Summer Rally 2018. Ian Harris (left) receives the coveted Sports & Vintage Cup for his years of service to the Morris fraternity with his Morris spares service. (Nick Williams)
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Front Cover

Ian Harris’ 1932 Calshot takes a rest on the Scenic Tour. Ian acquired the car from John Seddon and has carried out a good deal of work on it since repatriating it from France. (Gracefoto)

Rear Cover

Over in Holland, Halbe Tjepkema has completed the lengthy and meticulous restoration of his 1929 fabric saloon and is now beginning to enjoy driving it. Here we see Halbe participating in the recent Juliana Children’s Rally where old car owners pick up a chronically ill child for the day and go on a rally where the child has to do the navigating and is therefore ‘in charge’. Halbe brought the oldest and slowest car, but they did arrive at the finish first! Unfortunately they missed all the questions (“What questions?”) they had to answer along the route. Never mind though, Halbe’s young navigator felt they had won anyway and had had a fabulous day! This picture shows them being flagged away by 'Bobbie', a Dutch celebrity who hosts a children’s TV programme called ‘Ernst, Bobbie & the Rest’. (Marilène Dubois via Cat Spoelstra)

The Small Print

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In 1976, I was a penniless final year student at Bath University. I was running my first car, which was a 1968 Triumph Herald (VMF 480G. Funny how we remember these things.) The Herald was a good car, but this particular one suffered from various maladies, including a blown gearbox and rotting chassis outriggers. Part of the reason for me being penniless was the garage bills to sort all this out. Logic suggested that if I had a pre-war car, it would be so much simpler, and I could fix it myself when needed. I came across an Austin 7 Ruby at a garage on the A36 just outside Bath. The garage owner offered me the car for £350 with a brand new MoT. It was in red lead primer and had no upholstery, but I reckoned I could easily deal with these mere details. The following week, I called in at a garage in Bathwick Street to fill the Herald. I got chatting to the owner, as he had a very nice Mk. 2 Jaguar. Proudly, I told him that I was about to become the owner of a pre-war car. I told him all about the fine mount that I had discovered, very probably one of only a handful of surviving examples of this extremely rare car…

Hearing my story, he told me that there was a chap who lived almost opposite who also had a pre-war car for sale – a 1937 Morris 8 tourer. I had no idea what one of those was, but decided to follow up his lead. The car was parked in the street and the first things I noticed were that it was painted and had upholstery. And it was an open-topped car! The owner was a local school teacher, Mike Gibson. He took me for a spin in the Morris and it was mightily impressive, having been fitted with an OHV Wolseley 10 engine and other go-faster mods. He could spin the wheels in second gear! And the price? £350 - exactly the
asking price of the Ruby. And so it was that my vintage motoring career swerved from Austin to Morris at the outset! Oh, and it had SPARES with it!

I ran the car for a few months, but had trouble with the chassis, which kept on cracking over the front springs. I would have it welded up, only to find it cracked in another place a week or so later. (One garage even wanted to turn the car upside down to weld it! I declined, as was sure that the body would fall off!) I sold it on, but after about a year, now a postgrad, I hankered after another one. So I placed a Wanted advert in Exchange & Mart. I received just one response, from a chap in Chesterfield. He told me that he didn’t have a Morris 8, tourer, but did have a Morris Minor tourer. I had taken the 8 to the Morris Register’s summer rally at Beaulieu a few weeks earlier. They parked my scruffy student hack at the very far end of a long line of concours 8’s. Right next, in fact to a small gaggle of tiny Morrisises, which I learned were called Minors. They were gorgeous! I bought the Chesterfield Minor (PJ 5121), and spent a very happy summer sorting it and getting it running and test driving it up the Fosse Way.

And so I had my first Morris Minor. Thus started forty years of Minor ownership, spanning at least thirty examples, both sidevalve and overhead cam. And 24 years later, in 2000, I founded the VMR.

Meanwhile, Mike Gibson became a dear friend and taught me just about everything I knew at that time about prewar cars. In the far back of his garage in Bathwick Street, he also had a Minor. But no ordinary one. No, this was a McEvoy Special – just about the best looking car I had ever seen. He was nearing the completion of a twelve-year restoration of the car. (I remember thinking, ‘How on earth can a restoration of such a simple little car take TWELVE YEARS!”). I was to find out in due course…). At that time VK 6518 was fitted with an OHC engine, but Mike had the original McEvoy sidevalve engine under his workbench, which is now fitted to the car.

Tragically, Mike was to succumb to cancer at far too young an age. He attended our Wedding in 1983 on crutches after an operation and that was the last time I saw him.

Fast forward to about ten years ago. I was corresponding with Harry Edwards (another dear lost friend) about McEvos, and he put me on to a chap in Ipswich that he had received correspondence from. He had a Minor with what appeared to be a Jensen body. But that was about 20 years earlier. I tracked down the son of the late owner and learned that he still had the unrestored car tucked away in a workshop behind the high street. I visited it and could immediately see that the body was by Jensen. But there was no McEvoy radiator script and the engine could not be found. However, a couple of months later, I had a call from the owner who told me that he and his wife had just been to dinner with some old friends. His wife just happened to mention that her husband was going to sell the old Morris, to which the friend replied, “Oh. So I suppose he’ll want the engine back, will he?” It transpired that he had taken on the engine about 20 years ago to restore it for his friend, but the project had never progressed and it had been forgotten.

I called the friend with the engine late one night and asked him about it. “Wait a minute,” he said, “It’s in a shed at the bottom of the garden. But I have a cordless phone.” He found his way by torchlight to the shed. I asked him if he could see the manifold. The engine was completely dismantled and spread about the shed in various boxes. After a search, he found the manifold. “Could you describe it?” “Yes, its got cast fins on it and it looks like it takes a downdraft carburetter.

