



NWMMOC NEWSLETTER

March 2023

British Motor Heritage by Steve Chater

In January five friends and myself visited the British Motor Heritage Company in Witney. BMH was established in 1975 as a subsidiary of British Leyland to supply genuine components for classic cars using original tools wherever possible. BMW obtained BMH when it acquired the Rover Group in 1994. In 2001 BMW sold BMH back into private ownership, by which time it was also producing Triumph TR6 bodies in addition to MGB replacement bodies that it had been producing since 1988, and MG Midget bodies since 1991. They later added various Mini models including the Clubman in 2004. In addition to the above mentioned body and body panels, BMH also produce a limited number of Jaguar E Type bonnets. These are very labour intensive, partly due to the original tooling being somewhat worn. However the finished product is of a very



Photo by Steve with kind permission of BMH

high standard albeit expensive. For example a Mini body shell starts at £10620 and an E Type bonnet is at least this! BMH also manufacture/supply numerous parts in addition to bodies and body panels. These include many mechanical parts, carpets and Tex products - wiper blades, arms, mirrors etc. BMH strive to source items they cannot make from British manufacturers to ensure the highest quality and to minimize damage to the environment. BMH work closely with the Bicester Heritage Skills Academy and currently have two apprentices from the Academy working for them. Production of Mini bodies and panels form the largest part of BMH's business, and unfortunately they only manufacture front and rear wings for Morris Minors. BMH is well worth a visit, they really paint a positive future for the classic car industry, and I have been in touch since my visit to sound out the possibility of a NWMMOC visit. They are happy to take up to twelve people, so if there is sufficient interest from our members this could happen!

If you are interested in visiting please could you inform [Gill](#). We will then investigate possible dates.

More information here: <https://www.bmh-ltd.com/>

The Flying Monk.

On Sunday 26th February, 25 or so members of our Branch attended a presentation on Elmer the Flying Monk, by Bill Reed, at Castle Eaton Village Hall. The story tells of Elmer, a Benedictine Monk of Malmesbury, who in about 1010 decided to attach a pair of wings to his hands and feet, launch himself from a tower at Malmesbury Abbey and attempt to fly! We are led to believe that he managed approximately 200 metres before landing. Unfortunately the speed of his landing broke both his legs, injuries that were later described as similar to that of a high speed skiing accident. Re-enactments took place in 1962 (by the Athelstan Players) and 1976, the 'volunteer flyers' being attached to a safety wire to avoid major injury. Although breaking his legs left him with a limp for the rest of his life, he did live to a ripe old age! Bill's presentation was a thoroughly enjoyable experience, a great insight into Elmer's vision, determination and courage or foolhardiness, whichever way you choose to look at it.

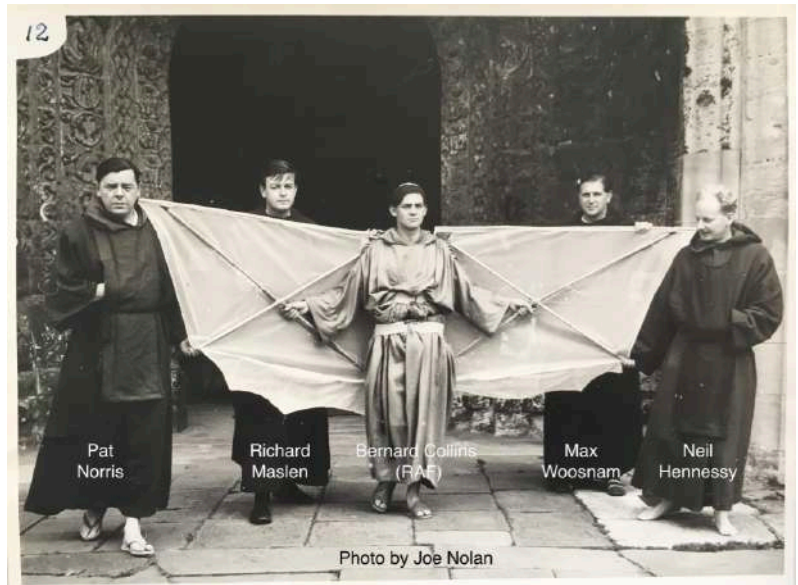
Steve Chater

Bill adds:

