

Malvern Hills Branch Newsletter

March 2016



Welcome to the March *international* edition of the branch newsletter.

This month we return to our regular meetings at the Huntsman PH, Green Street at about 8pm.

Saturday 13th February

Drive out, Meet at Rowberry's Nursery at Chaddesley Corbett at 12 ish.

Tuesday 8th March

Back at the Huntsman PH meet at 8pm, sorry I have not been able to arrange the Footman James talk, but there is a lot to discuss about our branch rally and the Morris marathon.

Saturday 9th April

Provisional open day at David Manners Group (Morris Minor Centre Bham), at their shop at Oldbury. Details to be confirmed.

Tuesday 12th April

Social at the Huntsman PH meet at 8pm (Branch Rally planning).

Sunday 8th May

Branch Rally Brockhampton Hall, near Bromyard.

Tuesday 10th May

Social at the Huntsman PH meet at 8pm.

Our Feb meeting was held at Rowberrys garden centre, Chaddesley Corbett. I was a great success as can be seen from Daves report.

Still having a few problems with the emails going missing and the like so not everyone has been emailed their copy of the branch newsletter due to gremlins in the system. As a work around I will be adding a link to a condensed version of the newsletter (most of contact details have been taken off) on our web site.

Treasurer's Trivia

Hello Everyone

Our meeting at Rowberry's last month was a great success. The people and Minors kept arriving and some of us were starting to spot Minors we did not recognise. The answer was soon known to us as owners came into the restaurant and introduced themselves as Birmingham branch members. They had seen we were having our meeting at Rowberry's and decided to come along. What a great crowd they were. I thoroughly enjoyed talking to them both inside and with their Minors in a rather perishing cold car park. At least it was dry! Having our winter meetings in the daytime continues to work very well and the last couple of months have been particularly well supported. Thank you to everyone for coming along and supporting the branch. Don't forget we are back to evening meetings in March.

Membership- I know I mentioned it last month but do not forget renewals are due next month. Some members pay by standing order but if you do not please let me have your renewal at the next meeting or you can of course send it to me.

Rally- The entries are starting to come in. We have 15 to date; although this may not seem many yet it is not an unusual number at this stage. The trophies are being ordered and plans for the memento are in hand. I will bring entry forms with me to the next meeting or you can download one. We will need donations for the raffle and tombola; please let me or any committee member have any items you may wish to donate.

I have still not done the rear wheel cylinder on the 'MM' yet. I had hoped to do it this week but have been laid low by a very nasty bug! Still as I write this I am starting to feel a little bit better so hope to have the Morris out shortly. See you all at the March meeting.

Dave



Classic Cars in Spain

Chapter 1 – A Beginning

Although Spain is a big country, my experience over some 23 years has been that there are not many truly classic cars about. My wife, Pauline, and I are proud owners of a very ordinary Ford Escort Mk II 4-door 1.1 GL, originally from Italy and, therefore, LHD. I acquired this car about 25 years ago when I was still in the motor trade through a fellow motor trader who had bought it as part of an insurance total loss package and found it remarkably sound and too good to break or crush! I had plans to buy a holiday home in Spain and, at that time, (late 1980), I had a LHD Ford Cortina MK III 2 litre GXL which we had used in UK and on trips to Germany (we had friends in Leverkusen, not far from Köln). It was good mechanically but really needed some extensive bodywork so we agreed to swop cars, my Cortina for his Escort. His Escort had UK plates and was fully legal in UK. It became my wife's runabout: ideal for Morrison's as the attendant would raise the barrier as he could see how difficult it was to reach the slot on the machine from the wrong side! I fitted a reconditioned 1.3 litre engine and acquired the complete interior from a limited edition of the later Mk II known as the Linnet; this was very similar to the Ghia with sporty steering wheel, Rostile wheels, wooden door cap trim and lovely heavy twill seat coverings. To add style, I fitted a vinyl roof covering!

