



## Malvern Hills Branch Newsletter

May 2020



Welcome to the Malvern Hills Branch May newsletter.

# Every thing is still cancelled

Dear All,

I hope that everyone is ok, also that you have been making the most of the lovely spring weather. Over the Easter weekend, as I could not go on any canoe trips, or long walks in the countryside. I took part in the Camping either inside or outside your house. So I put the tent up and had a camping weekend in the back garden, being woken up by some snuffling noises each night. Wondering what it could have been I bought one of those wildlife cameras that work at night and use a motion sensor to activate. After playing around with the settings we got a result. We definitely have a visiting hedgehog. I have taken the opportunity to take off



the roof rack and touched up roof and gutters, only to find that each of the spray paints are a slightly different shade of cream. It does not look too bad in the garage, but is more obvious in daylight. As it's a working morris, I think that I will live with it. As every dent and scratch tells a story, then the miss matched paint will remind me of the weeks and months in 2020 when all the shops were closed, and life was on hold.

A big thank you for all the articles you have sent in to me. Mary sent in a quiz, which I will be using in next month's newsletter. In this one we also have an article from Mike, Tom, Mary and Bob.

### Malvern Hills Summer Rally 2020

Although the date for the Rally at Burford House cannot yet be decided, please will all members spend their joyous lockdown time composing a history of their Morris. A single A4 sheet giving the car's known history would be a useful addition to the windscreen for all the visitors to see. Important information should include year of manufacture, the model, engine size, year of purchase by you, perhaps the name of the previous owner, repairs and restoration which you / the previous owner have carried out, annual mileage and any other interesting facts to entertain and amuse visitors. Start researching and typing!

## **Treasurer's trivia,**

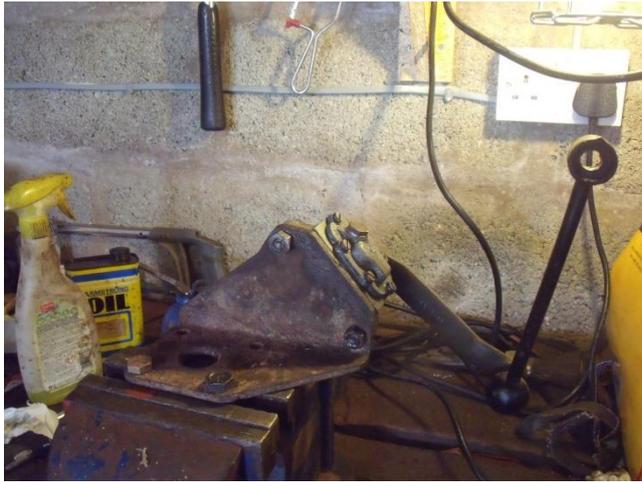
Hello everyone,

I am starting to write this to you on Sunday the 26<sup>th</sup>. It is a beautiful day and was, as many of you will know, to have been 'Drive it' day in the classic car movement. Of course any such event is not possible at present for the reason you all know. Indeed, it is difficult at present to think about anything concerning our Minors when each day we hear of the loss of loved ones being experienced by thousands of people in our country and abroad. It is a traumatic time and we can only hope that the news becomes better in the very near future. As I write this I only know of one of our members who has had to self-isolate. It has touched our family; a niece of Sandra's had it but luckily only in a mild form and is now over it. I very much hope that you and your families are keeping well; I know some of you have had to face up to very serious health issues before this pandemic occurred and you are very much in our thoughts. I must admit I did miss not having our meeting to go to in April; in 33 years of being a member I think I can count on one hand how many meetings I have missed. I am still keeping my fingers crossed it might be possible to hold our rally later this year; the omens are not good just now but we will have to just see how things develop.

Sandra and myself have been immensely lucky to be living where we are now during this pandemic. We live in a lovely spot with wonderful countryside views. Our son and daughter have dropped off essential supplies to us which has kept us going and avoided us having to go out which as you can imagine has been a huge help. Being able to keep chickens has come into its own too and we have never been short of eggs; in fact one of my chickens came back into lay the first week of the lockdown so that was very strategic timing! Like quite a few of our members I do enjoy my vegetable gardening and with the good weather of late I have been able to get out and get that underway. Thankfully, we still had a good lot of leaks in the garden so in the past few weeks potato and leek soup has been very much on the menu! Being at home all the time has not prevented me from at least sampling my ultimate heavenly pastime; driving my MM. It may have been only down the drive and back but there is nothing like an MM; when Morris Motors described it as 'The World's Supreme Small car' they were spot on.

