

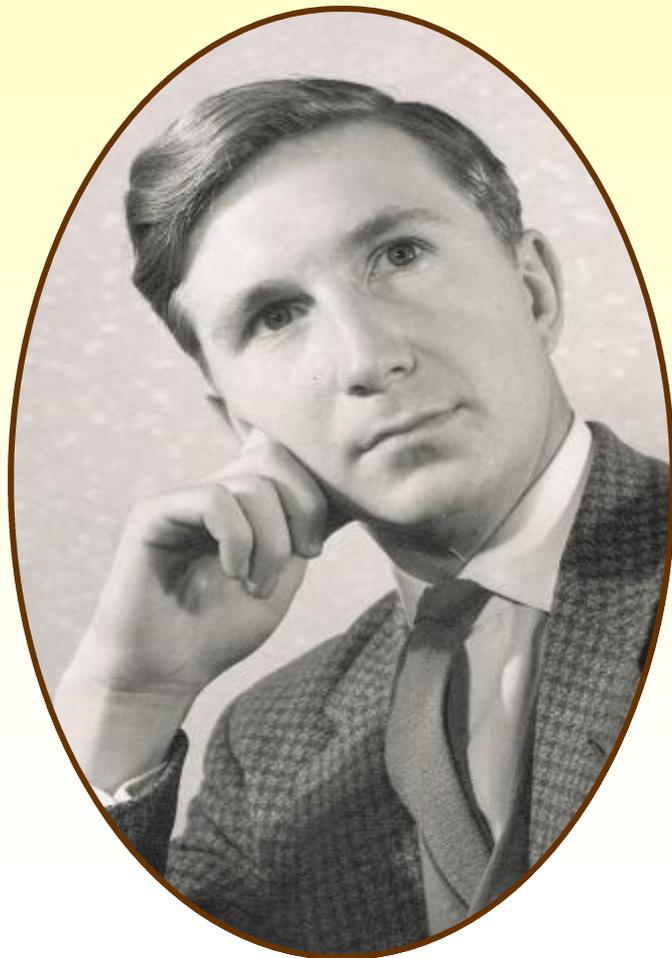
# A Minor Tale



**John Nagle**

**I would like to  
tell you a story  
about my first  
car.**

**OW 4224**



John Nagle in 1962

**A 1934  
Morris Minor 2 seater.**



OW 4224 in 1960

# On the 3rd March 1958 I was 17.

I was now old enough to drive on the public roads and like most boys of that age could not wait to get behind the wheel of a car. All I needed was a driving licence and a car! At that time I was at Forest Grammar School studying for 'A' levels, so cash was at a premium, so dreams of exotica went out of the window.

The first step was easy. The appropriate form was filled in, and I made a trip to Shinfield village Post Office 400yds down the road and acquired my provisional driving licence.

The scene was set, and I now started to eagerly scan the Reading Standard small ads each week for a suitable car. At this stage I have to admit that even at my tender years there was only one car in my price range for me - would you believe, a Morris Minor. My friend Terry Walker was mainly responsible for my enthusiasm, as he had a '32 two-seater that I had had the opportunity to observe closely, work on and drive and I was impressed by the simplicity and soundness of design and the user friendliness to a young amateur mechanic and driver. Terry Walker's 1932 two seater was painted bright yellow with black wings. It looked like a huge wasp, and was fondly known as the Y.P. (short for yellow peril). I remember that at one time he fitted a "cammy" engine to this car from a scrap Midget. Unfortunately it was a complete failure, as the engine was so worn that it threw copious quantities of oil around the engine bay from the overhead cam, and gave inferior performance to the side valve unit which was subsequently reinstated.

Finally the Reading Standard of Friday 29th August came up trumps - "1934 Morris Minor 2 Seater £30, telephone Sulhamstead....." I raided £10 from my Post Office savings account on the 2nd of August (Father and Mother were not too amused but in the end tolerant under protest!). Terry had driven me to Sulhamstead and standing in a barn was OW 4224, regrettably painted pale turquoise blue, but I could soon put that to rights. After an inspection of the car, the deal was done and I agreed to return with the other £20. Terry and I returned the following day and OW was mine!!!!

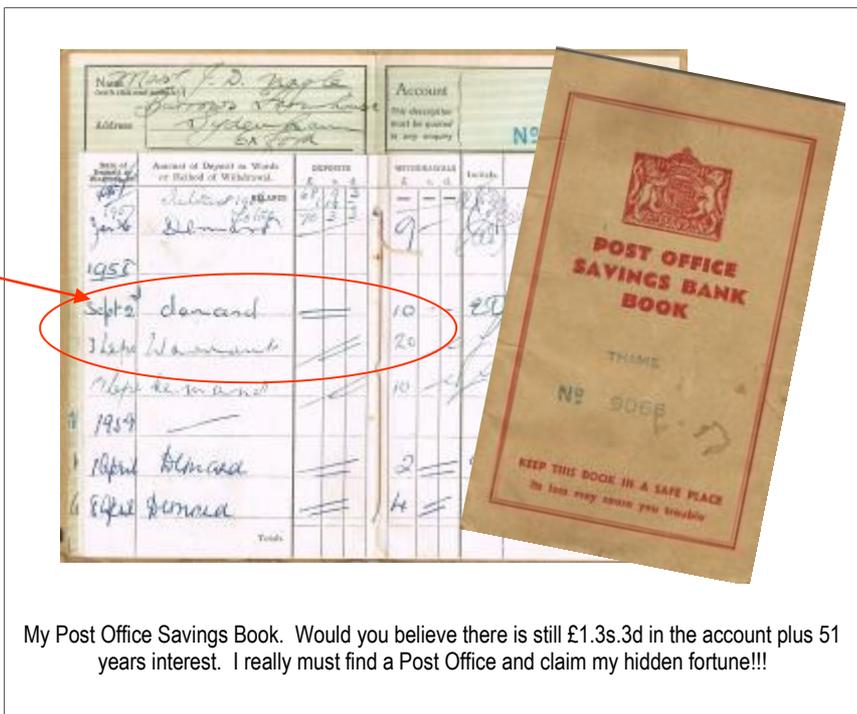
I ought to relate that she was put on a trailer and transported home to Shinfield eight miles away, but one we didn't have trailer and two a car to tow it! However, if I remember rightly, I drove home via the back roads. The road tax and insurance regulations were much more flexible then than they are today!!!!!! and I probably didn't see more than one or two cars on the journey. How very different from today - still very naughty, but it was a long time ago!

My memories of 'learning to drive' fall into two categories, 1) learning to drive with my qualified friends in the passenger seat and 2) with a driving school, flapping my hand out of the car giving hand signals on a continuous basis while driving, in order to pass the test!! (How Her Majesty's testers thought that the average motorist drove round in summer and winter alike with the offside window permanently open for the purpose of hand flapping I cannot imagine.) I flapped and I passed!

Now to the more important issue - the car. All my available spare time was spent on learning the mechanics and repairing and refurbishing as required. Spares were gleaned from scrap yards, headlamps were chromed and I sprayed the body in dark red with black wings. I was king of the road. However, I was still a schoolboy and I had to ask Mr Jackson the headmaster of Forest Grammar School for permission to drive to school. It was duly granted, and I have fond memories of raising my cap as I passed Masters on their bikes on the way to school! There must have been at most five cars in the school car park, of which one was mine.

Finance was always a problem, even though road tax was only £12.10s (£12.50) and third party insurance £9 from Norwich Union, obtained from my brokers Woodroffe Scudds in Reading, whom I still use to this day. There was, however, a continual need to feed the beast with petrol, and that caused the biggest problem. There were numerous occasions when I received a severe wiggling from Father when he went to mow the lawn, only to find that the petrol for the mower had been raided yet again!!

