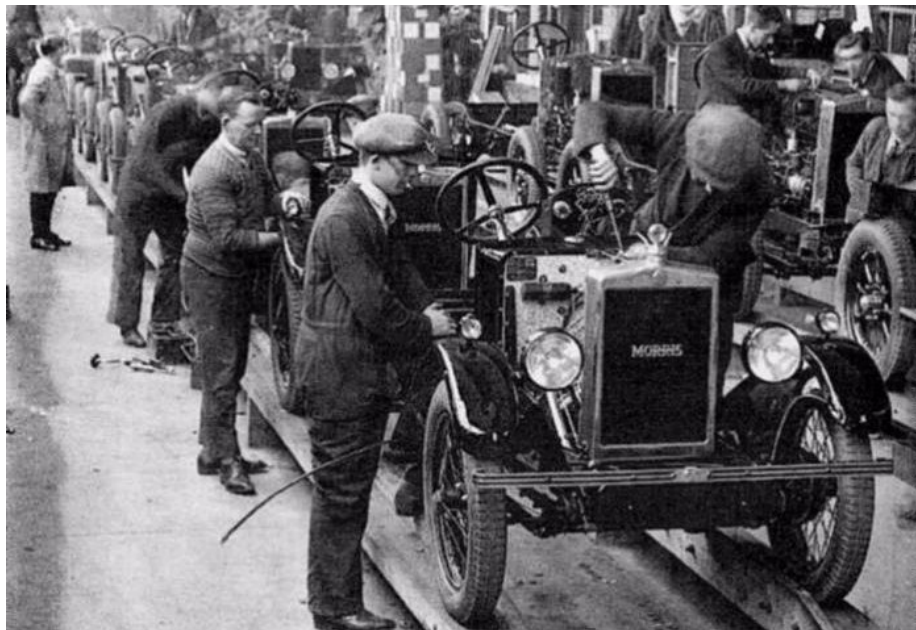


Export Chassis – What We Know So Far



The Minor production line at Cowley in 1929. The Minors of the 1929 production season carried ‘MORRIS’ scripts on their radiator honeycombs – presumably to distinguish the newly-introduced model from the many Austin Sevens that represented the majority of light cars on the road at the time.

Although Morris Motors exported complete cars to Australia in the twenties and thirties, the majority of Minors arrived at the docks in chassis form. Shortly before Anders Clausager left the British Motor Industry Heritage Trust for Jaguar in the early days of the Register, he provided the following data for OHC Minor chassis, which he extracted from records held by BMIHT. They show that just 137 chassis left Cowley for the UK special builders, which goes a long way to explaining the tiny number of surviving specials, but the figures also provided, for the first time, some real statistics regarding export vehicles and chassis.

	Chassis Numbers		Grand Totals			Of Which	Total	Export Chassis (including van chassis)			Of Which
Season	From	To	Chassis	Vehicles	Special chassis	UK Chassis	Export Chassis	Australia	New Zealand	Rest of World	Van Chassis
1929	M101	M12295	12,195	10,955	1,240	49	1,191	1,135	24	32	0
1930	M12296	M27011	14,716	13,985	731	-21	752	700	43	9	32
1931	M27012	M34699	7,688	7,483	205	109	96	10	68	18	11
Totals			34,599	32,423	2,176	137	2,039	1,845	135	59	43

So we have a total of 1,845 OHC chassis exported to Australia between 1929 and 1931, plus at least 458 CKD (Completely Knocked Down) chassis, making at least 2,303 chassis. That number must have kept the coachbuilders very busy indeed.

How do we know about the CKD chassis? The following is an extract from our Magazine M 106 (Winter 2001) and discussed the export of Minor chassis to Australia and explained the Y chassis production.

We are getting a little closer to solving the Australian Y chassis number mystery. Richard Brotherton at Gaydon has run a search in the Progress Books for the engine numbers of engines known to have been fitted to these chassis frames when new. As we suspected, none were found. This means that these Y chassis were entirely separate from the mainstream production run of M prefix chassis. To date, of the eleven known surviving Y chassis, Y558 is the highest Y chassis number traced (Phil Sanders' Holden tourer – engine number U19006). So, assuming that production commenced with chassis number Y101, as was Morris convention, then at least 458 OHC Minors must have been produced in addition to the 34,599 mainstream vehicles, giving a total production of something over 35,000 units.