## **Rear suspension**

I had been thinking about taking the rear shock absorbers off on the 948 for a while and checking them as they did not seem to be working quite as well as they should. Perhaps if I did not have the MM as well I would not notice it. From my own personal experience the ride in the MM definitely feels softer and more comfortable to that of the 948. Over the years quite a few owners who have driven both types of Minor have made the same comment to me so I am not unique in thinking this. I am not sure the real reason for this; I do know that modified rear shock absorbers were fitted to the Minor from February 1954 and in December 1958 the leaves on the rear springs for saloons were changed from 7 leaves of 7/32in to 5 of 1/4in. One other factor could be that I have cross plies on the MM and radials on the 948. I seem to remember reading somewhere once that cross plies tended to provide a more comfortable ride. Perhaps we have a member who has more intimate knowledge on this subject who could comment on this. As it turned out I took the shock absorbers off and the movement over the whole range was fine. A small amount of topping up was all that was



Dave

needed. I use an old support bracket with a couple of bolts fitted to hold the shock absorber in the vice which is ideal (see picture)

Shock absorber in vice with link arm attached.

My apologies for my trivia being fairly short this time but of course everything is on hold at present. As I finish this the news is a little better so hopefully we are a tiny step closer to all meeting up again. Take care everyone,

### A letter from Mike

I hope everyone is well. As we can't meet up or use our Morris Minors, I thought I would send car a related story that you might use in the newsletter.



When our eldest daughter was getting married, I decided that instead of hiring a wedding car, it would be cheaper to buy one to use for the day and then sell it a week or two later, hopefully at the same price, thereby saving the expense of hiring, it seemed like a good idea at the time. After looking around I settled on a black MG Magnette ZB saloon.

The guy I bought it off said he would drive it up from his home in London if I paid for the Petrol, which I was happy to do, reasoning's that if he was confident to drive it up from the capital to our house in Belbroughton, it must be ok.

Sure enough, on the agreed day the car arrived, money exchanged hands and I now owned my first MG. A quick check over and everything was working as it should, time to get it in the garage for a proper inspection. The black paintwork was a bit dull, the chrome needed a good polish and the maroon leather interior was showing its age, however after a few days with the T-cut, wax polish, leather restorer and chrome polish, it looked great. I took it to our local garage for a MOT test, where, it failed, rust had perforated the passenger side floor area, well, I thought, that's an easy fix, however what I didn't know was these saloon cars have a double skin floor and someone had filled it with concrete, ! Blimey, I've never seen that before. Not to be defeated, I cut out and removed the floor area then fabricated and welded in a new one. Everything now back together, painted and under sealed, and this time it passed the MOT. The car now all shiny and dressed with white ribbons was used to take the bride to the village church on her wedding day. After the ceremony and reception, I did drive a few of the guests for a tour around the village, it was all a great success. I kept the car for a while, but when the bills started to arrive for the Wedding dress, suit hire, eight bridesmaids

dresses, champagne reception etc., it had to go . I sold it to someone who came over from Ireland and took the car back on the ferry. After everything was accounted for, I actually made a small profit on buying and selling the car rather than hiring one, and I thoroughly enjoyed the whole thing.

Car designer, Gerard Palmer started in Morris drawing office in Cowley in 1938, left to work for Jowett in 1942 where he designed the Jowett Javelin with its flat four engine, in 1949 he returned back to Morris where he became chief designer, designed the MG Midgette, Wolseley 4/44 and other notable cars, he left in 1955, and was succeeded by Alec Issigonis. Regards. Mike Rochelle

## A Letter from Tom

Hello to you all.

I hope you're all keeping safe and well at this extremely difficult time.

For a variety of reasons, I haven't seen many of you since last summer's rally at Hanbury Hall. Since then there have been a few changes.

Some of you may recall that I was considering selling my black 4-door Minor Series 2, affectionately known as 'Max'. I felt that I wanted something a little larger and faster, preferably with automatic transmission. I finally took the plunge over August bank holiday weekend. I took 'Max' to a charity car show at Chaddesley Corbett and put a 'For Sale' sign in his windscreen. Within five hours I'd sold him to a young chap who lives in nearby Harvington, and an era came to an end.

In the meantime, I'd decided that I wanted either a Triumph Dolomite 1850 automatic or a Morris Marina 1.8TC automatic. I have owned a number of Marinas in the past, mainly during the 1980s when they were still just cheap 'throw-away' cars, but I've always found them pretty good, despite the commonly-held misconceptions about unreliability and shoddy build quality. I inspected a couple of Dolomites and wasn't too impressed with either of them. Both were classic examples of shiny paint hiding plenty of structural trouble. Having been rather put off by the Dolomites, I decided to concentrate on finding a Marina; still sticking to my idea of a 1.8TC automatic. The first problem I encountered was learning that the 1.8TC Mark 1, made between 1971 and 1975, was never offered with automatic transmission. The twin-carburettor 1.8HL Mark 2, made between 1975 and 1978 was offered with an automatic transmission option but very few were made, and only three or four remain on the road in the UK.



