



BRANCH OF THE MORRIS MINOR OWNERS' CLUB

Committee

Chairman; John Green 01709 373561 neverdareafool@hotmail.com

Secretary; Di Belcher, 01709 376250 dicolbelcher@talktalk.net

Treasurer; Colin Belcher 01709 376250 dicolbelcher@talktalk.net

Editor; Peter Fawcett 01142 301023 jagxjsport@btinternet.com

**Meeting venue: 'The Waverley', Brinsworth Road, Catcliffe, Rotherham,
S60 5RW**

Meeting dates: the third Wednesday of the month at 20-00hrs

MAY 2014

Via the tie bar bush, more rubbish from ykw.

Again not a lot to spout about, but our last meeting went well with a profitable raffle and another of Mick's entertaining quizzes. Sympathy was shown over Shane's unfortunate episode of having his car stolen and burnt out with considerable anger at the lowlife who carried out the deed. I shouldn't like to be in their shoes if Shane ever found out who they were.

I outlined the events that I had been busy organising, the Drive It Day and the Host Day being the most important. Both were well accepted by members and we look forward to the dates: Drive it Day April 27th; Host Day August 10th. Be there, please!

We are enormously short of articles either factual or entertaining, so please get your brains working and your keyboard fired up. Should your writing skills be a little rusty, then our editor will be happy to 'edit' accordingly.

John.

Forthcoming events.

The sadness this month is the cancellation of the Sheffield and Hallamshire Hope Show in June, but this will be back next year under a different format. Also, cancellation till further notice of the Hope Lions' Show in July, the future of which sounds doubtful; a true shame, for it was an excellent day out in anyone's book.

Events that are going ahead are:-

May 11th, Barnsley MMOC at Elsecar, pre booking is advised.

June 15th, Northern Regional Rally at Kirklees Light Railway, pre booking would be helpful (see West Yorkshire Branch website for more details).

And of course, June 28th/29th MMOC National Rally at Kelmarsh Hall; entry form in the March/April Minor Matters.

July 20th, Madmog. One not to be missed for it must be the best rally field in the MMOC (the Carvery recommended too!). Entry forms on the Mansfield website or ask JG who has dozens.

July 25th to 27th, Brid and Wolds Camping Weekend at Wansford. I got told off for missing this last time, so get your tents out and have an enjoyable weekend. See the Brid and Wolds website for more details.

That's all for now but don't forget our Host Day on August 10th, we will need Stewards etc. Tombola gifts are being collected now, so come on and be generous!

More next month.

The great unleaded debate revisited

Over the past couple of months it has been surprising how many cylinder heads for unleaded conversion

have passed through my hands. To complete this task I strip the head down, taking out the valves etc, removing all the studs and thoroughly decoking the ports and combustion chambers, degreasing. Then, it is off to my favorite engineering shop for the deed to be done. I always use and recommend Rotherham Engine Supplies (RES) at Meadowhall for this task. They are the only company that can do it correctly, using a Serdi Millennia machine which cost £16000 ten years ago, so excellent results are expected. The Serdi is a most phenomenal machine, made in France, air operated, and even the bed which the head is bolted down to floats on a bed of air. The accuracy of this machine is such that on completion of replacing the exhaust seats and refacing the inlet seats, the valves will all go back together without having to grind them in. Now that is accuracy and it saves the palms of your hands that suffer when you hand grind the valves in.

Involved in the operation the valve guides are usually replaced, the head is surface ground, pressure checked, cleaned and vacuum testing of the valve seats ensures that they are sealing correctly. Now this all comes out at a price but I can guarantee it is in line with any unleaded head available from Morris Minor specialists and vastly superior. Most cylinder heads that are advertised by specialists and in the press are usually done by some back street outfit that uses a Vee Gee valve seat cutter. These tools are ancient! I used one when I first started in the motor trade 50 years ago. Yes, when they were new they were reasonably accurate but after all these long weary years they, like us, get a bit tired. These heads usually are not surface ground, do not have new valve guides and are not checked for seating etc or thoroughly cleaned. So, 'caveat emptor', mate! Should you be wanting your head converting for unleaded please give me a call and we can have a chat about it.