Having confirmed that these chassis represent an entirely separate production run, we now have to determine the reason for this parallel production. Ross Steel in Australia has provided an insight into the import of vehicles into Australia which may explain the Y chassis number mystery. He explains that there were two ways in which vehicles were imported into Australia in the 1920's – CKD and SKD. CKD stands for Completely Knocked Down, and SKD for Semi Knocked Down. CKD was how most UK and USA vehicles were imported after the depression. SKD amounted to driving chassis, while CKD referred to completely dismantled vehicles. Prior to the depression of the late 1920's vehicles were imported as SKD. CKD was subsequently introduced to minimize import duty and freight charges.

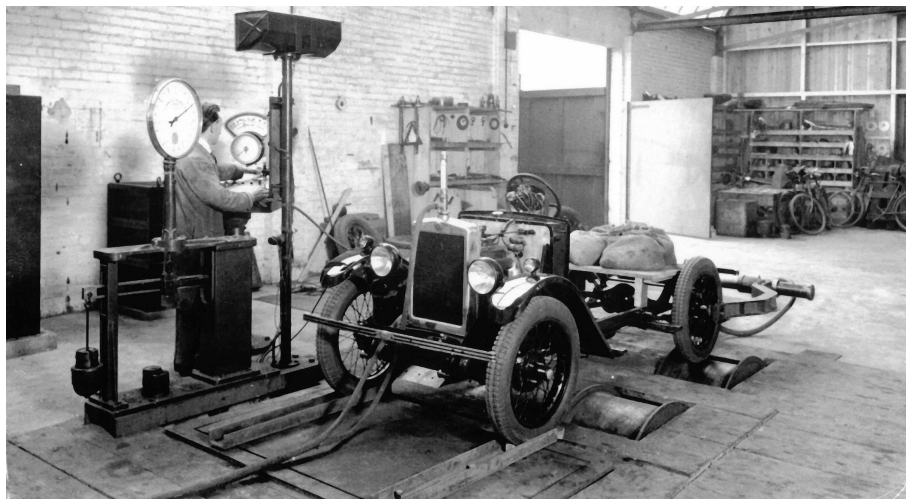
These different levels of import configuration were bought about by the Government of the day wanting to support local industry. In the 1920's Australia had very little manufacturing industry and import duty rates were levied to encourage manufacturers/importers to develop a local industry. In S.A. Cheney's Book "From Horse to Horsepower" (Rigby Ltd, Adelaide, 1965) he outlines how this process occurred and the pressure that the local assemblers put on the Government of the day to enforce this type of protection. Interestingly CKD and SKD were on and off legislation from 1920's up to the 1980's, with the Government of the day giving and taking back incentives or imposing duty continually.

So it would appear that up to the summer of 1929, Minors were imported as SKD driving chassis, but this changed to CDK kits of parts at this time. It is likely that the chassis associated with these kits were the mysterious Y chassis. Perhaps a change in Government regulations in early 1930 prompted Morris to revert to SKD.

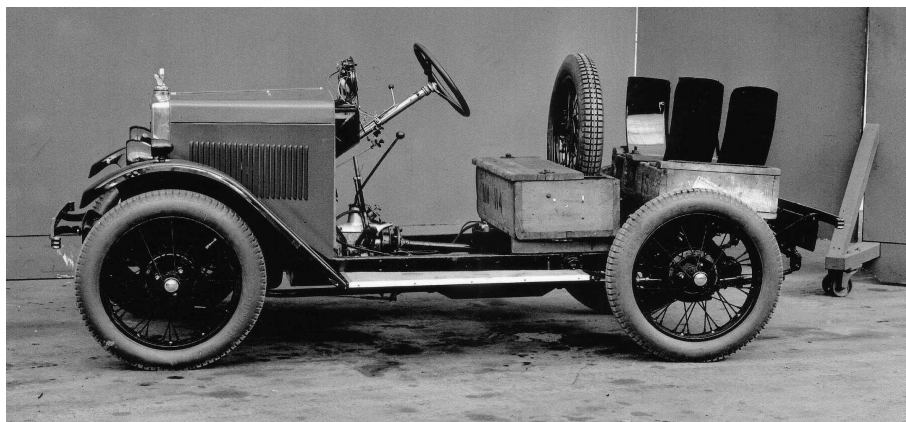
Interestingly, Ross also notes that during his time at BMC in Sydney during the mid-1960's it was normal procedure that English designed and manufactured components which were unique to Australia were prefixed with YDO ----- and were designed/modified by an export group within the UK company. The locally designed components were prefixed ADO ----- standing for Australia Drawing Office. Perhaps the Y was a 'carry over' from the early Morris days?

