MORRIS MATTERS

WESTERN CAPE MAGAZINE

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MORRIS MINOR OWNERS CLUB WESTERN CAPE

Clubhouse: The Cape Multi-Motor Club, Jan Burger Sports Ground, De Grendel Road Parow North.

Web: www.morrisminor-wc.co.za **Facebook page**: MMOC Western Cape

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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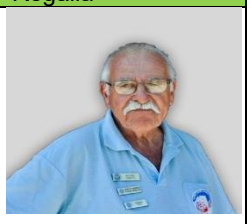
Theo Smit  tfsmit@mweb.co.za	Su Prins  suprins@me.com	Mitford Roberts  mitfordr1951@gmail.com
Technical	**Member**	**Events Co-Ordinator**
Tony Harrison  tohar@telkomsa.net	Sandy Gush  sandragush@gmail.com	Llewellyn Buckley  lulubucks007@gmail.com

CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER

FRIKKIE MULLER

Two of the winter events we've done so far is a visit to Die Plaaskombuis, Hemel-en-Aarde, Hermanus and the yearly visit to Snoekies which were very successful and the attendance for both these events were exceptional. Llewellyn Buckley, our new Events Coordinator is doing a stellar job!

Christmas in July is coming up on the 20th of July and Sandy Gush, who handles the Hospitality side of the club, has every under control. I think she needs a standing ovation for the work she puts in organizing this meal.

Ron and Sharon Clark and two of their friends, were fortunate enough to go on a Mediterranean cruise. According to the photos and the stories they had to tell, it must have been a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Glad you're back safely and ready to sell more raffle tickets, Ron!

On the technical side, during winter, one should constantly check your car's battery. If your car is still equipped with an "old school" battery, remember to check the battery water to prevent it from dying.

If you don't use your car regularly, it would be advisable to start the car once a week and let it idle for a few minutes for the oil and water to circulate. This will also charge the battery to ensure a longer lifespan.

Su Prins, our Membership officer, had two difficult experiences, first with the fall and facial injuries, and then needing two stents a few weeks later. That is a lot to go through in a short period. She is recovering well from both and was able to join us on the trip to Snoekies.

For months, Roger Buckley has had constant back pain; they found a cyst on his kidney. He's having surgery on June 17th. We wish him a speedy recovery.

Until our next edition, I hope our members stay healthy and warm to enjoy what the club still has to offer for the rest of the year.

BIRTHDAY LIST

JULY		AUGUST	
6	Patsy Buckley	5	Peter Haffenden
6	Su Prins	13	Jill Gerstner
11	Annerene Harris	17	Gert Smit
19	Danie Bothma	19	Andre Swanepoel
22	Robin McIntosh	27	Johan van Rensburg
25	Frikkie Muller	28	Mike Bagley
25	Sue Tissington	31	Deon Bower
30	Sharon Clark		

GET WELL SOON

Special prayers go out to Roger Buckley who had undergone an operation on 17 June. Best wishes to Patsy and the family.

Happy to report that Su Prins our Minister of Membership is doing better after her stent surgery.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

1. **Sunday 20 July 2025 – Christmas in July at the clubhouse**
2. **Sunday 17 August 2025 – Soup and Bingo at the clubhouse**
3. **Sunday 21 September 2025 – Braai at the clubhouse**
4. **Saturday 4 October 2025 – Sandbaai Whales and Wheels car show**

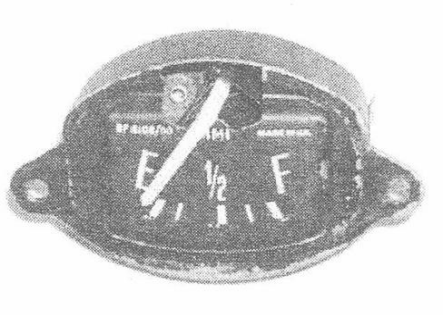
5. **Sunday 19 October 2025 – Sunday lunch at Dixie's Restaurant in Glencairn**

For more details on each event, visit our website, www.morrisminor-wc.co.za.

TECHNICAL

Tony Harrison

PETROL GAUGE – ENOUGH OR FINISHED?



