

Magazine of the

Vintage Minor Register

Issue M 101

Autumn 2000



Free to Members



The Vintage Minor Register

Serving the Overhead Camshaft Morris Minor – 1928 to 1931

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Front Cover



Gordon Scott's extremely original 1929 tourer VF 6700 (M 11272) basking in the Norfolk sunshine this Summer. It has spent all its life in Norfolk being supplied by North Norfolk Garage in Holt. Gordon acquired the car about twenty years ago, and has carried out a very sympathetic restoration. Prior to Gordon's ownership, the car had been laid up for many years. Among the car's many original features, it retains its original silencer, undertray, and Sparton horn and button. The pedal treads are virtually unworn! The car still has its original floor boards fitted, which Gordon has recovered in blue linoleum to match the body and trim, as did the originals.

Rear Cover

Two ancient and venerable machines! Paul Veenboer's Semisports (M 3273) enjoying a summer outing in Holland. Currently registered DM-31-45, this Minor started life in February 1929 as fabric saloon WL 6488. After finding it in rotten condition, Peter Vasher of Abingdon rebuilt the car as a Semisports replica before passing it to VSCC member D E Barker. It then found its way to Mr. Thung in Holland. Mr. Thung sold the car to Paul in August 1996. Paul uses the car on summer days like that shown in Holland where it attracts much attention. Thanks fore the beautiful pictures Paul! Are there any other OHC Minors in Holland?



The Small Print

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



From the Driver's Seat

Welcome to the very first edition of the Vintage Minor Register Magazine. Over the past few months I have been in touch with most of you, and I would like to thank you all for providing such a wealth of data, history and photographs of your venerable motor cars. The result is that we now have traced well over 100 overhead camshaft Morris Minors, both in the UK and around the world, and at least a further 50 or so are known to be out there somewhere. While this does not represent a particularly satisfactory survival rate, there is every likelihood that the number of known cars will grow now that there is a Register to keep track of these worthy vintage light cars, the youngest of which will soon be turning three score years and ten.

The consensus seems to be that the formation of a loose association of some sort is long overdue, and would be a *good thing*. Hopefully, the creation of the Vintage Minor Register will provide the means to track surviving cars, act as a platform for teasing out a little more history of the model, but most of all encourage and support owners to keep their vehicles out on the open road where they most certainly belong.

This first magazine issue is largely experimental in format - your comments and feedback would be most welcome. Needless to say, if you have any material (articles, rebuild updates, discoveries, photos, adverts, etc.), these would be most gratefully received. It is intended to issue four magazines a year. This first issue is being sent free to all known owners, along with an invitation to join the Register. To join the Register, receive a copy of the OHC Minor chassis register and to receive the next four magazines, simply fill in the form included with this magazine and return it with your subscription. Please support the Register by taking a moment to fill in the form.

Happy Minor Motoring!





Register Ramblings

The majority of vintage models benefit from a greater or lesser degree of cohesion afforded by their respective marque or model registers, many of which have been salting away surviving vehicle details and historical data for years.

By contrast, the Minor has always been something of a misfit in the vintage world. In the 1960's, owners were eligible to join the Morris Eight Tourer Club, and more recently the Morris Register, which grew out of the original Morris Eight Tourer Club. Or, if their Minor was manufactured before the end of 1930, they could have joined the Bullnose Morris Club perhaps, and owners with sporting aspirations might have joined the Vintage Sports-Car Club. However, no single organization has supported the Minor as its primary purpose. Perhaps the Morris Register comes closest, but this large organization, with membership numbering many thousand now caters for all pre-1940 Morris vehicles worldwide, and is not a true Register, in the sense that no formal chassis listings are maintained.

Moreover, the original Minor chassis files and progress books have ended up in the hands of the British Motor Industries Heritage Trust. Both the MG Car Club and the Bullnose Morris Club benefit enormously from owning the original factory chassis production records and car files for their models. BMIHT do make their data available (at a price), but clearly access is very much more restricted than would be desirable for the maintenance of an up-to-date Register.