We bought a holiday home in Andalucía and drove the car from Alveley in Shropshire to Plymouth docks, boarded the ferry to Santander and headed for our little house in the 'campo' foothills of southern Spain – a journey of three days! For some six years, the Escort was our only means of transport when on holiday in Spain but, later, when I retired, we had a variety of other LHD cars including our present workhorse, a VW Passat Estate 1.9 TDi. This is a very useful and comfortable machine for our many trips to England in the summer months when it becomes rather hot and sticky! That is normally the best time to visit UK and get our Morris Minor 2-door out for a while and, whenever possible, join the Branch on some of its outings which we, in UK, do so well: plenty of lovely classic vehicles of all shapes, sizes and makes in varying condition and with many fellow enthusiasts to talk to.

It's very different over here. Firstly, there are not too many classics or old cars generally: I find this strange because one would assume that cars would last longer in a dry climate and that rust would not be a problem but cars tend to be simply a means of transport and are very often run into the ground with

minimal maintenance. I have seen only two other Mk II Escorts in my 23 years here: one in the back yard of a Ford Dealer on our way here and another at the side of the main N340 coast road; it had some accident damage and seemed to be abandoned. It has long since gone – probably to a breaker's yard. I should have bought it!

Chapter 2 – A Big Weekend in Jerez

The SOL Classic Car Club is based in the Marbella area west of Malaga City (the expensive end!) and we live about 65 kms east of Malaga so we meet the Club very rarely. Some time ago, the Club members were invited to bring their classic cars to a special motoring weekend in Jerez, about 200 kms west of our home. The programme started with meeting the others in the centre of the lovely city of Jerez to display our cars before being escorted by the Police on a tour of the city on our way to the well-known F1 circuit just outside the city. There, we were expected to display our cars for the public to see from Saturday lunchtime until 5 pm on the Sunday. During that time, the circuit would host the equivalent of the Goodwood Revival Meeting with classic and vintage racing cars doing what they were built for. We were to be given the freedom of all of the track viewing areas including The Pits and all of the Grandstands and we were permitted to visit the Tio Pepe Tower. We decided that this was an opportunity not to be missed, so we booked accommodation for two nights at a golf complex at Arcos de la Frontera, about 20 kms from the circuit. Other accommodation closer to the circuit had been booked well in advance so we planned to set off early on the Friday and make our own way there, meeting up at tea time with others from the car club who had managed to find rooms about ½ km from the circuit.

The journey took us through some very attractive countryside with many spectacular mountain passes but most of the journey was on good quality roads. We reached our accommodation at about 4pm, checked into the magnificent golf complex which is the Red Bull F1 Team base when they are practising pre-season at Jerez. With many expensive motors parked up, we felt a trifle overpowered in our 40 year old Escort but we were delighted to find that we had been upgraded to an apartment on a second floor with two of just about everything you could possibly need and the freedom to use all of the facilities on the complex! However, we thought that we should complete the journey to Jerez and meet the other club members and find out what to expect

over the following days. We met up and exchanged stories about our respective journeys before returning to our accommodation.

After a good night's rest in luxury and a superb breakfast, we set off to join our fellow club members and their wide variety of cars including a Bentley, an early Porsche, a couple of MGBs, a Lotus 7, Mercedes and one of those Phaeton lookalike 1930 Tourers. We joined the convoy in our rather mundane Escort Saloon and headed for the centre of Jerez. We found a local café and watched other vehicles arrive only to find that, to our amazement, we were to be part of a cavalcade of about 200 vehicles ranging from some early 1900 carriages to Jaguar XK120s and many other classics of the 1960s to 1990s. After a rather protracted registration procedure, we were told to 'keep up close and follow the leading Police cars in tight formation: do not become separated!'. Imagine a string of vehicles travelling slowly but nose to tail through a very busy city on a Saturday morning and ignoring red traffic lights: it was chaos! Spanish drivers are renowned for their excessive use of the horn and that day was no exception. As far as I know, there were no accidents but I'm sure that there were some close calls as we headed for the Formula One circuit.

