

**MGB
V8**

Sebring
style GT



**JAGUAR
XJS**

Survivor's Guide



GORDON KEEBLE



Bespoke Brit restored

BUYING | RESTORING | REPAIRING

CLASSICS

APRIL 2015 ISSUE 227

MONTHLY

**MORRIS
IN THE
MED**

**TAILOR-
MADE
MINOR**

FIND YOUR
NEXT PROJECT
FOR SALE
INSIDE!



TRIUMPH

**MAXI v
AMBASSADOR**



TR HISTORY



Austin hatches compared

WORKSHOP

✓ WIPER BOX
STRIPDOWN

✓ SOUNDPROOFING
THE PRO WAY

✓ MORRIS TRAVELLER
PROJECT: FITTING UP

✓ HOW IT WORKS:
BMC B-SERIES

✓ STAG REBUILD: ENGINE
BAY AND COOLING

22 PAGES OF STAFF TECH

- ✓ 20 pages of staff tech
- ✓ Big Citroën fettling
- ✓ Spitfire heater
- ✓ Toledo brakes
- ✓ MGB stripdown
- ✓ A40 clutch system
- ✓ XJ40 electronics



APRIL 2015 £27



TIME
2013-2014
COST
£27,000

MINOR ON THE ROCK

John Tewkesbury lives in Gibraltar and fancied a classic four-seat convertible that was easy to live with and straightforward to maintain

WORDS IVAN OSTROFF PICTURES LYNDON MCNEIL



Gibraltar John Tewkesbury has owned a 95th anniversary Harley Davidson motorbike since 1998 but for some time he'd been hankering after a more sociable form of open air transportation. His idea was to find type of classic four-seater convertible that he could enjoy with his wife and family. It had to be something that he would be capable of looking after himself and be able to enjoy well into his retirement later on.

In 1973 the first car that John ever owned had been a Morris Minor that he purchased from a lecturer at the Gibraltar college for the princely sum of £60. With memories of that car and the good times

he enjoyed whilst he owned it still very clear, he decided to try and find a similar car. There wasn't much on offer around Gibraltar and some of the cars he saw in adverts in UK were in need of considerable work. John was concerned that if he bought a classic car it would be have to be capable of regular reliable usage and only requiring the most basic maintenance. After researching the various Morris Minor experts, John discovered Charles Ware's Morris Minor Centre Ltd., in Bristol. "It appeared that they were able to do absolutely anything to a Minor, so in the spring of 2013 I decided to go over to the UK and pay them a visit".

After a look around the workshop and a

chat with Adrian Fry, John decided to take the plunge and in the summer of 2013 finally placed an order for a bespoke left-hand drive drop-top Minor. John: "I knew that they were able to build a Minor for me exactly the way I wanted it, they were extremely professional and told me the car would be ready by the summer of 2014. Charles Ware proved to be absolutely as good as their word. At the end of the year they confirmed they had a suitable donor car for John's project, so he flew over to have a look. The donor vehicle was a Morris Minor 1000 that had been first registered on March 1, 1967. "I paid the £600 required for the donor and went back to Gib knowing that they would not

RESTORATION TIMELINE



1) DECEMBER 2013
The donor chosen was a Minor 1000 saloon.



2) JANUARY 2014
After the shell was stripped all corrosion was cut away.

READER RESTO Morris Minor 1000

be free to begin the work until the winter." In January 2014, work began with the donor two-door saloon shell being totally stripped out in readiness for the rebuild. By February the shell was placed in the workshop where all corrosion was cut away and replaced with fresh metal. This involved replacing some of the floor, chassis rails, and wings. At this stage the roof was removed and the car converted into a drop-top in readiness for all the necessary hood mechanism to be fitted. The whole car was then rustproofed thoroughly (Charles Ware guarantee its rebuilt shells for

three years) then sprayed in primer prior to painting.

Once the body had received its fresh maroon paint internally and externally, the engine and gearbox were dropped in, followed by the radiator, front grille and valance. A new hood assembly was then fitted, along with a boot rack and a tow bar to enable John to pull a trailer so that he could take his Harley to the various shows and biker meets.