A few issues ago the article on petrol gauges and tank sender units touched on the checking of the early type gauges that have regulators attached. The following covers trouble shooting on the black faced gauges marked MM1, the difference for gold faced gauges marked 12V is that the terminals are opposite – tank is the left one viewed from the rear. The method of accessing the fuel gauge is the same that is by removing the speedometer.

Make sure you disconnect the battery (one terminal is all you need to disconnect). You will need to disconnect the speedo drive cable and pull out some of the warning lamp holders from the speedo to allow you to move the speedo far enough out to get at the fuel gauge terminals.

Using a 12v bulb and wire leads as a tester, (a digital voltmeter makes life a lot easier), attach one lead from your test lamp to a suitable earth point i.e. some point that is definitely well bonded to the chassis of the vehicle – check for a good contact which is to bare metal, not painted metal. Look behind the speedometer and identify the 2 terminals (1/4in spade terminals) which are the connections to the fuel gauge. Now, switch on the ignition for only a minute or two at a time in case the distributor points just happen to be closed and carefully touch the other lead from your test bulb to each of the fuel gauge terminals in turn – the lamp should light up when touching either terminal, but may be brighter on the left hand as seen from behind the speedo. This left-hand terminal is the one connected directly to the fuse/battery, whereas the right-hand terminal is the side of the fuel gauge which goes to the tank sender unit.

If the lamp does not light on either terminal with the ignition on, the fault lies in the fuse or the wiring from the fuse to the gauge. If the lamp does not light on the RH or tank terminal, the gauge itself is faulty and must be replaced. Note that there are gold and black versions of the fuel gauge and the replacement must be of the same colour.

All bronze faced Minor speedos including the first two years of the 1098cc type had nutted sender units. All Minor black faced speedos (1964 onwards) had the Lucar push on connector.

If your speedo and fuel gauge have a black face, then you must have the later type sender unit which has a Lucar push on connector on the petrol tank sender unit.

If you have a bronzed faced speedo unit then you must have the earlier type sender unit which has a nut on the terminal.

REGALIA

Flat Caps	***R150.00***
Baseball Caps	***R 80.00***
Union Jack/England Window Flags	***R 30.00***
Bumper Badges	***R 180.00***
Cap Badges	***R 50.00***
Dust Cap Remover	***R 30.00***
Cloth Rectangular Badge	***R 35.00***
Cloth Circular Badge	***R 40.00***
Key Ring	***R 50.00***
Bumper Stickers	***R 20.00***
Magnet / Pin Badge	***R 50.00***
Rear Window Sticker	***R 20.00***
Morris Fridge Magnet	***R 20.00***
Licence Disc Holder	***R 20.00***
Club Pens	***R 25.00***
LRP Replacement	***R 140.00***

***Any Regalia questions / needs call Mitford Roberts* 083 268 0957**
Email: mitfordr1951@gmail.com

A BIRD'S EYEVIEW

Gerda Muller

A VISIT TO THE HEMEL-EN-AARDE VALLEY, HERMANUS

"Hemel-en-Aarde" means "Heaven and Earth" in old Dutch and Afrikaans and according to a visiting Moravian missionary in 1899, "Rightly has it got its name because so high are the hills which closely embrace the valley all round, that they seem to touch the sky and you cannot see anything but heaven and earth".

On the 18th of May, the MMOC Western Cape took a trip to this beautiful Hemel-en-Aarde Valley, just outside of the seaside town of Hermanus. 41 members in 15 Morrisses and 3 plastics made the trip to Hermanus and back without a hitch. After a quick pit stop at Coffee on Clarence in Betty's Bay, a quaint little coffee shop which the ladies especially enjoyed, we had to leave, because Paul Hoffman organized a trip to Calvin Hutton's classic car collection in Hermanus. The men then had their turn to dote on the cars on display.

Upon learning of our arrival, the local magazine arranged for a group photograph of the members and their cars at a beautiful beach.

We then proceeded on to Die Plaaskombuis where we received a warm welcome and got to sample their delicious wines. The food was great, the company superb, and the drive offered stunning coastal views.