There has always been chatter about Metro heads being suitable for unleaded use; don't believe it! Metro heads with the number 12G202 are not all suitable, but late ones probably are. Identifying them is impossible unless you have access to a spectrograph. The only way you can guarantee a Metro unleaded head is if you obtain one with the number CAM4180. These are available from post-1989 engines with the type no 99HE.



This is a head I recently did for a friend; the rusty surface appearance is actually preservative and lousy camera work (not mine!)

JG

(Editor's note: I can vouch for RES and their expertise. With their unleaded head and electronic ignition, I get instant starting and full compression with no worries about valve seat recession in the long term. PF)

Nostalgia

On our recent holiday to Spain we were lucky to see the All Spain Volkswagen rally again. We usually manage to be there when it is on but have missed out for the past couple of years (must get the wife some lessons in calendar reading!). This year we got it just right, for the rally had been brought forward and the weekend usually reserved for the VW's was allocated to Lambretta Scooters. I know which one I would

rather see, between a load of mods with their ridiculously long radio aerials and dozens of spot lamps, and souped-up VWs drag racing down the main street in the town; no contest!.

But the thing that got me excited was the two little varmints pictured below, both Abarths, the big one a 600 and the mini one a 500, and both very highly tuned. They had come all the way from Portugal and we hadn't seen them for several years. The nostalgia of seeing these types of car in the 1960s, racing at Mallory and Cadwell etc against the Mini Coopers and beating them, came flooding back. I was confident that the small one was a genuine Abarth, but the bigger one, I suspect, could have been a cheat but very well done. I was not allowed to go too near and conduct a full investigation, but in either case both of them looked the business.



I couldn't resist including this. It is a life-size bronze of Ava Gardner (note the shiny bits!!!) who starred in the film, 'Pandora and the Flying Dutchman' which was filmed in Tossa de Mar in the 1950s.

JG

(Editor's postscript: Carlo Abarth, a Yugoslav, founded his tuning emporium in 1949 which was absorbed by Fiat in 1971. He was Italy's answer to John Cooper and his products were equally exciting to drive. All Abarths are highly-prized today. PF)

THE MINOR LITERATURE

One of the joys of owning a Morris Minor is the plethora of literature available surrounding its origins and subsequent development, so that any enthusiast may instantly assume 'aficianado' status.

Below, I review texts comprising my own bench collection of Minor literature which is by no means exhaustive, and excludes the huge bibliography devoted to maintaining and restoring the Minor.

The first serious, scholarly, text devoted to our cars was Paul Skilleter's 'Morris Minor: the World's Supreme Small Car' (Osprey Publishing Ltd., 1981), and even after over thirty years since publication, it still remains as the most authoritative history of the Minor's inception and development. Skilleter was first employed as a highly skilled photographer on 'Motor', subsequently moving to 'Classic Cars', and then emerging as a prominent Jaguar historian with several erudite texts devoted to that marque. He is currently a publisher in his own right.

Ground-breaking when published, much of Skilleter's material is now common knowledge amongst enthusiasts, but access to Cowley's archives enabled much unpublished material on prototypes and upgrades to the Minor which never saw production, to see the light of day. Of particular interest are Gerald Palmer's handsome 'New Minor' project, Issigonis's total redesign of the Minor monocoque as early as 1951, and Austin's stylist, Dick Burzi's re-design of the Minor which emerged in production as the Wolseley 1500 and Riley 1.5. It was this Burzi design which re-emerged in the antipodes as the Morris Major and Austin Lancer, both of which never appeared on the British market.

Inevitably, the huge success of the Morris 1100 from its introduction in 1961 eclipsed any radical development of the Morris Minor and thereafter sales rapidly declined, with an attendant neglect of its development potential. In the light of this, the Minor's attenuated production run is remarkable.

Skilleter's narrative reads well as the Minor story unfolds (disregarding an irritating over-use of the semi-colon!). Now out of print, copies can generally be found at autojumbles for a modest outlay.