Bingo! This was indeed a 1933 McEvoy Special. The deal was done and a few months later, the car was on its way in a 40-foot container, along with my 1930 ex-Olive Willatts fabric saloon and a Mirror dinghy with Seagull outboard (a story for another day), through the Panama Canal to the Port of Seattle.

And thus my Minor story comes full circle. I am now the proud owner of a McEvoy Special – one of only four in existence (almost as rare as Rubys!) and just like Mike’s VK 6518. So where is it now? In a million pieces in my garage here in Seattle, waiting for me to find time to progress the restoration. Still, I’ve only been at it for about nine years, so I guess I have at least three more years to go, by Mike’s yardstick. Piece of cake!
Register Ramblings

Ewan Lambess sent in these two photos that he took in September at the All British Day at Parramatta, Sydney. Three Minors attended including Paul Kinder’s Holden-bodied LWB tourer (see page 35). Also in attendance was this roadster, reportedly chassis MM414. If this chassis number is correct, this will be the earliest known surviving Minor. That accolade is currently held by MM463 which is a fabric saloon in England. According to the Genome, MM414 was also a fabric saloon and its chassis was laid down on 25th October 1928 (MM463 was laid down on the 30th). Interesting, as most of the early chassis that went to Australia were in bare chassis form.
Mike Byrne contacted the Register recently as he was looking at this 1933 2-seater UF 9088 (SV 21109) which was being offered for sale. The seller was looking for £3,000 which was a little too rich for Mike’s blood, so he is now looking for a better one.
While corresponding with Mike, it turns out that he is a Jensen man and sent me some interesting photos of one of the first cars built completely by Jensen. Known as the White Lady, this impressive car has just been rescued from Canada and is now under restoration in Germany.
The business end of John Newell’s 1932 Minor 2-seater CG 1140 (SV15401) as it approaches the end of its rebuild.

Over in Kemble, Gloucestershire, John Newell has been busy restoring his 1932 2-seater Minor, but loss of garaging has forced him to offer it for sale. It was entered in the Richard Edmonds auction at Castle Combe in October, but wasn’t present on the day.

CG 1180 in earlier days - perhaps in the fifties. Note the suitcase strapped to the passenger door!
It was a very, very wet and muddy VSCC Welsh trial on Saturday 13th October. Perfect conditions! Claire Rolfe at Cwm Whitton farm in the family Riley-engined M Type. (David Saxl)

The following report was submitted by Claire Rolfe:

“Having trialled the Morris Minor saloon and tourer many times, I thought it was about time I competed in the MG M Type. Over 100 Vintage cars entered the Welsh trial, but only one Morris Minor semi Sports and two MG M Types competed. The Welsh Trial is different to other VSCC trials as only pre-1931 cars are allowed. Traditionally it had a 200-mile road run on the Saturday, but sadly this has been whittled down to a short 50 mile run for scrutineering. Our run meant we spent the morning in torrential rain and high winds, which tested my endurance as it was very difficult to see the road and the oncoming rain was incredibly painful. By lunchtime we were both wet through and pleased to reach the garage in Presteigne.

After signing on, a hot cup of tea and a bacon roll we were rejuvenated and ready to begin the trial. I was delighted and it felt rather exhilarating to reach the top of five sections and come very close on two others. Even restarts became a pleasant challenge. It was good to see Mark Smith swapping his J2 for a vintage M Type that looked very standard. Owing to a 4-speed box he was competing against the specials
Trials cars and at the end of the trial the car showed signs of battle damage. Mark’s determination in finishing the trial was also rewarded with a good score, clearing three hills and getting near to the top of two others. After a good start, Graham Goode in his Morris Minor Semi Sports was forced to retire.

‘Smatcher’, which has been in the trial since 1939, had an immensely long queue giving us an opportunity to chat with other competitors. However, after such a long wait we were rewarded, like many others, with a disappointing two points. Sunday afternoon finished with three sections at Cwm Whitton Farm. It is an excellent venue for spectators, with hot food, plenty of parking and a wonderful finale for the triallists.”

Thanks Claire! And now the results:

Claire gained 271 points, including five cleaned (if that is the word!) hills.
Mark Smith (M Type) scored 235 points.
Graham Goode (Morris Minor Semi-sports) scored 98 points on seven hills before retiring.

Trials had their heyday in the 1930’s when even manufactures like MG, Austin, Allard, Morgan and others would enter a works team. Some of you may be wondering how trials work. It’s quite simple. The hills to be attempted are spread around the countryside and the competitors drive from one to the next, attempting to climb as far up each hill as they can. Climbs are not timed. Hills are typically steep and/or muddy farm or Forestry Commission tracks, some include a watersplash, while others have a loose, stony surface. Some are straight and steep, others are twisty and tight. Every trial contains a wide variety which keeps things interesting and challenging. Each hill is prepared by the marshals who define the start line and then place 25 numbered marker boards up the hill, from 1 to 25, 25 representing the finishing line.

When the marshal flags you away, you blast up the hill and try to get your back axle past as many markers as possible. If you clear the number 25 board, you score maximum marks on the hill. If you grind (or slither) to a halt on the way up, the marshal will record how far you got and then either help you to the top or to CAREFULLY reverse down to the start line. Often, it takes the help of spectators to manhandle the cars off the hill. To increase the level of difficulty, organisers will choose difficult places on a couple of hills to have a restart. On these steep restarts the driver will have to stop with the front wheels in a box and on a drop of the flag continue to the top, or at least try and restart. It all makes for a great day out in the country with other vintage cars, with everyone getting plastered in mud as your rear wheels spin, but that is just part of the fun of the day!

