

## Tailpiece

This issue's bedtime reading comes from the pen of 'Mileator' and was published in the March 1929 Morris Owner magazine. It describes in charmingly quaint terms a French visit undertaken in the 1928 fabric saloon UD 2588, covering a distance of some 1,600 miles.

### Across France in Quest of Sunshine

#### **Telling of a Morris Minor that journeyed from Oxford to the Riviera and back in a day over a week**

A long delayed week's holiday in mid-winter. What must be done with it? The pit-pat of rain on the window urges that it should be spent in front of the fire at home, an urge which sundry Christmas numbers and snowbound covers littered about the house sought to justify. On the other hand, there was the newly acquired Morris Minor suggesting a holiday on the open road; the only place a real holiday can be spent.

#### **The Impetus**

But after all one must have sun for a holiday and, according to the latest report, copyright by Reuter, Press Association, Exchange telegraph and Central News, the nearest point the sun had been seen for weeks was on that happy northern shore of the Mediterranean, where wealthy Europe spends its playtime hours in the duller months of the year.

An atlas. A pencil and paper. Mr. Philip's map measurer. These three in combination quickly told two forlorn would-be holiday-makers that the sun was only 800 miles away. Rapid calculation of fifty into eight hundred showed that it only required sixteen gallons of petrol in the Morris Minor to cover the journey. The memory of a circular from the Townsend people showed that the freight across the channel was but a modest two pounds. Ergo, a matter of four pounds at most plus the passenger charge for ourselves across the Channel was the market value of the sun.

#### **Following Mahomet's Lead**

Everybody knows Mahomet's historical decision when the mountain refused to budge. To make a short story still shorter, history repeated itself.

Thus it came about that in the drizzling rain of an early Saturday morning the road 'twixt Oxford and Dover began to fly under the wheels of our Morris Minor in order that it might be alongside the quay at 9.30 as per the book of words issued by Townsend Brothers, already mentioned. And, in a very short space of time, the little car, complete with two suitcases, coats and other effects, was stowed below deck and on its way to France, the while we crossed on the railway boat.

The rain continued, the sun was not going to meet us half-way obviously, and when we had thanked the R.A.C. representative for his attention and departed from the pavé quay at Calais, it was still raining.

But we cared not, the passenger and I, and I am sure Morris Minor did not. He simply loved it. He ate up the early stages of our route so kindly set by the R.A.C., and ere the sun had withdrawn such grudging rays as he sent through the canopy of cloud, the execrable pavé of Boulogne was being left behind us, and Abbeville, our agreed terminus for the night, was appearing on the direction boards.

The only complaint was against headlights. French roads are straight as macaroni. French headlights are big as searchlights in most cases, and as soon as a pair appears on the skyline, the driver blinks continuously until you put yours out, whereupon he turns on a spotlight which is rather more blinding than his lamps were. He then goes into first and passes you as slowly as possible, and as you don't know his country, even with headlights on, it will be readily understood that night riving – until you get used to it – has its drawbacks. That's why Abbeville, only forth miles from Calais, was considered good enough for the French portion of the first day's run.

#### **The Delights of Foreign Travel**

But we were not complaining. Thanks to Morris Minor we had enjoyed a run in a strange land and a meal which only a French cook can prepare, discussing a Sauterne which nobody would blame the French for keeping in their own country, and after dinner a drive round the town, taking in the spectacle of French women doing French shopping, which consisted almost entirely of carrying home two yards of bread in a bag obviously intended for crumpets.

If it were not that a stony-hearted Editor had limited me to three pages of his book for this chronicle, I should tell you of the delights of that first night on French soil, of the cognac sipped in a cosy café, the while London came through on the loud speaker; of the crowd of eager sports who surged around Morris Minor when

we parked him outside the cosy café aforesaid, and finally climbed hand over fist into the tallest beds ever at our hotel.

Next morning, up bedtimes, as friend Pepys used to say, although not so bedtimes as we had intended, for French hotel servants respect their Sunday mornings. Indeed, the local population had resumed its stable amusement of taking the bread for a walk when we left.