Should you wish to place the Minor within the history of the Morris marque from 1913 when the first Morris Oxford appeared, until its demise in 1983 when the last Morris Ital left Cowley, then there is no better read than Harry Edwards' encyclopaedic 'The Morris Motor Car: 1913-1983' (Moorland Publishing Company Ltd., 1983). Edwards's text benefits from a clear exposition of the enormously complex range of Morris cars during the inter-war years to the three-model rationalisation of 1948 (Minor MM, Oxford MO, Six MS), and through the BMC and BL years to their much-maligned Ital swan song. The text is supported by exhaustive specification sheets and production figures for each model catalogued. A must for any Morris enthusiast, Edwards's text is still in print but used copies are available at reduced cost at autojumbles. For more esoteric tastes, Edwards also published 'Morris Commercial Vehicles' (Sutton Publishing, 1992).

The Morris Register published 'Morris Cars: the first thirty-five years', a compilation of photographs from the period under discussion with extended captions. The Register also reprinted a series of articles and road tests from the 1930s which had originally appeared in 'Practical Motorist'.

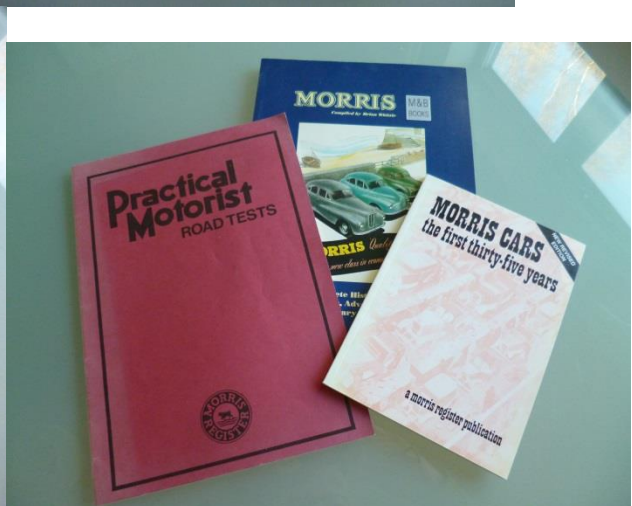
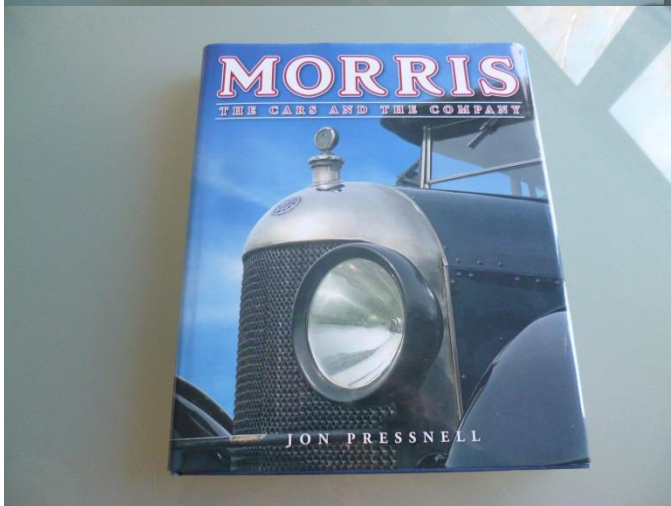
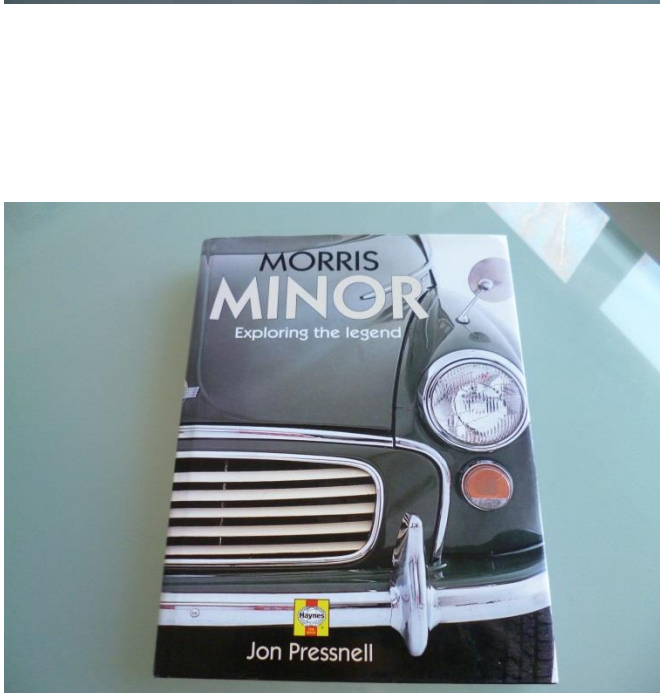
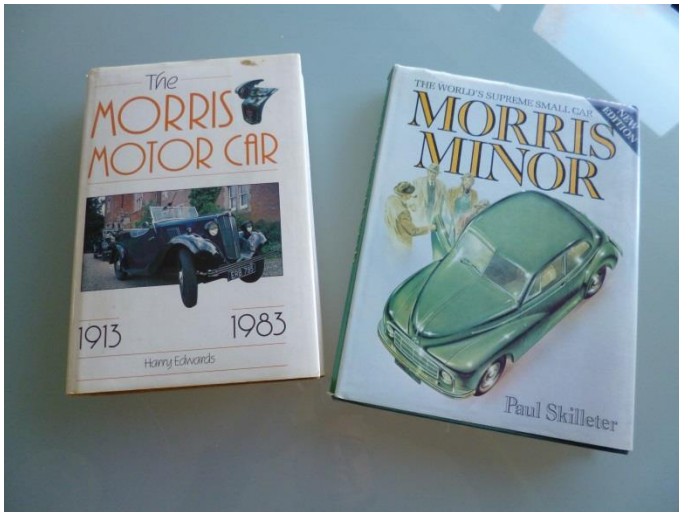
Should you crave a synoptic view of the Minor's history, then Ray Newell's 'Morris Minor' (Shire Publications, 2011) is an authoritative and well-written précis with superb illustrations, many culled from contemporaneous Morris publicity material. Newell's text is an obvious starting point for any enthusiast compiling a bench collection on the Minor. Still in print, it represents remarkable value.