Every time we go on an outing like that, it gives me such a kick to see the admiration people have for our cars. There is a significant public fascination with photographing these vehicles. One cannot help but feel very special to be able to say, “That one is mine”! I’m willing to bet that on any of these events, someone will come up to us and say that they or their dad’s, or someone in their family had a car just like that years ago!

Publication of trip photos on Facebook led to contact from Audrey and Martin Matthysen of Somerset West, who promptly joined, thus adding to our membership.

YEARLY TRIP TO SNOEKIES

Gerda Muller

We joined the club in 2008 and as far as I can remember, a trip to Snoekies in Hout Bay Harbour was always on the Events list. It was also one of the first events we had after lockdown. We were not allowed to sit inside, but everyone got their parcel, and we sat on the harbour walls, honouring social distancing, enjoying the sunshine away from the confinement of our homes.

On the 15th of June 2025 we went on our yearly drive to Snoekies, Hout Bay, and as usual, it was a beautiful, sunny, and clear winter's day. 10 Morrisses, 3 plastics, and a total of 30 people joined us. I can only remember one year where we had torrential rain going to Snoekies. Rain was streaming down the mountain as we drove along Beach Road, but amazingly, none of the Morrises broke down.

For those of you who are not familiar with Snoekies, the story dates back to the early 1930's when as a young boy, Hans Mickeleit watched fish being smoked at his homeport of Swinemunde, Poland. Later in 1939, Hans boarded a freighter bound for Japan but was detained in Durban when World War II was declared. At the end of the war, he decided to visit Cape Town where he fell in love with the port village of Hout Bay and immediately arranged for his family to emigrate.

Hans's purchased an old bus, which he converted into a takeaway cafe and positioned it at the end of Harbour Road, Hout Bay. They named the take-away cafe, Snoekies from where they served fish & chips to the local fishermen. Hans's wife ran the Snoekies take-away cafe whilst he experimented with smoking fish and they found that his smoked snoek sold well at the café. Before long they found it difficult to keep up with the demand from their garage at home and in 1956 he built a factory in the Hout Bay Harbour.

In 1959 the business, together with Hans's secret for smoking fish, was sold to South African Sea Products under their Oceana division. More than 60 years since it's humble beginnings, the custodianship of the Snoekies Brand has been placed on the shoulders of entrepreneurs David Aronson & Justin Strong. Today you will still find Snoekies situated at the far end of Hout Bay Harbour, continuing to provide locals and tourists with light, crispy-golden battered hake and freshly-cut chips from the Snoekies take-away as well as fresh fish from the Snoekies Fish Market.


Snoekies
CLOSED TODAY FOR
PRIVATE EVENT
INVITED GUESTS ONLY
AT Snoekies MAIN
TILLS.
BUZZER WILL NOTIFY
YOU WHEN ORDER IS
READY FOR COLLECTION.