I had seen a very low mileage 1976 Marina 1.8HL automatic for sale in Derbyshire during July last year, at a time when I couldn't afford it. I expected to be waiting a long time before another one came up for sale. However, good fortune came my way. The car I'd seen but couldn't afford was purchased by a classic car dealer in Stone, Staffordshire. It was advertised on his business website at the beginning of September and a hurried straight off to inspect it.

It was in lovely condition with a huge history file supporting the mileage, which was recorded at 28,400. Needless to say, I bought the car on the spot before anyone else could see it! So far, I've only managed to add a further 400 miles to it.

It's typically 1970's with metallic green paintwork (it's had new front wings and been re-sprayed completely). The brown vinyl roof is factory-fitted. The beige velour-covered seats and brown plastic dashboard (complete with the original factory-fitted Motorola radio) are also typically 1970's.

Hopefully, when things return to normal, I'll be able to bring it to the Malvern Hills branch rally if it's possible to reschedule the event for later in the year.

In the meantime, please stay safe and well. My best wishes go to you all, with special thoughts to those of you who work, or who have loved ones working in essential services where, at this difficult time, exposure to illness is a daily risk.

All the best. Tom Burmingham.

### **LIFE UNDER LOCKDOWN from Jonathan and Mary**

Well what strange times we are in at the moment. It has so far been a year to remember – of biblical proportions. Fire, flood and pestilence and it is only April! The weather has been absolutely beautiful – white blossom, fluffy lambs, daffodils, primroses. I drove down to Tenbury last week to do the weekly shop at Tesco and it was an absolute pleasure to be on the road. In some ways I wished I had been driving the Morris because the road was so quiet it would have been perfect for Morris Minor driving!

We have three Morris Minors at home at the moment and all on the road– what a pity we can't actually drive them! Jonathan occasionally starts them up and drives them round the



block but that is as far as we can go. The picture shows the Convertible with Jonathan's Traveller on the drive with our new greenhouse in the background. Jeremy has been working at home since lockdown and will shortly be on furlough as there will be no work until they can actually go out and do some surveys. For Jonathan and myself, like most people of our age, the days seem to be all the same and somehow without stress – although

when Jeremy first started to work from home there seemed to be a period of adjustment until a routine was established. Jonathan has been doing lots of jobs round the house such as painting, gardening and erecting the new greenhouse. I have been cleaning out cupboards and washing curtains and bedspreads. All social activity in the village has ceased apart from meeting people sometimes walking down the lane. It seems almost deathly quiet apart from birdsong and the occasional lawnmower – not even the church bells are rung.

I do hope that we will be able to all meet up again this year. It is such a pity that the rally had to be cancelled. So much is uncertain that all we can do is to hope for the best. I hope that everyone is keeping safe and that we will see you sometime in the summer.

Mary

### **I rode a cock-horse to Banbury Cross... by Bob Prophet**

Many Classic Car clubs, including Midlands Austin 7 Club, were invited to go to Banbury to support the Banbury stage start of the Rallye Monte Carlo Historique on 30<sup>th</sup> January this year. Looking briefly at the map, I decided that it wasn't far across country so I signed up. As the date approached, I kept an eye on the weather forecast – rain... – until it changed the day before and showed an overcast but dry day. Phew!

Having refuelled, checked Arthur the Austin the day before and loaded him with coats and emergency rations, I left home at 8 am and headed for Pershore. Arthur sailed along at a goodly speed and I was enjoying it until, some three miles before Evesham, I joined a queue approaching road works which took me 20 minutes to pass. I then took the B4035 from Evesham to Banbury despite Mr Google's suggestion that M5 and M40 would have been a better route (I'm not risking a smart motorway...); without satnav, my route card and map kept me on the straight and narrow. Then, it started to drizzle and mud sprayed off the road surface. Visibility was often minimal, I had to use head/side lights judiciously [an Austin 7 can run out of electricity completely if headlamps are used for more than about an hour!] and I relied on other vehicles spraying the windscreen so that I could use the wiper – on the overrun only, of course! After what must have been one of the worst journeys I have ever undertaken in Arthur, I reached Banbury in a car which looked as though it had been used for mud-plugging. I found a supermarket and put in a couple of gallons and then headed for the start where about 150 other cars were waiting. By chance, the marshals had one vacant space opposite the start ramp so I parked between an Austin Champ and an A55 Pickup.