If this Y chassis theory is correct, Morris must also have made arrangements with some concern in Australia to assemble and distribute the chassis locally. The arrangement seems to have run for about six months – perhaps to early 1930, when the original practice of exporting completed M prefix chassis taken from the mainstream production line appears to have been resumed. Interestingly, no evidence has surfaced to date which indicates that this practice was undertaken for any other Morris model, so we may yet have more to learn regarding this matter.

Talking of Antipodean Minors, it has also emerged that export chassis were shipped with copies of the factory body drawings to assist local coachbuilders. Many of the Minors bodied in Australia carry bodies that are undoubtedly of local design, but there are some which bear a very close resemblance to English Minors but have slight differences which have hitherto been difficult to explain. With the revelation regarding the body drawings, it is becoming clear that these drawings were used in many cases by the local coachbuilders, but detailed modifications were made where necessary, for example, to allow for the fitting of a locally manufactured windscreen.



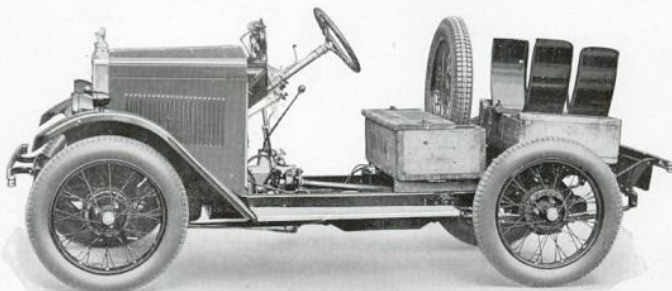
All Minor chassis were dynamometer tested prior to either being sent to the body shop or shipped as driving chassis to domestic coachbuilders or for export. Note the Minor scuttle fuel tank on the pillar, the water hoses fitted to the radiator which also has a thermometer fitted to it and the sandbags used to weigh down the rear of the chassis.



A driving chassis, having been tested on the rolling road, was prepared for dispatch. The kit included rear wings and a spare wheel. Note the instrument panel mounted on a temporary bracket and the wooden trunk, probably containing the toolkit, and doubling as a basic driver's seat.

MORRIS CHASSIS

FOR the convenience of those who wish to have their cars fitted with special coachwork to suit their individual requirements, Morris chassis are obtainable separately. These chassis are exceptionally well equipped and include such items as wings, running-boards, headlamps, instruments, spare wheel and complete tool kit : in short, they are all ready for the coachwork.

