



Minor Message series 3 no. 9 The Last (Factory) Saloon

North Wilts Branch members will know that the very last Morris Minor saloon, GHR 800N, was actually built to order at Dutton Forshaw in Swindon and registered in 1975.

Sue Akrill, MMOC Branch Liaison Officer, has issued a Press Release on the last FACTORY saloon, now restored, with a request that we pass on the information within the Branch. Here is her message, followed by the Press Release itself.

Hi All, I do hope that you are keeping safe in the second lockdown. Here is something to hopefully lift your spirits and those of your branch members. This is a pre-runner to the whole article that will be in Minor Matters with full photos of the restoration of FMT 265J in the Jan/Feb issue. The Last Saloon should have had its anniversary celebration at the Lancaster Classic Motor Show at the NEC. When this was cancelled the plan was to take it to the Mini Plant Oxford on 12th November (the actual date of it coming off the production line). Unfortunately neither of these events is possible to stage due to Covid-19, but we really want to get this iconic car seen by as many



people as possible. The sheer hard work of everyone involved this year in very difficult times is evident when you see the result. Many of you possibly saw the car in its original state at the Practical Classics Car and Restoration Show on our stand "The Last Chance Saloon" in 2017, when it wasn't much more than a 'lace curtain'. Luckily we did manage to get the car back to Cowley at the beginning of this week, unfortunately there was no audience to see it and I can tell you for the very few people concerned on the day it was a major scramble to get it done before we were all locked down again. Because of the historic significance and story surrounding this Minor it would also be great if you could pass on our official Press Release to your local newspapers as this is a once-in-a-lifetime article. We really want as many people to see this car as possible. I do hope you will help to do this with us, as a club we are strong and still working to do everything we can during this awful time.

Stay safe all. S 😊

Susan Akrill
Branch and Register Liaison

MMOC PRESS RELEASE
Last Morris Minor Built returns to Cowley after 50 years
12th November 2020

A historically significant Morris Minor has returned to the place where it rolled off the production line on the 12th November 1970. 50 years after it was built, the last Morris Minor saloon to be produced has been relocated into the building where it was made at MINI Plant Oxford in Cowley, Oxfordshire and now forms part of the factory's collection of historic vehicles. The gleaming car is a credit to the professionals, specialists and volunteers from the Morris Minor Owners Club who have worked tirelessly over the past four years to restore the car to its former glory. Today, the fully restored vehicle looks just as good as it did when it was first built.

The transformation seemed impossible when the car was discovered in 2016 after languishing in the open for many years. The provenance of the vehicle was well established having previously been offered for sale in 1994. Sadly, the new owner at that time was unable to enjoy the pleasure of ownership due to ill health. After his demise, the car was abandoned and it deteriorated badly in the intervening years. The car was acquired by the Morris Minor Owners Club in 2016. Initially a phased restoration was planned. Substantial structural repairs were needed, and the services of a specialist welder and fabricator were enlisted. In 2018, thanks to a generous bequest from a former member, things gathered pace and with the help of members with specialist skills, original components including the engine and gearbox were rebuilt. The bulk of the refurbishment and the reassembly of the car was undertaken by volunteer club members in Derby where the MMOC has its headquarters.

Club Secretary, Ray Newell who accompanied the car on its return to 'T Building' (which houses MINI Plant Oxford's car collection) at a specially arranged socially distanced handover prior to the current lockdown, said: "The car is a credit to those who have supported the club in getting it back on the road in time for this significant anniversary. "We are grateful to staff at MINI Plant Oxford for their assistance in getting the car into the factory's museum and for housing and looking after it for the foreseeable future. We hope that post lock down, people will be able to come to view the vehicle and appreciate what is a wonderful example of this iconic British car.' Steve Wrelton, spokesman for MINI Plant Oxford, said: "The backstory and subsequent restoration of this car to its former glory is nothing short of staggering. Like the Mini that came after it, the Morris Minor was one of the most popular and recognisable cars in Britain. To have the last one built returning to its spiritual home and joining our car collection here at Plant Oxford is just fantastic."

Additional note to Editors: Further information about the restoration of the vehicle available on request. MMOC Office Derby 01332 291675

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