Greetings fellow Wessex Morganeers

Picnics, days out, tours, noggins, treasure hunts, classic car shows, Silverstone, MOG 17, Brooklands... and more. There is no excuse for not getting out in your Morgan at this time of year, and enjoying the best of the British (and European) countryside and culture, as well as the camaraderie of other Morgans and classic cars, and those spontaneous conversations with complete strangers that are triggered by the cars we drive. Weather permitting, driving topless enables us to appreciate all this to the full. Make the most of this.

Motoring in the future will inevitably change. Electric vehicles are coming over the horizon, with developments in battery technology still to catch up. Range, weight, effective life span, and cost are important concerns, and many questions arise over the necessary infrastructure to support this change. I wonder if there is a future beyond electric cars? The Morgan LIFECar (Lightweight Fuel-Efficient Car) project, originally with a hydrogen fuel-cell, has indicated that Morgan are thinking ahead.

A nostalgic glimpse back at the past always helps to keep things in perspective. The RAC 1000-mile trial recently passed through Dorset and over Bulbarrow (highest point in Dorset, with superb views). Carole and I had a lovely leisurely lunch in the pub at Ibberton before a stroll to watch these pre-1939 cars navigate through the intricate network of lanes. It was a brilliant feast for the eyes, with these cars in action rather than on parade or static in a museum. Aston Martin, Bentley, Chevrolet, Frazer Nash, Lagonda, and MG were among the marques competing – a serious challenge, and ‘serious’ fun, too, no doubt.

Of course, we are not short of lanes with tearooms, pubs, stunning scenery, and places to visit in the Wessex region. However, do remain alert for farm vehicles, especially at this time of year; lanes get smaller with the encroachment of hedges and verges, and tractors and combine harvesters get bigger. Return to the challenge of yesteryear – use paper maps. Get out there!

Safe, happy motoring.

Roger

Copy date for the next Morganiser:

25 October 2017
NEV’S NOTES . . . . . The Centre Secretary reports for July

Plenty going on as usual within Wessex! Shortly we have the treasure hunt, and in the interests of keeping the number of events down a bit in the holiday season this doubles as the ‘Monthly Noggin’ for August.

We do have a pleasant Sunday afternoon to look forward to at The Crown & Victoria car & bike show on Sunday August 13th..............easy to arrange, if the weather is nice and you fancy going along, just turn up. There is a collection in aid of the Somerset Air Ambulance, a well worthwhile cause!

I do enjoy looking at the variety of Mogs that turn up at meetings these days, ranging from the latest cars to the similar looking, but with the significant detail differences found in early examples of the same model. Much interest these days in the four-seater models (I’m biased of course!), because they are no longer in production. We have in Wessex four-seaters ranging from Dave Sapp’s 1939 example, William, my 34-year-old ‘Bluebell’, right up to Graham Land’s 2016 ‘last-of-the-line’ example.

On the question of news from our parent MSCC main club, all of you on e-mail should have received your log-in code, to be used in conjunction with your membership number to log into the members’ area of the new MSCC website. If you haven’t received it (and there have been cases where the message has ended up in the ‘Spam’ folder) then please contact either myself or Gill Bevan, the MSCC membership secretary, and we will attempt to get you connected. The new website is superb, and will be developed. It currently contains a link to our own ‘Morganiser’ newsletter, so it can be read all round the world!

On the question, again, of our monthly Noggins, we are constantly reviewing our regular meeting places and the service and popularity of each venue. So, if you have any comments please make these known to any of the committee who will take these on board.

Our Events Secretary, Pete Turner, is always working hard to ensure we have a good time ..............he doesn’t deserve the bad luck he suffered recently. Apart from spending part of his holiday in hospital, he also suffered a Morgan malady (they don’t heal up on their own!).....putting him in line for the OBH award this year? A failed seal around the Otter switch in the radiator bottom tank led to the loss of all coolant in traffic, leading to a failed head gasket. A quick survey at the last meeting ensured that all of us with a similar switch have arranged to carry a spare seal, courtesy of Pete who is arranging a small shipping order. I should also report that Pete is medically recovered and back to his usual smiling self.

That’s what club life is all about . . .

sharing information

and assistance.

Nev.

photo: Mike Smith
The Tinney Tour Tribute  
Sunday 11 June 2017

Originally known as ‘The Tinney Tour’, Henry's trips were always scheduled for the last Sunday in June, together with the promise of fair weather from the Man Above. The Tribute Tour was “set in stone” quite some time ago, I believe it may have been at the last AGM, and would follow the same format as Henry's tours. Due to a clash with other events in June, this tour had to be planned for the middle of the month, so we didn't know if the weather promise would still apply.

This Tribute tour was superbly organised by Dave Sapp and Nev Lear, and brought a whole new meaning to “Martial Arts” or rather, Marshal Arts, as carried out by Dave Sapp! The tour started at The Burrington Inn, with cars gathering at 10am. I arrived well before 10:00 to find 5 cars there already, and from then onwards, they just kept coming; 17 Morgans, and 3 tin-tops, making a total of 37 people.

Refreshments were available at the Inn, after which Dave handed out route options to reach our lunch stop at The Rodney Stoke Inn: an “adventurous” 25 mile jaunt, or an “easier” 20 mile run (apparently avoiding a section of extremely narrow lanes with minimal passing places). Unsurprisingly, only two cars took the easy route! (I won't say who!).