It seems amazing today that these simple small cars should have served as everyday transport, but that is what 'Emmeline' as she had now been christened did for me for several years, only to be interrupted two years into her stay with me by a slight altercation with a tipper truck in the Oxford Road Reading. Fortunately I was going quite slowly, but the back end of the truck



wrought severe damage to the little car. The headlamps and front wings were smashed, and so was the radiator, but worst of all the chassis was bent!! She was put into temporary retirement while a 1936 Fiat 500 Topolino did sterling service in the mean time. That was a fascinating little car, but that's another story a small part of which is told by my old friend Owen Coakes.



OW in the drive of my parents home in Shinfield. Please note I had fitted semaphore indicators and a radio aerial was attached to a Bush transistor portable that had a car fitting kit. There's posh!

Owen who ran a Morris eight 2 seater and in recent years a 30's Morgan recalls; *I well remember the time that I spent working with you on OW, driving the chassis around the garden at 'Hylands' (my parents' home), being fed eggs and chips by your mother in the kitchen, and getting rides to and from school at Winnersh on occasions. As I recall, I made the occasional contribution of 2 shillings (10p) to petrol when petrol was 3 shillings and 9 pence a gallon (19p). At that price you would be lucky to get the end of the drive at today's petrol prices!* *I remember the aftermath of the crash in Oxford Road, particularly the purchase of the Fiat 500 from a guy at Whiteknights Park and hot wiring it so that you could have a test drive around the car park in the dark. I also remember me driving the Fiat out of Wokingham with you, and being stopped by a copper somewhere near Janet Skedgel's (an old girlfriend) house because only one headlight was working. We promised to get it fixed – little did he know that I did not have a licence at the time.*

Some time after I had acquired OW, an acquaintance had told me that he knew of another car the same as mine. It turned out that it belonged to a young lawyer by the name of Paul Haye, who lived in a quaint old cottage at the end of a little lane in Winnersh only five miles from my home in Shinfield. One sunny Saturday afternoon I set off to find him and his car, and sure enough as I arrived there was Paul with his head underneath the bonnet of his Minor! That meeting led to a long standing friendship and other motoring adventures with a 1922 Bean and the Bean Car Club. Paul has had a life long love of Alvis cars, of which he has owned several and now edits the Alvis register magazine.



Owen's 2 seater Eight, my Fiat 500 and OW midway through her rebuild at the Nagle car works in Shinfield in 1961! I think I am holding the running board from the Fiat.

It so happened that at the time of OW's misadventure with the tipper truck, Paul had acquired a scrap car (the same model) to do some refurbishment of his own car, and when he was finished he kindly gave me the remains of the scrap one. I was in business again but little did I know the heinous crime I was about to unwittingly commit. It is at this point that I have to admit that OW 4224 is now a 'Ringer'.

I stripped down OW (Chassis No 34/MS37955) and the scrap car, used the bare chassis frame from the scrap car (Chassis No 34/MS4129) and bolted on all the mechanicals and body from OW. With the wings, headlights and radiator from the scrap car, plus some other small parts from the scrap yard OW was resurrected!!!

At this time I was attending Reading Technical College, and a fellow student also had a Minor, a 1930 open tourer. His name was Terry Synnott and he is now a Vintage Minor Register member and still has the same car! ( I assume he has had other newer ones over the years!!!!) As a result of our interest in our cars we have re-established contact and continue our friendship after 50 years.

They were great courting cars the two seaters, as they possessed a bench seat!! Happy days! OW served me well and faithfully until she was finally usurped by a company car - an Austin A35 (not even a modern Minor) and she was finally sold in 1963.



OW and Terry Synnott's tourer at Shinfield. Circa 1960

**H**owever, that is not the end of the story, as by a strange coincidence she turned up a few years later back in Shinfield village in the hands of Paul Harris, yet another Minor enthusiast.

**P**aul's motoring career started in the year that I sold OW..... 1963. He rescued a 1934 Minor two door saloon, DG 7729 from the then famous scrap yard of Harold Goodey in Twyford, Berks, for the sum of £10. Like myself, the details of its rescue and subsequent journey home along the A4 to London Road in Reading are best left unrecorded, as are the comments of his grandfather who then owned the Morris 10/4 of which Paul is the current custodian.

**A** very important character in the eventual rescue of OW now enters the scene. Bill Barkus was a skilled engineer (*the first of two Bills who play an important part in the engineering of the car*). Welsh, and bearing an uncanny likeness in appearance and mannerisms to Harry Secombe, he was related to the Barkus scrap yard and car spares business in Bearwood, near Wokingham and Caversham Road in Reading. He was many years older than Paul and worked on Jensen steering box development at Adwest Engineering, Woodley. His love of cars spilled over into his spare time, and he used to make a bit of fag money by doing car repairs at people's homes. Paul first met him when he came to fit new piston rings to his stepfather's rather horrid Ford 100E Anglia, and they struck up a friendship which lasted until Bill died at a good old age a few years back. Nothing fazed Bill, and without his skill and help neither DG 7729 or the subsequent 10/4's in Paul's life would have survived for very long. Bill's favourite expression was "don't worry boyo, we'll soon have it fixed"....the sight of him arriving in his Austin A30 with the dashboard covered in fag ash, brought instant reassurance ...Lord only knows where he found the new parts, but find them he did and never charged for anything except the trade cost and the price of another 20 fags. He was a good friend to Paul.

**B**ack to OW. By November 1968 the 10/4 was finally sorted, and Paul was tackling the rebuild of a 1929 Minor, DF 9053. Needless to say, Bill was assisting with the engine and one evening he announced that a mate at work had an old Minor that he wanted out of his way. They were both quite keen on the idea, but Paul didn't have any money (nothing new there, then) and Bill didn't have any space. The neat solution was for Bill to persuade the landlady of the double garage Paul rented that she could not live without an old car of her own to restore. She fell for Bill's charms and the deal was done.

**B**ill got hold of some trade plates and the following Saturday they headed off to Wokingham in the 1934 Ten Four to mount the rescue operation. The lock-up was opened, and there sat a very sorry looking 1934 Minor two-seater, OW 4224. She had allegedly been prepared for hill climb work and was painted all over with Radiator Bronze paint (remember that?). Tyres were bald and flat, engine seized and most of the interior ripped out. Paul was all for shutting the doors and leaving the thing there. Bill, however, was made of sterner stuff and was already fixing the tow rope between the 10/4 and the Minor. Paul was on tyre pumping duty, and in no time the trade plates were fixed and they were ready to get on their way. Bill said that he would drive the 10/4 as he had more experience in towing work! It was now raining hard and the light fading fast. The Minor had no hood, no brakes



The rescue November 1968

and no working lights. Great! Bill meanwhile was in the warm and dry and by the time they had turned out on to the main Wokingham Road had clearly forgotten that Paul was there at all. They went through Wokingham town centre at a good lick and all was well until just outside the town, where there were some major road works at a railway bridge. This had involved the building of a fairly substantial wooden ramp, and traffic was making its way over it quite well. I guess the 10/4 was doing about 30 mph when it went over this bridge. That would have been no problem solo, but back in the Minor with springs seized through rust and no shock absorbers, Paul remembers it was not a pleasant experience. Somehow, the tow rope held and they made it to Reading just as it got dark. A rather keen young PC approached the unlit Minor at the Earley cross roads traffic lights, no doubt licking his pencil. Luckily, the lights changed and Paul was wafted silently out of harms way...clearly the constable had not seen the tow rope!

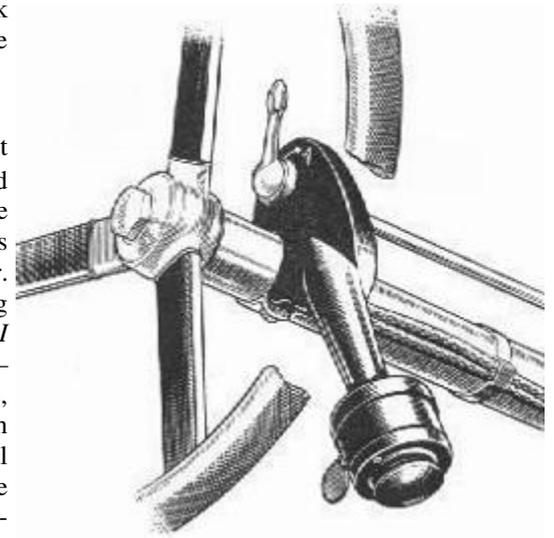
**T**he years had not been kind to OW. In addition to the obvious mechanical problems a lot of her interior fittings were missing, including the difficult to find steering column mounted horn/dip switch, which was peculiar to the 1934 season cars. However, her fortunes were about to change. Bill acquired a set of new hydraulic wheel cylinders and engine valves, gaskets and some good second-hand tyres. Paul had the missing dashboard instruments in stock, and between them they soon had her up and running. Bill was working nights at the time, so during the afternoons found time to spray her in more suitable colours of green with black wings. A local coach-trimmer of the old school, Phil Mortimer, fitted a new hood, new carpets, recovered the side-screens and re-upholstered the bench seat.