Harry Edwards, the stalwart historian of the Morris Register and long-time owner of 1930 OHC Minor coachbuilt saloon UK 8983 has been a tremendous help in creating the Vintage Minor Register. He has information on very many Minors going back to the 1960's and beyond, and has a huge personal knowledge of these vehicles. However, the information that he has accumulated has largely been gleaned from membership applications, rally entry forms, advertisements in the motoring press, etc., and has never been assembled into a single, cohesive, continuously-updated reference document. Understandably, it has proved impossible for Harry to keep track of every pre-1940 Morris vehicle worldwide! His notes, which have proved invaluable in assembling the Register, are full of comments such as, "chassis owned in 1973 in New Zealand", or "was owned by early member of the M8TC", or "was last seen in Aylesbury in 1962". Harry, we all owe you a huge debt of gratitude for the unstinting efforts you have expended to

further the Morris cause over so many years – consider yourself the first Honorary Member of the Vintage Minor Register!

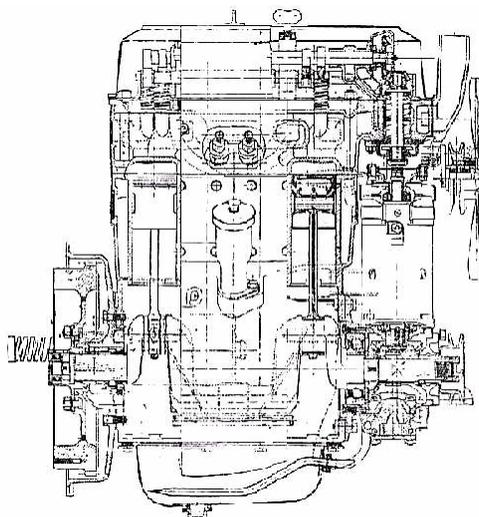
Nevertheless, when one compares the Minor situation with other Registers, it becomes obvious that we have a great deal of work to do. For example, the Early MG Society maintains a Register of around 100 surviving Bullnose MG, Flatnose MG and MG18/80 vehicles, but it manages to publish a high-quality quarterly magazine, co-ordinate batch production of unobtainable parts and holds a number of gatherings every year. Anyone who has seen the recently-published and magnificent tome ‘Oxford to Abingdon’ by Robin Barraclough and Phil Jennings cannot fail to stand in awe of the research that has been expended on these vehicles that have survived in broadly similar numbers to the vintage Minor.

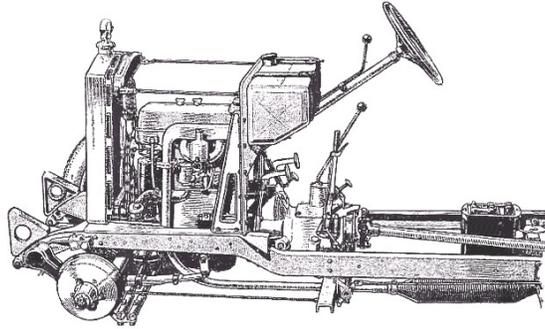
So, with around 150 cars and chassis located, where do we stand in terms of survival rate? Given a production run of some 34,599 chassis, this represents a miserable survival rate of somewhere around 0.3%. This compares very disappointingly with other contemporary marques. For example, of some 3,200 ‘M’ Type MG’s manufactured, there are over 400 ‘M’ Types on the MG Car Club’s MMM Register. Now, we all know that more than a few of these are actually Minor chassis that have been dressed up as MG’s over the years, but the survival rate of other MMM types is even *higher!* It is not possible to ‘fudge’ a J2 or P Type chassis, so we cannot blame the MG fraternity exclusively for the lowly survival rate of the Minor!

