



# MINOR MESSAGE No. 12

## Morris and Me - Part One

by Steve Chater

My love affair with Morris cars began at the age of ten in 1958, when my Grandad bought a 1935 Morris Ten-Four saloon. This was an interesting car as it was the actual vehicle that appeared at the 1934 Motor Show held at Olympia - it was common practice to show the following year's models. Being a 1935 model it was different in two fundamental aspects. Unlike the previous model, the accelerator was moved from between the clutch and brake pedal to the position we are



The Ten-Four BPL 914 in 1961 outside our family home in Brockham, Surrey.

familiar with today, to the right of the brake. Also the handbrake changed from a large vertical lever to the smaller almost horizontal lever between the front seats, again familiar to us all today. To a ten-year-old little boy it was a very grand car, resplendent in its green and black paintwork.

My Grandad sold this car to my Dad in 1960, as it had become too heavy for him to drive. He replaced it with a 1948 Morris Eight Series E. It was a lovely little car but did not have the presence of the Ten-Four. I should mention that my Nan affectionately called the Ten-Four "Bertha", a name that remained throughout our ownership of her. I was thrilled to bits that I now had a really grand car to help look after. Every weekend I would wash and polish Bertha to within an inch of her life!

This marked the beginning of my mechanical experience, as my Dad taught me to service "Bertha". Believe me there was a lot to do - change the engine oil every 1000 miles (no oil filters then), change the oils in the gearbox and back axle every 5000 miles, plus adjusting valve clearances, cleaning and adjusting spark plugs and points much more frequently than we do on our Morris Minors. Then there were the grease nipples, all 28 of them!

In 1961 my life got even better as at the age of 13 my Dad taught me to drive "Bertha". Having no synchromesh on 1st and 2nd gears, I had to learn how to double-de-clutch. I did soon master this and "Bertha" was an absolute pleasure to drive. She also had hydraulic brakes which helped considerably. Apparently it halved the braking distances from a cable- or rod-braked car of the period. I hasten to mention that PC Finch, our village bobby, was either blind or turned a blind eye to my and Dad's very illegal, and in hindsight dangerous and irresponsible activities. Fortunately we did not experience any mishaps!