Whilst she may never have won a concours, the end result was very pleasing and for a while she shared the garage with her ohc sister, DF 9053. Sadly however, the good landlady decided that she preferred her Standard Vanguard Estate car and during 1970 OW 4224 was sold to a young couple who ran an antique shop in the Wokingham Road. They had other old cars, but thought a lot of OW and used her frequently for trips up to Richmond Park. They changed her colour to cream with chocolate colour wings and the upholstery was again re-done in brown Ambla to match. Non original of course, but it suited her rather well.

Paul then rather lost track of her until 1973. Fred, the owner of the antique shop was selling his 1939 MG TB and, having just sold his 1929 Austin Heavy 12/4 Windsor, he fancied something a little faster. However, Fred wanted to sell his complete collection as one lot, and that included OW 4224 (which had not been used for about six months due to a big-end bearing having run), a 1934 season Family Minor in poor condition and a mint Austin Seven. Paul negotiated the Austin Seven out of the deal and ended up with the other three cars plus two sets of antique bellows (don't ask !) for £650.

OW again found herself on the end of a tow rope (behind the MG this time) and was installed in Paul's newly built garage in Shinfield. He then returned for the Family Minor. This was a somewhat more interesting journey, as the ash frame had all but collapsed and the passenger door fell off as soon as the MG had taken up the slack on the tow rope. Paul ensured that this time he was driving the towing vehicle himself!

Paul and his wife quickly decided that OW should stay with them. Not knowing anything of the car's past, they christened her 'Mary Minor', and decided that she would be used as her makers intended....as an everyday road car. He reckoned that time was running out for being able to comfortably use such cars as true everyday vehicles, and therefore lost no time in returning her to running order. The Family Minor provided a whole host of spares, including the elusive steering column mounted horn and dip-switch arm. (*that is extraordinary, as when I purchased the car the arm was broken and I managed to find a replacement—John*) Engines from both cars were dismantled and the best collection of bits, together with a host of new parts (sourced by Bill and Clares Motor Works in South London) were sent to a firm of marine engineers in Gosport for a total rebuild. The steering box was also removed and sent for re-bushing with all the engine bits. The dashboard was rebuilt with bits from the Family car and re-



The elusive arm.

polished, the car was rewired, (*again, I put in a new wiring loom in 1960! - John*) radiator re-cored, fuel tank cleaned out plus a whole host of other smaller jobs preparing her for use as a normal car. A further Family Minor purchased at auction provided the correct four bladed fan, dynamo and a second windscreen wiper.

By May of 1974 OW was up and running. The engineers in Gosport had done a superb job, and from the start she proved to be a totally reliable little car. Indeed, apart from oil



Paul Harris at Lockinge August 1975

changes every 3,000 miles, Paul doesn't recall ever touching the engine again.

Paul's memories of OW:- bouncing up and down on the Sandbanks to Swanage Chain Ferry in tune with the waves, runs back over the Berkshire Downs on an August evening following the Fairford Steam Rally (stopping for a drink or three at the Barley Mow in Blewbury), winter runs to the Cotswolds (and Burford for lunch!) radiator muff in place, warm and snug in the cabin, numerous Bean Car Club and other rallies but perhaps just best of all, the ability for her to share with the 10/4, normal daily motoring without some idiot in a Chelsea Tractor up his exhaust pipe. Happy days indeed.



Herr Kapitan Harris of U 4224 in wet and wildest Sussex.

All good things come to an end however, and a house move combined with the expensive restoration of a Ten Four tourer during the late 1970's meant that she had to go. Paul sold her to Commander Allison at Halfway Garages, a well respected vintage and sports car emporium on the Bath Road at Padworth, and he knew that her sale would be treated with dignity, as indeed it was.

Paul has had many Minors in his time, both ohc and sv. Without a shadow of doubt he believes that OW was by far and away the best. She was trouble free, smooth running, had accurate steering, excellent hydraulic brakes and was comfortable and cosy to travel long distances in - what more can you ask of any old car? He remembers that there used to be an advert for the MGB which went something like "When all the proud cars of your years line up to take the chequered flag of memory, you will remember how you caught the sunrise and rode the misty wings of morning in your MGB GT" - heady stuff, but very true of his beloved MG. However, alongside that on the front row of that mythical grid would also be one of his Ten Fours and Morris Minor OW 4224.

I had no further contact or knowledge of OW until July 18th 2008 which turned out to be a special day for me. After 50 years almost to the day I was re-united with my old pride and joy and first love Emmeline! She was now sporting a green coat similar to her original factory colour, and there was the old log book with my and Paul's names in it, that we had filled in all that time ago.

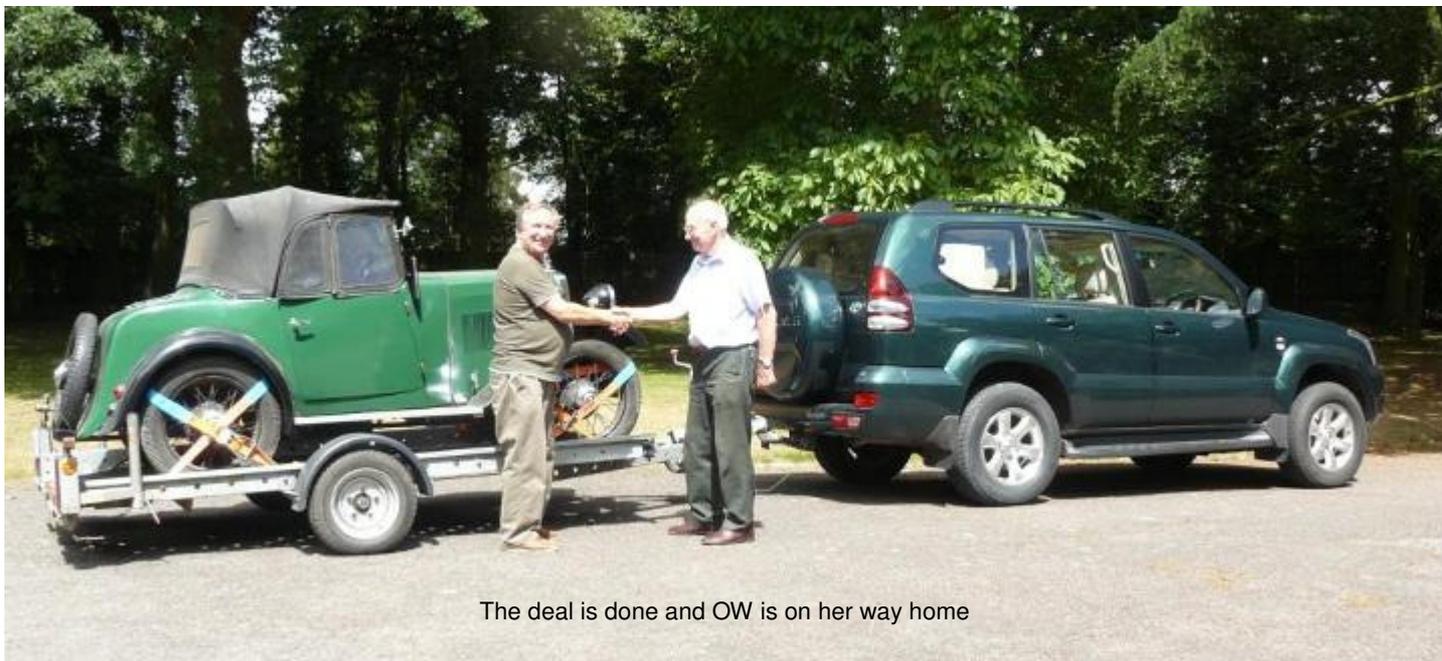


I had promised Paul Harris I would give her a pat on the bonnet for him!

