War Office 2-seaters, plus four chassis delivered to the War Office.

Also of interest is the transition to the 1933 season production. Chassis SV18457 is annotated "1933 model". This was a 2-seater, chassis laid down 9/6/32 and despatched 15/3/33. The next 1933 model is SV19158 (also a 2-seater), and then another 261 1933 model 2-seaters (and one chassis) appear sporadically prior to the start of the 1933 season proper at chassis SV20301. In fact, by early July, all of the 2-seaters came out as 1933 models, the first 1933 season SV saloon (and start of official 1933 season production) being chassis SV20301. Between the 1931 and 1934 seasons, just 1,518 SV 4-seater tourers were built which indicates the waning demand for this model during the early thirties, and explains their rarity today.

Finally, we come to some interesting cars with recorded Oxford registration numbers. Chassis SV929 was annotated as JO 1585, but is no body type or dates given for the production stages. Similarly, chassis SV 3596 became JO 1879 but no other details are given, although we know that this was a prototype 1932 season 2-seater. However, chassis SV3599 (Michael Summers' saloon UR 9708) was laid down 24/4/31 – so probably on the same day. Chassis SV4891 was annotated 'Experimental car. Sold second hand JO 758', and chassis 4982 was similarly annotated, with registration number JO 757. And saloon, chassis SV5582 was 'Sent to Sir William Morris' on 7/9/31. What a find that would be today!



Martin Redmond
Kings Corner
9 Main Road
Biddenham
Bedfordshire

Dear Ian,

I have accessed the Genome spreadsheet in the Members' Area of the website. Should I find LWB chassis listings below SWB? Also, starting with a chassis number, is it possible to find the original registration? Is it a DVLA thing?

[Ed. Martin, for the OHC LWB cars, yes, they follow the SWB cars, which end at 34699. OHC LWB chassis ran from 34700 to 39199 – exactly 4,500 chassis before production ceased on 21st July 1932. For the SV chassis, the situation is slightly more complicated. Production was mixed, and batches of SWB or LWB cars are identified in the Remarks column of the Progress Books (and transcribed in the Genome spreadsheet in column I). Each batch of cars starts with the note 'M. MINOR S.W.B.' or 'M. MINOR L.W.B.'.

Unfortunately, the Cowley Progress Books tell us nothing about vehicle registrations. Apart from a very few isolated Minors registered to Morris Motors and retained by the works for various reasons, registrations were handled by the selling garages after delivery from the works. A few of the surviving registration ledgers from the now-defunct local taxation offices did record chassis numbers, but this is very rare. In my experience, I have never seen a chassis number quoted in any registration records. DVLA will only have records of cars that were 'computerized' in the seventies - perhaps 2% of the original production that had survived to that time. However, although the DVLA has an online vehicle enquiry search facility (linked from the website - <http://www.vintageminor.co.uk/research/research.htm>), this only allows you to enter a registration and vehicle make, and then tells you the vehicle's registration status, but divulges nothing about the vehicle's chassis number. It would be superb if they could give me a complete listing, by chassis number, of all the Minors that are recorded in their computer, but that is not likely to happen!]

Keith Montell
178 Hargreaves Road
Steels Creek,
Victoria 3775
Australia

Hi Ian

I would be prepared to collect subs for Australia and New Zealand. I am a qualified Accountant (CPA) and carry public liability insurance (in case I run off with the loot). I would propose emailing subs forms and if possible having funds deposited directly into a bank account. I would keep a member listing; reconcile payments and forward funds to you.

Loved the 2015 newsletter and we are sorely tempted – our main barrier is finding someone to look after our farm and 30 plus Alpacas.

Should even have the Minor finished by then. I am currently trying to clad the body in aluminium and have realised it will never be a concours winner. But it is still fun and I enjoy the challenge.

[Ed. Keith, this is a very generous offer of help – accepted! See ‘From the Driver’]

Mike Jones
The Pightle
Church Road
Elsing
Dereham
Norfolk

Dear Ian,

Sue and I both heartily agree with your editorial in M 147! I think that those of us who were lucky enough to use pre-war cars as everyday transport view them in a different light from those who buy them now as a hobby or plaything, or to indulge their restoration skills, and who never get round to driving them enough to become confident, or perhaps are dismayed to find that they don't behave like the latest offerings of the industry.