Anders Clausager, until recently the archivist at the British Motor Industry Heritage Trust made the following observation:

“I would expect a survival rate in the order of 1%, i.e. I would expect there to be about 350 cars preserved. The estimated survival of 1% is what over the years I have come to expect on non-sporting cars of no particular distinction.”

I might take Anders up on the ‘non-sporting cars of no particular distinction’ comment, but that is another story!

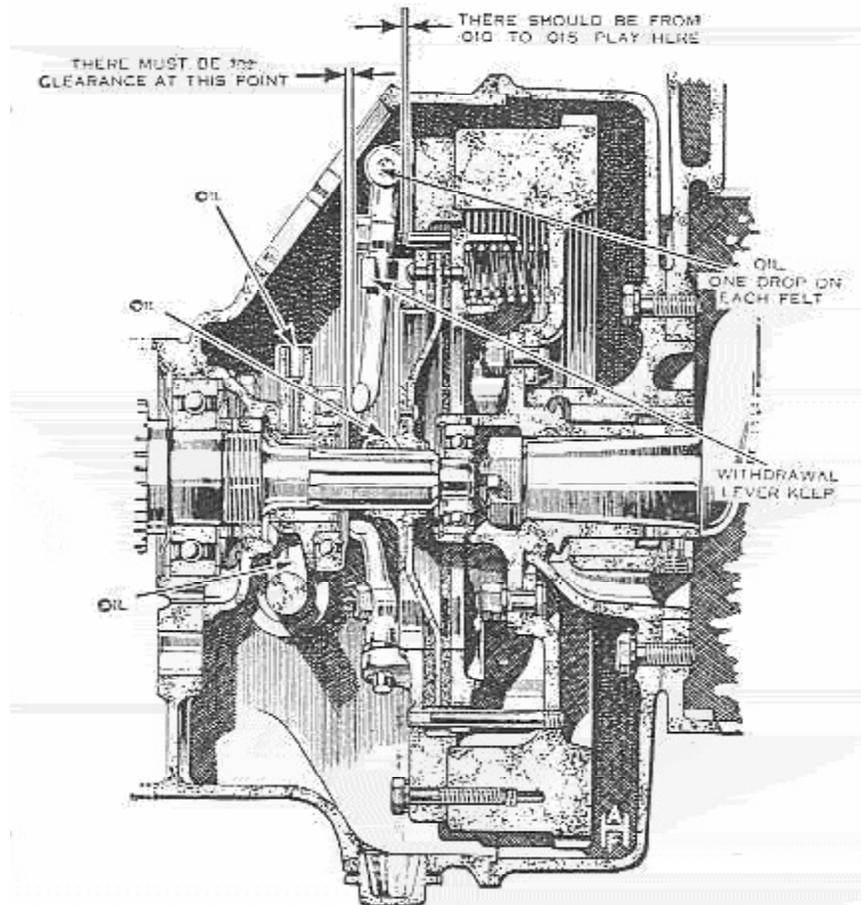




Technical Matters

After the war until the early '70's, John Wrigley provided an invaluable spares service for Morris Minors. Initially operating from Vicarage Road Hounslow, the business moved round the corner into Martindale Road in the early '60's. In those days, he routinely broke up Minors for spares, and his parts list was accompanied by informative and entertaining Minor fettling notes. Here is an extract – more of John's gems to follow in subsequent issues.

The Clutch



All right, all right! Sit down there at the back, ladies and gentlemen! The clutch is a simple mechanism which, given a fair chance, will function efficiently without even a lot of maintenance. Unfortunately many owners are inclined to leave it too much to its own devices. In the end the devices become worn and finally pass out - in small pieces of metal and metal dust - through holes which they make for themselves in the bell-housing!

To prevent this major disaster a certain amount of maintenance is essential. Occasionally, please, remove the tin cover on the bell-housing and check the toggles for correct adjustment. At the same time, lubricate lightly the toggle spindles at each side by the felt washers and place a drop or two of oil in the spout of the clutch thrust carrier. Do not, I beg of you, hammer the tin cover flat. It has a raised edge, thoughtfully provided by Mr. Nuffield, to allow breathing.