I had travelled to Basildon in Essex to meet Derek Powell (a Morris Register member), where OW was resident along with a large collection of pre war cars in various stages of repair and restoration. All the time I was there I could not help thinking that it would be splendid to bring her home to Shinfield. Sentimental old tosh, but true. What is it about old cars that turn grown men into little boys again!!

Well they do and they did!! While I had been talking to Derek I asked him that if he ever wanted to sell the car would he please call me first. To my surprise he was not averse to the idea and we casually discussed the value of the car. When I returned home my first task was to convince the 'management' that our '32 saloon was lonely and needed a stable-mate!! I am delighted to say that reason prevailed and permission was given for a new toy!! A very wise decision by my wife Josephine.

August the first dawned, and Josephine and I set sail again to Brentwood armed with a cheque book and car trailer (kindly loaned by fellow Minor owner and Morris Register Member Eric Mouser, who incidentally has a similar story to tell about his Minor). On arrival the girls did what girls do best and Derek and I got down to the serious matter of car trading. A deal was struck and OW was mine once more!!



The deal is done and OW is on her way home

I originally purchased OW on the 2nd September 1958 from John Perrot who purchased her in July 1956 when he lived in Durley Southampton. He moved to Sulhamstead from where I acquired the car.

**Since I sold the car in 1963 it had a chequered history which runs as follows:-**

- 1) Sold to 'Unknown who did not register it and subsequently found by Bill Barcus.
- 2) Sold to Paul's landlady who bought the car in 1968. She did not register it either.
- 3) Sold to Fredric Afford of Earley, Reading on 11.10.71.
- 4) Sold to Paul Harris on 9.10.73.
- 5) Sold to Halfway Garage who in turn sold it to the late Patrick Gordon of Dunstable on 13.2.78.
- 6) Sold to Vyvyan Sanson of London on 18.10.86.
- 7) Sold to Alan Hart of Chelmsford on 26.10.91. Alan made a new seat, new ash door frames, and took out the dash to use as a pattern to make a new one (the old one had been abused and was full of holes). The floor boards were renewed as the old ones were rotten and full of worm. In addition the brakes and the clutch were relined.
- 8) Sold to Derek Powell on 15.10.01. The car had not run since 1994. Derek re-sprayed the car its current colour and freed up some stuck valves to get it running again. However the car was not taxed or used. (Sadly Derek died in 2011)
- 9) Sold to me on 1.8.08 and brought home to receive some tender loving care before venturing out on her travels once again.



Little could I have foreseen what was to follow over the next few weeks. My wife, Josephine, thought it would make a nice story for the local paper to tell them about OW's return to my ownership. The Reading Evening Post sent round a reporter and photographer, and published an article on August 13th. I think there must have been a lack of news worldwide at that time, because from the moment the article appeared my phone rang off the hook from local and national newspapers, regional radio and national television stations. By the time the whole episode was finished, I had given dozens of interviews and had received loads of calls from friends and acquaintances on the subject. It continues to surprise me that the subject is still mentioned by people I meet. It just goes to show what a fascination our old cars have, even to the non enthusiast.



At home at last alongside JN 1617 to keep her company!



The BBC live from home. Cameraman, myself and presenter Tim Muffett, plus the transmitter van in the road. The fun started at 5.30 am and went on most of the day as ITV turned up as well!

# PRIDE AND JOY: John welcomes Morris Minor Emmeline home

# Reunited with first

# I♥ve after 50 years

BY CHINE MBUBAEGBU

A LOWER Earley man has reignited a love affair he started 50 years ago with Emmeline – his first car.

John Nagle, 67, from Rushall Close, bought a 1932 two-seater convertible Morris Minor for just £30 in May 1958 from a seller in Sulhamstead after seeing an advert in the *Post's* predecessor the *Reading Standard*.

Mr Nagle, who was studying for his A-levels at the Forest Grammar School at the time, raided his Post Office savings book to buy the car, which he later christened 'Emmeline'.

He spent every spare minute working on the car, sprucing it up to tip-top condition, finding spare tyres from scrap yards, chroming the headlights and spraying the body dark red with black wings.

Mr Nagle, who is now retired, said: "As a schoolboy then we had to learn to do things like this ourselves."

Although he loved the car, a few bumps and scratches over the years meant he had to finally let her go in 1963, when she was "finally usurped by a company car" – an Austin A35.

But over the years, Mr Nagle still harboured hopes that he would one day be reunited with his beloved Emmeline.

Then earlier this year, he tracked her down through a search on the Morris owners register and found she was currently the property of a man in Basildon, Essex.

After negotiations with the owner, it was agreed Mr Nagle and his wife Josephine, 65, could buy Emmeline back for £4,500.



TOGETHER AGAIN – John Nagle with his first love, Emmeline

Picture: STEVE TEMPLEMAN (Ref B2271)

Mr Nagle said: "July 18, 2008 turned out to be a special day for me as, 50 years almost to the day, I was reunited with my old pride and joy Emmeline, now sporting a green coat similar to her original factory colour."

It also came with the old log book, in which he had written when he bought the car 50 years ago.

Over the years she has been the

property of owners in Earley, Dunstable, London and Chelmsford. Mrs Nagle is coping well now that her husband's first love is back on the scene.

She said: "I'm happy that John was reunited with his dear little car. It's a heart-warming and delightful tale."

Mr Nagle said that as he is now retired he will spend a lot of time

restoring Emmeline to her former glory.

"I'm delighted. I feel like a little schoolboy again like when I was 17 when I first had the car," he said.

"It has been great fun renewing old memories and past acquaintances with the car and her owners. I am delighted to have her back and look forward to sharing her with fellow Minor enthusiasts."



After the furore had died down, I had time to take a close look at OW, and the more I looked the more I realised that there was only one course of action to be taken – A COMPLETE REBUILD. There were so many things that were not right, that on the 24th





Chassis and running gear revealed

August 2008 I started the process of taking the car apart. The more I worked the worse matters got!! Been there, done that I hear you cry. I suppose I should not have been surprised. After separating the bodywork from the running gear I realised that the ash scuttle frame would need replacing, and that at some stage in the past the back end had been 'stuffed' and badly repaired. There were also a large amount of rusty bits that needed to be cut out and replaced. I could cope with the wood work but not the tin bashing, so the body was despatched to Bill Roberts Engineering at Swallowfield (*the second Bill enters stage right!*) to receive the appropriate treatment. At the same time the rotten parts of the wings were replaced with shiny bits!!



Body off



An attack of woodworm and rot!

I knew that the rear floor of the car was incorrect (it is important in keeping the rear of the bodywork rigid) and as a result of a visit to fellow Morris Register Member Harold Blair, (who was restoring a similar car) I managed to obtain a pattern of the floor parts and the dimensions of the rear support bracket. I did the woodwork and Bill's trusty right hand man Bob Stainthorpe did the metalwork. After many hours and the expenditure of copious quantities of Pound Notes the rear end was restored to good health. It was then put on one side to await further attention at a later date.



A rear wing being fettled!



Frame manufacture

I now turned my attention to the chassis. Everything was removed and stored, and the frame was transported on the roof rack of the Land Cruiser to the shot blasters, who removed 75 years worth of rust, grease and paint. After spraying with a coat of red oxide primer, I found it necessary to remove the rear dumb iron castings and the rear front spring hanger castings, as the half inch clearance holes for the shackle pins were now oval with wear. They are riveted



A nice new ash frame.

to the side members, so it was necessary to grind off the heads and drive them out. The next step was to enlist the help of my friend Terry Hunt who kindly bored out the castings and sleeved and reamed them to the correct dimensions. The chassis was then transported to Bill Roberts who re-riveted the castings to the side frames.