We should take a leaf out of the Rolls Royce Silver Ghost fraternity's book - they seem to go off on Continental journeys of 2,000 or 3,000 miles regularly without a second thought!

Trevor Wilkinson
101 Biggleswade Road
Upper Caldecote
Biggleswade
Bedfordshire

Dear Ian,

I am as guilty as the rest for not using my car on VMR Drive-it Day, just happened to be the 'wrong day'. Having said that I do use my '34 two-seater throughout the year, (it's not put away for winter). It is also driven to wherever we want to go (no trailer), this year that has been to Anglesey, Wiltshire and North Norfolk plus all the local runs, nearly 2,000 miles since January 1st. Distance isn't a problem but I usually keep to under 200 miles in a day but did easily manage nearly 250 miles returning home from North Wales in the spring. In other years it has also been to Eire and Holland.

I think that a little time sorting out a suitable route before setting off makes for enjoyable motoring, as does an enthusiastic passenger, (I'm really lucky on that score). So that's it, suitable route and happy/enthusiastic passenger helps, then go for it and enjoy your car while you are still able. It was a nice autumn day here today so it was taken out for a run, about 25 miles.

Martin Gregory
56 Thorburn Road
Weston Favell
Northampton

Dear Ian,

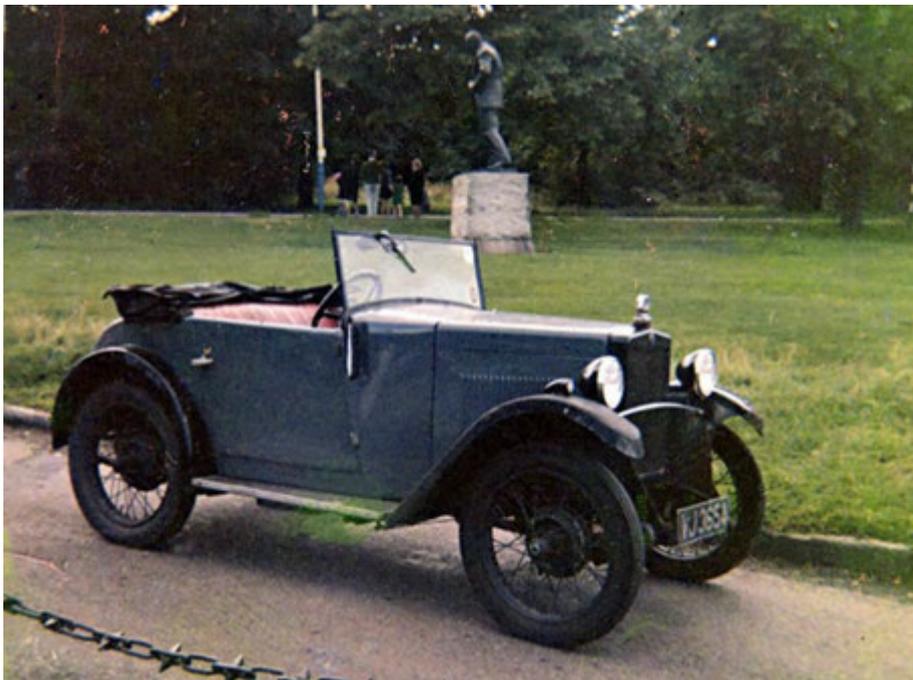
On this subject of using vintage vehicles as everyday transport, I miss the times of my youth when my 1931 side valve two-seater (VJ 3654) was my only form of transport. Mind you that was in the early sixties so it was then a youngster at a mere 30 years. How time flies and life moves on. It is staggering to think that this car will now be over eighty.

As a student in Loughborough I would drive to college from London and back each term, which was a trip of about 120 miles each way. I note from the logs I kept (sad person!) that I went via Chingford and Enfield to Potters Bar and picked up a bit of road destined to become the M25. Then up past St. Albans to Dunstable and onto the M1 to Newport Pagnall. I would not contemplate using the M1 these days. From Newport Pagnall I took the old A50 to Northampton and then on to Welford and Leicester and round the ring road to the A6 for Loughborough. I remember that this took me about 4 or 5 hours. The car always suffered with a slipping clutch, so had to be nursed along. Acceleration was quite mythical, the increasing revs being absorbed in the clutch rather than the road wheels. However, the car never failed on any of these trips.