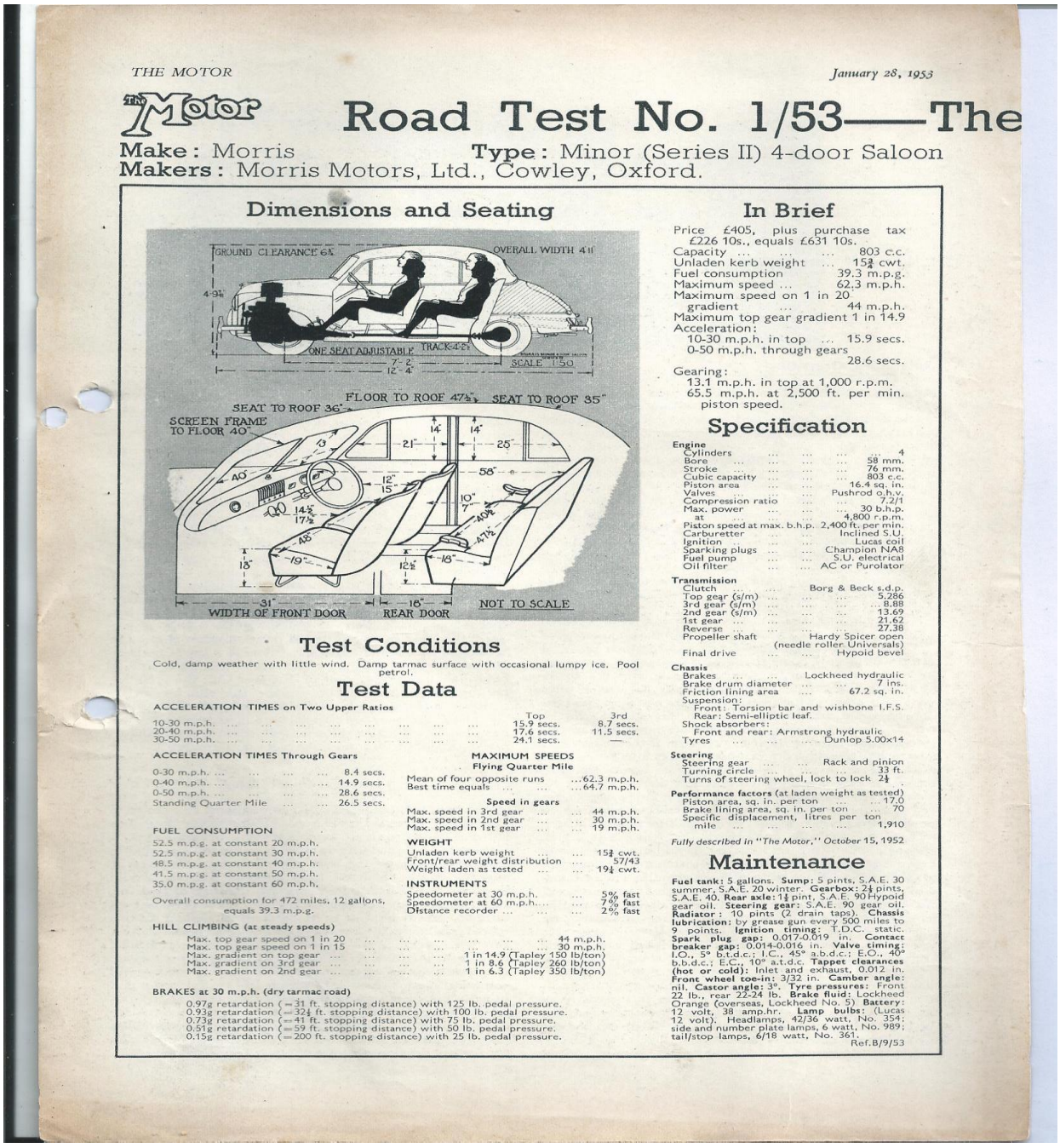

SNOEKIES


SNOEKIES

ROAD TEST NO. 1/53

Malcolm Johnston

I know the print on this road test is quite small but wanted to share it with all of you. I encourage you to speak to Malcolm Johnson should you be interested in any of the other road tests that he has, and he has lots of them.



THE MOTOR — January 28, 1953

The Motor

Road Test No. 1/53—The

Make: Morris **Type:** Minor (Series II) 4-door Saloon
Makers: Morris Motors, Ltd., Cowley, Oxford.

Dimensions and Seating

In Brief

Price £405, plus purchase tax £226 10s., equals £631 10s.
Capacity ... 803 c.c.
Unladen kerb weight ... 15¾ cwt.
Fuel consumption 39.3 m.p.g.
Maximum speed ... 62.3 m.p.h.
Maximum speed on 1 in 20 gradient ... 44 m.p.h.
Maximum top gear gradient 1 in 14.9
Acceleration:
10-30 m.p.h. in top ... 15.9 secs.
0-50 m.p.h. through gears 28.6 secs.
Gearing:
13.1 m.p.h. in top at 1,000 r.p.m.
65.5 m.p.h. at 2,500 ft. per min. piston speed.