Items such as steering, brakes, back axle, gearbox and engine were dealt with one at a time and were all stripped, cleaned and refurbished as necessary. I enlisted another friend, Peter Gafney,



Bill Roberts and I inspect the chassis. How about the flat hats!!



Oval holes!



Peter in the engine



Grotty brake cylinders all seized up!

to help me with the engine, gearbox and rear axle. Peter had also owned Morris Minors as a young man and was Member number 260 of the original Morris Eight Tourer Club!

The brakes were a nightmare to get apart, due to corrosion caused by leaking brake fluid from cylinders that were beyond redemption. But once apart and cleaned, all was well and appropriate parts were sprayed black and exchange cylinders purchased along with new hoses and fittings. The master cylinder and reservoir were serviced, cleaned and painted. New hand brake cables were purchased, and the cross shaft and brackets cleaned and re-sprayed black as were all other chassis brackets and fittings. Hours of filthy work with a wire cup brush on an angle grinder resulted in loads of bits hung up to dry on wire hooks on an improvised line in the garage after spraying.

When purchased there was a knock from the engine, and this revealed itself as a loose flywheel which was subsequently cured by lapping the flywheel onto the crankshaft taper to give a tight fit when the securing nut was tightened up. The mating surface of the cylinder head was pitted, so was despatched to be ground flat. At some stage the engine had been filled with modern oil, and the effect had been to leach all the deposits from the cast iron so the oil had been reduced to a black sludge which had coated the inside of the crankcase. To clean it I used my wife's industrial pressure washer that was normally employed for washing dishes. It worked a treat! The block and other parts were stripped clean of old paint and re-sprayed black. The engine was re-assembled after regrinding the valves and making a new oil suction pipe.



The block in the dishwasher



The badly worn splines

The four speed gearbox is a prize pig to take apart and re-assemble, so I don't advise doing so unless you have masses of time and patience. OW's box had to be, as the splines on the primary motion shaft were in a terrible state, as were the splines in the clutch plate. The rest of the box was in good order. A new clutch plate was purchased and Bill Roberts built up the shaft and re-machined the splines. Because it was very badly worn he also built up and re-machined the clutch withdrawal cross shaft where it acts as the pivot for the foot brake lever. Old paint was stripped from the gearbox and new black paint applied and aluminium castings were polished before re-assembly.



Gasket making

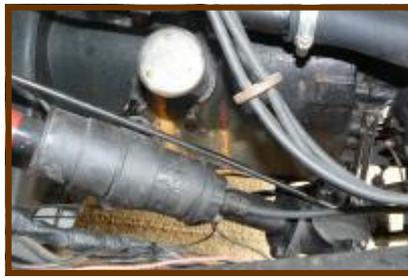
Apart from replacing gaskets and adjusting the clearances in the rear axle, all was well and the appropriate stripping of old grime and paint preceded a shiny new coat of black and a polish of the aluminium casting. The refurbished brakes were then re-united with the axle.

The front springs were not a matched pair. One had straight cut ends as opposed to the rounded ends to the leaves on the other three. By a stroke of luck Bill Roberts had some spare leaves of the right pattern, but imagine our amazement when we discovered



The re  
picture  
August  
March

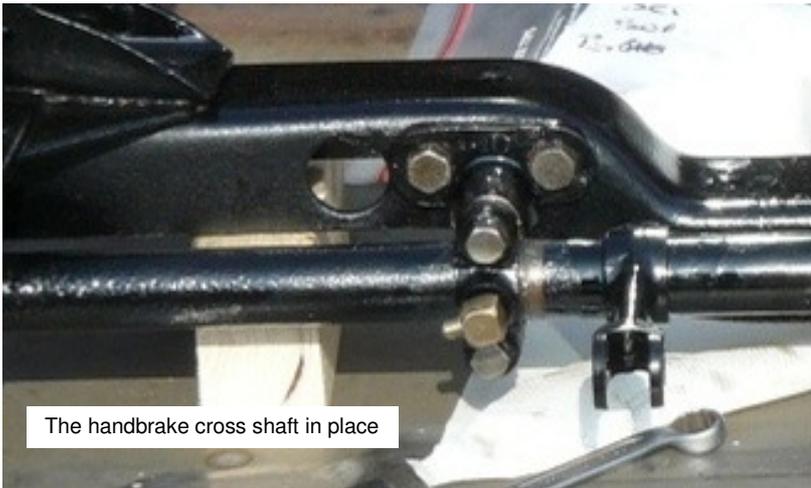




build in  
es from  
2008 to  
n 2012



that one of the main leaves from the car was 3/4" too long and was stamped **GWR!!!** A trifle small to have come off a Great Western Railway main line engine but possibly from a platform trolley!? Once again Bill and Bob worked their magic and the springs were rebuilt as new. I stripped down, cleaned, greased and re-assembled the rear springs.



The handbrake cross shaft in place



Polished and painted parts

Now the magic moment had arrived on 18th March 2009, and I could start bolting things back together!!! The first item was the hand brake cross shaft swiftly followed by all the chassis parts excluding the engine, steering column and gearbox.



And then the Morris Register Membership Secretaryship took over my life, and work on OW virtually ground to a halt. Some months before in a moment of weakness I had taken on the job, but the main workload kicked in at this time and until October very little was accomplished on the car. However, by November all was under control and work recommenced.

The wheels went to the shot blasters in preparation for powder coating, only to disappoint when two of them were returned looking like lace table cloths!! The rims were a write off. I am glad I did not drive the car as they were clearly unsafe. Gideon Booth, a fellow MR Member, came to the rescue with a good pair to replace the rotten ones, and Sean Mitchell at 'Le Carousel' at Silchester did a paint job that made them all look brand new. New tyres, tubes and rim liners were purchased from Tony Etheridge and fitted. The gearbox was finished and put in store for fitting at a later date. I had a rolling chassis.



The petrol tank must qualify for a mention at this point, as when removed from the chassis it was apparent that at some stage it had exploded! Only gently I must add, as it was still in one piece but the side walls were bulged and the internal baffle was drifting loose in the bottom. It had become detached due to the expansion of the sidewalls. One end was de-soldered, the sides pushed back into shape, the baffle re-soldered into position and the end plate soldered back into place. The usual treatment of wire brushing off the old paint and re-spraying black was carried out prior to fixing into position. I would love to know how it was blown up!?

Another area of devastation was the wiring. The loom, that I surmise Paul Harris had fitted, was rotten in parts and cannibalised in others. Consigned to the scrap heap, a new one was ordered from The Wiring Harness Company of Derby. I was about to fit my second wiring loom! This in turn reminds me of the task of separating the wings, wing support brackets and

headlights. The problem was umpteen layers of paint and rust. Brute force would not do as the headlamp parts are fragile. Several hours of heat, WD40 and patience did the trick and all parts emerged intact. What a relief!!

**O**n the subject of layers of paint, I think that since I stripped and repainted the car in 1958 the profits at Dulux must have soared!! There were so many layers on the car it was unbelievable. You could almost measure the thickness with a ruler! I stripped the paint off one of the small plates illustrated on the left and weighed them both. The results were amazing. With paint 11 ounces. Without paint 8 ounces. If you multiplied that around the whole car it must have been the equivalent of carrying around an extra child as a passenger all the time. Quite a consideration when you only have 19bhp at your disposal at best.



**D**ecember saw the return of the body to Bill's tender care to finish the metalwork on the doors and the door catches. In the event further problems were revealed with the frames, so I rebuilt them so that the tinwork could be completed. Peter and I had also made some new door support rollers out of door hinges as the original ones were missing. As I could not remember what they looked like we did some guesswork and hopefully we got the pattern right.



The brass plate screws to the door sill, and the 'half hinge' with the brass roller fits inside the door so that it engages with the sill plate as the door closes, and thus prevents the door dropping.

