



NWMMOC NEWSLETTER

February 2024

A Note from the Chair

If you have opened your MMOC Directory for 2024 you will have seen that despite your committee's work last year, North Wilts Branch is still listed as Area 6. This is a mistake and has been taken up with the MMOC. Sarah

NEW YEAR LUNCH, FREKE ARMS, 14 JANUARY

Words & photos by Sarah Bracher, Chair



On the 14th January, 29 of us had our annual meal out in lieu of having a meal out before Christmas. We went to the Freke Arms Grill on the Hill, Swanborough near Highworth. 4 hardy souls brought their lovely moggy's which was great to see on such a lovely sunny day, if a bit cold! The Freke Arms is named after the family of local landowners. It was built in the early 1800s on the instructions of the (then known) Henry Freke to entice the farm workers over from the nearby Quaker village of Stanton Fitzwarren. The Freke Arms was brought by Arkell's in 1892 and altered to its present state in 1966. It retains its character with lovely fireplaces which were unfortunately not lit while we were there.

The meal was great with meat options, vegetarian options and also vegetarian and coeliac friendly option. The puddings (my fave part) were great and lots of choice. The welcome we received and the food served were both great and I hope to return to this venue in the future with the club, perhaps in the summer months so we can use their lovely outside area. There is also camping available for those people who would like to stay over. All in all a nice time was had.



Some of our Branch Members at The Freke Arms. More photos on our Facebook page.

NORTH WILTS BRANCH EVENTS

Sunday 25 February: 'Soup and Spuds' with Auction and Beetle Drive
at Castle Eaton Village Hall. Please inform [Gill](#) if you are attending.

Saturday 23 March: Drive Out, details to be confirmed.

Sunday 21 April: Drive It Day

Sunday 5 May: Annual Branch Rally at Lechlade Vintage & Country Show

Friday 28 to Sunday 30 June: MMOC National Rally, Gaydon

AREA 4 plans a breakfast event at Bradford on Avon, 16 March; and a camping weekend near Frome, 21-22 September. Contact mmocareafour@gmail.com
See the [EVENTS PAGE](#) of our website for other local events you might like to attend.

Deadline for March North Wilts Branch Newsletter: 25 February

Please send items to bill@euclidvillas.co.uk or text to 07798 601224

MOGGYFEST at BEAULIEU

Alex and Bill are booked to attend Moggyfest, travelling down to Beaulieu on Friday 17 May and staying at a nearby hotel. Please contact one of us if you would like to travel together or meet up.

MY FIRST YEAR OF MOGGIE OWNERSHIP

Words and parts photo by Paul Kimmens

It's been a year since I got my 1st Moggie. She is called Jenny and is a 1971, 2 door saloon, Peat Brown in colour. I purchased it from a gentleman in Salisbury and it came with no history at all and some very wet carpets. "That's just condensation" said the seller but it was almost paddling depth inside the car!

The drive home from Salisbury was 'interesting' due to almost non-existent brakes. So 1st job was to rip the carpets out and then fit new cylinders, shoes, and drums all round. Quickly followed by new front suspension bushes and track rod ends. Spotted the worn bushes whilst doing the brakes (why does one job always lead to another). Then took a deep breath and went off to the MOT station and with a bit of adjustment to the brakes it passed to my amazement with no advisories 😊

Things slowed down a bit for a while and then after a few months I took another deep breath and took the kick plates off to look at the cills. Door posts were not rusted, cills were in great condition but the jacking points and cross member were rusted at the end so had a bit of welding done to fix that and then gave the cills a good wire brushing and several coats of paint.

During the summer I added some silicon to the windscreen rubber and replaced the rear quarter light rubbers. I still need to replace the rear window rubber but that'll have to wait until next summer and lots of cups of tea as I understand that it is not the easiest rubber seal to fit. The leaks are much less and a good quality cover now keeps the inside dry.

Almost on the anniversary of purchase I finally made the decision to take the engine and gearbox out to give them a clean/paint and to paint the engine bay. Current status is that some bits have been unbolted from the engine and next stage is to remove front panel and radiator to get better access for the engine removal. I don't have a garage to put the car in so working on the car on my drive is weather dependant therefore timescales for completing the engine / engine bay are flexible.

Thoroughly enjoying my car and the friendship of the club.