Once parked up in our allotted area, we were free to witness the fantastic historic racing cars with a commentary from all around the circuit including the Pits and Pit Lane. All the well-known teams were there in force – Alfa Romeo, Mercedes, Ford, Lotus, McLaren to name but a few. The next two days went very quickly and the weather was excellent and the days became a blur of remarkable events, motoring memorabilia and all the enthusiastic chit-chat one could wish for. At about 5.30 pm on the Sunday afternoon when the racing finished, we were invited take an escorted lap of the circuit: some had started home already but some 50/60 cars lined up on the starting grid and motored round gently in convoy. Racing was not allowed but I did see one or two drivers changing places in competitive moves. What a lovely way to end a great weekend. We then set off on the 5 hour journey home – including some night driving – and reached the sanctuary of the garage without mishap. I gave the Escort (and the wife) a little pat on the roof and we made a very welcome cuppa.

The moral of the story is that there are classic cars in Spain even if you have to travel to find them!

Chapter 3 – Why Morris Minors?

So far, no mention has been made of Morris Minors: let me explain how I came to have an interest in that great motor car. Back in 1967, I decided to make my interest in cars into a full time job. I had been employed for many years as a sales representative for several companies, more recently with Holts, the car chemical company; my job was to call on the garages and allied trade firms in the Midlands and, as a result, I made many contacts including a wholesale/retail parts outfit in the Northfield area of Birmingham; they offered me a part-time job (two days a week) to call on the motor trade in the south of Birmingham and promote and foster the motor spares business for them. The wage they offered was sufficient to pay my mortgage and the job would leave me the time to develop my own sales and repair business from our house in Kidderminster. As my previous job gave me a company car, my first requirement was a cheap, reliable and inexpensive to run small car. Many of my company cars had been Morris Minors and, as I was well familiar with car auctions, I went to what was then 'Southern Counties Car Auctions' in Tewkesbury and checked out the Minors as they came through. Most on that day were above my budget but, right at the end, a 2-door Series II came through (actually, it was pushed through!) as a non-runner from a main BMC franchise. As most of the buyers had faded away, I took a good look around and underneath the car and put my hand up at £20. No-one else took me on so the gavel hit the rostrum and it was mine!

I was not concerned that it was a non-runner as I knew that I could fix anything mechanical and I could see that the little car was sound in all the right places. I duly paid my £20 plus the statutory indemnity of £2-10s-0d and the car, all its paperwork, faults and benefits (if any!) was mine. Some days later, I persuaded a friend to tow me and the Minor from the auction to my home where I could set about the task of making the car useable. The 803 cc engine was repairable but I decided to fit a 948 cc engine and a 1098 cc gearbox because a friend of mine had these items for sale and I knew that they were good. While I owned the car, I made many alterations and improvements including a Webasto sunroof, re-covering the front seats, fitting Wolseley front suspension and brakes, fitting Mk 1 Sprite wheels and radial tyres, replacing the wings all round, giving it a partial re-spray and, of course, replacing the usual crop of worn out parts. Over the past 48 years, the car has covered over 200,000 miles including several trips abroad, with my long-suffering wife and our three children. It was my wife's self-imposed task to ensure that other drivers had seen our trafficators which she then supplemented with some very

forceful hand signals! We have many happy memories of that car and, although we have had many other family vehicles, we have hung on to that Morris Minor and I hope to keep it for many years to come. Still going strong and well maintained, I think that I had good value for money!

By Barry Reader.

Other info

I have been sent more details of an open day in April (not sure of the date at the moment) at David Manners (Birmingham Morris Minor Centre). With a question on what should be on their first aid tin, a saloon or a traveller? They are also asking for an idea if people are interested in going to the event. Also is there anything people especially want to see at the event.

We are starting to make arrangements for our rally in May and the rally entry form is now available on the website, or ask Bob or myself to send you a copy.

The route for the Morris Marathon is gradually taking form. It looks like we will be towards the end of the marathon (at a guess mid to late Sept) with the Shropshire branch meeting at Stoke on Trent (joint event with Potteries SE Staffs and Shropshire) then us (Malvern) then probably Wye Valley (Ross?). Details are still in a state of flux and it's a case of watch this space.

Bob sent me details of a 500 mile scenic drive around Scotland, it's from 13th to 20th July stopping overnight in some nice hotels from £899 per person. It got me thinking if it's possible to plan a drive across Worcestershire which we could do this summer.

All the Best and Happy Easter.

Use Full contacts

Chairman Chris Perfect

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