**B**y the end of March 2010 the weather had started to warm up and make things more comfortable to resume work after the winter break. The body was back home and the doors now fitted the holes in the bodywork! Door catches had been made and the firewall bulkhead remade, and that is quite a story!

**I** had looked in Yellow Pages for sheet metal workers and found one just 3 miles away. I took the old part and the drawing I had made to them, and on entering the office was surprised to find John Fisher. I knew him from my youth, as his father Percy and my father Tom were responsible for the maintenance of a good profit level at The Bell and Bottle in Shinfield where we lived!! Percy was also a sheet metal worker and made some parts for the car back in the late 50's. How amazing that his son should be contributing the second time round.



Paul and John with the new and old parts in their workshop.

**I** laminated a sheet of 6mm ply with the galvanised panels, drilled out all the holes in the wood and was now ready to start the final re-assembly of the chassis. Engine and gearbox, refurbished carburettor, new wiring loom, brake and petrol pipes and the radiator. Things were looking great!!



**T**he battery box was not of the correct pattern, so I set about producing a correct drawing

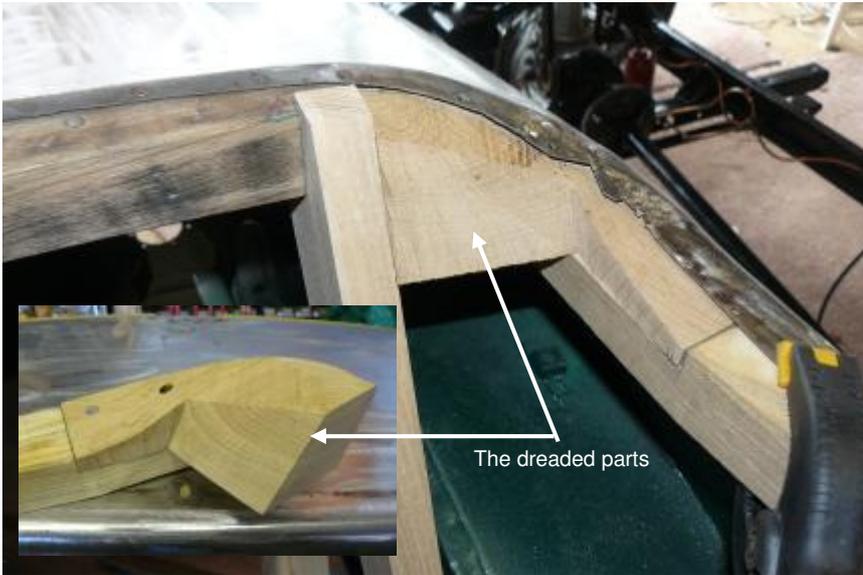




and making one out of card to my drawing to ensure a correct fit. I once again visited John Fisher in order to have it made. It so happened that several other Morris Register Members who were rebuilding similar cars needed one, so I could place an order for several at an advantageous price for us all!

**T**he completion of the woodwork at the rear of the passenger compartment

proved to be a struggle. The two components concerned were quite small, but a complicated shape and the old ones had been cannibalised and were dropping to pieces. It was impossible to make a pattern from them, so I had to set about



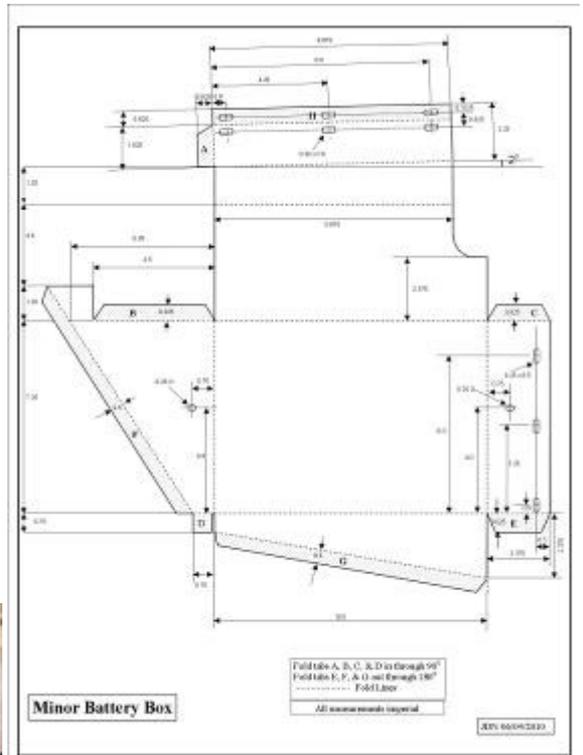
The dreaded parts



now in a position to strip the old paint off the bodywork, and as I said earlier there was a lot to remove. It was accomplished with the aid of a hot air gun and scraper, and then the metalwork was sanded to clean it up. The bonnet was taken to the shotblasters in order to remove the paint from the louvers and awkward bits.

**I** couldn't resist leaving a small area of red paint that I had applied 50 years ago, still in perfect condition which I sanded off after taking this picture!

**O**n completing the stripping I set about applying epoxy filler where needed and sanding down preparatory to applying a coat of etching primer. I was not best pleased when I discovered that I had dropped a large blob of the filler on the drive where it had set hard! It was finally removed with the aid of a hammer! Good strong stuff.



the task by trial and error. Mostly error it would seem, as I reckon I have denuded several forests of all their timber turning perfectly good trees into scrap!! The task was made even harder as there were right and left hand versions required. I finally succeeded, but I must say I have seldom spent so much time and effort to achieve so little! The band saw had been working overtime. What a useful tool. In spite of the problems, without it the task would have been almost impossible.

**H**aving completed the woodwork I was

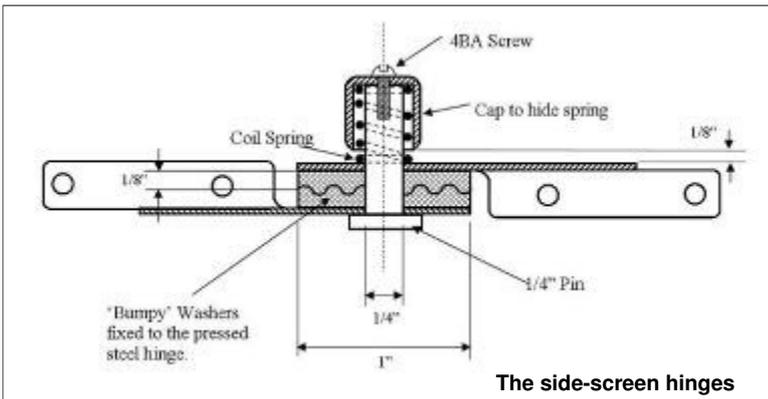


**A**t last all the body parts had been primed. They looked as if they were being prepared for desert warfare in the beige coloured paint!



Missing parts have been a problem, but with the help of Morris Register Members and other friends, patterns have been obtained and new parts fabricated. The parts concerned were the hood fixing brackets and screws, the choke and slow running cable clamps and the hinges for the side-screens. Fortunately, although the side screen hinges were tatty the 'bumpy washers' that enable the window to remain open in multiple positions were still there, so they were transferred to the newly made hinges.

As a side issue to the making of these parts, I am pleased to say that like the battery box a batch of them was made for other Minor owners to assist with their restoration projects.



I also decided to improve on the original number plate fitting (do I hear the anoraks sucking their teeth!!) by replacing the original bits of bent strip that were bolted to the back of the bodywork. It looked a bit naff I thought, and put an unnecessary strain on the lower bodywork panel. The new design is a one piece aluminium bracket to hold the number plate and the lights. It was not practical to use the hub cap to keep it in position so Terry Hunt came to the rescue again. He machined a solid dummy hub cap from an aluminium billet. This was screwed to the bracket and with a rubber gasket between the bracket and the spare wheel everything locks up solid. A smart job although I say it myself.