Clearly some cars are more powerful than others, and long wheelbase cars can be at a disadvantage on tight turns. Some cars are standard, while others are out-and-out trials specials. To keep things fair therefore, there are a number of classes and some trials also have a special class for newcomers. At the end of the day, your scores are summed and results calculated. In the case of this year’s Welsh trial, the maximum score achievable across the 16 hills would have been 400. The highest score achieved was 376, achieved by Peter Kite in his GN Sports.

The skill of the those who lay out the trials hills is to try to make sure that the hills are neither too easy or too difficult. This is more of an art than a science, since the weather conditions play a major role in determining traction. The trials season is deliberately organized during the winter months to ensure the maximum depth of mud, because dry trial so often result in most entrants scoring the 25 maximum points on hills and so there is little or no spread in results.

With the recent inclusion of sidevalve Minors in the Vintage Sports Car Club’s Post-Vintage Thoroughbred list, there is now the opportunity for owners of these cars to join the VSCC and compete in trials, as well as many other events. There are many sidevalve Minors out there that are not in concours condition and can be had at a relatively cheap price that would make perfect entry level trials machines or offer the basis for building a trials special. Who will be the first to take up the challenge? The Cotswold trial in November has a novice class, to encourage newcomers, and if you miss that the VSCC driving tests in December at Bicester or January at Brooklands make an ideal introduction to VSCC events.
The 2018 VMR Summer Rally

Contentment. Colin Lee, his daughter and his covetable MG J1 in repose at Whittington Court on Sunday morning. (All photos Gracefoto unless otherwise credited)

The feature article in M 166 focused on Pre-War Prescott, while this article will describe the Sunday happenings, namely the Navigation Rally and parallel Scenic Tour.

This year’s route was to take us almost due south from Prescott down towards Cirencester and back to Stanway House in the afternoon, after a pub lunch at the Tunnel House Inn at Coates – a new lunchtime venue for us. The only logical route south passes through bustling Winchcombe before climbing the wolds towards the Neolithic long barrow at the delightfully-named Belas Knap. On a clear day, the lane over the top affords breathtaking views back towards Bredon Hill and the unmistakable Malverns and beyond. And today we had wonderful summer weather, sunny skies and could see forever.

The first clue in the Navigation Rally, and therefore the first stop for the scenic tourists was at the little church at Sevenhampton. The clue here was “Sergeant Mills was awarded a medal for his gallantry. What medal was it?” The answer was to be found inside the church, on a beautiful stone Roll of Honour commemorating local men who perished in the Great War. The first name on the Roll is that of Sergeant Albert John Mills, DSM of the Grenadier Guards. Mills won his DSM during the defence of Gheluvelt on 31st October 1914. The Scenic Tour Handbook contained a full description of this young man’s gallantry.

Then it was on down to Whittington Court. The Court is a hidden 16th Century Cotswold gem owned by Jenny Stringer. Jenny most generously offered us the opportunity to take our cars up the drive to photograph them in front of the house. She also arranged with the local farmer to have him open his field opposite the entrance to the drive for us to park our cars and even provided coffee for the marshals at the gate!
Whittington Court on Sunday morning. Ian Harris, Frank Ashley and Thelma compare notes.

There were two clues at Whittington Court and another in the church next door. Jenny Stringer’s late husband had been a Catalina pilot during the War and this was the subject of one of the clues. Jenny placed a photo of her husband and a model of a Catalina on a table in front of the house. Jenny is a well-known fabric designer, whose work has been featured in several popular magazines, including Period Living. The Register made a £100 donation to the church roof fund in return for Jenny’s hospitality.
Above  Suitable transport for one of the marshals at Whittington Court.
Below  Stuart Cooke’s superb 1922 Morris Sports, also at Whittington Court.
And then it was on to Duntisbourne Abbotts - a name to strike fear into anyone who has been this way before on one of our rallies. Duntisbourne’s claim to fame is its ‘flooded road’. A river flows into the road, runs along it for a hundred yards or so and then disappears on the other side. The road is therefore a river, with a loose stony bottom, that gets deeper and deeper as you progress along the narrow channel.

Two shots by Mike Jones at Duntisbourne. David Pike’s 1910 Talbot AB and Graham Harding’s 1932 Wolseley Hornet Special.
Two more shots by Mike Jones. Philip Coombs’ 1932 M Type and John Muschamp’s 1939 Frazer Nash BMW 328.
Mike Dalby’s M Type was sick, so he entered his MGA submarine! (Mike Jones)

Harold Blair pauses to cool his tyres. (Harold Blair)
Kev and Mel Howe’s 1936 MG TA at Duntisbourne. It doesn’t get much better than this.

After surviving Duntisbourne (and there was a dry alternative route through the village, but I don’t know of anyone who took it), it was off to lunch at the Tunnel House Inn. The Tunnel House was John Betjeman’s favourite pub and was built in the 1770’s to cater for the navies and tunnel leggers of the Thames and Severn Canal. This timeless gem of an inn lies hidden in a canal-side hollow at the end of a quarter mile track and at the imposing Coates Portal entrance into Sapperton Tunnel. The Landlord had very kindly arranged for the large car park to be reserved exclusively for us, arranging parking in a field with his own marshals up the lane for the general public and the bar staff.

The Thames and Severn Canal, completed in 1789, was conceived as part of a canal route from Bristol to London. At its eastern end, it connects to the River Thames at Inglesham Lock near Lechlade, while at its western end, it connects to the Stroudwater Navigation at Wallbridge near Stroud, and thence to the River Severn. It includes Sapperton Tunnel, which when built was the longest canal tunnel in Britain and remains the fourth longest. There were always problems with water supply for the canal, as no reservoirs were built, while the summit section near the tunnel ran through porous limestone, and there were constant difficulties with leakage. Competition from the railways took much of the canal’s traffic by the end of the 19th century, and most of the canal was abandoned in 1927, the remainder in 1941. Since 1972, the Cotswold Canals Trust has been working to restore both the canal and the Stroudwater Navigation, so that it can again provide a navigable link between the Thames and the Severn. A number of the canal structures have been restored, and some sections are now in water once again.