We continued south through Beauvais, St. Germain, Versailles and Fontainebleau, where the forest glories are impressive even in winter-time. This enabled us to cut out Paris, although as the day wore on the road became comparatively congested with Parisians making the most of a dull Sabbath. Dining at Sens, we were yet able to push on to Joigny for our night's rest, having covered some 200 miles in the first full day's effort. The following day, too, saw another 200 miles accounted for, despite a comparatively leisurely pace at many stages to drink in the glories of the Côte d'Or, both scenic and otherwise – otherwise especially.

Lyon was passed through on account of rumours of typhoid in the city. Accordingly we found a little hotel some ten miles clear of the outskirts.

### **A Long Day's Run**

Next day we were determined to reach our destination by the evening, although we still had some three hundred miles to do. Therefore, although tempted to linger at what must be regarded as one of the most attractive stages of the trip, we kept our right foot down and proceeded at a steady forty five to fifty miles per hour the whole day, except for a few stops for photographs.

Through the charming villages along the banks of the Rhone we sped, meeting in reality places we had known previously merely as labels on wine bottles. Champagne, Chateaubourg, St. Peray were left behind, the traffic of Valence negotiated with but brief glances in the shops. Old-world Montelimar, with its arches left over from mediaeval time, and Avignon of our history-book days, were ticked off on the route.

And in the early afternoon we found our quarry, the Sun. We had threaded our way through a horse fair in Aix en Provence, and on a long tree-bordered road, nestling at the foot of a hill, a mantle of cloud rolled obligingly eastward and old Sol flooded the landscape with his beneficent rays.

### **A Choice of Ways**



**On the sea front, Cannes**

Frejus left us a choice of the mountain-road to Cannes or the not-quite-such-a-mountain-road along the coast, and as we still had half an hour of daylight left to us we chose the latter. Through St. Raphael and Boulouris we ran, while our quarry dipped into the bosom of the Mediterranean, gilding the orderly white villas and lengthening the shadows of the picturesque palms as he sank.