I took a holiday in North Yorkshire and remember driving through central Manchester, where I was so confused by a traffic cop outside Old Trafford stadium that I misinterpreted his signals and drove on past him as he gave up he presented me with a deep bow. I am sure that would not happen today. I also took the car to the Isle of Man for a holiday, where the hills and the slipping clutch were tested to the limits, but my girlfriend (now my wife) heroically walked up some hills and pushed on others! This fortitude was repaid by running out of petrol late at night on the TT course the day before a race. It is a heinous crime to obstruct the TT course so a phone call to Liverpool for emergency help was necessary and a reluctant local garage owner came out with petrol at £1 for a gallon (usually 5/- in 1966) at 1:00 am. Of course the story about running out of petrol late at night was altogether too good to be believed!

So finally the car was driven from Swindon where lived after college to Barnstaple in Devon to be stored in my parent's garage to keep it safe from the local children who were beginning to use it as a play thing. In the three years that I used the car I had travelled 10,000 miles very reliably albeit rather slowly and in retrospect it was a sad day that I sold it to clear the garage before we went abroad for three years.

So now I have a new octogenarian (1930 saloon UF 7090) to become acquainted with and when I am familiar with its habits and idiosyncrasies I hope that I will feel as confident to use the car as it was intended and travel these distances to avoid all the fuss and expense of trailers.



Harvey Pole
20 Seafield Road
Aberdeen
Scotland

Dear Ian,

I was very interested to read the article on the primary gliders. I only flew one once, and it was quite an experience!

My flying started in the Aberdeen Gliding Club where we had two Hols der Teufel gliders which lay in a shed. This is in the early 1960's. We fettled the best up to make it airworthy and each did a few flights. There was no bodywork at all, and no instruments save a piece of wool tied to a bracket. I got 350 feet from a winch launch and my "circuit" was a very swift 360. That was really flying by the seat of the pants!



Holly House
Station Road
Chipping Campden
Gloucestershire

Hi Ian,

Due to overseas holidays with the family, WE 6554 and I have not been around for the last couple of VMR Prescott weekends. I did, however, manage to attend the VSCC meeting at Prescott in August where I bumped into the previous owner David Whittle (see above – Dave is on the left, self on the right).

As you know, David featured with the 1929 OHC tourer in some of the previous VMR magazines. It was nice to reminisce with him about his time with the car and its earlier history, particularly the initial work carried out by Phil Knight in the '60's and the subsequent restoration work by John Peckham in the '70's. Since acquiring the car in 2009 I have ensured that the car is very well maintained and work carried out, as appropriate, to ensure it is in nice condition, the latest project seeing some improvements to the bonnet and body paintwork.

Due to a continuing back problem, medium to long journeys with the Morris are not on the agenda, but I am pleased to report that it is still in regular use in and around the North Cotswolds. Of all the vintage cars I have owned over the years I have had more fun with WE 6554 than the rest. It's a pleasure to drive and our dog Izzy simply adores it.



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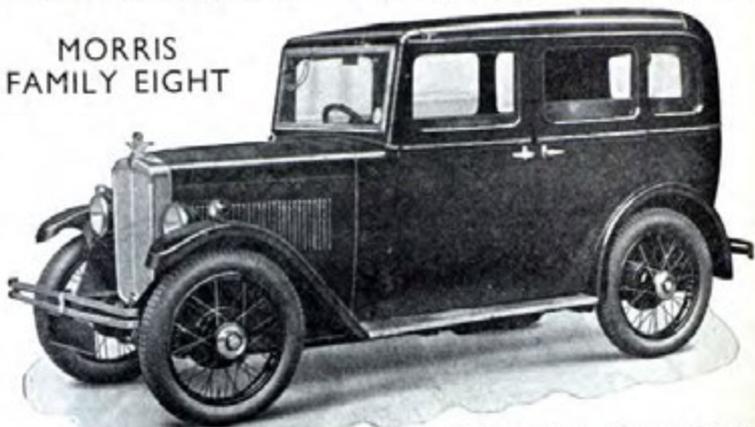
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1929 Fabric Minor Saloon (M11282)

Total body off restoration and very sound car indeed. Engine rebuilt by Sports and Vintage Motors and about run in by now. Present owner since 1986. Ex-Mouldsworth Motor Museum. On road summers only for local Club runs and Rally. Housed in insulated and dehumidified garage. Reason for Sale - due to age, down-sizing collection to 1932 M-Type MG and 1926 Cowley Tourer. Albert Spence Tel: 01856/771295 (Orkney Island). (4/11/13)



1930 coachbuilt saloon WD 1321 (M24783, engine 25409)

Registered 30/9/30.
Much work completed.