Here are the first few bits that I have cleaned and painted. A brownie point if you know what they are. They should be green to be historically accurate but they were black on my car so am keeping them black. **(Answers please to Bill bill@euclidvillas.co.uk or text to 07798 601224)**

Here's hoping for lots of dry weather so that progress is not too slow.



Paul's car CMO 450J with other North Wilts Branch Minors at Lechlade Vintage Show, 1 May 2023

AN INVITATION TO ORIGINS CLASSICS

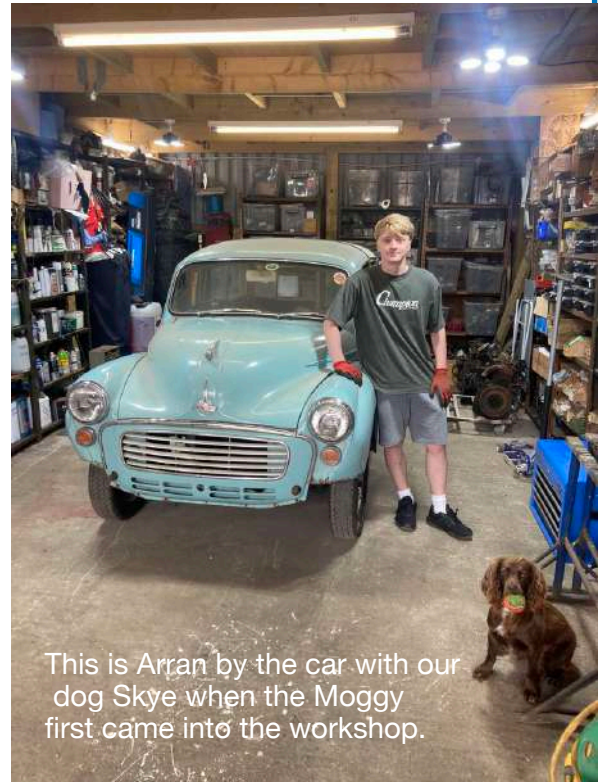
In autumn 2023 Bill was contacted by Cameron Brownlee of Origins Classics:

Hello Bill

We spoke a little earlier about trying to source a good second hand 1098cc engine for my son's first car. I have attached a picture of him stood by the Traveller which we are working on now. Like me, he is also a MMOC member. If you come across anything, please feel free to get in touch.

On another subject, it just came to me that my premises are a good place to hold a meet/gathering of like-minded enthusiasts. We have a big 4,000 sq ft building where we store classic cars and we have a large hard standing outside that can accommodate lots of cars. I am based just outside Avebury in Winterbourne Monkton. Just a thought.

My website is: www.originsclassics.com
All the best, Cameron



This is Arran by the car with our dog Skye when the Moggy first came into the workshop.

Bill was able to put him in touch with someone in Swindon who had an engine available, and Cameron wrote:

Yes, that lead was very positive, really nice man who actually gave us a used engine and some parts. I reciprocated by giving him spare parts for another vehicle I had that was useful to him. So, thank you for that introduction. As for a visit here, no problem at. Probably best we wait until the weather improves/warms up as whilst its all clean and tidy here there is no heating in the main building which is not ideal if you want to have a look around. How about March some time?

Bill and Alex are planning a recce visit to Origins Classics, please contact one of us if you would like to come.



Many thanks to Julian and Susie Marshall for sending this photograph taken when a few of us visited them in Wirksworth last October.