The 3,817-yard Sapperton Tunnel was opened on 20th April 1789 after five years of construction. It has no towpath; boats were propelled through the tunnel by legging. The tunnel was passable until at least 1966 but is currently blocked by roof collapses over several hundred yards, mainly in sections where the ground is fuller's earth clay. Restoration is proposed by the Cotswold Canals Trust as part of their project to re-open the canal route from Thames to Severn. The Trust operates tourist boat trips into the tunnel in winter months.
The afternoon route turned back north, taking us through open countryside with more gorgeous views across the top of the wolds. We stopped at the church at Daglingworth, passed by the World War One airfield at Rendcomb and across the World War Two airfield at Chedworth before visiting the famous crocodile at Compton Abdale and on to Hailes Abbey, where we made another £100 donation.

And so to Stanway House for cream teas on the lawn, results and awards before witnessing a private launching of the world famous 300 foot gravity fountain. Once again, a fantastic Cotswolds day out.
Stanway is dominated by the magnificent Jacobean Stanway House, owned by Lord Wemyss, who graciously allows us to park our cars in his front drive every year. The ancient manor house was presented to Tewkesbury Abbey in the year 715 by two Mercian leaders Odo and Dodo.
The Stanway gravity fountain seemed to affect gravity in its vicinity!
The 2019 VMR Summer Rally  
Friday 19th to Sunday 21st July

A sunny picture to warm the heart on cold, dark evenings. Pre-War Prescott 2018 and the Wolseley Hornet Specials Club certainly know how to picnic. We are expecting an enormous gathering of hornets next July. (Gracefoto)

I thought that things could not get better than our Summer Rally this year, but I have to report that next year’s weekend is already shaping up to be even better. We have a number of clubs and registers that have already declared for Pre-War Prescott 2019. These include the Early MG Society, who have not joined us since our inaugural VMR Prescott in 2003. They have at least half a dozen 18/80’s lined up already and are actively encouraging owners of Flatnose and Bullnose MG’s to join in. The Historic BMW Club also sent in a very nice note, saying that all of their members had such a good time this year that they are already planning to return next July. And on the MMM MG front, things are looking tremendous. The MMM Register contacted me to remind me that 2019 marks the 90th Anniversary of the start of production of the M Type MG (and therefore the start of the MMM era.) As such, there is a tremendous effort afoot to organize a record gathering of M Types in the Paddock on the day. And Cat Spoelstra contacted me recently to let me know that the Dutch MG Group is planning another raid on Pre-War Prescott in 2019 and she already has a dozen entries lined up. We are also expecting a very strong Wolseley Hornet Specials Club entry in 2019 and have already received three Hornet entries.

I was also contacted recently by the Never Forgotten Association. This charity was founded in 1920 and their Patron is the Princess Royal. The Association provides recreation, leisure and entertainment to serving personnel and veterans of any age. They support any serving man or woman who is wounded, injured or sick and any veteran with a disability, illness or infirmity; whatever the cause and whenever it arose. We are working on a plan to welcome a number of these disabled veterans to Prescott on Saturday and give them runs up the hill as passenger. I also hope that we can find them some seats on the Sunday run. I should have much more news on this shortly.
And of course we are very excited and grateful to have Mintex coming aboard as our main sponsor which will enable us to do even more to make our Summer Rally weekends even better.

There has been one important change to the entry arrangement since entries opened. It was initially reported that only a single free climb would be allocated to each entrant before the day and that further climbs would be available on the day. I was quickly contacted by a couple of longstanding entrants who pointed out that this could not only cause a scrum on Saturday morning, but might also deter those coming from afar and who may not be able to arrive at Prescott when the gates open. So to Plan B. We have reverted to the time-honoured system of offering additional climbs on the entry form, but we are limiting this to two additional climbs instead of three in the hope that we will have a few spare climbs available on the day.

The date for the VSCC race meeting at Cadwell Park has been for Saturday 27th July next year, so there will be no clash with this event next year. Good news for the racers among us!

You can track the entry list as it grows online on the Pre-War Prescott website at www.prewarprescott.com. Just click the ENTRY LIST link at the top of the page.

The website for the Summer Rally weekend can be found at:

http://vintageminor.co.uk/Summerrally2019/Summer_Rally_2019.html (or simply click the 2019 EVENTS link on the VMR website home page) and the dedicated Pre-War Prescott website may be found at http://www.prewarprescott.com.

Once again, VMR members will enjoy a discounted entry to Prescott on Saturday - £35 instead of £50.

There are several ways to enter. Go to www.prewarprescott.com, click on the ENTRY FORM link and then either fill in the form and pay online or download the entry form from the page, print it off and post it with your cheque to John Hicks at the address on the form. Or you can print off the entry form that can be found at the foot of each of our monthly e-mailed newsletters.

(By the way, if any Register member does NOT receive these monthly newsletters, do let me know so I can add your e-mail address to the circulation list. All Newsletters are also archived in the Members’ Area of the website).

Finally, you can also download the entry form from the VMR Summer Rally website.

Here’s the weekend itinerary:

**Friday Evening**
Informal Reception at Ye Olde Hobnails Inn at Little Washbourne (OS 150/991332). All are most welcome from opening time onwards. Meals will be served until 8-30 p.m.

**Saturday**
Pre-War Prescott at Prescott Hill. Gates open at 9 a.m., first driver briefing at 9-30 a.m., hill opens at 10 a.m. Lunch break from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m., hill closes at 4 p.m., after which awards will be presented, followed by a Party and buffet/BBQ with live music courtesy of Mike Dowley & Co. at the Clubhouse on the hill.