David King paulinedavid@live.co.uk

(1/8/12)

1932 Minor 2-seater TV 5295

In sound condition, with good chassis and bodywork. Very good canvas hood and sidescreens (no damage), and good interior, although this could do with a clean. All original fittings, including detachable front apron.

This car has been off the road for some time and needs recommissioning; the engine does not run at the moment, but does turn and with a little tlc, this will make a very good, useable car, which could be run as it is, or improved. We like it as it is. V5C.
The Vintage Petrol Pump Company 01947/895289 or 07876/741183



1934 Morris Minor Maddox Special EN 5810

This vehicle is unique and believed to be the sole survivor, and possibly the only one made. It is in original condition (no restoration work) and looks and runs great. It has spent the last ten years in a Heritage Classic Car & Motor Museum in the USA.

Serious offers please to:-

Ian Samuel, 13845C Loyalist Parkway, Picton, Ontario, Canada or e-mail me at carbonlogic@kos.net

(17/8/11)



1933 McEvoy Morris Minor TJ 1836 (SV31850)

The ex-Bev Hicks, Tony Dunster car. Restoration virtually complete, just needs some trim finishing.
OIRO 25,000 Euros

Roger Carrette, Belgium
carrette.roger@skynet.be

(15/6/12)



1932 OHC Cunard Calshott Special MU 5741 chassis M35723

The extremely rare car is very original, has history from the first owner, including photos, and the car has run less than 600 miles since a £4,500 engine rebuild. All aluminium body,

Rotax headlamps, history file, heritage certificate, spares and all-weather hood and sidescreens. See The Automobile for August 1997 for an article on this car. OIRO £15k.

For more information e-mail John at seddonjohn@orange.fr

(1/6/12)



Spares for Sale

For Sale Large quantity of SV Minor spares, following the sale of my 193 saloon. For details, see the VMR Forum (Our Cars – JF 4238). John Pallister jpallis001@aol.com. (4/11/13)

For Sale After selling my 1928 Minor in 2010, I have the following spares available: block, rims - poor condition clutch pedal, brake cross shaft, rear axle housing, wheel brace, head, rocker cover, exhaust manifold, tail shaft spider, valve springs, rockers, radiator, suspension spring leaves, fan & pulley, assorted gearbox parts, distributor, original style hose clamps, flywheel, clutch assembly bell housing, speedo drive gearbox end, oil filler neck, handbrake assembly & shoes, brake cam levers, 2 rear axles - large holes, 2 steering box repair "c" spanners, rear hubs, valves, camshaft, camshaft bevel gear set, brake back plates, 3 carbys that fit manifold- not S.U. Ian Hancock, Avoca Beach, NSW, Australia dorothea6@optusnet.com.au. (2/3/13)

For Sale Set of four Avon Triple Duty Sidecar tyres and tubes. Have been in store for many years, so three of them have small cracks in the side walls. Ideal to at least get your Minor rolling. £50 for the set. Tony Wildey, 39 Rectory Lane, Poringland, Norwich, Norfolk, NR14 7ST. Tel. 01508/493848 or ynot989@btinternet.com. (15/5/12)

For Sale Complete ash frame body for Morris Minor Semi-Sports, requiring some minor finishing work, but basically complete with door frames, etc. I would be willing to part with this for a reasonable £750 as I need the room to move onward with other projects. This is a good opportunity for someone who is looking for a project. If any prospective purchaser is also looking for the rest of the "components" i.e. chassis, OHC engine, etc., then I also have these items that could be put together by negotiation. Please contact Tony Gamble by email at anthony.gamble@btconnect.com or by telephone at 01757/270308. (1/8/11)