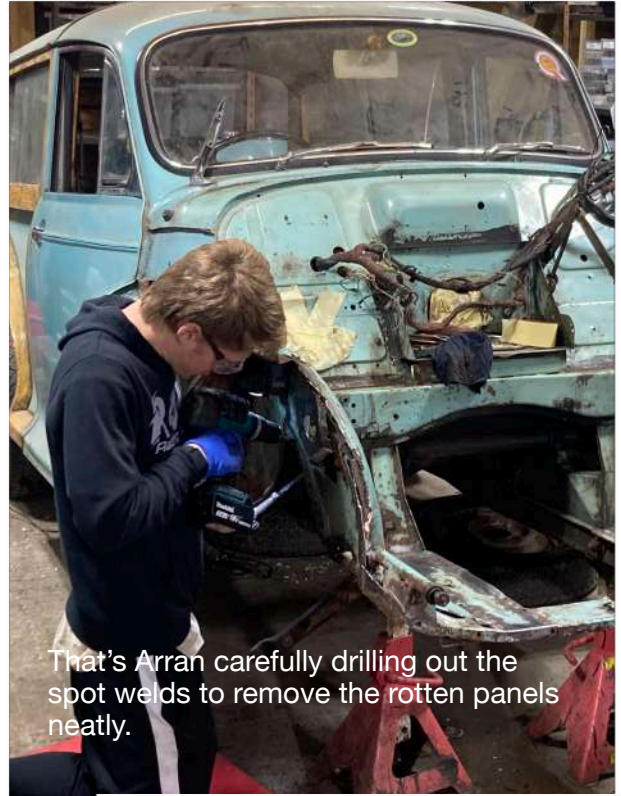
PROGRESS ON ARRAN'S TRAVELLER

Words & photos by Cameron Brownlee

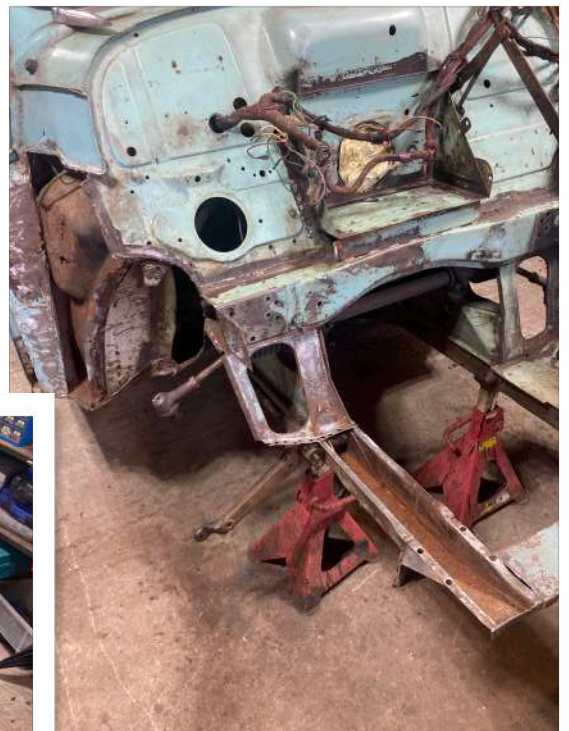
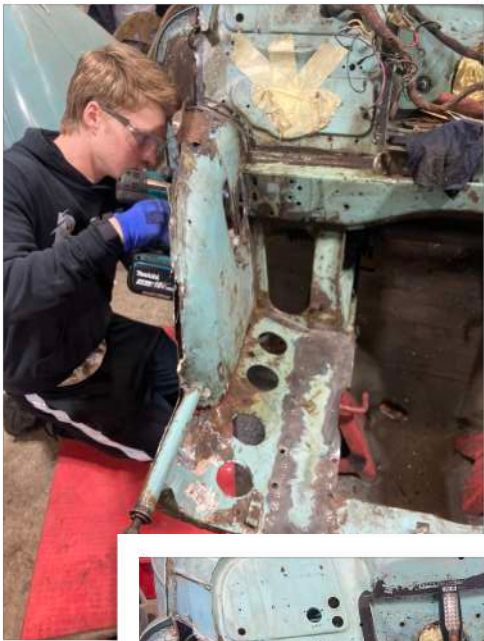
Here is some of the panel work we have been doing. I did not think we would have to go this far!



Before we started to remove any panels we made up this jig that would give us all the correct reference points to pick up on again.



That's Arran carefully drilling out the spot welds to remove the rotten panels neatly.



We have also done the passenger side as well



For those of you who missed the event, here are the cakes served at our Christmas Indoor Picnic in December. Thank you Kathleen and all who contributed!

STOP PRESS

Cameron Brownlee is looking for a "low budget" price late Minor saloon urgently. Must be in running order.

If you can help, please contact him:

cameronbrownlee@originsclassics.com

tel. 07968 809305

THE BORROWERS ... continued

Further to Ann and John Ford's mention of this occasion and the article in our January newsletter, you may have noticed that the recent MMOC publication *Minors Matter* (distributed with the December issue of *Minor Matters*) has a colour photo and a brief summary of the film on page 67.