Clutch Troubles

Clutch troubles on the Morris Minor are two in number. Firstly, the clutch slips. This is usually caused by oil leaking into the clutch from either the engine or the gearbox. The reason in both cases is worn bearings with consequent wear on the oil return threads which are therefore prevented from doing their jobs. The engine rear main bearing is provided with a main drain and it is unwise to introduce a felt washer here. It will probably make the clutch trouble worse. New bearings and attention to the oil return threads is the real cure and the latter is not a job which can be done cheaply.

Similarly the gearbox spigot shaft is provided with means to prevent oil leaking into the clutch and when wear occurs in the bearings, the oil return threads will become worn and so unable to do their work. Use thick oil in the gearbox -at least SAE 140.

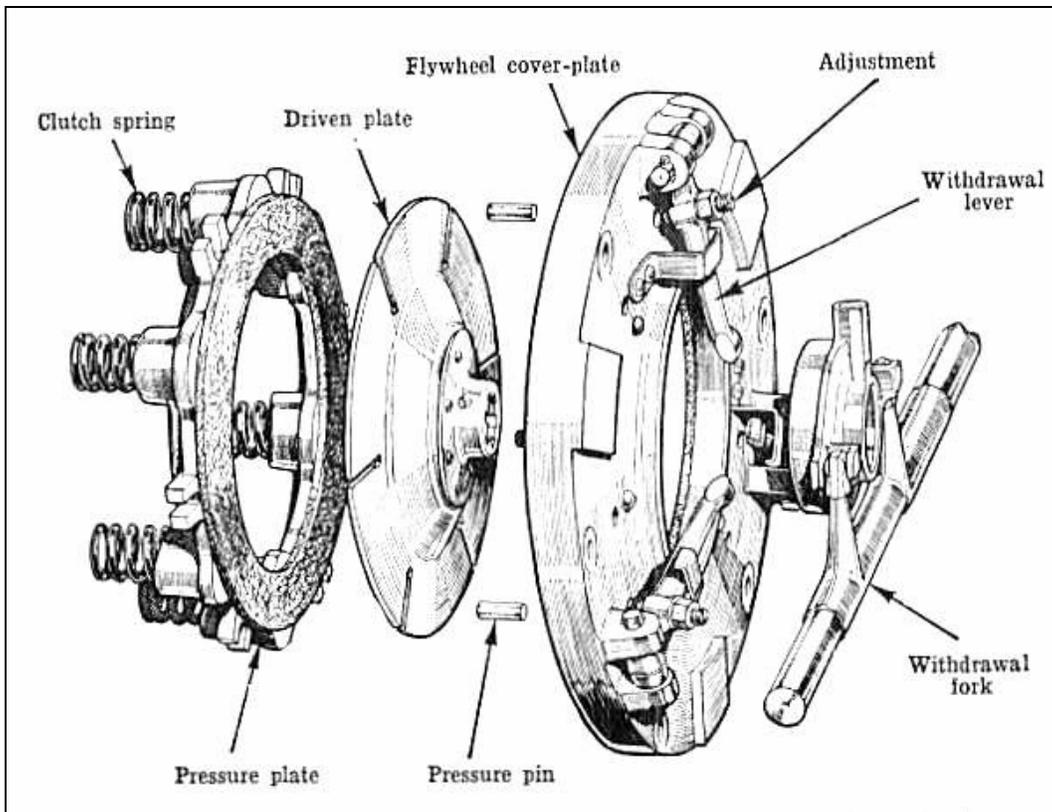
The second clutch trouble is that annoying ailment - inability to engage a gear and rough operation of the clutch. This is due to worn splines on the spigot shaft, on the clutch center plate, or on both. Should you decide to have the splines on the spigot shaft rebuilt, be sure that the work is done by a person who knows what he is doing, or you will be wasting your money. Clutch plates are

on the market which will not wear well if used with a worn splined spigot shaft.