**Sunday**
Navigation Rally and parallel Scenic Tour. Starting at Prescott at 8 a.m. where bacon butties and hot drinks will be available. There will be a lunchtime pub stop and the day will conclude once again with cream teas at Stanway House where the gravity fountain will be launched for us. Results will be announced and a variety of awards will be bestowed. In the evening there will be a farewell run out to The Shutters at Gotherington (OS 150/959296) to conclude the weekend.
David Roscoe
1931 to 2018

Always cheerful, David unloads his stricken Semi-sports at the Plough on the Sunday afternoon of our 2010 Summer Rally. The CWP was destroyed.

It is with tremendous sadness that I have to report that David Roscoe succumbed to pancreatic cancer on 20th October. David became an early member of the Register when hand cranking his enormous veteran became too much for him. He acquired an OHC Minor from me and commissioned me to build a Semi-sports body for it. This I did, and Dave Cooksey put it all together to produce a fine Minor that David and Diana campaigned regularly, trailering the car every year to our Summer Rallies from their delightful cottage in Devon.

I received the news from his wife Diana. She reported, “I know you'll know that David held the Register in huge regard and enjoyed all its aspects. Much as I admire your magazine I’d prefer not to receive any more copies - too painful. I suppose the membership must end too.”

The following has been extracted from the Daily Telegraph: “David died peacefully at home in Kingswear, Devon aged 87. He was a beloved husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather. Ad man, PR man, yachtsman, raconteur, film-maker, racing driver, vintage and classic car enthusiast. A kind and generous man and a life well-lived. Private funeral. No flowers please. Donations, if desired, to Rowcroft Hospice at Home, may be sent to Stockman and Loram Funeral Directors. 19 Holwell Road, Brixham. TQ5 9NE.”

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2003. David tries the Semi-sports for size for the first time at Dave Cooksey’s Wokingham workshop. David finally sold the car last year.

The Davids Cooksey and Roscoe – Pre-War Prescott.
Above  The two Davids again – this time sharing a joke on a Light Car trial.
Below  Diana studies the instructions on another rally.
Above  David and Clive Hamilton-Gould compare notes on the 2004 Light Car Welsh.  (Duncan Buck)

Below  The Semi-sports at home in Devon with wartime Fairmile motor launches in the background.
(The following article appeared in The Dart in July 2010 and gives a little more insight into David’s full and well-lived life. I though it well worth reproducing here.)

David Roscoe
There can be few things more joyous on a summer’s day than zipping through the Devon lanes in an open-top car – and when that car is a 1929 Ford Model A the fun is even greater!

“My motto is never grow up,” explained David Roscoe, car enthusiast, film maker, model aircraft pilot and former racing yachtsman, who at 79 is doing a great job of keeping old age at bay.

From the home he shares with his wife Diana at Kingswear, David has a magnificent view of Dartmouth and the Dart. He also has a shed with a view, stacked with model aeroplanes in various states of repair, and cans of film of such racing greats as Stirling Moss and Barry Sheen. In two garages live the beautiful Ford and a 1929 Morris sports car.

“There are two types of car enthusiasts – performers and polishers,” David explained. “I am a performer, so I drive the cars regularly and take them to races and hill climbs, or use them for general posing. They are there to be driven.”

David has raced cars throughout his life. Unenthusiastic about school, he admits to having been “more interested in holes in the ground, bicycles and model planes than knowledge.” He escaped from the family insurance firm (“the first Roscoe to escape in 100 years”) and after National Service spent with guns and tanks in the Army, he persuaded his way into a career in PR and marketing, three years before the advent of commercial television.

“I went to the London Press Exchange to be told that they were only taking on graduates. So I asked how they would know if their plan had worked? They were a bit baffled, so I asked if they wanted to take on someone who was not a graduate, so they could see if graduates really did perform better. I received a letter saying ‘It seems you are being offered a job with the LPE.’ I stayed for nine years and did better than all those who’d been at university because I had everything to prove.”

Always interested in cars and going fast, David switched companies and worked for clients such as Castrol, British Leyland and Rolls Royce, becoming a director before joining Rolls Royce as head of public relations for Rolls Royce Motor Cars worldwide. He said: “I turned Rolls Royce from a company who asked why, to a company who asked why not. It went from the habitat of the establishment to the reward for the successful. People say it must have been an easy job because Rolls Royce has such an excellent reputation – well you have to ask why that is…”

David’s racing, in a 1950s Cooper, was put on hold when he and Diana had their sons, Hamish and Adam. The car was sold and with the money David bought a cine camera. He filmed hundreds of races and the people at the trackside. Today his films are increasingly in demand from programmes such as Top Gear. In his study is a huge library of films all now transferred onto DVD. It wasn’t long before he was back on the track himself, however, this time behind the wheel of a 1930s Alvis.

Born in Leeds in 1931, with older and younger sisters, David moved to Windy Corner in Torbay when he was three as his father expanded the insurance company into the South West. There were just six houses clustered around the junction in those days. The Roscoes moved on to Guildford two years later, but their love affair with South Devon had begun and family holidays were spent here every year. When the War started Mr. Roscoe senior bought a little house at Three Beaches, just in case the one in Guildford was bombed, and eventually David’s parents retired to just above the Higher Ferry at Kingswear.