For Sale I have decided to sell off some of my stock of Minor spare parts, as we will not have the storage when our new house is completed. Those interested should contact Neville Wilson by e-mail at neville.val.wilson@gmail.com. (11/7/11)

For Sale I have 5 of the later, pre Magna type hubs plus 3 for repair (cracked round flange) £80.00. Includes MINOR stamped hubcaps although they are a bit dented here and there! Rims and spokes removed as scrap! Some rust on face of hubs but interiors come with good amount of vintage grease. Some good secondhand rims available if required £25 each. Toby Sears on 01590/644269 or e-mail themings@yahoo.co.uk. (11/7/11)



For Sale Gideon Booth fibreglass body for a 1934 Minor 2-seater, complete with front apron, wings, doors, threshold/sills and steel bonnet (if required).

When these were available, they retailed at well over £800, the wings alone were over £200 a pair. In addition a chassis could be arranged to go with it. Located in Reading or Hampshire coast.

oiro £850

Toby Sears

themings@yahoo.co.uk 01590/644269 or 07790/533619. (25/1/11)

Spares Wanted

Wanted Carburettor for 1932 SV Minor in order to complete rebuild of long standing. If you can help, please ring Tom Cantle on 0117/9780621 or e-mail to tomandgloria@tiscali.co.uk (6/9/13)

Wanted Smiths 0 to 80 mph speedometer, as originally fitted to the Wolseley Hornet. Martin Redmond martinredmond@btinternet.com (8/8/13)

Still wanted urgently One or a pair of fluted headlamp glasses for SV Minor headlamp. Brian Maeers brianmaeers@gmail.com (28/7/13)

Wanted for OHC Minor: Pair of tinplate door handles, radiator badge, Sparton horn, fuel cap, steering box attachment casting (as riveted to the front cross-member), pair of early alloy brake backplates, window pulls, 'Baby' calormeter, radiator cap, original pattern scuttle-mounted ignition coil. **For SV Minor:** Three late pattern (large diameter) steel brake backplates, pair of headlamps. Ian Grace vintageminor@gmail.com (28/7/13)

Wanted for my 1930 Morris Minor Semi Sports 4-speed gearbox. Would prefer a complete working unit. Original white faced oil gauge (in working order would be great). Furthermore I am looking for old used leather covers for my Semi Sports seat and backrest. Old and used to match the cars unrestored condition and the charm of the vehicle. The colour is unimportant because it can be changed if necessary (but red would be ideal). Alternatively a good used seat and backrest would do it as well. **Also wanted** for my 1930 MG M-Type Midget speedometer (80 miles) in working order. Original 1 1/8" bronze carburettor (a sound bronze body would do it). Electrics for the dashboard panel (the big thing on the right side behind the panel) or complete panel. Items can be picked up in England. Volker Tilly (Germany) Tel. 0049-160-97660205, e-mail: volker.tilly@online.de. (30/5/13)

Wanted M type basic restoration project. Only essential item is genuine chassis (any condition) with radiator and headlamp supports desirable. Anything else welcomed but genuine M type motor and other parts already owned. UK delivery or pickup can be arranged. Please email Alex at aldot@ihug.co.nz (8/5/13)

Wanted I'm still looking for a sidelight, along with two headlamp assemblies for my 1929 Minor tourer. Ray McCrary 1939mgtb@comcast.net (22/12/12)

Wanted I am looking for an M type to go trialing with, so a scruffy but mechanically good car would be most suitable. Derek Chatto dandgchatto@tiscali.co.uk (22/11/12)

Wanted I have been looking for a remote gear change for a Minor four-speed gearbox, or the parts to make one complete. There are various types and I would consider anything. I have been kindly offered an incomplete Wolsley remote but I need the parts to make it work. A complete one would be very good but a broken example might provide all I need. Sam Christie s_christie04@yahoo.co.uk (21/11/12)

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YF 15 – A Hot Little Number



Barbara Skinner (later Mrs. John Bolster) at the wheel of the TCS Special YF 15 at Shelsley Walsh on September 3rd 1932, when she annexed the Ladies Cup with a time of 56.6 sec.

While two Morris Minor based Skinner Specials were campaigned in the thirties by the Skinner family, a larger and earlier Morris-based Special known variously as Smoky or the TCS Special (Carl's full name was Thomas Carlisle Skinner) is less well documented.