Specification

Engine
Cylinders ... 4
Bore ... 58 mm.
Stroke ... 76 mm.
Cubic capacity ... 803 c.c.
Piston area ... 16.4 sq. in.
Valves ... Pushrod o.h.v.
Compression ratio ... 7.2/1
Max. power ... 30 b.h.p. at 4,800 r.p.m.
Piston speed at max. b.h.p. 2,400 ft. per min.
Carburetter ... Inclined S.U.
Ignition ... Lucas coil
Sparking plugs ... Champion NA8
Fuel pump ... S.U. electrical
Oil filter ... AC or Purolator

Transmission
Clutch ... Borg & Beck s.d.p.
Top gear (s/m) ... 5.286
3rd gear (s/m) ... 8.88
2nd gear (s/m) ... 13.69
1st gear ... 21.62
Reverse ... 27.38
Propeller shaft ... Hardy Spicer open (needle roller Universals)
Final drive ... Hypoid bevel

Chassis
Brakes ... Lockheed hydraulic
Brake drum diameter ... 7 ins.
Friction lining area ... 67.2 sq. in.
Suspension:
Front: Torsion bar and wishbone I.F.S.
Rear: Semi-elliptic leaf.
Shock absorbers:
Front and rear: Armstrong hydraulic
Tyres ... Dunlop 5.00x14

Steering
Steering gear ... Rack and pinion
Turning circle ... 33 ft.
Turns of steering wheel, lock to lock 2¼

Performance factors (at laden weight as tested)
Piston area, sq. in. per ton ... 17.0
Brake lining area, sq. in. per ton ... 70
Specific displacement, litres per ton mile ... 1,910

Fully described in "The Motor," October 15, 1952

Test Conditions

Cold, damp weather with little wind. Damp tarmac surface with occasional lumpy ice. Pool petrol.

Test Data

ACCELERATION TIMES on Two Upper Ratios

	Top	3rd
10-30 m.p.h.	15.9 secs.	8.7 secs.
20-40 m.p.h.	17.6 secs.	11.5 secs.
30-50 m.p.h.	24.1 secs.	—

ACCELERATION TIMES Through Gears

0-30 m.p.h. ... 8.4 secs.
0-40 m.p.h. ... 14.9 secs.
0-50 m.p.h. ... 28.6 secs.
Standing Quarter Mile ... 26.5 secs.

MAXIMUM SPEEDS

Flying Quarter Mile
Mean of four opposite runs ... 62.3 m.p.h.
Best time equals ... 64.7 m.p.h.

Speed in gears
Max. speed in 3rd gear ... 44 m.p.h.
Max. speed in 2nd gear ... 30 m.p.h.
Max. speed in 1st gear ... 19 m.p.h.

FUEL CONSUMPTION
52.5 m.p.g. at constant 20 m.p.h.
52.5 m.p.g. at constant 30 m.p.h.
48.5 m.p.g. at constant 40 m.p.h.
41.5 m.p.g. at constant 50 m.p.h.
35.0 m.p.g. at constant 60 m.p.h.
Overall consumption for 472 miles, 12 gallons, equals 39.3 m.p.g.

WEIGHT
Unladen kerb weight ... 15¾ cwt.
Front/rear weight distribution ... 57/43
Weight laden as tested ... 19¼ cwt.

INSTRUMENTS
Speedometer at 30 m.p.h. ... 5% fast
Speedometer at 60 m.p.h. ... 7% fast
Distance recorder ... 2% fast

HILL CLIMBING (at steady speeds)
Max. top gear speed on 1 in 20 ... 44 m.p.h.
Max. top gear speed on 1 in 15 ... 30 m.p.h.
Max. gradient on top gear ... 1 in 14.9 (Tapley 150 lb/ton)
Max. gradient on 3rd gear ... 1 in 8.6 (Tapley 260 lb/ton)
Max. gradient on 2nd gear ... 1 in 6.3 (Tapley 350 lb/ton)

BRAKES at 30 m.p.h. (dry tarmac road)
0.97g retardation (=31 ft. stopping distance) with 125 lb. pedal pressure.
0.93g retardation (=32½ ft. stopping distance) with 100 lb. pedal pressure.
0.73g retardation (=41 ft. stopping distance) with 75 lb. pedal pressure.
0.51g retardation (=59 ft. stopping distance) with 50 lb. pedal pressure.
0.15g retardation (=200 ft. stopping distance) with 25 lb. pedal pressure.