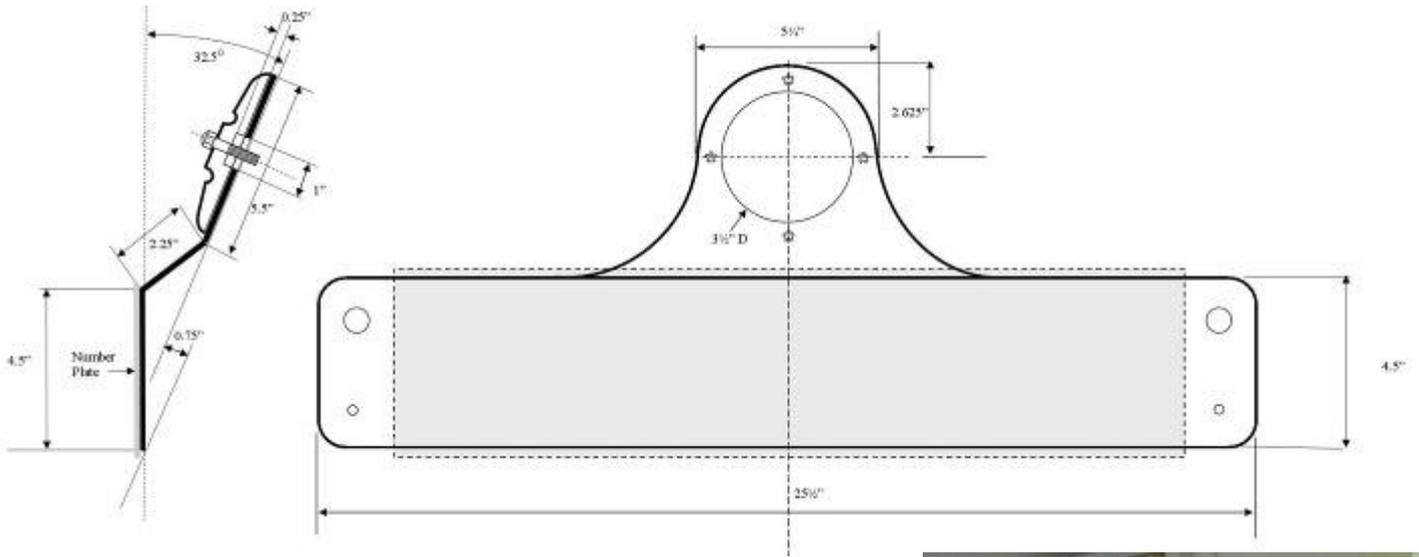
I finally plucked up courage to take the bright parts to the platers for re-chroming,



The hood fixings and the choke and slow running cable clamps



and at the end of November 2010 I picked up the finished work. I had had a struggle to find a platers near to me, but when I did find Solvabronz Ltd I struck gold. They had done a splendid job and everything was now shiny and bright.



It was amazing how long it had taken to complete all the little jobs of refurbishing, painting and re fitting of all the small parts to complete the chassis, engine and running gear. At last they were all in place and the body work was transported to Ady Godwin's (another MR member) paint shop at Membury in Berkshire for OW's smart new dress!!!

I had purchased a new trailer for transporting our Minor Family Eight and OW, and once the painting of the bodywork was complete I intended to take the chassis to Membury and fit the body there to ensure a scratch free journey home. Just six bolts attach the body to the chassis plus 18 bolts and 3 screws round the scuttle, so it was a relatively quick job to fit it, unlike the fight to free old rusted ones to get it all apart!

I can thoroughly recommend Brian Chandler of Caversham Glass who has made a super job of re-glazing the windscreen. It looks splendid with its new glass after re-chroming.

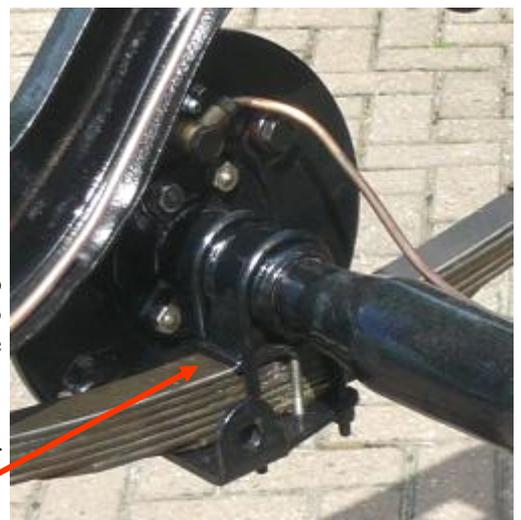


Russell Jones of Silvabronz with OW's radiator shell



I had been unhappy about the amount of distortion on the flexible couplings on the propshaft. It looked as though it was too long!! After a good deal of head scratching I finally decided to adjust the angle of the back

axle, to align the pinion shaft with the propshaft. I made two wedges tapered at 4° to go between the springs and the axle in order to tip up the front of the axle, so as to align it with the propshaft. This has produced a tidy solution, but why should it be necessary to do so?



Valentines Day 2011 heard the mighty roar of all 847cc's of OW's engine for the first time, and apart from a couple of water The wedges were inserted here.

leaks which you get if you don't tighten up the hose clips all sounded perfect!!

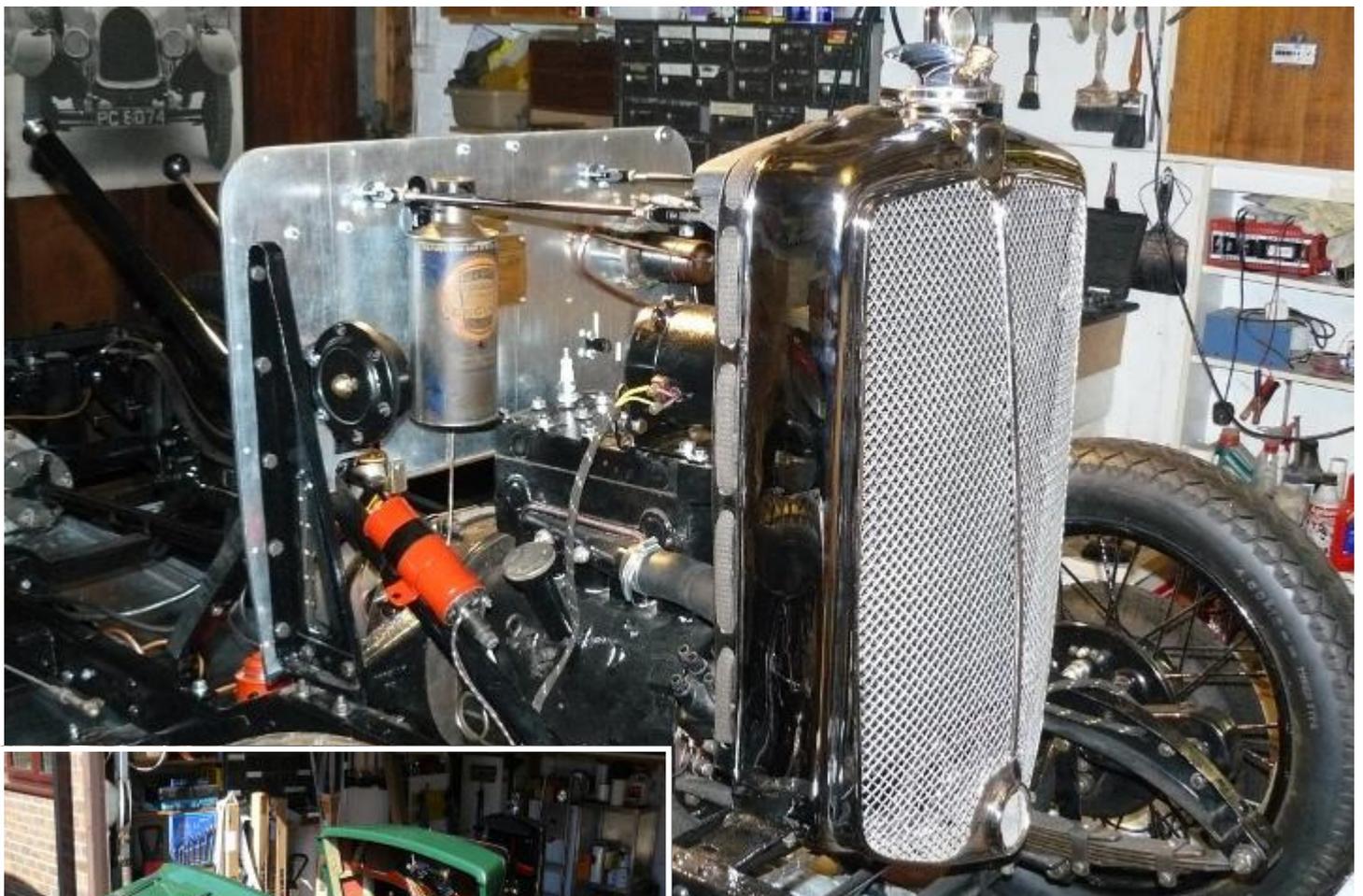
The following week I heard from Ady Godwin that the paintwork was finished and I set forth with the trailer to collect the body from his body shop at Membury in Berkshire. What a delight!!! If it looked as good when it left Cowley in 1934 I would be surprised. If you want your car re-sprayed Ady is your man!

