



NWMMOC NEWSLETTER

January 2024

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR MEMBERS!

THE BORROWERS, 1996

One of the stories told by Ann and John Ford on 17 December was their involvement, along with their Minors, in the filming of *The Borrowers* in Theale, Berkshire, in 1996. In fact two North Wilts Branch Minors also took part. The cars belonged to Roger and Liz Briance and to their daughter Alison - all now living in the USA and Honorary Members of our Branch.

Ann and John write:

We shall never forget the warm welcome you all gave to us. We send our very best wishes to you and your members for Happy Motoring in 2024.

It would be interesting to see what the Brianses have to say about their experience with us on that dreadfully wet Sunday at Theale all those years ago.

So ... read on for the rest of the story!



Liz Briance in "Jessie" during filming at Theale
(Reading Chronicle 4 October 1996)

The article and photos below appeared in the Reading Chronicle on 4 October 1996 under the headline **Little people make a big impact as Borrowers take over village**

THEALE will now be able to return to normal after a film crew took over and transformed the village for a blockbuster movie.

Filming for the big screen version of the children's book *The Borrowers*, by Mary Norton, lasted just over a week and finished on Tuesday.

But it has taken around one month to transform the village into an appropriate setting for the film.

The High Street was used for filming and was re-painted in colours of green and red. Brewery Court and Cloister Mews were also changed for the plot of the film. Also, The Falcon Pub was painted and changed into the Sleep U Motel.

Hundreds of actors, extras and crew were brought to Theale to create the original screenplay about tiny people who live under the floorboards of a normal-sized house.

Hollywood star John Goodman, Ruby Wax, and Hugh Laurie star in the film.

Adam Richards, location manager for film makers' Shepperton Studios, said: "It took about a month to change the village and now we have to put it back again. We had a wonderful reaction from the local people. They were so helpful and co-operative."

The film is due for release next summer.



Crowds gather to watch as filming takes place in the street.

ROGER BRIANCE REMEMBERS:

Liz and Ali both were involved with the making of the film. Filming took place in Theale (Berkshire) High Street. They were paid the princely sum of £100, Liz was paid slightly more because she actually drove her car (Jessie) in the film. She refused to let some long haired, spotty youth drive her! On top of the cash there was a continuous supply of food she seems to remember! Filming only lasted for 1 long day, for Liz and Alison. For some reason the film producers only wanted Morris Minors in the film. If you have watched it you will remember they were everywhere!

Street scene is from the Reading Chronicle dated Friday October 4 1996 and details the stars of the film (somehow they forgot the real stars, the Moggies!) Because Liz insisted on driving Jessie she had to go to the costume department and get dressed up. Hugh Laurie was especially pleasant and wrote a little note to Liz.

You will notice from the street scenes all the original number plates were covered over with special ones for the film. It was a long, tiring day and unfortunately Liz's scene ended up on the cutting room floor!

Roger and super star, Liz!



The Borrowers is available to rent or buy on Amazon Prime Video and is also listed on Google Play and Vudu.

NEXT NORTH WILTS BRANCH EVENTS

Sunday 14 January 12:00: New Year Lunch at the Freke Arms, Highworth

Contact [Gill](#). Freke Arms website and map: <https://www.frekearms.co.uk/>

Sunday 25 February: 'Soup and Spuds' with Auction and Beetle Drive

Contact [Gill](#)

Deadline for February NWMMOC Newsletter: 25 January

Please send your keyring photos to bill@euclidvillas.co.uk or 07798 601224



Answer to Charlie's quiz question in the Christmas edition:

The grille belongs to Steve Chater's 1970 van, originally registered to the Prison Service in Corby, Northants, and still carrying its insignia.

Thanks to those who sent answers.