Maintenance

Fuel tank: 5 gallons. **Sump:** 5 pints, S.A.E. 30 summer, S.A.E. 20 winter. **Gearbox:** 2½ pints, S.A.E. 40. **Rear axle:** 1¼ pint, S.A.E. 90 Hypoid gear oil. **Steering gear:** S.A.E. 90 gear oil. **Radiator:** 10 pints (2 drain taps). **Chassis lubrication:** by grease gun every 500 miles to 9 points. **Ignition timing:** T.D.C. static. **Spark plug gap:** 0.017-0.019 in. **Contact breaker gap:** 0.014-0.016 in. **Valve timing:** I.O., 5° b.t.d.c.; I.C., 45° a.b.d.c.; E.O., 40° b.b.d.c.; E.C., 10° a.t.d.c. **Tappet clearances (hot or cold):** Inlet and exhaust, 0.012 in. **Front wheel toe-in:** 3/32 in. **Camber angle:** nil. **Castor angle:** 3°. **Tyre pressures:** Front 22 lb., rear 22-24 lb. **Brake fluid:** Lockheed Orange (overseas, Lockheed No. 5). **Battery:** 12 volt, 38 amp.hr. **Lamp bulbs:** (Lucas 12 volt). Headlamps, 42/36 watt, No. 354; side and number plate lamps, 6 watt, No. 989; tail/stop lamps, 6/18 watt, No. 361.

Ref. B/9/53

We are always looking for interesting stories to publish in our magazine. Quite a few of our members have already supplied us with their journey with their Morris. We would love to hear more of those stories. Photos with these stories are always welcome!

BECCA – A GIRL WITH A PASSION FOR MINORS

Submitted by Gerda Muller

"Hello, my name is Rebecca McIlroy, a 13-year-old girl who is one of the many proud Morris Minor owners. It first started when I was a baby. My dad used to own a 1965 pale blue saloon, which we went to MMOC outings all the time. A few years went by and he decided to sell it to a friend of his. He then bought a Mark III Ford Cortina. Every year we would take the Cortina down south a couple of times for some well-known static shows. After that, he decided to take on a new project!

It was originally a Saloon but now it is a 1963 post-production Morris Minor Convertible. The many years of work finished just in time for the Easter Monday run in and around 2010. In June 2010 and 2013, we went to the National Rally, and it was so much fun that I hope to go again next year!

I have shown a lot of interest in Minors from a very young age, but last year my dad decided to take everything a step further. On the 26th May 2012 we were at a show in Bangor with a few good mates and one of them (Stephen Gordon) was selling his brother's 1963 Trafalgar Blue Minor and I said to my dad, 'Wanna buy me this?' and he said, 'I already have!'

I was so excited; it turns out he had been thinking about it for a while. Not long after I got it home and at 12 years of age, I was delighted to have my own set of keys! We have already attended a great number of shows. I want to get a respray and new chrome in the next year and then attend the National in it next year.

We have attended many shows over the years in places like… Moynalty, Loanends, Antrim, Garvagh, Shanes Castle, Armagh, Waringstown, Braid valley, Carnlough, Glenarm, Trim, The Glens, Stranraer, Bangor, Lisburn, Mosney and many many more!

Dad's Mark III Ford Cortina has been sitting in the shed for a year or two, off the road and needing a new gearbox, wing fillers, and a respray. We are hoping to free the clutch in the next couple of weeks and attempt to get it going again as it is a lovely, big car.

During my free time, I enjoy attending many shows and spending considerable time caring for Lionel.

Becca McIlroy, Morris Minor Owners Club Northern Ireland"

Published on the 3rd October 2013 in the Minor Memories of the Northern Ireland Club.