The former name was somewhat irreverently given to YF 15 by the lads in the workshop at the S.U. Carburetter Company, Adderley Park, Birmingham, who worked on the car. Two such cars were constructed on Cowley chassis, probably by Morris Commercial Cars in Coventry. One became Carl's personal mount, while the other went to Carl's third brother Bill Skinner who had no connection with S.U. Both specials were powered by surplus 2,468 c.c. six-cylinder MG 18/100 Tigress engines and stopped by servo brakes. Due in part to a disastrous debut in the 1930 Brooklands Double Twelve race, only five 18/100's were completed by MG, but 25 sets of bodies and engines had already been produced. At least two of these units came into the hands of Carl Skinner, who used them to power the specials in question. Others were disposed of by W. E. Humphries, the Euston Road motor trader who bought the remaining Tigress spares from Abingdon in the late thirties and sold the engines complete with clutch and gearbox, but without the carburetters for £35.

YF 15 was fitted with coachwork provided by Jensen in the style of the 18/100, presumably because the surplus Tigress bodies did not fit the Morris chassis, or perhaps because MG used all their surplus Tigress bodies on subsequent production 18/80 Mk II tourers. However it was not Carl but his daughter who campaigned the car at Shelsley Walsh in the early thirties after her father passed the car on to her. From the Midland Automobile Club records, we learn that Barbara annexed the Ladies Cup on September 3rd 1932, with a time of 56.6 sec in YF 15. She was back at Shelsley the following September where she then achieved a time of 53.2 sec. In 1934, Barbara used Smoky to tow her new competition car, the White Minor, to speed events, and until recently nothing more was known of the car beyond the mid thirties.

The unusual registration number of this car invited further research. YF 15 was first registered in London, but like so many other County records, these London registration records have not survived. But

in 2000, I discovered that there is a very useful little book prepared by Noël Woodall and edited by Brian Heaton simply entitled Car Numbers, which details the current owners of cherished numbers and the vehicles to which they are now attached. A quick check confirmed that YF 15 was indeed alive and well, but now manifests itself, not as a Range Rover or BMW, but a 1926 3/4½ Bentley Special owned by Sue Shoosmith. A call to Sue confirmed this. Sue recounted that the car was originally owned by the celebrated Bentley special builder Gordon “Mac” McDonald.

Two chance meetings in the summer of 2001 then provided further tantalizing clues as to the possible fate of the original YF 15. First, and by an almost unbelievable coincidence, I overheard a conversation in the Royal Oak in Gretton, during the VSCC Prescott weekend. The chap in question was not involved with the Prescott meet, but was merely traveling through the area that evening to visit his girlfriend and had stopped when he saw a number of interesting old cars in the car park. He was telling one of the owners that his father used to own a vintage Bentley Special. Nothing very unusual in that perhaps, were it not for the fact that, for some inexplicable reason, he mentioned the registration number of the Bentley – YF 15. The gentleman turned out to be none other than Alexander McDonald, Mac’s son.

Alexander remembered the Bentley well. He put me on to Graham Williams who had been involved with the car since around 1950 when, as a schoolboy, he cycled to Mac’s house every morning, threw his bike in the garden and had Mac drive him to school, thereby accumulating immeasurable “street cred” among his mates. Graham went on to take an apprenticeship at Meadows in Wolverhampton where he was able to support Mac and his Bentleys with numerous machining jobs. Mac originally bought the Bentley in 1934, but it was not until after he had returned from military service in 1947 that he set to work developing the car. Around 1955 to 1957, the car underwent a total rebuild which included the fitting of a semi-stressed skin aluminium body constructed on a ¾” square steel tube frame which was bolted to the chassis by forty or so ¼” bolts, thereby providing it with amazing rigidity. Mac sold the car to Kay McCosh on 22nd July 1962 - the day after Graham’s wedding, where it was used as the bridal conveyance. Graham believes that the number YF 15 was transferred onto the Bentley in the early fifties.