Interesting publishing phenomena, which have accompanied the rapid growth of the classic car movement, are compilations from Brooklands Books Ltd. of articles on a huge range of makes and models, reprinted from contemporaneous journals. Pertaining to our cars, there are two substantial volumes, 'Morris Minor MM and Series 2' and 'Morris Minor 1000', each of over 150 pages. Although there is no linking commentary in this most comprehensive compilation of Minor material available, nevertheless it remains a

'must' for aspiring 'anoraks' or well-seasoned practitioners (eg. JG and PF!). For any enthusiast wishing to examine in microscopic detail the development of the Minor, this is most emphatically the best source.

But for avid followers of publications pertaining to motoring history, a new 'genre' has emerged. Noted authors, when engaged with marque histories, dilate not only on the cars but also on the personnel involved in their production, and therefore upon underlying management decisions. Graham Robson's definitive history of the Standard car is typical, but Jon Pressnell's recent production, 'Morris: the Cars and the Company' (Haynes Publishing, 2013) is surely a triumph, and necessary reading for any 'Morrisiste'. Pressnel traces the Morris history from its humble beginnings 'fettling' undergraduates' bicycles, through the vintage and inter-war years when Len Lord introduced the market-leading 'Series' cars, to Lord's dominance of the BMC years when Morris was relegated to second division status beneath Austin, and culminating in the demise of the Rover group. It is a sad tale of managerial incompetence in the face of real engineering ingenuity and prowess, presented with real narrative skill and impeccable documentation; along with his equally erudite 'Morris Minor: Exploring the Legend' (Haynes Publishing, 1968), 'Morris: the Cars and the Company' is required reading for any Minor owner with even a passing interest in its origins.

Prof PF.



Covers of publications alluded to in the text.