A MINOR HERO: COLD START

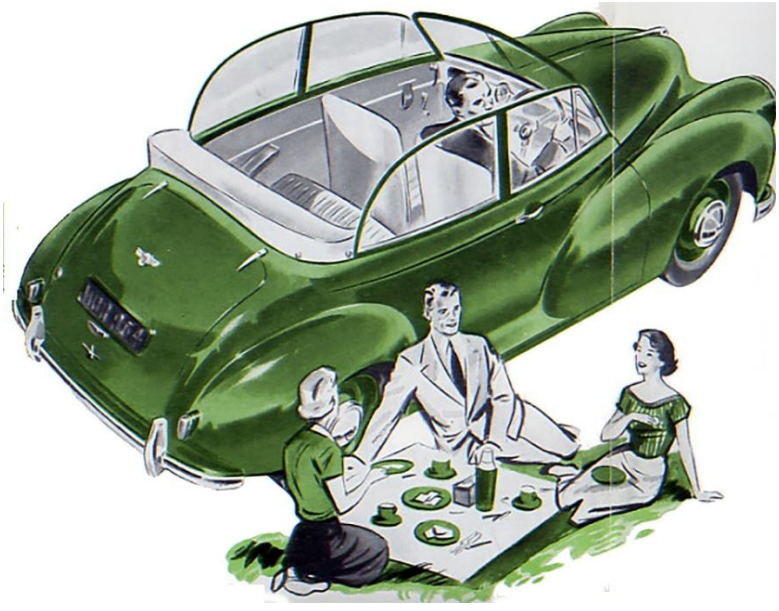
By Jason Torchinsky

Link to website: https://www.theautopian.com/a-minor-hero-cold-start/

I was driving the other day when I noticed the car you see up there, happily toodling along: a Morris Minor, and a convertible one, even! There are a few Minors in town that I've seen before – actually, just one, a Traveller version (the one with the woody station wagon body from the B-pillar back), and it has a Datsun engine, and I've gotten to drive it before, which was a treat. But this one was new to me, and I was absolutely delighted to see it on the road.

It looks to be in pretty good shape, except perhaps for that top, which doesn't inspire much confidence considering the context of the rainy mess this area has been for the past few weeks. The convertible versions of the Minor were always a little odd because they retained the door window frames, which makes them look a bit more like a car with a massive sunroof.

Here, look at this tiny, verdant gentleman and his green lady friends having a picnic in what I'm guessing, based on the chromatic cues, is Greenland:



See? All the windows drop down, so you're getting plenty of sky, it just comes very adequately framed.

The fit of that top just looks a bit janky and it's hard to imagine it's not flappy and leaky, but this thing is just so damn charming, who cares? This one appeared to be driving great and seems in fantastic and usable shape.

Whenever I think of the Minor, I can't help but think of one particular story about the car, which I first wrote up so long ago, back in 2012. The story is about how Alec Issigonis, the man who designed not just the Minor but is better known for the iconic Mini, was looking at a nearly production-ready Minor right before the car was about to go into full production.

But something didn't look right.

The car was his design, and here it was, real, in the metal right in front of him. But at that moment, seeing the car in person, he suddenly realized that something was off. The size and proportions weren't quite right. He looked and looked, thought and (I like to imagine) paced around the car, and finally arrived at a conclusion. As Ray Newell tells us in his book, *The Morris Minor:*

"All the prototypes were 57 inches wide, the same width as the Morris Eight. Issigonis felt this was too narrow and so he ordered that one of the prototypes be sawn in half lengthways. The two halves were then moved apart and set up at different intervals. At 4 inches (10 cm) apart, Issigonis was satisfied."

Yes, that's right. Issigonis had one of the prototypes split down the middle, and separated the halves by four inches to widen the car. *Now* it was right.

That's why the early Minors, the "low light" ones, have a couple of clues that tell you that this car was once bisected lengthwise, like a hot dog bun, or something. The most obvious clue was the front bumper, which had to be split in two and re-connected by means of a metal plate in the centre to fill the newly-added four inches, which also had the socket for a starting crank.

Then there was that flat swage on the hood, which started off as just a decorative crease, but, being stretched, turned into a flat raised stripe, of sorts. Back in 2012 I mocked up what a pre-widened Minor may have looked like, but since The Old Site no longer shows images, I had to re-create it so you can see for yourself, because this is important, dammit:

See the difference? I think Issigonis made the right call, as the wider car I think does look better; I'm not certain if the track was changed or any suspension and chassis parts, or was it just the body? I think just the body. Still, that was a hell of a dramatic last-minute call.

Anyway, here's to the champ who is still driving what looks like a '60s-era Minor around town to this day!

HOW ELECTRICITY REALLY WORKS

Anonymous

A sheet of paper crossed my desk the other day and as I read it, realization of a basic truth came to me. So simple! So obvious we couldn't see it! Leo Martin of Hiawatha division had discovered how power circuits work. He says that smoke is the real thing that makes power circuits work because every time you let the smoke out of something electrical, it quits working. He claims to have verified this with thorough testing.