Mac owned two other vintage Bentleys, and had a penchant for two-letter, two-digit registration numbers, not for any reason of vanity or status, but simply because they fitted neatly on the rear cycle wings. One of Mac’s other Bentley Specials had been assembled entirely from unused Bentley spares in the early sixties. This car, named Fat Boy (because of its bench seat), had a very similar registration number, UK 15, which had been transferred from a Wolverhampton Corporation bus for the same reason – first to Mac’s new Hillman Husky and then to Fat Boy. Kay McCosh, it turned out, was Sue Shoosmith’s father, who raced and hillclimbed the car for many years before the car passed to his daughter who continues the family tradition in YF 15 to this day. Kay also ended up with three Bentleys, including Fat Boy which he also acquired from Mac. When Kay died, his three children drew lots for their father’s Bentleys. Sue won YF 15, Gerard won Fat Boy, and Christian ended up with the standard 4½.

But getting back to Smoky, I had another chance encounter with Jay Hall at the 2001 VSCC/VMR Driving Tests at RAF Henlow just one week after bumping into Alexander McDonald at Gretton. Jay told me of a scrapbook of early MG articles and advertisements doing the rounds in MG circles. In it, there are two adverts which undoubtedly refer to Smoky and which date from around 1950. The first advertisement was placed by a Mr. Boyle of 206 Coventry Road, Coleshill, Birmingham in Motorsport in October 1951. The advert quotes the car as a sports four-seater, recently overhauled and in first class condition. New lamps and radiator block, twin carbs., dual ignition, Girling brakes, Marles steering, Armstrong and Houdaille shockers, Lucas lighting and ignition, bodywork sound and presentable, Shelsley 53 secs., £240, which all clearly identifies the car as YF 15.

The second advert was placed by a gentleman named J. A. Chapman in Autosport, quoting the car as an MG Skinner Special, ex-Barbara Skinner, built by SU, Tigress engine, 10,000 miles, Austin A90 valves/guides (so must be after 1948), Rover P4 carb. (so must be after September 1949), Girling brakes, twin spares, Jensen body, acceleration phenomenal, Shelsley 53 secs. £240. J. A. Chapman, Redcote, Doddestone, Cheshire. There can be no doubt that the car in question was also YF 15. As another clue to the date of this advert, there is an adjacent advert for a December 1949 MG TC, for which the asking

price was £750, which suggests a publication date shortly thereafter. In search of more information, Jay called every Chapman in or around Doddestone, but with no success. Finally, he visited the village and found two people who knew of Chapman. He was possibly an ex-RAF Flying Officer – a bit of a shadowy figure who dealt in cars – possibly in the motor trade. He had “numerous old and interesting cars”, including an MG K3, but unfortunately, there was no longer any trace of him in the village. Can anyone provide any more information on Mr. Chapman?

It has been suggested that Mac McDonald might have acquired the number YF 15 from the London registration authority, the original car having been scrapped at an earlier date. In the light of the aforementioned classified advertisements, this now seems very unlikely. Another possibility relates to a practice prevalent around 1950 when motor taxation was £1 per HP, but was only £10 for new cars. Owners of thirsty cars of large horsepower discarded their registration numbers, claiming that they had found their cars, with no number plates, in a scarp yard. They were then registered as new cars and therefore attracted a much lower flat rate taxation. However, if this was the fate of YF 15, then how did the number find its way onto the Bentley? A third and far more likely scenario is that Mac obtained the number YF 15 in the same manner as he obtained UK 15 – through Berty Hopcutt, a motor dealer in Horsley Fields, Wolverhampton, who was a close associate of Mac's. Perhaps Berty had the Morris in stock and alerted Mac to the two-letter, two-digit number. Mac's Bentley was originally registered YP 2999, so perhaps a straight swap was agreed, in which case, Smoky may have been re-registered as YP 2999. In any case, the two adverts clearly show that not only did the car survive the war, but that development work continued on it into the 1950's, and the not inconsiderable asking price of £250 suggests that it was in very sound condition at that time. What was the ultimate fate of YF 15? Was the car broken up at this time, or, as seems more likely, was it passed on with a new registration number? If so, has the car survived, unrecognized and incognito? Who can say more?



Barbara Skinner in action at Shelsley Walsh, this time without the sidemounted spare, but with a hood and fold flat windscreen. The date was possibly July 1932 or July 1933.



Ken Martin took his recently-refurbished 1930 Minor saloon VX 4590 for a spin for the camera in early November. The glint of the autumn sunshine on the new paint, contrasted by the lengthening afternoon shadows add to this superbly atmospheric scene.