The story was fully reported by John and Ann Ford with monochrome photos in a 2-page spread headlined **BORROWED FOR THE DAY** in *Minor Matters*, Jan-Feb 1997. I have been unable to obtain a scan of these pages from MMOC but Steve Chater has kindly lent me his back issues. The magazine is tightly bound in a folder so I have not been able to scan it, but I have photographed it instead and extended this Newsletter by two pages so that you have a chance to read it. Thank you Steve.

BORROWED FOR THE DAY

*'The Borrowers' by Arrietty Films, goes on general release in the autumn.
MMOC members John and Ann Ford were on the casting couch!*

MINORS 4 YOU normally supply only one vehicle per day for TV programmes or adverts. So when the call came from Shepperton Studios at the end of August to supply masses of Morris Minors for a big-screen adaptation of *The Borrowers*, by Mary Norton, it presented a huge challenge.

A meeting was arranged for 8th September. Originally, discussions included the provision of nine saloons to be used as 'pool cars' over a ten day period, with additional saloons, travellers, vans, etc., in various permutations. Luckily for us, we were able to start telephoning the people who were on our database as a result of our previous ads. in *MM* for people who were willing to hire their vehicles for filming. However, within a very few days, numbers and specifications had been changed quite considerably (e.g. convertibles, and any vehicle in any shade of blue or white, were now excluded, which certainly narrowed the field down a bit). Sadly, this meant disappointing some owners who had already agreed, but it also meant frantic phone calls to some Branch Secretaries for further recruits.

to commence early the following morning. We arrived at the rendezvous at 1.10, only to find everyone else already there (including John & Gill Spaul all the way from Baldock, with their lovely maroon traveller). How keen you all were! The sight of nine Morris Minors lined-up was the cause of much curiosity amongst the Sunday afternoon shoppers, along with the usual comment "my dad/mum/aunt used to have one of those" (oh, if only I had a £1.00 for every time I'd heard that, I'd be able to buy another one).

Monday morning dawned: problem number one was that some of the local residents were holding the production company to ransom for the removal of their private cars which were parked outside their houses – despite notification having been made some couple of weeks beforehand, and with the full approval of both the local council and police. As the production was supposed to be set in the 1950's, it would somehow have been inappropriate to have seen 'N' & 'P' registered Astras and Mondeos parked alongside! We have to add here that the art department made a wonderful job of building a fake house on



Mark Williams (alias Jeff the Exterminator) poses proudly alongside his 'customised' van outside the steps of Ealing Town Hall (BEFORE the rain machines!)

they turned on the 'rain-machines'. Potter's limousine, (driven by George Yiasoumi) had to make an unscheduled emergency stop to avoid some 'extras' who were hurrying by, and almost mounted the town hall steps. A guest appearance was made here by Ruby Wax, though in period costume and make-up, she was unrecognisable to many.

We were then approaching the build-up for the big scenes at Theale, in Berkshire. There were to be two 'units' here – one shooting a 'mock-up' garage scene in a courtyard, and



Potter's limo in foreground of the house the studio built (complete with Virginia creeper!)

Further requirements included the purchase of a Morris Oxford, to be cut in half (ouch!) and turned into a stretch limousine – complete with 5" long fur trim and carpet in a nauseous shade of lime-green, a matching green fridge (for the champagne of course), and the obligatory gold telephone. This was for 'Potter', played by John Goodman.

Finally, one side panel of a specially purchased Minor van was cut out and then re-attached via hinges at the lower edge and suspended with chains. This was for use by Jeff the Exterminator ('The Pest's Pest'), played by Mark Williams, in which to house all his equipment.

The owners of the pool cars were required to deliver their vehicles to Sainsbury's Homebase car park at Kew between 2.00 and 4.00 pm on Sunday 22nd, ready for shooting



Every house has one – a Morris Minor, that is!

the corner of the street, complete with Virginia creeper.

By Thursday 26th, the location had been moved to Ealing, outside the Town Hall to be precise. That was great fun – especially when



American actor, John Goodman (alias 'Potter') ponders his next move, while Jeff the Exterminator checks his equipment.

the second, in the High Street, in which many of the buildings had been painted a regulation green in the preceding weeks. For the High Street scene, on Sunday 29th, we needed fifteen saloons, four travellers, two vans and a pick-up, in addition to all the pool cars. All those



Perhaps we should start serving ice-creams next?