I was flabbergasted! Of course! Smoke makes all electrical things, work. Remember the last time smoke escaped from a transformer? Didn't it quit working? I sat and smiled like an idiot as more of the truth dawned. I remember when I had witnessed the awful destruction of a 4kv breaker and bus at Sunnyvale. The breaker and bus leaked out so much smoke that the breaker and bus stabs actually melted and quit working.

Yes, I now know that Leo's theory is true. It's the conductor that carries the smoke from one device to another. It starts at our power plants where stuff is burned to produce smoke. The smoke we see coming from the stacks is the excess smoke that the system doesn't need. The smoke is then sent down the conductors to transformers around the system. Transformers are big and require a lot of smoke to work properly. That is why the conductors are so big. If these conductors spring a leak, it lets the smoke out of everything and then nothing works.

TOP DOWN

By David Bullard (Sunday Times 16/1/2000)

Submitted by Dave Gerstner

Although mostly a fair-weather driver, the sky would occasionally darken while I was out and large, menacing drops of rain would splash on the passenger seat.

Convertible drivers these days don't know what this is like because their cars are born with poncy electronically operated hoods. Putting the hood up on a Morris Minor is a skilled job at the best of times, ideally suited to a well-coordinated team of driver and passenger. For the solo driver, the ability to put the hood up successfully marked one as something of a technical genius.

If you pulled too hard on one side the damn thing would jam, so the best plan was to stand up facing backwards in the middle of the car with the front seats folded forwards and pull evenly on either side while trying not to lose your balance or fall backwards over the front windscreen. A well-executed hood erection would take no more than four minutes at the most, by which time puddles of rain would have formed in the front foot wells. Even with the roof clamped tightly onto the front windscreen, the rain would still blow through the gap between the top of the driver's window and the canvas roof. The minuscule windscreen wipers were designed for light showers and not tropical downpours, so were fairly ineffectual. This didn't really matter much because in a rainstorm all the interior windows would mist so badly that it was impossible to see out of the car anyway.

I am so bored with all the wind-tunnel-tested clones offered on the car market today that if some smart repro company decided to milk the nostalgia market and produce Morris Minors I would almost certainly buy one. At my age, though, I'm taking no chances. I want the twin-exhaust, four-litre, turbo-charged babe magnet model.

I once owned a genuine Morris Minor Convertible circa 1960. The theory goes that men buy a car with engine power in inverse ratio to their sexual prowess. This is probably just a malicious story put out by people who can't afford the modest R1-million or so it takes to buy a Porsche GT3 these days. Anyway, I decided to turn the theory on its head by deliberately buying an old car with a small engine,

on the sensible assumption that perceptive women would know that the lack of oomph under the bonnet would be more than compensated for elsewhere. Although the car attracted many admiring looks and the occasional compliment, I can't really vouch for its success as a babe magnet.

It was rather optimistically painted in British racing green, had tan leather upholstery and accelerated from 0 to 100km/h in a sporty two minutes on level ground. Uphill was a different matter entirely. Octogenarian women laden with shopping bags regularly used to overtake me. Changing down to second made very little difference except that the engine sounded a little less asthmatic than it did in third. Changing down to first when even second gear became a bit wheezy was a highly technical exercise because you had to double declutch and that usually resulted in the car losing momentum, stalling and rolling backwards downhill. After that it was simply a matter of hoping that no one was following too closely and steering the car into a kerb so the rear wheels would jam before coaxing the engine into life again.

After the first such nerve-racking experience in Melville, I decided to drive around hills whenever possible, or, if I really couldn't avoid them, to hug the kerb as closely as possible, while a slow, winding snake of traffic built up behind me.

Unfortunately, the camber on some of Johannesburg's older roads meant that not only was I travelling mostly at an angle of about 35 degrees, but I also got the worst of the potholes.

During the summer months I drove the car with the hood down. Sweat would drip off me and I would comb scabs of dead skin out of my sunburnt scalp at night.

A BIG thank you to all who contributed articles and pictures.