

EAS954

Morris Minor Series II Convertible

'Easy' was built on 15th December 1953 and first registered on 22 January 1954 as JWM460. This unremarkable registration obviously meant something to someone as it was transferred in 1967 and 'Easy' became EAS954, a far more appropriate number!



'Easy' appears to have been loved and cherished throughout her life as her undersides have never been welded and are in a remarkable condition for a 67 year old. Some restoration was completed in 1995 but appears to have been limited to the interior and a re-spray. The colour is supposed to be Birch Grey but the colour matching was not perfect and she is a few shades off, but no less beautiful for that! She also had the original Series II gearbox replaced with a 948cc type at some stage with the accompanying gear lever move to the Minor

'1000' position. I also discovered after buying her that the differential is from a 1098cc Minor '1000'! As the original (?) 803cc engine was still in place the modifications did nothing to improve the already pedestrian performance.

We purchased 'Easy' in March 2009 with the intention of using the car for touring, particularly on the 'Minors on Tour' (MOT) trips to the continent, and as my 'every day' car during the summer months. As she was going to be **used**, some modifications were carried out for safety reasons.

To give her a bit more energy to cope with modern traffic conditions I fitted a 948cc engine mated with a 1098cc ribbed case gearbox. To maintain the Series II 'look' the remote-control on the gearbox was removed and the tail casting from a Series II gearbox was fitted which moves the gear lever back to the original position. For appearances sake, rather than use an HS2 carburettor as fitted to most 948cc engines, I have used an H type which looks correct with the Series II air cleaner modified with a K&N filter element so that it flows well and actually cleans the air! As 'Easy' was a 'base' model a heater was not present so a round style heater was fitted.



We decided that headrests and seatbelts were essential so ordered a pair of Newton Commercial 'Suffolk' seats in Maroon, apparently the correct colour for the car. Newton, and most of the other Minor dealers, use the same colour of Maroon for all ages of Minor from Series MM in 1948 to the last '1000's in 1971. I am not convinced that this is correct as, even allowing for fading/ageing and fabric types, the original earlier cars do look different. Comments would be welcome! Anyway, the door panels didn't look very good so we ordered those as well and finally decided to go the whole hog and change everything so it would all match. The rear seats were stitched to match the new style fronts (unfortunately the fronts could not be stitched to match the original rear seat) and, I think, the overall effect is very good. The seatbelts are new inertial reel types but using chrome fittings and maroon webbing to look as 'period' as possible.

The final safety 'mod' was to the indicator system. The Trafficators have been retained (of course) and during the changes I discovered that they were 6 volt examples which explains why they worked with such alacrity, not a hint of hesitation! They have now been replaced with 12 volt ones which also retract properly! To supplement them I fitted some high brightness amber LEDs to the front sidelights and some more to a pair of clear glass lamps mounted under the rear bumper. Hopefully now there will be no doubt as to which way I am turning!



More recent changes, principally to the interior, include re-fitting the parcel shelf, replacing the early '1000' round heater with a Series II one and fitting some supplementary instruments. Anyone who has seen my modified Traveller will realise that I am a great enthusiast of instruments! As we intend doing a lot of touring in 'Easy' I felt it was important to monitor the engine temperature as well as oil pressure. On a car fitted with a dynamo, an ammeter is also a useful addition. The MM/Series II dash is lovely and, in my opinion, much nicer than that

in the later cars. The problem I had to overcome was that supplementary gauges are round and would not match the originals at all, even if the faces and needles were painted in the correct colours. I found an ammeter of the same type as the MM/Series II gauges at an autojumble. It was probably from an Oxford. However, look as I might I couldn't find a temperature gauge but, remembering that an electrical temperature gauge worked in the same way as a fuel gauge, I created one. The next problem was how to mount my two new gauges, as they are designed to be viewed through holes in the dash rather than mounted in holes like more modern gauges. The obvious solution, though not an easy one, was to mount them in the original dash. In this way they would like they were 'meant to be'. After a lot of 'cutting and shutting' of both the outer dash panel and

the gauge mounting panel underneath I have ended up with what you see now. It is not perfect, and maybe at a later date I will try to improve it, but I am pleased with the result.

Early in 2011 I had to do some painting. When we bought 'Easy' she was fitted with a '1000' rear wing on the right and a correct Series II rear wing on the left. I won't embarrass myself by saying how long it took me to notice this. Anyway the offending '1000' wing had to be replaced. I had managed to find a replacement wing and was waiting for an opportunity to get it fitted. As I thoroughly enjoy driving the car this opportunity was not presenting itself but things were brought to a head by an incident during our eventful drive to MOT 2010. At the end of a long, hot, tiring day I forgot about the small trailer behind the car when I smartly reversed. I remembered again when I heard and felt the bang as the corner of the trailer wrecked the left hand rear wing (the correct Series II one you may recall!), the rear valance and my bicycle wheel. I now had to repair the left hand rear wing and the valance, replace the right hand rear wing and there was a small amount of rust bubbling at the bottom of the boot lid. In the interests of economy I decided to do the work myself, including the spraying. Again the job wasn't perfect but I am pleased with the result.

