

MINOR MONTHLY

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A GREEN PULLOVER... ...SO MUCH BETTER THAN A PAIR OF SOCKS!

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Words and pics by Russ Harvey

As Green today as it's always been... ...Charles Ware Morris Minor Centre in Brislington, Bristol

IT WAS A cold December day when Mandy and I had arranged a meet with the Morris Minor guru, Charles Ware, who owns and runs the appropriately named Charles Ware Morris Minor, now located on a Brislington trading estate. These are much larger premises than those previously occupied a few years ago in Bath. Charles kindly gave us a guided tour of the premises where he told us he has over 20 staff now employed 'on the spanners'. There were some splendid vehicles in for work during our visit, to note a few an excellent Series II Minor van, once owned by the Triple fff Brewery, now with a new customer. I also noted Cam & Gill Shaw's *(Ed note: - who got married on the LEO tour)* ex-forestry van, being rebuilt looking resplendent in its correct Mid-Bronze Green that had been recently applied. Also present in the workshops was an very old Minor indeed, chassis number 584, that means there were only 83 older that this one, its rumoured to be the 3rd or 4th eldest known survivor. This one is currently being rebuilt and owned by an enthusiast *(Ed note: - if you are the owner of this we would like to hear from you)*.

During the tour we chatted about the how versatile the Minor is and it is so 'green' in this modern age in which we



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live, however nothing on these issues have changed at the Morris Minor Centre, Charles Ware has been promoting the 'Durable Car' ownership for many years, well before recycling was fashionable and green! Basically the wording may have changed slightly but the advice from the Charles & the Morris Minor Centre is simple and is proclaimed in all their literature: -

'BUYERS-BEAT THE CREDIT CRUNCH, invest in one of our Durable Morris Minors, for low financial depreciation, low insurance. Now not a lot of people know this, the Minor has as low an overall carbon foot print as any car on the road, plus it is extremely reliable. Durable car ownership is based on the same principles that govern house ownership, where the priorities are to eliminate dry rot, rising damp and leaking roofs and to make sure the plumbing and electricians are safe and reliable.

We apply this philosophy and practice to the Morris Minor because it is an excellent Durable car designed over 60 years ago by the great Sir Alec Issigonis (whose next car was the Mini). In engineering terms it was light years ahead of its time. The handling, light steering and driveability are acceptable on today's roads. In its original standard form, the brakes are old fashioned and it lacks many of the amenities we are now used to. To bring it up to date we offer over 30 improvements for convenience, safety and comfort to choose from and with a few of these fitted the Morris Minor is practical, safe and above all very reliable for daily use with the advantage of free road tax, low insurance and very low financial depreciation.'

Whilst talking with Charlie he further explains 'a modern car is planned to have a very short economic life. On average financial depreciation runs at 20% per annum that coupled with the necessary replacement of electronics let alone an engine it costs more than the car is worth. With climate change and carbon foot prints rightly being focused on, it is good to know that a Durable Morris Minor has a lower overall carbon foot print than any normal modern car on the road today.' Again just reiterating how 'Green' the Minor really is.

There is a huge selection of spares available that Charles Ware MMC ship to all corners of the World, displayed on a notice he has grateful letters from Minor owners from overseas thanking him for dispatching the much needed parts. The Morris Minor Centre produces its own spares catalogue, not too unlike the old BMC parts books, these £6 and over 100,000 copies have been sold. The parts sold are

what are used in his workshops and the best available.

A number of panels come from the centre's own factory in Sri Lanka, Charles tell us more about this operation: -

'Since our 'handmade' labour intensive craft based factory was opened in 1991 as a partnership between ourselves and local interests, tools and jigs for over 80 chassis and body shell panels have been developed. They have been designed to suit the exacting standard of our long serving workforce. The panels being made are sold in the UK and elsewhere because of their consistently high quality and competitive price. It must be stressed that this is not an exercise in using cheap labour to make cheap and cheerful products for western markets, but a serious project, demonstrating how well paid craftspeople in a developing country can sell their manual skills in a highly competitive world market. The difference in labour rates between Europe and a developing country like Sri Lanka is fundamental to the project, but we are not interested in a like for like manufacturing process. In Sri Lanka we have adopted a different approach. In a modern plant the panel may take three minutes to produce, in Sri Lanka it takes two or three hours for a skilled well paid metal worker to make the same panel. The consequence of this is that our present workforce of thirty people make the same number of panels as perhaps three or four people in a modern panel pressing plant. This could appear to be a rather silly old fashioned system in the context of modern mass production methods, but in the context of southern Sri Lanka, where unemployment runs at 28% it works, each well paid worker supports in one way or another an extended family of 15 other people so at present our small factory is contributing to the well being of over four hundred local people.'

The Minor Centre always has a selection of cars available to purchase and all cars sold come with chassis guarantees, a new 12 months MOT's and are fully serviced and overhauled for reliability and daily use. On the face of it, their cars may seem more expensive than the price guides show, however Charles' team are spending many hours eliminating the long term under body rust and corrossions that afflicts 90% of Minors many due to many years of MOT



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patching and plating. As Charles is keen to promote ideally it is worth you visiting the centre to see them and if they don't have exactly what you are looking for, they can always find the right car tailored to your budget. What is stressed if you come into the market at the lower end of their price range they will not be cosmetically perfect, but in perfect working order, they after will need carefully planned detailed cosmetic improvement in the future as and when the budget allows, exactly what Charles has preached for over 30 years, Durable car ownership.

At the other end of the scale are virtually 'new' Minors, these are prepared for long term, daily use, they are strong and reliable, with various upgrades that include a 1275cc motor, brake disc conversions, alternators plus many more options for the customer to choose from. On the day we visited there was a splendid Minor Traveller converted to LHD that was commissioned and destined to go to Germany. I must say one thing that really did catch my eye whilst on my tour was that the water based paints used at the centre give an outstanding appearance and the finish quite simply looks stunning.

My sincere thanks to Charles Ware for his hospitality and allowing us the opportunity to interview him, also to the staff at the Morris Minor Centre for the help in compiling this feature.

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