The clutch withdrawal assembly consists of a yellow metal carrier, a 'crowded' ball race and a hard steel cover which fits over the latter. Make sure that the race is fitted with the thrust face towards the clutch. The clutch operating shaft bushes are also worthy of attention.

Finally - neglect. Please don't leave things too late. Spares are not all that easy to come by and a most magnificent clutch explosion can be achieved if things are allowed to wear too far.

The clutch thrust carrier becomes worn until finally the fingers on the clutch operating shaft are able to slip out of their crannies. The clutch thrust carrier then whangs round carrying all before it, but it doesn't whang very far before a large chunk of the bell-housing takes off, all the toggles disintegrate or assume futuristic shapes and the unhappy owner is faced with the problem of propelling his vehicle home either manually or on the end of a piece of string.



For those interested in strengthening the clutch, fitting the larger MG J2 clutch is well worth considering. The existing Minor flywheel can be easily modified to take a J2 driven and pressure plate by simply repositioning the guide pins. Take (plenty of) metal out from inside the rim, and move the guide pins out. The J2 has shorter pins on a step inside the flywheel. Therefore, don't use J2 guide pins, as you can remove more metal by retaining the original long-type Minor pins.

The Minor cover plate will require replacing, and new lightweight aluminium J2 cover plates and actuating toggle levers are available from Mike Dowley at Sports & Vintage Motors in Shrewsbury (01939/210458), as are all the other J2 clutch parts you will need. The alloy J2 cover plate has six bolt holes, but unlike the Minor, one of these holes is not positioned at 60° to the others, so you will need to tap a new hole in the flywheel (and fill in the old one for balance). This was done so that the cover plate can only be fitted in one orientation – to preserve balance. J2 clutch springs have a stronger spring rate but are otherwise dimensionally identical to the Minor items, so can be fitted to any Minor clutch to improve performance.

At the same time as making this modification, the Minor flywheel can be considerably lightened. For details of where to remove the metal, and how much to remove, call Mike on the above number- he will be pleased to advise.

While rebuilding your clutch, you may need to replace the flywheel starter ring gear. Bill Traill of Santa Clara offers the following advice:

“The ring gear is about 10.55" OD with 83 teeth. The flywheel needs to be turned to 9.359". To expand the gear before fitting, DO NOT EXCEED 290° C - you may destroy the gear if you do. 290° C is about 550° F, or within kitchen oven limits. I calculate the ring will grow .028" in diameter at this temperature. I will guess the flywheel should be .010 to .012" larger than the ring at room temperature, but that is a guess.

When machining the flywheel, leave a radius on the inside corner to avoid a stress riser and possible future crack. The ring gear should have a chamfer to allow a small radius.

An old time automotive machinist heated mine by "eye" with an acetylene torch and it went on with no problem. Before heating make sure you have the gear in proper orientation so it does not go on down side up! A pair of gloves and two pliers to grab it would be helpful too. Have an accomplice ready with a hammer - in case it jams, you have about one second to tap it down. It should slip on easily, and when it does, tap gently on the flywheel a little to set up a vibration to help it seat evenly. If it jams you will have to hacksaw it partially through and split it with a cold chisel to remove.

For what it is worth, I machined mine flush to the flywheel. My old time automotive machinist friend who had apprenticed in the 1920's, said I should have machined in another .03" and left a small wall a few thousandths high to keep the gear from being knocked off by the bendix. He said he had seen a few do that in the old days. Naturally the gear would have to slip over the wall when hot.”

Our Minors

In this section will appear photographs and details of our cars, and a different model will be highlighted in each issue. This first issue will concentrate on the fabric saloon, while the next issue will take a look at some of the surviving Semisports models. If you have photographs of your Minor - on the road, under restoration or taken in the past, please make them available for the magazine.