The original 1000cc engine was replaced with a fully reconditioned unleaded 1275cc unit from a Morris Marina 1300, matched to a



TOP TIP
Following an engine rebuild, always torque down the cylinder head bolts after the first 500 miles.



John's restored Minor tends to attract a lot of attention back home on 'The Rock'.



3) FEBRUARY 2014

All panels were repaired or replaced before the roof was chopped.



4) MARCH 2014

Once the body shell was repaired the roof was removed.



5) APRIL 2014

With four new wings attached the car was primed ready for paint.



The Minor's symmetrical dash layout made it easy to convert to left-hand drive.



READER RESTO Morris Minor 1000

Buying a Minor

Basically all the mechanical components on the Minor are hardy and are all available, but check for oil leaks and weak synchros in the gearbox. However, the bodysheils do succumb to rust. Check the bottom of the wings, wheel arches, along where the wing piping sits, the area around the headlamps, the bottom of the doors, sills, A and B pillars. Then check the underside, the floor area and all suspension mounting points.



“The original 1000cc engine was replaced with a fully reconditioned unleaded 1275cc unit from a Morris Marina 1300”

T9 five-speed Ford Sierra gearbox and exhausting via a new stainless steel exhaust system. Part of Charles Ware's brief had been to convert the car from right-hand drive to left-hand drive to make it generally easier to own and run in Gibraltar, so a new LHD rack was installed and the pedal box transferred from the right to left. For added safety, the original drum brakes were improved by installing Marina front discs and a servo.

In the suspension department, there are the usual

half elliptic cart springs locating the Minor's live rear axle, but the original lever arm shock absorbers have been replaced with inboard telescopic units. At the front end there are the expected torsion bars, lower suspension arms and lever arm dampers, but there is also an addition pair of telescopic shock absorber and a much stiffer anti-roll bar. On the electrical

side, the headlamps were replaced with halogen units and alternator and electronic ignition were fitted to guarantee modern standards of starting and reliability. The car was then totally r-trimmed in best quality hide and fitted with front and rear inertia real seat belts to bring safety closer to modern standards.

At the end of June 2014

when John's Minor was finished, he and his wife flew over to England to pick it up. John was delighted with the car and decided to spend a few days touring the UK before catching the ferry for Europe. That was probably just as well, as after a couple of days and a few hundred miles driving around Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and



6) APRIL 2014

The shell is painted prior to fitting bonnet and boot.



7) MAY 2014

Once in paint, the engine and gearbox go in.



8) MAY 2014

After the engine and gearbox, the grille and hood follow.



READER RESTO Morris Minor 1000

Oxfordshire, the clutch became more and more difficult to operate. Eventually somewhere near Oxford, the Minor failed completely so John pulled off the road onto a petrol station forecourt and contacted Charles Ware. The car was eventually collected and taken back to Bristol on the back of a low loader. On examination back at Charles Ware, they discovered a fault with the clutch linkage running from the 'new' left-hand drive pedal box. John: "I must say, Charles Ware looked after us well, putting me and my wife up in a hotel overnight whilst the Minor was repaired. The following morning it was as good as new and we were soon back on our way."

John had decided that the journey home to Gib would be



something of a relaxed holiday. Therefore, after visiting some family in UK, the pair drove straight down to Plymouth and caught the ferry to St Malo. After enjoying Brittany, they then drove around the French coast down to La Rochelle, then pressed on

down into Spain, via Biarritz. From there they drove across into Portugal, down the Portuguese coast then back into Spain, to finally cross the border at La Linea and into Gibraltar after a drive of some 1750 miles. Throughout the trip the Minor performed



TECH SPEC Morris Minor

■ **BODY & CHASSIS:**
Steel monocoque.

■ **ENGINE:**
BMC A+ Series 1275cc
Inline-four, OHV

■ **GEARBOX:**
Manual 5-speed T9 Sierra unit.