“By this time I had left Rolls Royce and become a head office man for Vickers in London which I hated. When your hobbies are sailing, driving old cars and flying model planes it’s no good living in a flat. So we moved to this house, Crew Cottage, just along the road from my parents’ house, and I did a weekly commute. I spent less time on the train than my secretary who came in every day from Kent. And when I was at home I could do ocean racing out of the Royal Dart, or race my cars. “We have five grandchildren, the eldest of whom are now adults, which is somewhat ageing. But I don’t intend giving up just yet - life is all about having fun!”
Technical Topics

“For Want of a Nail, I Never Made Pre-War Prescott 2018”
Gearbox Failure Analysis & Clutch Replacement of a 1929 Morris Minor

Peter Hills

Introduction

This article describes easily made mistakes, the consequences and then solutions concerning the renovation gearbox and clutch and successful back on the road of my 1929 Morris Minor 4-seater tourer (DS 9936). In 2016 I published an article in M 160 (VMR Winter 2016) ‘Upgrading a 1929 Morris Minor Gearbox and Clutch Thrust Bearing’. Despite fitting new bearings and a clutch thrust bearing the existing pitted gears and thrust washers remained a constant concern. Mid 2018 I procured a set of hardly used cogs and thrust washers in excellent condition for my gearbox. Prior to attending the annual VMR Pre-War Prescott hill climb event I decided to fit the newly acquired parts. In my haste, during assembly, I made a basic error and paid the price, but in the process learned a lot more about the Morris’s three-speed gearbox and clutch. I also found the cause as to why it can be very difficult separating and refitting the gearbox to the engine. Further I identified the reason for the ‘characteristic’ juddering when taking off in first gear.

The Abortive Journey

The gearbox fitted with the virtually new gears sounded sweet; we departed London with great joy having planned to break the journey with some friends living outside Bath. Upon passing Stonehenge I noticed the clutch was slipping a bit, then smoke exuding. On inspection I found some oil leaking from the clutch bell housing. I could not understand the cause but calculated that there would be sufficient oil remaining since the car sounded well in top gear. In hindsight, of course, I should have stopped and had the car transported back home there and then but we were so close to our overnight stop.

Arriving near Amesbury Hill House (the name is the giveaway), I missed the turning on a very steep lane, putting the car into reverse, the clutch started slipping and then ‘BANG’! The car was towed to our friend’s home; we then hired a car to attend Prescott. After returning we accompanied the Morris on a transporter back to London. It was the car’s first road breakdown since 1992; naturally I was rather crest-fallen.

That Hill, It Is Steeper Than It Looks! Towed Home, A Sad Day for DS 9936
Failure Investigation

After removing the gearbox top cover the cause of the failure was evident but the consequential damage was more serious. Simply, the failure was due to the 2nd Gear Cluster Lay-shaft not being locked into position. Having selected the incorrect (shorter) locking bolt (Figure 1) the Lay-shaft was not secured so it had progressively moved backwards creating an opening into the Bell Housing (Figure 2). This had the effect of allowing gear oil to leak into the Bell Housing and then onto the clutch plate.

When I applied reverse gear, the second gear lay-shaft was then only supported at one end (gear box rear support pedestal), the gear probably twisted and jammed into the first gear assembly shattering the lay-shaft’s aluminium pedestal (Figure 3). See the bits that sheared off and the lay-shaft’s locking hole that is bolted from below (Figure 4).

In the process it sheared a tooth off the second gear cluster (Figure 5). The fracture face of the sheared tooth (Figure 6) is indicative of a catastrophic failure having taken considerable force from a single impact.

Realising I needed a new gearbox casing and second gear cluster, I put the word around while at VMR Prescott and was delighted that the Morris Minor owners rose to the occasion with offers of parts that were subsequently obtained

Back home the process of rebuilding ‘Gearbox 3’ was started, perhaps third time lucky, but with past acquired experience, every detail was to be attended to with even greater care.
Yes, it was my mistake but it is easily made. I had stripped my old gearbox along with the newish internal parts from the low mileage box. They were all laid out together on my workbench in an organised mess (normal work place)! What I had overlooked was that there are two sizes of shaft locking bolts (Figure 7). These bolts have a machined end, like a dowel, and dimensions are critical. The shorter locking bolts secure the clutch pivot shaft bushes while the longer is for the lay-shafts. I simply selected the shorter bolt and suffered the consequences. My excuse is that I had overseas visitors who were with me while I was assembling the gearbox! The golden rule is “work by yourself” unless you have a similar knowledgeable car enthusiast to assist.

Despite my unfortunate experience there was a silver lining. Since the clutch had been slipping extensively and, frankly burning, I realised it had to be replaced. With the gearbox removed and subsequent inspection I discovered just how fortunate I was finding an unknown fault.
It can be seen in Figure 8 that the centre spline boss is loose in the clutch plate. See the rivet holes, they had elongated and the rivets themselves were worn or sheared 50% of the shank (Figure 9). This explains the reason why the car would judder when taking off in first gear as the loose clutch plate oscillated. I understand that the MG owners have a splined boss and plate with 12 rivets to avoid this distortion but I was unable to investigate this further at the time.

**Issues to be Addressed**

Despite restoring my car, started in 1970 (I was 26) and learning over the years, I thought I had everything covered but as always there is more to learn. As mentioned, the gearbox failure enabled me to identify the cause of both new and inherited faults as follows:

1. Referring to my gearbox renovation article in M 160, I was rather bothered about the difficulty in removing and fitting the gearbox and decided to investigate the cause.

2. I was very surprised at the poor condition of the clutch since it had only done 7,000 miles. The loose rivets and development of the elongated slots was probably accelerated by impacts each time the clutch slipped. This was exacerbated from the overheated clutch plate. Over time it was probable an incremental fault developing.

3. Reducing oil leaks from the gearbox concerns us all. I now realise why there is a spilt pin in the drain hole in the base of the Bell Housing. I feel the oil seepage can be contained.