The Fabric Saloon



- 1 Tony Gamble's covetable ex-Sword Collection fabric saloon SK 1508 was registered on New Year's Day 1929. Chassis number is M 1243, making it the second earliest known surviving fabric saloon.



2 Another view of Tony Gamble's fine and highly original fabric saloon.



3 Open air motoring! Tom Dixon's recently acquired fabric saloon WL 7995 (M 11455) captured undergoing major ash frame surgery in an Oxford street the 1970's. Prior to Tom's ownership, the car had spent several years in Germany. Note the large Autovac mounted on the bulkhead.



- 4 The ex-Jim Dalton fabric saloon BR 7084 (M 2857). Jim recently sold the car to a retired Belfast University lecturer, but all attempts to trace the lucky new owner have so far failed. Can anyone help trace this delightful early car?



- 5 John Price's 1929 fabric saloon MY 1435 (M 14097). John bought the car from Peter Bignall at the Beaulieu Automart in 1995. We hear that restoration is about to commence. Good luck John, and keep us posted on progress!



- 6 The most northerly Minor? Albert Spence's 1929 fabric saloon MM 9063 (M 11282) lives on Orkney. Pulled out of Dixon's scrap yard in Billericay by Terry Hayward in 1965, the car spent many years in Jim Peacop's Mouldsworth Motor Museum in Cheshire before moving further north in 1976.



- 7 Mike Hewson's very interesting 1929 fabric saloon 545 LWP (M 3931) was originally registered in April 1929 as CL 7777, and was also registered DS 9618 for a time, as the picture shows. The car is the famous ex-Captain McLeod car and is fitted with an MG 'Q' Type engine, among other subtle modifications.

Tailpiece

The following article was published in the winter 1967 edition of the Morris Eight Tourer Club Journal. It was written by Roy Hogg, a founder member and arch Minor enthusiast. The car in question is his 1929 tourer MT 3286, which Roy still owns. Roy, who is a Master Upholsterer in Dorset, has had Minors for more years than anyone can remember, proving the adage that upholsterers never die – they just keep recovering. Here he describes a holiday spent with his wife, Heather in the Minor, starting from his then home in Southall, Middlesex.

A Minor in Yorkshire

At 6 am one Sunday morning in August the old Morris Minor throbbed into life once more to take my wife, myself and a camping trailer on a weeks holiday in and around Yorkshire.

We made for the M1 with hopes of winding up the hand throttle and sitting back for a few hours. We did just that, and later that day we arrived in Yorkshire to spend our holiday looking at lovely scenery and, of course, searching for old vehicles.

We saw much of both, the moors with their rolling lanes which go for miles without touching town or village, and the mechanical geni of days gone by.

The first car to search for was, of course, a Minor which we had seen four years earlier and had long since forgotten the place where it had rested. The Minor's resting ground was eventually tumbled upon by a sheer stroke of luck, but the car had been sold as spares. In the same small yard, however, lay other interesting items – the remains of an Essex car with wooden wheels – a 1925 Morgan with air-cooled engine – several motorcycle engines and stationary engines up to 8 hp.

Our second port of call was to a gentleman owning several vintage vehicles, but oh! What a surprise when he showed me a cycle car. This really interested me: no chassis, just an ash body tensioned by steel rods (or were they spokes?) covered in aluminium; B.E. wheels on an ash front axle with cable and bobbin steering, tandem seating, belt driven, the whole being powered by an air-cooled engine of 1910. The car was assembled in 1923. Everything was there and, in fact, the lathe which was used to make many of the parts was even on the same property.

The next call was to a breaker's yard, which revealed a steamer still running, several old tractors and a couple of odds and ends (calormeters, etc.) which are now in my possession.

On through the rolling moors to yet another yard in which a Model 'T' van dwelt awaiting a new owner with 350 pounds in his pocket. AS very large '30's Sunbeam, several lorries of the same period, the remains of an MG 'M' and others too numerous to mention were also to be seen.