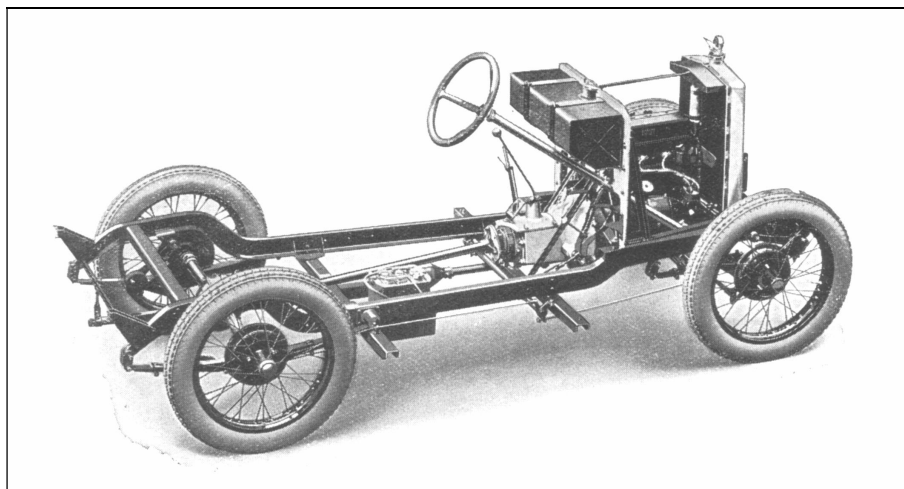


The
**MORRIS
MINOR
CHASSIS**
Price £100
Ex Works

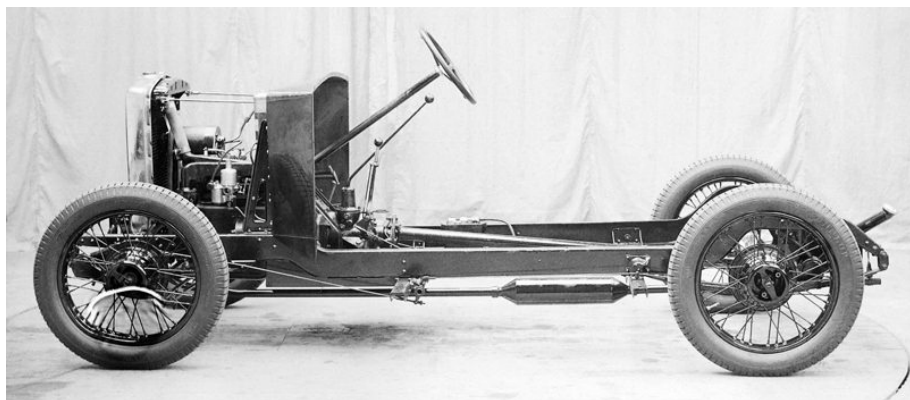
Specification as on page 3.

*The chassis equipment includes :—*Plymax dash, dash shroud, scuttle frame front member with bonnet rest fitted, splashers, headlamps, sidelamps, tail-lamp, battery, front and rear wings (enamelled), bonnet ledge, front and rear bumpers, front and rear number-plates, speedometer, oil gauge, ammeter, electric horn, full kit of tools, spare wheel and tyre, calormeter with wings, shock absorbers front and rear, bonnet fitted to chassis complete with fasteners, running-boards covered and beaded.

An extract from the 1931 season Minor brochure, using the publicity photograph on the previous page, and offering full details of the Minor chassis.



Another view of an early Minor chassis. Note the deeply-dished steering wheel which was changed at chassis MM1110 – presumably to provide a little more space for the driver.

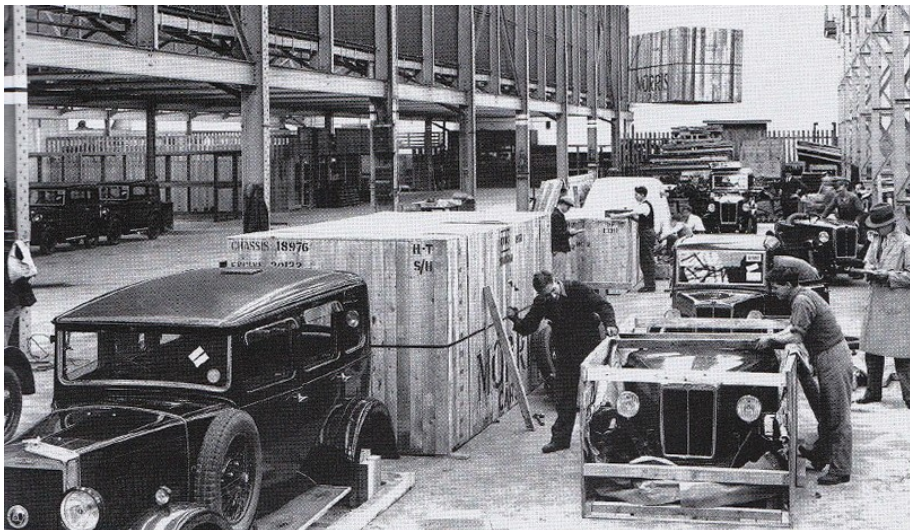


A sidevalve LWB chassis. Note the horizontal front dumbirons and the front-shackled front road springs.



The chassis plate of David Taylor's Minor Y400 quotes the engine number U14389 which dates the chassis to around August 1929.