■ **POWER:**
57 hp at 5500rpm

■ **TORQUE:**
62 lb ft at 2450rpm

■ **FRONT SUSPENSION:**
Torsion bars, lower suspension arm, lever arm dampers plus secondary telescopic dampers

■ **REAR SUSPENSION:**
Live axle, leaf springs, telescopic dampers

■ **BRAKES:**
Marina front discs. Drum rear. Servo assisted.

■ **WHEELS/TYRES:**
145/80x14

■ **WEIGHT:** 775 kg

■ **TOP SPEED:** 86 mph

■ **0-60MPH:** 15 secs

■ **ECONOMY:** 36 mpg

Updated and updated

- Electronic ignition
- 1.3-litre engine
- Brake servo
- Up-rated suspension



9) JUNE 2014
A very happy John Tewkesbury collects his Minor.



10) JULY 2014
Clutch linkage problems brings the Minor back to Bristol for repairs.



11) OCTOBER 2014
Second in the Jerez concours, it was all worth it!

perfectly; the uprated suspension was noticeably firm on the more bumpy country roads, but on the faster highways it really came into its own. John said: "It felt generally solid and planted, and I was surprised how it filled me with a sense of security. I was able to cruise along merrily, easily keeping up with all the modern traffic. Although I was taking care as the engine was being run-in, I did have it up to 80 mph briefly. It was amazingly stable, but it seemed happiest at 60 or 70mph, so I decided to use 60 as a maximum until the first oil change. I also made sure I always refilled tank when it was showing a 1/4 full, even though everything was checked and like new. I never like to run a car until it's empty and risk drawing muck up through the system."

Although the car had been MoT'd prior to John taking delivery in UK, before it could be registered in Gibraltar and be issued with a set of local number plates, it had to get a new MoT from the Gib Department of Transport. After it sailed through that test, John decided to take it to the classic car gathering at Jerez on the occasion of the Masters Classic Race meeting in October where to the delight of its owner, won second prize in the concours.

The drive

The cockpit of John Tewkesbury's Minor appears quite standard apart from one

very sensible extra Smiths gauge fitted on the left hand side of the dash, next to the A post. The top half displays oil pressure, which at tick-over when hot was around 5 Opsi, whilst the lower half shows the water temperature, which runs at around 75 degrees when we drove the car.

The unassisted steering is a tad heavy at parking speeds but is comfortable enough to handle once the car is on the move. The T9 five-speed gear box is smooth and easy to use although even though everything is still rather new and tight. Having the benefit of that lowish first gear ratio, the Minor feels very nippy off the mark whilst once you are up into fifth, it runs quiet and totally unfussed. The modifications to the handling are superb, it corners confidently and feels as if it is glued to the road.

Curiously though, when really pressing on, there is a

tendency for the front to understeer, which is probably due to the fact that it has been endowed with that extra stiff anti-roll bar. Nevertheless, the car is just lovely to drive, the new hood fits perfectly and is easy to put up and down.

The extra margin of power and torque from the Marina 1275cc engine helps immensely when keeping up with modern traffic flow. Inside the car, the sumptuous leather seats are as comfy as any decent club armchair, yet they provide enough lateral support to keep you in place when you feel like exploiting the Minor's renowned cornering qualities.

Sum up

My only minor criticism (sorry!) was that I didn't like the headrests fitted to this car; they looked out of period and thus out of place. However, I also have a sneaking feeling that John agrees with me and may

READER RESTO Morris Minor 1000



well be removing them.

The Morris Minor is a brilliant classic to own and the convertible has always been my favourite. As far as driving enjoyment is concerned, you can chuck this Minor into a corner and exit the other side with a huge smile on your face, it really is a great handling car.

The modifications carried out to John Tewkesbury's lovely Minor have made it a reliable year round driver and one of the nicest Minors I have ever enjoyed.

OWNER'S SPECIALISTS

- Charles Ware's Morris Minor Centre Ltd, Bristol.
www.morrisminor.org.uk
- Gibraltar Classic Vehicle Association.
www.gibraltarclassiccar.com

TOP TIP
An alternator conversion and electronic ignition is a great addition to ensure easy starting in damp winter conditions.



Tow bar and roof rack are two practical additions.