Down the lanes and up the hills we went. Will she make this hill? "You'd better get out and push, love!" Push, push, push - made it, now wait for Heather. I can hear her puffing, but she's still 200 yards away! Oh here she comes, "Hop in love. Like a cigarette, or do you want to drive so that I can get out at the next hill?"

This lane is a bit stony. It's on the map, but oh! It's ended in a farm. "Morning Farmer! Can we pass over your field of heather into the next road?" "Yes....go down through the gate and over that field, through the next field of heather and into the next farm, turn left, then right, and you're on a gravel track. Follow this through the ford and up the hill to the road..."

It sounds as though it will only take ten minutes but at the next farm - what is this? A 1930-ish Jowett spoked wheel with tyre and tube. "I'll give you 7/6 for it." "Make it 10/- and you can have it." "OK you drive a hard bargain." (Thinks...what a bargain it is - the tyre is new).

When we finally arrive at a town it is market day and quite crowded, but just let's pop in this garage and see if they've any Minor spares. Yes, a few axle locking washers, some Bullnose speedo drive couplings and a hand Klaxon.

Oh well, our week is nearly over, but we'll just have a look around these auction rooms. "What's this - do you like it?....Play it then!....Yes, we'll come and bid for it tomorrow."

"Now" says the auctioneer "this is what everybody has been waiting for! What am I bid?" "Five pounds." "Any advance? Going, going, gone!" Now to get the thing home. Tie it on top of the trailer and we're off down the A1 - but what have I forgotten? The trailer lights burned out during the week. Oh well, I'll have to rewire. Take this

off the trailer, remove half the camping gear and start work.

We're off once more, finally to arrive home at 3 am Sunday morning. We had traveled 800 miles on one battery without the dynamo working - not bad when you include five hours with the headlamps on. And I didn't even lay a spanner on the car the whole time.

I expect everyone is wondering what we bought? Did anyone notice an organ being played beside the A1 last Saturday night? R.H.

Lost and Found

In this section, we will report on new additions to the Register, and also seek the whereabouts of others, so that their current owners can be contacted.



To start the ball rolling, can anybody help trace this very sound looking tourer nearing the end of its rebuild? The first letter of the registration number is unknown, but we do know that the car is out there somewhere. Can anyone say more?

On the subject of tourers, we are also trying to trace FL 7665, a brown 1929 tourer last with Stuart Hartley in Preston, PG 5664 which was for sale at Lutterworth Garage in 1983, DS 7123 (originally PN 4886) which is known to still exist, GC 2938 which was owned by an early member of the Morris Eight Tourer Club, HY 1833 the ex-Rodney King 1931 tourer (and which was famously in collision with a fire engine in Bristol many years ago) and which may now reside in the Channel Islands, VB 7513 which was, and maybe still is owned by Brian Grisedale in Essex and TR 8283 which was featured in Finds and Discoveries in the Automobile in August 1993.



And last but not least, where is this very original tourer, registered 194-A in Washington DC? Peter Widdison (who owns 1930 tourer UR 7238) supplied this photograph, believed to have been taken around 1974. Thanks, Peter.

Finally, we are sad to report the theft of a 1930 Morris Minor Coachbuilt saloon VC 6555 chassis M 28897 registered 9/10/30 belonging to Graham Beck has been stolen from its garage in the West Midlands while under restoration. If you should come across this car, or the chassis, please contact the Register.

Needless to say, if anyone has details of any of these cars, or of any other Minors, which may have gone to ground over recent years, we would be delighted to hear from you.



Marketplace

Got a Minor or parts to dispose of? Looking for a car or vital spare part? Place a free advert in Marketplace. Here are some current offerings and wants to kick things off.