After my talk, Ash Holmes asked if there was any technical information about Elmer's wings. So I looked up what Max Woosnam wrote:

Perhaps Elmer was fairly small and 100-odd sq ft would have been sufficient. Otto Lilienthal did a number of glider flights in the 1890's with a wing area of 150 sq ft. The main difficulty for Elmer would have been getting such a contraption steady at the top of an 80ft tower in a breeze sufficient to support him right from the start of the flight. Fine cloth or parchment were available and ash trees and willow grew nearby. As man has not got the strength or depth in his chest to flap wings sufficiently large to support him, some structure would have been necessary to prevent the wings folding up.

(from Max Woosnam, "Elmer", 1986, p.26)



Re-enactment of Elmer's flight, 1962



Branch cars at Castle Eaton on 26 February

The Kindness of Strangers

by Bill Reed

Returning from our meeting on 26 February, my engine died, out in the countryside half way between Minety and Charlton. Fortunately, a long straight stretch of road where I was clearly visible; unfortunately, a very poor spot for phone signals.

I got the car mostly onto the verge using the starter motor. Gave the fuel pump a thump, to no avail. My phone battery then died while I was trying to contact the RAC (there's a long preamble before you can report your location). With the engine not running, I could not recharge.

About 100 yards behind me were two farm cottages. No answer at the door of the first one. But at the second, I was very fortunate. A young couple, Amy and Ben, who immediately sympathised, helped me push the car to safety, offered me use of their phone, and a cup of tea. More than that - it turned out Ben was a mechanic who was familiar with A-series engines!

The RAC call centre was incredulous. *A 1970 car???* However the delay quoted was 40 minutes, which seemed reasonable.

While we waited, Ben offered to come out to help me do some basic checks. Fuel pump - working. Spark - there was one, but not strong. With one plug removed, the engine started again but would not accelerate.

And then another stroke of good fortune and kindness. Somehow, Steve Chater, with an innate homing instinct for Morris Minors, managed to track me down. He knew within 6 miles or so where I had broken down but by the time he arrived I was partly hidden in a driveway, with my phone on recharge in Ben and Amy's kitchen. Nevertheless he found me - and proceeded to get on like a house on fire with Ben!

I then became somewhat of a bystander while they checked float chamber, compression and ignition. After some lead-checking and headscratching the verdict was that the problem lay with the coil, the ballast resistor wired in to it, or the electronic ignition unit inside the distributor head (all compatible units by the same manufacturer; the first two replaced less than a year ago).

A replacement 12V coil (I had a good spare in the boot) got me back on the road.

Current theory (pending further investigation and advice) is as follows: The ballast resistor allows a starting spark of 12V (useful in cold weather) and then drops to 6-9V for engine running, reducing stress on the coil and the ignition unit. But the coil itself does not show a rating. It could be rated below 12V, with an allowance for brief use at 12V for starting. So ... if the ballast resistor fails ... 12V is going straight through the coil ... which, in due course, also fails. Without warning, in my case.

As for the RAC: about half an hour after my request, I received a text informing me that the delay would now be 300 minutes. That's five hours. Once we got the car started (after about two hours) I cancelled the request. No preliminaries needed there. "Press 1 to cancel." "Request cancelled". At least that bit was easy. The RAC can't afford to have vans turn up after the breakdown has already departed. I understand that. However the call centre reaction and estimated response time were disappointing.

As was the life of less than a year for the coil and ballast resistor setup. The previous units lasted for 7 years.

My heartfelt thanks to Ben, Amy and Steve. I would not have liked to stay stranded at the roadside after nightfall.

Brian Tinson

Gill and Bill represented North Wilts Branch at Brian Tinson's funeral on 2 March, at Bath Road Methodist Church, Swindon.

