

Echo reporter Carol Newhouse puts a revitalised golden o

Thoroughly modern Minors!

CONVERTED MORRIS FACTFILE

COST: Basic Morris Minor Traveller plus £1,588.40 for a reconditioned specification Series Three kit (all new — £1,779.80). Can be fitted by DIY enthusiast of moderate competence by MM Centre at extra cost for labour.

SUPPLIER: Morris Minor Centre, Avon House, Lower Bristol Road, Bath.

FUEL CONSUMPTION: 37.2 m.p.g. (gentle use).

MAX. SPEED: 88 m.p.h.

ACCELERATION: 0-60 m.p.h. in 17.6 seconds.

PICTURE THIS: You are cruising along at your usual motorway speed, perhaps idly working out what the car's repayments are costing you per week, when there's a blur of curved wings and polished woodwork to your right.

You've been overtaken — by a Morris Traveller. The realisation takes time to sink in as you fumble in the dash for the solace of a cigarette or boiled sweet. It's a shock.

Surely the Traveller was the car dear old Auntie Mabel and Uncle Cedric used to potter about in with the Aisatians in the back and the carburettor held together with bits of string?

No more. If Charles Ware of Bath's Morris Minor Centre gets his way a new breed of the old Minors and Travellers will be taking to the roads of Britain in great numbers — leaner and meaner and engineered for the 1980s.

The centre is pioneering a modification for existing cars which it boldly calls the Series Three — the last "series" of the Minors was launched by its makers in the late 1950s and remained much the same until production stopped in 1971.

Ware and his team have been repairing Morris cars for a decade, but increasingly clients were asking if more could be done to bring old-fashioned Minors up to scratch for modern road conditions.

The Morris was a test car for a time and the design was the result

Minor sensation: Charlie Ware with WAH 793H — a traditional car adapted for the 1980s.

naturally in some respects it has lagged behind in the wake of new developments," said Charlie.

The first problem to be tackled was the suspension. Today's drivers expect maximum roadholding and stability combined with minimum vibration.

The solution was to fit a Marina back axle complete with differential, shafts and fitted radius arms. Hydraulic shock absorbers and new lower ratings complete

drum brake system. The new braking being

vital for modern road speeds and lane overtaking. Front disc brakes are the new feature.

To go the whole hog, drivers can have either an 1100 or 1300 Series A engine fitted, along with new comfortable seats and trim.

All the adaptations have been built into WAH 793H — the prototype showcar Traveller which may already have burned you up on its travels round Britain — steady as a rock at over 90mph.

Purists would say the car had been gutted — virtually re-built. Certainly Ware is no sentimentalist, but a

prophet of appropriate technology.

He argues that motorists will increasingly revolt against the built-in short life of so many 1980s cars.

"The cost of reliable motoring has spiralled beyond the reach of many people. People are tired of having to replace their expensive cars every three years — making a massive loss of depreciation just to be able to rely on them."

The trend, he says, is getting hold of a durable car like the Minor or Traveller and gradually repairing and adapting it over a period of time until you get what you want.