For Sale



1929 Morris Minor 4-seat Tourer KP 8119

A good home restoration with red fabric body and bonnet with black wings and seats. Runs well. £6,500. Malcolm Elder Tel. 01869/340999 (trade)

1930 Morris Minor Semisports HX 8980

Mike Baxter, Waistcotes, Hutton Lane, Levens, Kendall, Cumbria, LA8 8NX Tel. 01539/560088

1930 Morris Minor Coachbuilt Saloon VK 3672

John Young, Garden Flat, 4 Westcliffe Grove, Harrogate, HG2 0PL Tel. 01423/506275



1930 Morris Minor saloon UR 6459

Low mileage since full restoration. Good all round condition. Tax and long MoT. £4,750. Tel. 015395/36104. Grange-over-Sands, (South Lakes) Donald.Hodkinson@care4free.net.



1929 Morris Minor Coachbuilt Saloon WD 1430

Leather seats, hydraulic brakes, pistons re-ringed, folding head, 4-speed gearbox, original registration, some spares, MoT September 2000 **£3,990 FOR QUICK SALE.** Tel. 0161 747 4674 (Urmston) john.seddon@btinternet.com.

Wanted

For 1930 Morris Minor Coachbuilt Saloon JA 1083

Sound chassis frame, front seats, Lucas instrument panel. Tony Gamble Tel. 01757/270308 user@gamble131.fsnet.co.uk



In the Next Issue

Issue M 102 will go to print in early December, so that it can be distributed to members prior to Christmas. Therefore, any material for the next issue should be sent by the end of November. Photographs will be copied and returned if requested. Your contributions on any Minor topic will be most gratefully received. In particular, we are looking for Semisports pictures, rebuild progress reports, etc. for the next issue.



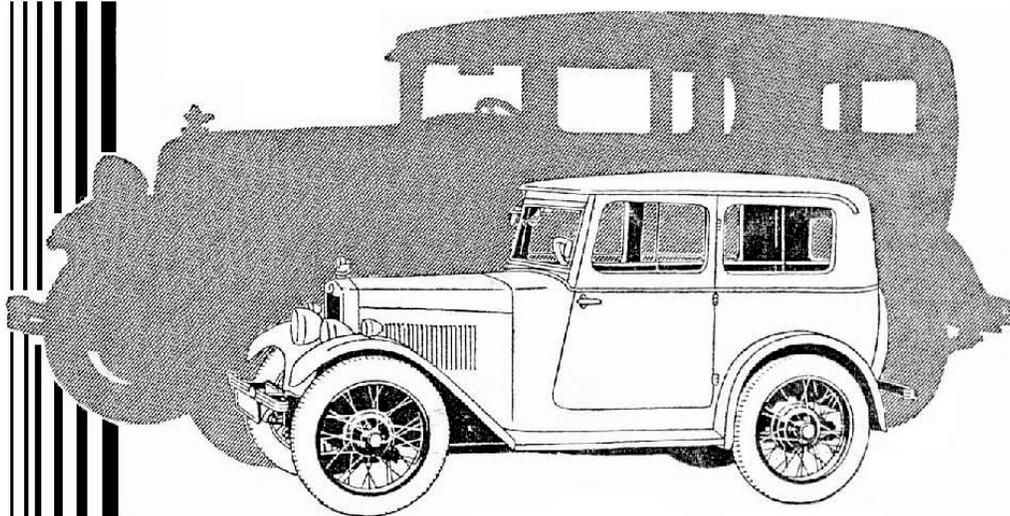
Now I come to print the magazine, and find I have an odd number of pages, so here are some more of our motor cars!



When I grow up, I want to be a Blower Bentley! David Brown of Fiskerton, Lincs. owns this unique fabric bodied OHC Minor special (M 22203). Colour is BRG, of course. David has raced Minors for many years – is this your 2001 Le Mans entry, David?!



Bodywork needs attention? This is 1930 Semisports TY 7961 (M 30882) as found in 1993, after being parked unprotected in a Stockport back garden for 25 years. The rescue story and much more on Semisports Minors in the next issue.



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TOURER (Coachbuilt)	£130		

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