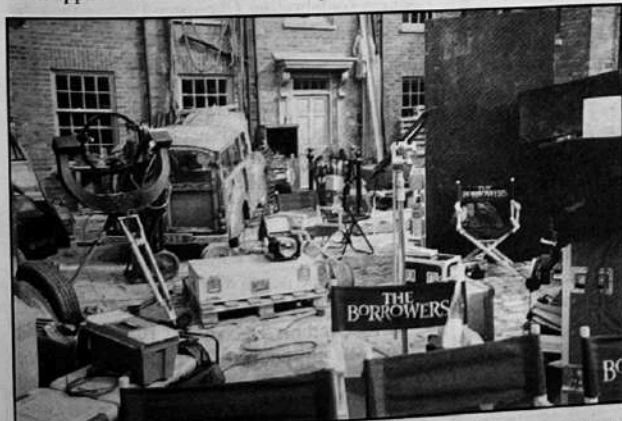
wonderful owners turned up well before 7.00 am (some from as far as Southampton and Bournemouth) on a very wet and windy morning. By far the most 'senior' member of our team on this day, was a charming Scottish octogenarian and former Morris works employee, and to whom I shall refer only as "Mr. P".



Well, would YOU buy a used car from this garage?

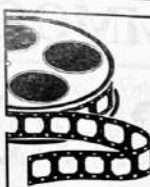
Several people were promptly whisked off to wardrobe and make-up, in order that they could actually take part by driving their vehicles 'through camera' – do we have some stars in the making here? The location was actually several hundred yards from the base, so when the shooting started, things became pretty hectic, and we were unable to identify some of the drivers, once they were in 'costume'. The convoy was lined up, the second assistant director called "standby – cameras – ACTION", and everyone moved off at a sedate pace, headed by Mr. P. Unfortunately, no-one had told him he had to stop after a few hundred yards, and he was last seen heading off in the direction of Bracknell! (Bless him).

Another problem for the production company was that a special paint which had been applied to a milk float was rapidly being



washed off by the rain! Some twelve hours later, our owners, refreshed by the generous and appetising hospitality of the production company, and with the knowledge that they had played a not unimportant part in a 'big movie', wound their weary way home.

Monday 30th saw the pool cars still in Theale, this time outside a more modern terrace of eight houses further along from the High Street. All of these too, had been painted the uniform green. The whole production was supposed to be set in America, so driving throughout was on the right hand side of the road, (which the actor driving a removal lorry



in one particular scene found a trifle difficult.) We didn't need the rain-machines for this – the real thing was provided free of charge!

We were rapidly approaching the culmination, to be shot at the rear of a well-known biscuit manufacturers premises at Park Royal. The art department had done yet another splendid job, transforming a virtually derelict building into a Police Station. Four former almond green Moggies had by now been turned into two-tone 'cop-cars', (with the full permission of the owners, of course) complete with green (yes, green) flashing lights on top. The rain machines were brought out, but by the end of the day, our Maker had again obliged us with the real thing (which caused further problems with the paint on the fleet of milk floats, which by now numbered nine). By 9.30 pm, our trusty 'team', headed very efficiently by their Major-General, Frank O'Connell, (and after a frantic search entitled "who's got my keys?"), said goodbye to all our new friends at the production company.

Ah, we thought, now it's all over, and we can settle back into normality, and have a well-deserved 'lie-in'. Not so! As anyone who knows *anything* about the film industry will tell you, after seeing some of the 'rushes', it was decided to re-shoot a couple of scenes. This resulted in frantic early evening calls to some of our owners to determine the availability of their vehicles the following morning. However, even this request was received with the equanimity that



The milk float whose paint nearly 'floated away' when it rained!



New York Police Department have come a long way since these days!

all able to smile, and tell your families and friends about the day you and your little "Moggie" were stars. Who knows, 'The Borrowers' could be the motoring equivalent of '101 Dalmations', when everyone will be clamouring to buy one – which is good news for us all!



we have now come to realise is a standard characteristic amongst most Morris Minor owners.

It was quite a feat organising a production of this enormity, and we should like to take this opportunity of thanking *everyone* who helped us, in a variety of ways, in particular Richard Plant, our mobile mechanic (amongst many other things), and all the other owners, too many to mention by name here, for their invaluable co-operation; without them, none of this would have been possible. We hope, despite some of the inevitable little 'hiccoughs', that at the end of it all, you were

Ann Ford
MINORS 4 YOU



P.S. Since 'finishing' this article, we've been called twice more – ah, well, what is it they say, "You've never finished until you've finished"?