Now all that remained was to screw all the bits back together, get the coach trimming done and a new hood made, but once again things did not go as I had hoped.

The bodywork, wings, radiator shell and windscreen were fitted, dash board and instruments put in place and all wiring and pipe work connected.



Ady (on the right) and the team with shiny new bodywork



I removed the old hood fabric from the frames and guess what? The metalwork was OK but the wooden bits needed remaking. The wooden hoops presented a problem because I did not have a steamer to enable me to bend the ash, so I decided to laminate new ones. A good decision as it turned out as the resulting hoops were extremely strong. I made a former using the old hoop as a pattern, and cut the ash into 3mm thick strips, and then bent and glued them together with Polyurethane glue which gives a firm bond in 30 minutes, thus enabling all 7 strips to be formed into the finished hoop in just 3 hours. The router rounded off the edges and a final sand down produced a super job.



Hood frame Construction underway



Apart from the usual small snags such as poor electrical connections and bits that didn't fit properly, all went well until I came to fit the bonnet. It looks a treat in the picture below doesn't it?

HOWEVER, WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE IS THAT THERE IS A 5/8" GAP BETWEEN THE BONNET AND THE RADIATOR AND THAT THE BONNET CATCHES ARE OUT OF ALIGNMENT!!!



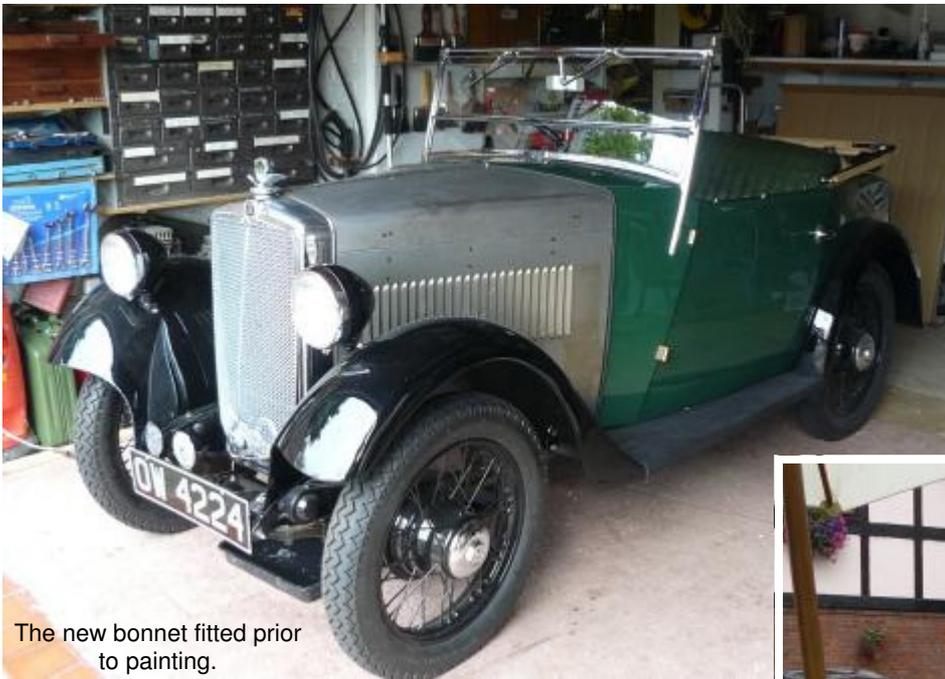
A phone call to Harold Blair who has a similar car revealed that I had the wrong bonnet. During our conversation he told me that he thought Gideon Booth had some NEW ONES IN STOCK!!!!

Sure enough, he did and Bob Stainthorp was summoned to cut the new bonnet to fit the car. After some very careful trimming and shaping we ended up with a bonnet that **fitted** perfectly. I am very cross with myself for not checking the bonnet before it was painted, but I must admit I find it difficult to believe that someone had fitted the wrong one.

The car was now complete except for the painting of the new bonnet and coach trimming, and I decided that as it was MOT'd taxed and insured to take it out for a spin - what joy!! **OH NO**, after one mile there was a screech from the front end and the oil pressure dropped to zero!! After I stopped crying I faced the prospect of removing the engine to find the cause. This little car had been a trial from the beginning, but I vowed one day I would get it finished.



Bob shaping the bonnet



The new bonnet fitted prior to painting.



The errant oil pump.

My neighbours Phil and Maurice were very sympathetic of my plight with the disaster, and told me to relax and they would investigate by removing the oil pump to see if the problem was there. The pump was removed and behold we found a severe lack of teeth on the gearwheels. We adjourned to the garden to celebrate the finding of the problem with a glass or two of wine. Later with a new pump fitted I started the engine only to find that all was not too well. There were certainly noises that should not be there. I shut it down and decided that I had had enough for the time being and so closed the garage doors and went on holiday!!



Neighbours Maurice & Phil enjoy a sympathetic glass of wine with me!



The high tec engine test bed.

And so back to work. Refreshed from a few days away Phil and I set forth to remove the engine and strip it down for an inspection. Its internals were revealed and apart from the fact that I had installed a pressed steel oil thrower on the front of the crank the wrong way round (you simply cannot get the staff!), all appeared to be in order. The engine was reassembled and placed on the Nagle patent engine test bed. This conforms to all British Standards, all Health and Safety regulations and Ministry of Poke-your-Nose requirements. I must say I do like the petrol tank and the ingenious 'down - the drain cooling system'!!

Everything was coupled up and at the press of the starter button all 847cc's fired into life. No funny noises. We adjusted the timing and carburation and all seemed well. We had apparently done nothing but the engine now seemed in fine fettle! So we set forth to reinstall the engine in the car. All went well for a change, and in no time OW was complete with her new bonnet that I had picked up from the painters and ready for a test run. Several test runs later all was going splendidly - I couldn't believe my luck.

**B**elow is OW looking resplendent in the autumn sunshine on one of the test runs. The other two runs seemed to end up in the same place, 'The Magpie and Parrot' my local pub. I am so glad she is learning her way around so quickly!! I now await a call from the coach trimmer to send us on the last lap of this eventful journey.



October 2011 - Only the upholstery and hood to go!!



**M**arch 2012, location Thatcham Berkshire.

Richard Geater at work on the interior and hood of OW, the final lap of the journey finishing on 15th March. Beautiful green leather trim, tailored green carpets and the hood, hood bag and side screens completed in beige fabric.

I am sure that OW didn't look as good when she left Cowley 78 years ago!



**F**inally all is finished and I now have my best girlfriend Emmeline safe and sound in my care and look forward to spending many a happy hour together.



John Nagle in 2008



A Mole End Publication



I would like to thank everybody who has helped me through the restoration of OW and the writing of this booklet. It has been a journey of hard work, triumphs and tragedies, disappointments, joy, broken fingernails, barked knuckles, and most of all copious amounts of cash but all has come right in the end due to our joint efforts.

*John Nagle March 2012.*