The rally cars (all Classics) had left the start in Glasgow some 36 hours earlier and had rested up in Banbury. The next stage to France via Dover was not due to start until 1.30 pm so I was able to wander round and see the other support acts: some 150 Classics (even a Tatra and a Trabant!) including Subaru, Porsche and other exotic machines. A beautiful 1930s Bentley, a similarly-aged Lagonda, a 1906 Darracq and a Model T Ford were there to represent motoring before WWII; Arthur was proud to be the only Austin 7 on parade and he was happy to be the subject of countless photographs and interested visitors, some of whom were proud owners of Sevens which they had left in the garage: shame! One visitor even recognised that Arthur had been registered originally in Banbury although I couldn't tell the enquirer who the original owner was.

By this time, the drizzle had started again but the Town Mayor and Chairman of the County Council braved it as they dropped the flag and hooted the hooter for the departure of each of the 15 cars. The commentator did his best to keep us all amused with his interview of each driver before the car left the ramp in a cloud of artificial smoke. The rally cars were a mix of unlikely steeds, some (or at least examples) of which had driven the actual rally years ago (including a huge Daimler Conquest), some of which had driven the Historique in recent years and one – a 1955 sit-up-and-beg Ford Anglia – was never designed for such adventures but the driver was determined to make it! His co-driver smiled bravely. A 1930s drop-head Riley (with the hood down!), a TR2, an MG Y-type saloon, a Midget and an Escort Mexico set off amidst much cheering. At the rear was a modern Mercedes Saloon whose co-driver had dropped out the day before leaving the owner to drive solo. At least he had a degree of comfort.

The start over, I decided to leave before it became too dark and I took a different route home, this time along the A361 to Chipping Norton and then up the A44 to Evesham. This turned out to be a mistake as, just outside Banbury, I joined another road works queue which added

some 20 minutes to my journey. Arthur continued to behave impeccably although his cruising speed of not-a-lot caused a few queues behind. When the road was clear, however, I received many a polite and cheerful wave (well, I think that they were polite and cheerful...) as the moderns roared off to their warm firesides. Inevitably, darkness descended and I put the side lights on, using headlights only when absolutely necessary. Yet more mud hit the car but, this time, the rain wasn't there to help and, at one point, I had to pull into a layby and pour water over the windscreen. I have now acquired a plastic spray bottle which I can operate from inside the car whilst on the move. I took the A46 round Evesham and roared towards Pershore, finally admitting defeat and switching headlamps on as I entered Upton.

All in all, a fantastic day of 9 hours during which I covered 120 miles in some 5 hours of motoring. Whilst I enjoy owning and driving Arthur, I have to admit that, with its extremely heavy clutch and, for me, cramped driving position, such journeys are becoming more difficult to undertake (or am I just becoming older and larger..?) but I wouldn't miss them for all the coronavirus-free tea in China. My thanks to the Rallye organisers and for giving me the chance to be there. I will certainly consider a repeat performance next year although the thought of going in Eric the Morris does appeal as he has a radio, heater, windscreen washers, two wipers, trafficators, indicators and brakes even if the engine is only fractionally larger than Arthur's...

No, how could I be so disloyal to the 86 year old who looked after me so well and in whose company I had a marvellous and exciting day out? Now that I am forcibly confined to Barracks, I have spent five days cleaning and polishing him. I even took each wheel off and polished the rims and spokes, painting the rusty brake drums before re-assembly! He smiles at me now! Any member care to join me in a Morris next year?

PS To continue the Nursery Rhyme, I didn't see a fine lady upon a white horse. Shame: should have gone to Coventry, perhaps.



1930s Riley

MG Y-Type

TR2



Daimler Conquest

Escort RS2000

Ford Anglia



This Riley ran out of lights during the night on the way from Glasgow but Blue Diamond was on hand to fit a new alternator and some new wiring.



Which way is this going..?

1906 Darracq

Subarus a-plenty



Anyone remember this venerable beast?

All the best from Bob

### For Sale

Good morning. I was once a proud owner of a 1959 Minor. Sadly, it gave up on me several years ago. I still have two spare wheels, two workshop manuals and a user handbook. Is anyone in your Club interested?

Regards,

John Haywood

Anyone interested, contact me (Dave Bennett) and I will get in contact with John.

Thanks for all of your articles, keep them coming.

And here's hoping we can all meet up again soon.

## **Useful contacts**

**Chairman**

**Lester Stenson**

**Treasurer**

**Dave Smith**

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**Bob Prophet**

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