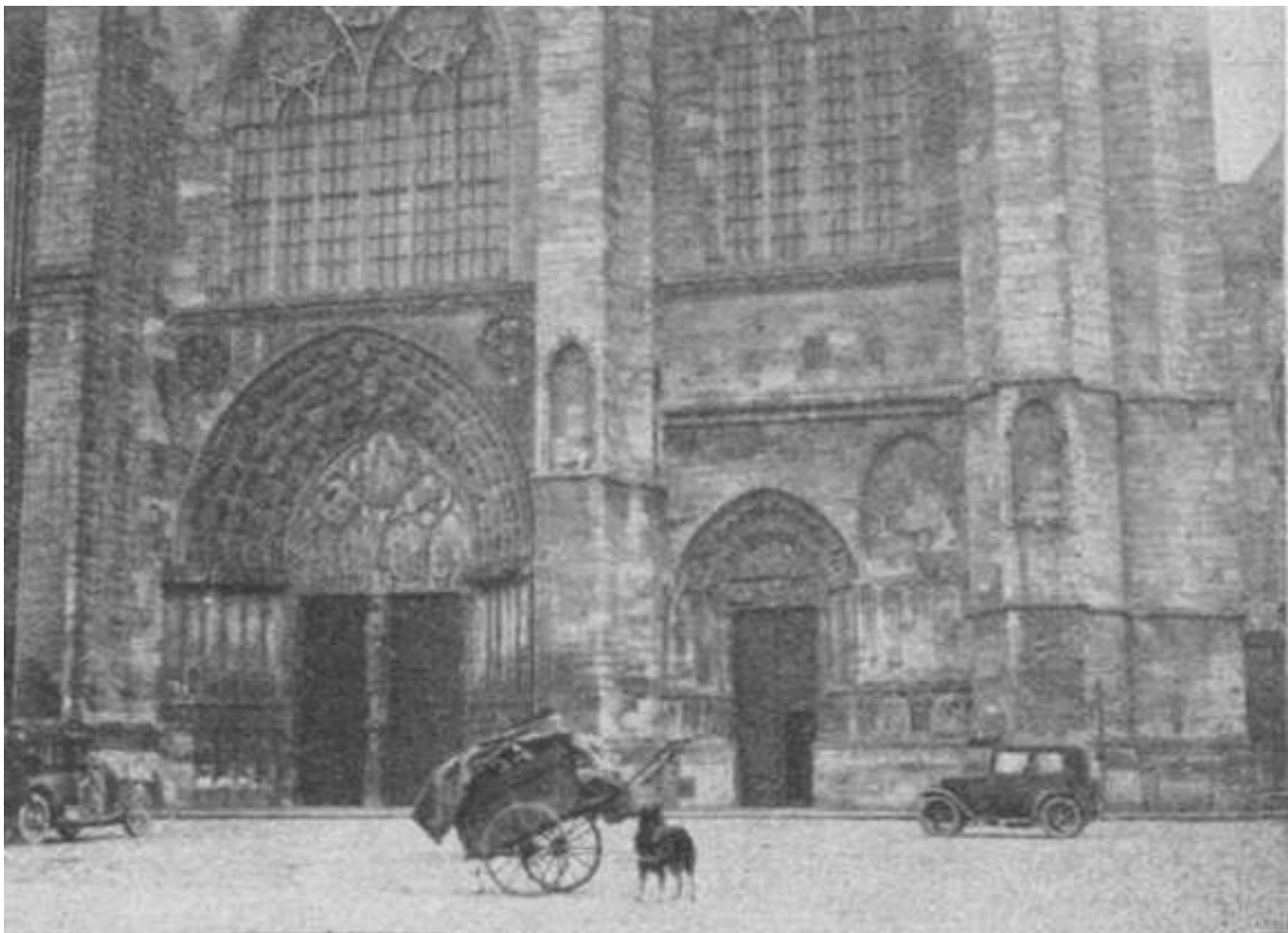
If this coast road was the only attraction, the trip would have been well made. Elevated for the most part on cliffs against which the southern sea laps, it winds like a ribbon through a veritable fairyland, which nightfall enchants the more with a myriad lamps. Cannes was reached in time for dinner.

We had tracked the sun to his lair and thereafter followed three nights and two days among the many attractions of the playground seaboard. Antibes, Nice, Mentone and Monte Carlo supplied their complement of pleasure, Morris Minor dutifully taking us from place to place and enabling us to see as much in our two days as is possible for the average visitor in a week if he has to rely on motor coaches and other forms of public transport.

Very reluctantly a return journey was made over the same route early on Friday morning, and by keeping the accelerator pedal close to the floorboard we were able to arrive in Calais by the Sunday afternoon – too late, however, for the boat – this incidentally giving us an excuse for another night spent on French soil.

On the return journey, in order to save time, the passage was made on the Townsend boat where a limited number of passengers accompanying their cars are permitted. The accommodation, if restricted, is comfortable and, generally speaking, decidedly to be recommended when time is an important factor.

And now for expenses; to those about to follow in our wheel tracks, the most important item. The boat charge for the return trip was £4, while petrol and oil for the journey there and back came to only £3 12s., notwithstanding that fuel is a little dearer across the Channel. Added to these expenses, of course, was 19s. 6d. each on the railway boat, and 10s. each on the Townsend boat coming back. As everybody knows, hotels in France, for a given standard of comfort, ask about half the customary charges here, it being possible for two people to live in any but the Americanised show places for twenty-five shillings a day, with perhaps a fifty per cent increase on the Riviera itself.



**Sens Cathedral, which has many links with Canterbury. The dog in the foreground supplies the motive power for the baker's cart**



**The historic arch at Orange is among the oldest pieces of Roman architecture in Europe**



**At a French level crossing, which it will be observed opens upward**