**Gearbox Renovation**

Assembling the gearbox was straightforward but I did discover a trick when fitting the steel Thrust Washers. Since I had a variety of different thicknesses of thrust washers I was able to obtain optimum gear clearances. However, fitting the thrust washers can be tricky and awkward. It will be observed that each cog cluster has a recess on one end and a flat surface the other (Figures 10 and 11). I found that when fitting the thrust washers is a two-stage process. First turn the gearbox vertical so that the cog and thrust washer can be positioned into the recessed end and secured with the portion of the lay-shaft.

Then, turn the gearbox horizontal and fit the other thrust washer since it is a parallel fit, so the optimum clearance is obtained. Trying to force the thrust washers in any other way is not only frustrating but also likely to cause damage. The same process applies to both first and second gear cogs.
It should be noticed that there is a lubricating hole in the spigot shaft (Figure 12). First ensure it is clear. Its purpose is to lubricate the splined shaft in the clutch plate, but some oil will find its way to the bell housing drain hole. This design feature will result in the odd drip of oil into the bell housing and cannot be avoided.

![Spigot Shaft Showing Spline Lubricating Hole](image)

**Figure 12 – Spigot Shaft Showing Spline Lubricating Hole**

Referring to Figure 2, it shows the second gear lay-shaft penetrating though the bell housing. Thus, a loose fit will allow excess oil to leak past into the bell housing. During assembly it is advisable to apply some Hylomar or other sealant brand around the end of the shaft to minimise any oil seepage.

**Removing and Fitting the Gearbox**

It always bothered me why it should be so difficult to separate the gearbox from the engine and then refitting it. My old gearbox casing had evidence of past removal difficulties with several fractures and corrective welding to the aluminium casing. Past owners must have used tyre levers, screwdrivers, etc. to force apart the gearbox which is a high-risk solution. Fractured bell housings (Figure 13) are a common feature on many of our cars but that needs not to be the case.

The basic cause of the problem is the forced fitting of the spigot to its support bearing. The original reason is that past replacement clutch plates were not centrally positioned. Then when the gearbox was being forced fitted the matching spigot shaft end was not aligned to its support bearing resulting in plastically deformation of the shaft. This then created a very tight fit in the bearing that again makes removal very difficult.

Most are aware that when fitting the clutch plate, it is essential to use a mandrel to centre the clutch plate since when it is bolted down its position is held very secure. When inserting the gearbox, the spigot shaft has to first align with the clutch splines and then into the rear spigot bearing (Figure 14) that is at the back end of the flywheel.

I removed the old rusty spigot bearing and replaced it with new sealed type. While this bearing’s duty is pretty low, anything that can improve the car’s performance and reduce noise (lack of lubrication) must be a benefit. When checking the new bearing’s fit to the matching end of the spigot I found it extremely tight. Since I also had a second spigot shaft, I found that it too was a very tight fit. I measured the
diameter at base of the spigot shaft end compared to where it would enter the bearing, it was some 5 thou larger. On the spare spigot shaft, I found that the end was oval! Using a friend’s lathe one shaft was trimmed to size with emery tape but the second was so distorted we needed to use a grinding wheel to remove the high spots. Once done the shafts fitted the spigot bearing comfortably.

When the clutch plate was fitted to the flywheel a mandrel was used to ensure its alignment. Remembering that I had a spare spigot shaft I decided to recheck if indeed the clutch plate was central. I found this not to be the case; the mandrel is just not sufficiently a precision fit. I loosened the flywheel bolts and using the spare spigot shaft repositioned the clutch plate and then tightened up the assembly making it perfectly aligned.

In the past many a gearbox has been forced into position, I was just as guilty thinking it was just one of those things, a characteristic of the vehicle. The photo below, showing a gearbox being fitted in the Morris factory, clearly illustrates that levers, jacks, pulleys, etc. are not needed (refer to my article in M160). First, ensure the spigot shaft and bearing are an easy fit. By perfectly aligning the clutch in the flywheel before attempting to refit the gearbox will make life easier now and for future custodians. It will also ensure gearbox bell housings are not damaged by forcing its separation from the engine.
Clutch Renovation

As mentioned, I found the old clutch plate rivet holes elongated and so the plate needed to be replaced. After sourcing a new plate and rivets from Ian Harris Morris Spares Ltd., UK I had to decide how or who would do the work? Time was not on my side, as we wanted to attend the Morris Register Annual Rally at Thoresby Hall, thus I decided to ‘have a go’ myself.

After removing the old rivets separating the splined boss, I found that the new clutch plate holes were slightly smaller than the boss and new rivets supplied so I reamed them to size. I did not have a ‘riveting kit’ and certainly did not want to damage the dome head of the new rivets so I made a tool. Using an old large bolt I drilled a 5/16” recess in the head of the bolt (Figure 15). This was secured in the bench vice as the anvil for protecting the shape of the round head end of the rivet (Figure 16). Once positioned, I then impacted the parallel rivet end with a 7 lb. hammer that seemed to do the job quite effectively.

After fitting all six rivets I then peened each rivet to improve its appearance (Figure 17). It should be noted that peening introduces surface compressive stresses that reduces the onset of metal fatigue.

Prior to fitting the whole Clutch Assembly (Figure 18), for good measure I weighed all the bolts making them identical. Also, the clutch fingers contact faces were smoothed and ensured each unit weighed the same. This detail ensures even balance of the assembly. Remember to soak the clutch finger felt washers
in gear oil (SAE 140) prior to fitting. When all was prepared the gearbox slid into position without any problem making the installation so much easier and quicker than before.

**On the Road**

It was a Thursday evening that the car was back on the road. After a quick spin around the block, I announced to Sandy that we would leave for Thoresby (170 miles north). “Are you sure the car is okay this time?” We loaded the tent and all the camping kit for the weekend and departed Friday morning, driving up the M1. The car went well despite the rain! At the MOREG rally we were delighted to be awarded ‘Best in Class’, a trophy that we first won in 1992.