Although the carpet was replaced, along with the new seats and interior panels, in 2009 it has had to be changed again in 2012. Several reasons for this, firstly the set I used didn't fit very well, secondly the colour was wrong (again only one 'red' colour is available for Morris Minors) and it did not 'go' with the maroon seats and panels and thirdly, and most importantly, it was covered with engine oil in 2010 on the way out to Minors On Tour! The oil feed pipe from the engine to the oil pressure gauge in a Series II is a metal pipe in two pieces joined by a piece of rubber pipe where it goes through the bulkhead. After 56 years the rubber pipe, most unreasonably, decided to give up the ghost and split covering my sandalled foot and the carpet with hot oil whilst we were driving round the Paris Peripherique. I won't bore you with the rest of the story suffice to say the carpet became a bit grotty and was replaced. The new set is a far more pleasing colour and the edge binding finishes it off nicely.



The only other work completed in 2012, with the exception of routine maintenance and minor paint repairs, has been to make a security box to fit under the passenger seat. This means that we can leave small items in the car without the risk of some tea-leaf nicking them!

A more recent job, to give the car the proper 'touring' look, was to fit a GB plate. I was unable to find a CSMA plate (did they ever produce one?) so have refurbished an AA plate. I was unable to resist detailing the small AA badge in the middle of the plate with yellow behind the black 'AA'; not strictly original but it does look nice!

'Easy' also tows our ultra-lightweight caravan. The first proper outing was to the Silverstone Classic in 2013 which went very well. Subsequent trips have included the 2014 Minors on Tour rally which was to Quimper in Brittany and the 2014 MOT-UK rally in North Devon. People's reactions, on seeing the car and caravan, has ranged from surprise to outright incredulity! As it happens the caravan follows the car extremely well and we cruise at around 50mph. That, of course, is on the flat without too much headwind! I always thought that it would be very nice to have a bit more power for the hills but I was reluctant to replace the very sweet 948cc engine with a 1098cc or 1275cc lump. However, I did have a Shorrock supercharger in the garage.....

I could not resist the temptation of fitting the Shorrock. It was the perfect solution, an instant power boost with a very useful increase in mid-range torque. The job started with a rebuild of the supercharger. This exercised my brain cells in trying to work out how to set the very small clearances between the vanes and the casing. In the event the clearances are greater than they should be but I cannot see how I could make them any smaller - advice would be welcome! The result of this is that the supercharger is not quite as efficient as it should be but I still get a very good increase in power.



The Shorrock was available with a fitting kit specific to 948cc Morris Minors in the mid '50s. Unfortunately I did not have the correct fitting kit so had to adapt what I had. This meant a lot of measuring, making new parts and lots of trial fitting. The parts I had to make included a twin groove pulley to be bolted onto the existing crankshaft pulley, mounting brackets, fan spacers, oil connection for lubrication, manifold adaptor plate and studs. I happened to have an SU HS4 carb with the float chamber on the correct side so rebuilt that to use. I had intended to fit a rear crankshaft oil seal conversion to the engine to help it cope with increased crankcase pressure but discovered that I had already fitted one when I rebuilt the engine in 2009! I was delighted to note that it was

doing its job perfectly which was a relief as they get a lot of bad press from people saying that they never work. I guess the answer is careful fitting (or luck!).

Whilst the engine was out I took the opportunity to change the gearbox (the old one had a tendency to jump out of 3rd on the over-run) and the clutch (it buzzed when disengaging).

Once the engine was re-installed I was able to cobble together a replacement for the bottom hose. I had to use a 45° bend, two 90° bends and a couple of connectors. I also had to adjust some of the spacers to ensure adequate clearances between the fan blades, belts and the radiator and between the carb float chamber and front suspension damper.



The original instructions for fitting a Shorrock supercharger to an A-series engine recommended limiting the centrifugal advance in the distributor and disconnecting the vacuum advance. This would certainly protect the engine from pre-ignition but wouldn't do much for the petrol consumption - I guess that with petrol at less than 1/- a gallon it didn't matter too much! I was more fortunate in having access to modern electronics in the form of an Aldon Amethyst ignition mapper. This device can set the

fixed, vacuum and centrifugal advance in addition of ignition retard during boost conditions. All the setting is done using a laptop, even whilst running.

Finally a vacuum/boost gauge has been fitted, suitably modified to fit in with the rest of the instruments.

The whole setup works very well with more power available and more flexibility. A couple of weeks after the first run we set off on the 2015 Minors on Tour, to the Ardeche, and over 1300 miles the car performed impeccably giving a fuel consumption of over 40mpg on a couple of legs.

Since then I have not done very much to the car apart from use it. We have done a couple more trips to France and week long trips to Norfolk, Somerset and West Yorkshire. Nothing much has gone wrong except for my modified temperature gauge so, as a temporary measure, I fitted a capillary gauge under the dash. I have now replaced the gauge workings with those from another fuel gauge so, after testing, the temporary gauge has been removed.

'Easy' is a delight to drive and we have enjoyed lots of trips including MOT's on the continent, MOT-UKs, rallies all over the country, the Roses Run, Silverstone Classic, the NEC Classic Car Show and being used as a wedding car. She has also featured in several magazines.

Well I think that brings the story up to date. There is much more work to be done, including a complete re-spray, new hood and a rewire in the not-too-distant-future, but no great rush.

Ash & Pam Holmes

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