

Why I bought our Morris Minor

[Folding head OHC saloon first registered 11th October 1930]

After full time education I embarked upon a five year engineering apprenticeship. I had no need for a car, travelling to and from work on the local GWR branch line was available and convenient, fortunately, it was the period 'pre-Beeching Axe'. During my apprenticeship I passed my driving test so was able to use the family car on odd occasions to take my girl friend, - now wife – for a ride around the Shropshire countryside. The vehicle in the photograph below was the family car.



Fig. 1

It was 50 + years later that my wife and I again encountered a Morris Minor, this time it was a 1969 Traveller.

After relocating to their present family home, Ben, our 10 year old grandson, on his own initiative, approached an elderly neighbour who owned a 1969 Traveller which, apparently, had lain dormant beneath an overhanging hedge for over 20 years.

Ben convinced the owner that he had sufficient pocket money saved to buy the vehicle to have fun and learn some basic mechanics at the same time.

Originally, he had been looking for an old motor lawn mower to practice on!

The gentleman was only too pleased to rid himself of the vehicle and asked only a nominal fee, a deal was done and we dragged the vehicle, with great difficulty, to the family garage.

Throughout my fulltime employment my wife and I and two daughters relocated on a regular basis so a car to me had been a functional item enabling me to travel to and from my workplace. Settling into retirement was a very attractive proposition as I had no intention of restoring motor cars as a hobby. However, my wife suggested my spare time could be effectively used to assist Ben in his restoration project – see Fig's 2 & 3 below. Ben had already decided to join the local Morris Minor Owners Club (MMOC).

The Club Members were both surprised and pleased that he had joined the group and they offered him active support in his restoration project.

My role had now become one of transporting Ben to and from the monthly Meetings. With some trepidation on my part we set forth on restoring the deteriorating motor car without having a clue how, and, where to proceed.

Fortunately, a member of the group, a professional Morris Minor restoration engineer, thankfully, undertook the bulk of the mechanical work including the replacement of all damaged bodywork once Ben and I had stripped it bare.



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

Through our new contacts within the local MMOC, we were made aware of a Morris Minor advertised for sale which stated the condition as :-

' complete but partially dismantled for restoration. Brass headlights, spare front axle, extra wheels, springs, steering column, tyres and tubes ' – see Fig's 4 & 5 below.

My wife, our youngest daughter, Ben and I decided to drive into Wales to view the vehicle in anticipation of finding spare parts for the Traveller, how naïve was I.

However, the drive from our home in Shropshire through to mid-Wales proved highly beneficial as, without hesitation, we all decided 'on-the-spot' to purchase the car and arranged for collection and transportation home as soon as possible. I bought the Morris for its appeal, its uniqueness and as a challenge to restore it to its former glory. Despite the wholly misleading description of the sales advert this is what we found, an October 1930 registered OHC Morris Minor Coachbuilt Saloon with a Kopalapso Folding Hood.

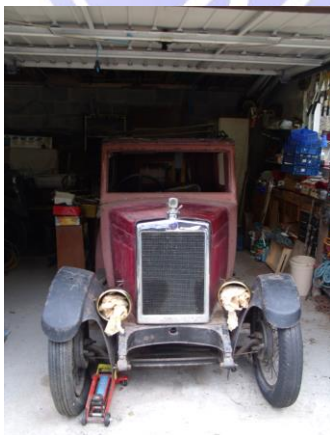


Fig. 4



Fig. 5

When we got home we gave our purchase a much thorough inspection. It was at that point that I realised the magnitude of the project I had taken on. As a complete novice and not having any experience of car electrics and mechanics it was quite daunting.

The six year restoration project of the 1969 Traveller was nearing completion. Fig's 6 & 7
The restored Traveller was ready and waiting for Ben to pass his driving test.



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

A new project on the Minor was immediately embarked upon, retirement was again postponed indefinitely. The arrival of MU 2165 necessitated a major tidy-up and clear out of my garage so that a relatively free work space would be available. My wife was also pleased as she was more able to access the fridge/freezer without negotiating an obstacle course.

Careful removal of all loose debris from inside the car was the first activity but not to discard any items that looked something like a car part. Major dismantling of parts was not necessary as there was nothing to dismantle viz the original advertisement stated above.

The next stage was to prepare a programme, and sequence, of the work to be undertaken. Needless to say, on reflection, that was a wasted exercise as I continually changed my mind as the project progressed. I quickly realised that the availability of replacement vintage car parts was a vastly different scenario to obtaining brand new replacement 'parts off the shelf' for later models like the Traveller.

My lack of awareness of component terminology did not help!

Joining the Vintage Minor Register and the Pre-War Minor Network turned out to be invaluable as both Ian Grace and Chris Lambert readily gave advice and assistance. Both have continued to do so throughout the restoration along with many other Club Members and component suppliers that I have had contact with.

My first contact was Mike Houston.

In the early, original, inspection of the car I noticed a number of unusual features but they did not register at the time. It was not until I had the good fortune to receive a copy of Mike's paper 'The early Morris Minor Coachbuilt Saloon bodies' that I realised I may have an unusual car comprising of mix dates.

Mike's article highlighted a whole array of interesting features that I have experienced as restoration progressed.

I am grateful to Mike for allowing me to include material in this article.

The photograph, Fig.8 below, shows the October 1930 registered MU 2165 having the MP series body stamp. Fig. 9 shows the three-section metal body shell pressings with depressed lines running down the outside of both rear quarters. The three metal panels seamed at the inside with a cover piece, apparently were only available on the 1929 bodies. The 1930 body has no joins or seams.



Fig. 8



Fig.9

Fig 10 shows the rearmost roof supports that are packed with wood wedges at the point where it meets the cant rail to fit and support the curve of the metal apron panel.



Fig. 10



Fig.11

Apparently the early (1929) bodies were fitted with substantial brass hinges, as shown in Fig's 11 & 12. These were plain, with no name stamps, and had a two-into-three leaf arrangement with a substantial peened pin through the centre.



Fig. 12

The construction of MU 2165 appears to comprise component parts of differing dates which tends to indicate that the early vintage vehicles present a challenge when one attempts to achieve close originality in a restoration project

Accessing the interesting and informative Club Magazine articles, and relevant websites, have given me an insight into vintage motor car restoration and I have also been fortunate in conscripting a number of local friends, professionals in their respective trades.

The Morris restoration engineer, who helped in restoring the 1969 Traveller (noted above), again, undertook all the mechanical work on the Minor, including the replacement of all damaged bodywork.

Our local painter and decorator advised on achieving high quality hand painted finishes, a restorer of fine antique furniture replaced all damaged sections of the wood frame. He also restored all of the seats and machined the fabric covering for the door panels, with pockets.

Our plumber undertook the 'tinning' and soldering of the many cable ends whilst a complete suite of new glazing was provided by the local glazing company.

Their collective help and advice has been invaluable and I look forward to having the Morris Minor up and running in the not too distant future.