Brian and his wife Freda were founder members of *Moonraker Minors* in 1980. Brian himself was born opposite the Moonrakers pub. Freda was from Torquay and at one period they travelled back and forth between Swindon and Torquay, 2-up on a Lambretta. WDV 745 originally belonged to Freda's parents.

A short obituary has been submitted for publication in *Minor Matters*. The photo shows Brian and Freda at the Sun Inn, Swindon.



Minor for sale

We have been contacted by Mike, a non-branch member wishing to sell a Minor. He says, *"It is solid underneath, it has no engine, gearbox and will need a new wiring loom. I have a Morris Marina 5 speed box and rear axle to go with it. I am looking for £3,500 for it or a Ford Transit with cash if under that price."*

The car is in Malmesbury. For more details, please ring Mike's wife on 07904 838837 or contact his friend Chris by email at enigma1958@hotmail.co.uk



Branch cars update

We now have a dozen branch cars featured on our website [here](#). There's room for more - please add yours by sending a photo and a few lines of description to [Ash](#). Thanks to Ash and to those of you who have already contributed!

North Wilts Branch Events 2023

Please note that we need a Branch organiser for Wheel Nuts on 30 April. Peter Watts has kindly done this in recent years but will be away this time. He will be happy to provide advice. If you can help please contact [Gill](#). We have a long record of support for St Rose's School for Children with Disabilities (we won the Best Club Display Trophy in 2016), so it would be a pity to miss it as a Branch.

Sat 11 March: Run out from Studley Grange, followed by high tea. keridley@sky.com

Sat 1 April: Windrush Valley Spring Run. Contact 43martinhoward@gmail.com

Sun 30 April: Wheel Nuts, St Rose's School, Stroud wheelnuts@stroses.org.uk
(Needs an organiser for our Branch please! Contact [Gill](#) if you can help.)

Sunday 11 June: Annual Branch Rally, Swindon & Cricklade Railway, Blunsdon

Saturday 24 June: Summer Festival on the Parks, Swindon.
Contact mike9welsh@yahoo.co.uk

Sunday 30 July: Run and visit to the Oxford Bus Museum & Morris Motors Museum, Long Hanborough OX29 6LA. Contact 43martinhoward@gmail.com

Saturday 5 August: Gloucester Vintage and Country Extravaganza at South Cerney Airfield.
Contact [Bill](#) ASAP to reserve a space on the club stand - we only have 9 places allocated.
Other information at: www.glosvintageextravaganza.co.uk

Other events you may wish to take part in:

Sunday 2 April: [Cowley Drive it Day](#)

Sunday 23 April: [Drive it Day](#)

Sunday 21 May: [Morris Minor Day at the Great British Car Journey](#)

(see March-April issue of *Minor Matters* for discount)

Sunday 18 June: [Salisbury Motor Show](#)

Sat 1 July: [Wallop Wheels & Wings](#)

Sunday 9 July: [British Leyland Day, Gaydon](#)

Sat-Sun 15 & 16 July [Market Lavington Vintage Meet](#)

Sunday 23 July: **Stroud Classic Car Show**, The playing field, Bisley Old Road, Stroud, Glos GL5 1NL. From 10:00 am - just turn up early, entry is free.

August Bank Holiday: [Pershore Plum Festival](#)

August 27 & 28 [White Horse Show, Uffington](#)

Sat 2 Sept: **Kingswood Classic** Contact [Jenni Wood](#), MMOC Area 4 Liaison Officer

Sun 3 Sept: [White Horse Vehicle Show, Westbury](#)

If you would like to arrange an outing to any of the above, or just an informal breakfast or coffee meet, please give Gill a call on 01793 813309.

Note from the Chair

After 8 years as Chair of North Wilts Branch, I will be stepping down with effect from our AGM in October.

To help maintain and develop our Branch activities, please consider joining our Committee. We are able to "co-opt" members to the Committee during the year, and this would be an ideal way to join us in order to see how we work and what you could contribute. The Committee meets every other month. Please consider this - we are a strong, active branch but need your help to remain so.

Bill Reed