**Conclusions**

A hard lesson was learned, a major fault caused by selecting the wrong length bolt. However, had this not happened I would not have found that the clutch was in such poor condition. At least now I know that the transmission system is sound for my [http://www.back-to-africa-in-a-1929morrismenor.com](http://www.back-to-africa-in-a-1929morrismenor.com) planned for 2019.
Dear Ian,

Many thanks for your kind letter and donation to the Whittington Church roof fund of £100. I am so pleased your rallyists enjoyed their visit to Whittington Court and also the Church and thank you also for getting over 50 people to sign the visitor’s book, that will indeed help in showing ‘foot fall’ at the Church and help with our fundraising efforts.

The Reverend Colin Randall
Rector, Whittington Church
G’day Ian,

We’re making great progress on recommissioning 34/ML38172 (Morrie).

With the help of Ralph Skelton and members of the Motoring Enthusiasts Group of Cronulla (NSW) RSL Club (MEG), we have the engine running, flexible joints replaced, brakes serviced, electrics recommissioned, and the vehicle is now on NSW Historic Vehicle registration.

We are attending Club runs with MEG and have joined the NSW Morris Register with whom we attended the Sydney All British Day with over 1,500 British vehicles on display. What a delight to win one of seven Judges’ Awards - for originality and patina. Our prize included Meguiar’s Car Care products which will, if used on Morrie, ensure we don’t win the same award next year... hehehe.

We will continue to preserve the car and enjoy it on club runs while we explore Morrie's story, particularly the peculiarities of Holden Australia bodied cars. Together in motoring delight, Paul

Paul Kinder
2 Tanner Avenue
Carlton
New South Wales
Australia

(Photo – Ewan Lambess)
Hi Ian,

I should have been in touch earlier but still enjoying the magazine. Marilyn and I are coming up to our 60th year of marriage next week but she still won't come in the Morris with me! I'd like to teach her drive it but I’m only permitted to drive it 10 kilometers from home.

I regret not going to Harvey Bay. I should have made the effort despite the lousy weather.

I thought you might be interested in these photos of a friend’s genuine J3, almost finished. All made in a shed powered by solar batteries at Stanhope, Queensland.

The J3 owner is Lloyd Hagaman, who reports:

“"I will start by saying this year is 30 years since I put Barry Gilbert’s Minor motor together.

Re the J3, this project started 35 years ago when I bought some OHC Morris motors to build a Minor sports car. There was an MG block and bits in the collection. Thus started the project. I was building the special until an MG man from South Africa said I should check what car the motor was from. It turned out to be a J3 motor. With the help of many MG friends who supplied parts and samples, this is the result. I have made a lot of parts, including, crank shaft, conrods, pistons, camshaft, cam fingers, supercharger housings, etc. The body is approximately J2 MG without doors. As I said, I had a lot of help with measurements and samples and so on. The motor was fired up two years age it runs sweetly. I am hoping to have the car finished very soon.”
Hello Ian,

I take it that you are good! I have been working on my efforts for the book, looking at M Types without known chassis numbers and one that I do not have a number for is WX 8057. On the DVLA website it is said to be a Morris and that it is taxed until April 2019. I wondered if you had any reference to it as it looks to be a "special", when I saw it at Silverstone a few years 2004, I think! [Ed. Sorry Mike. I have no record of this car. Does anyone know the current owner?]
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Cars for Sale

In Australia, Barry Clarke is selling this 1929 Minor tourer, chassis M9770. For details contact Col Schiller at colin.schiller@bigpond.com Col Schiller.

Barry is also selling this 1929 Minor roadster, chassis M3863.

OHC 1932 Minor Family 8
(TF 7653, chassis M36187)

OHC engine, original 9” Lockheed hydraulic brakes. Preserved and in road-going condition. Regularly exhibited. Please contact Martin Watts at mjonwatts@toucansurf.com.
1932 SV Minor 2-seater in Germany
Chassis SV19059, registered GY 3515

After owning the car for 39 years, I am now having to sell the car due to health problems. Restoration nearing completion. Anyone interested in this car should contact me for more info. Should be an easy restoration to complete.

Herbert Scheuermann
h.sch49@web.de

1933 McEvoy Morris Minor
TJ 1836 (SV31850)

The ex-Bev Hicks, Tony Dunster car. Restoration virtually complete, just needs some trim finishing. OIRO 25,000 Euros

Roger Carrette, Belgium
carrette.roger@skynet.be

Spares for Sale

For Sale Two pairs of Hardy Spicer adapter plates for the Minor or M Type. Plates are £25.00 each. Adapt the shaft to the spiders. Pair of Morris German silver threshold plates £15.00 each. Pair of bonnet catch plates in stainless steel £30 for the pair. Steel flexible coupling disk between dynamo and camshaft drive £10.00. Clive Hamilton-Gould hga@towerfields.com.

For Sale I have just six Minor/MG clutch thrust bearing left. For sale now, or I can bring them to Pre-War Prescott. £45 + P&P. Peter Hills hills.peterw@gmail.com.

Spares Wanted

Wanted The following items needed to complete the restoration of my 1934 Minor 2-seater here in Sweden. Any and all help most gratefully received.

CW&P 8x34, dynamo with fan, carburetter SU O.M with 1” throttle diameter, distributor, oil filler cap, radiator cap, gearbox cover and lever, Cardan propeller shaft, front lamps, front road springs complete, instrument panel with gauges, radiator badge, brake cross shaft bracket, bracket to facia board (steering column), ignition control rod assembly, triangular scuttle supports, radiator tie rods, three 18” wheels and wheel spokes. If you can help with any of these parts, please contact Anders at anders.ahlkvist@telia.com.

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(Note – NEW CONTACT DETAILS)
Harold Blair exits Duntisbourne Abbotts flooded road. Summer Rally 2018.
(Harold Blair)