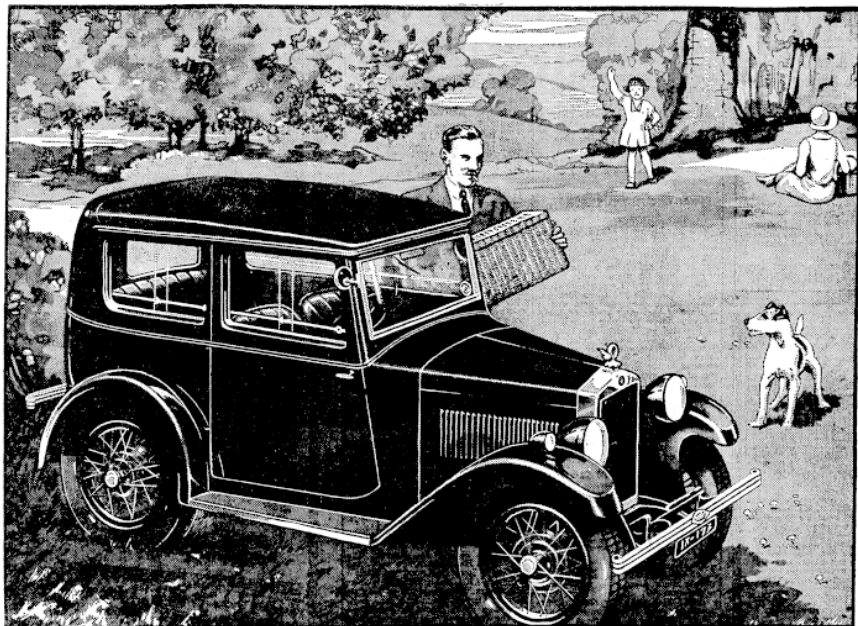
Turning to the SV Minor, although Anders did not provide any data for these chassis, we now have a transcript of the entire set of original SV Minor Progress Books. This data has been entered into a filterable spreadsheet, and this enables us to quickly determine the number of chassis produced for coachbuilders or export. The total is 1,633. In addition, there were eight SWB chassis (SV26580 to SV26587) and four LWB chassis (SV26671 to SV26674) that were recorded as 'Australia unassembled', presumably meaning CKD. Unfortunately, the missing piece of the jigsaw is how many of those 1,633 chassis were exported to Australia or New Zealand.



It was not only chassis that Morris exported. Here we see complete cars being crated for export in the Cowley export packing department. The photograph was taken in 1931 and shows Minor 2-seaters and saloons being crated. The saloon behind the tourer has an EXPORT sticker on the windscreen. Some components, including wheels and tourer windcreens were removed and packed separately so that the cars could continue their journey by ship without damage, and perhaps to minimize crate volume. During 1931, more than 3,000 complete cars were exported by Morris.



Although this photograph was taken in 1953, William Morris made regular visits to Australia and New Zealand to visit his agents. Here we see the then Viscount Nuffield (left) in a meeting with Sir Charles Norwood, Chairman of Directors, Dominion Motors Ltd., Nuffield distributors of Wellington, New Zealand. The Dominion Motors advertisement on the following page was published 31st March 1931 in the Evening Star and depicts a late OHC saloon.



DOMINION MOTORS LIMITED
announce the Lowest-priced
Saloon Car in New Zealand

£213

The
MORRIS
BABY SEDAN

FULLY EQUIPPED

EQUIPMENT includes four double-panel sliding windows with Triplex Safety Glass throughout, window locks, single panel windscreen, speedometer, oil gauge, automatic windscreen wiper, pressure chassis lubricating pump, calorimeter and wings, driving mirror, progressive shock absorbers on all wheels, bumpers front and rear, full five lamp equipment, five detachable wire wheels with reinforced cord balloon tyres, complete kit of tools with every car.

NOW you will be able to buy the utmost the light car field has to offer in comfort, economy and performance at the lowest price of any saloon car in New Zealand—£213 f.o.b. main ports. A big car in miniature the 8 h.p. Morris Minor Saloon represents the acme of economical motoring. Petrol consumption averages approximately 45 m.p.g. and road speed is in excess of 50 m.p.h. Roomy bodies, sparkling performance, absolute reliability, extensive equipment, low first cost and low upkeep cost enable the Morris Minor proposition to stand alone. Made by the largest purely English manufacturers of motor vehicles in the World, the materials used in the Morris Minor are the best procurable and the British workmanship is beyond reproach.

ASK FOR EASY PAYMENT PLAN

Dunedin Agents: HISLOP & GIBSON LTD.

Palmersburg South: J. Gordon & Co.
 Middlemarch: T. Stevens.
 Roxburgh: A. Earl.

Lawrence: D. Stewart.
 Tapscott: Wylie Bros.
 Omapau: C. L. Caldwell.

Balclutha: Wilson Elliott.
 Otago: E. Dale.
 Waipatu: A. Booth.

MCL-846

FOR HEALTH AND HAPPINESS



Taken from the May 1932 Morris Owner, the caption reads, "New Zealand buys British. A Morris car en route for New Zealand, part of a shipment of a number of British motorcars being slung by Mr. Harold Mitchell, M.P. for Brentford and Chiswick, and Private Secretary to the Minister for Overseas Trade. The car formed part of a consignment valued at £120,000 [equivalent to £8.3 million in 2020], sent in exchange for Dominion dairy produce."



Two M Type M.G.'s were also exported in chassis form to the Dominions. And here they are! Bill Fuller's 2M/1523 and Tony Slattery's 2M/1524, both bodied in Australia and reunited in 2016.
(Tony Slattery)