As I was a solo driver on this occasion, I opted to tailgate Roger and Carole Gibson, as it's virtually impossible to read instructions AND drive a Morgan ('though some drivers seem to do it with their mobile 'phone!). The earlier part of our route out of Burrington Combe was fraught with cyclists going in every direction, making it very hard to pass them with the now obligatory 1.5m clearance. We were lucky navigating the narrow lane section, with no vehicles coming the other way. The route used many lesser known lanes, meandering through Charterhouse, Shipham and eventually into Cheddar and then into Cheddar Gorge. This was a nightmare from the start. I believe that every cyclist in Somerset was out that day. Consequently, there was a 10mph crawl over most of the length of the Gorge, interspersed with equally frustrated tin-tops as well as our Morgans. Our planned route eventually took us off the beaten track again, down past the gliding club towards Draycot and Rodney Stoke. This was also a very narrow lane with very rough verges, but this time we were treated to many vehicles coming the other way. Fortunately, we seemed to be given “right of way” priority by most other cars, particularly as by this time there were quite a few Morgans tailing each other.

Arriving at the Rodney Stoke Inn, we were assigned to the lower car park, and marshalled into position by Dave, forming us into three neat rows and with the utmost precision!
We were also assigned to the lower section of the restaurant, and were served very efficiently within a short space of time. The food was excellent, with copious bowls of vegetables, all done to perfection.

We were due to be at the Wookey Hole Caves by 2pm, and with another short route guide issued we were soon on our way again. Dave was at the car park to make sure we were all lined up neatly, (which took some doing as there were so many of us to fit into a limited space). Eventually, all was sorted out. Following in Henry's tradition, we were presented with the obligatory quiz! Immediately, the “quizophiles” had their heads down and were deep into solving the clues. We made our way to the cave entrance to be met by our tour guide, who it turns out had a voice louder than a Sergeant Major, enhanced even more by the caves. The tour was interesting, quite colourful, and also quite tricky to navigate in places. It's hard to imagine that at one time the River Axe flowed through the caves, carving out cavern after cavern, yielding interesting geological formations. The caves are still being explored by cave divers, and gradually being expanded so that various chambers will link up. We passed areas where Cheddar Cheese was stored to mature, and also where wine was laid down to age (complete with a commercial advert prompting sales at the cave shop!). Near the end of the cave tour, we were obliged to wear hard hats to traverse the narrow and low tunnels. This ended in a cavern with remarkable geology formed by water eroding the limestone, some 20,000 years ago. Then all of a sudden, we were let out of a wooden door into bright sunshine overlooking the headwaters of the river Axe and the way out via the amusement park. This was easier said than done. The exit signs were either minute or very well hidden. However, this did lead us past a building showing an interesting film about cave diving. It seemed to take ages to escape, but eventually Ted Bradley found the final sign and we were free.

Back at the car park, many were still deep into the quiz, and in true Henry tradition, we were then directed across the road from the car park to the Wookey Hole Inn for tea and scones or whatever. During this time, the answers were revealed. The erudite winners were Robert and Jane Pring, with the wooden spoon going to Tim and Chrissy Ayres. However, all the results were very close with only a few points between them.

Overall, a very pleasant and memorable day – and it didn't rain, so Henry had to be watching over us.

Many thanks to Dave and Nev for a well organised Tour, and to the camaraderie of the group.

Mike Smith
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New Elms Workshop

Dave, George, Tom, Darren

FossilMog’s Hive Beach Picnic
Sunday 25 June 2017

photo: Graham Land

photo: John Graham
On Friday evening, 7th July, Irene and I arrived at Powderham Show ground to set up the gazebos for Wessex Centre’s weekend. At the entrance to the field we were given our plot number, this time number 68 which was a new position for the club but not too far away from the usual place. We think the new plot better as I’m sure it was slightly larger and facing towards the estuary. It was a very pleasant evening with lots of exhibitors setting up their stands in readiness for the crowds the following morning. Some of the really enthusiastic car club members were mowing or strimming their plots. Barbecues also were starting to be lit, with tempting sausage and bacon smells filling the evening air.

Saturday morning soon came round, and travelling on the A30 towards Exeter we passed John and Elaine and also Nigel Guppy and his dad charging along at a good pace like a couple of boy racers! When we arrived at the show ground we were surprised to see Robert and Jane already there relaxing in their chairs with the gazebo opened up just as if they had been there all night. Within a few minutes Pete and Val arrived. After saying our ‘good mornings’, and catching up on the latest news, we had our first coffee. The public were a little slow coming to start with, but around 11am we had a steady flow admiring our beautiful cars. One couple had bought a new 4/4 Morgan from Berrybrook a few days before the show and were going to collect it from the show ground over the weekend. I believe they came from the Southampton area and were enquiring where would be their nearest Morgan Centre, plus lots of other Moggie questions. The weather always plays a big part on show days, and we were lucky in having a fine day. The trade, auto jumble, and craft stands looked busy, and the live music with three girl singers plus all the interesting vehicles added to the wonderful atmosphere. Oggie Mog had a smaller stand next to ours with 4 cars; one was a very nice red 4 seater with lady driver.
The day soon went by, and at 5.30pm after a couple of trips again around the show ground it was time to get packed up and head for home.

Sunday: this time only one Morgan on the Wessex stand - Bob’s, parked sideways so as to take up as much space as possible. Bob took Pete Turner because Pete’s car is out of commission (I’m sure Pete’s car problem will be explained somewhere). Anyway they both had a good day, and by the time I arrived to collect the gazebo the lads had packed it all away ready for me to bring back home.

I noticed from the Crash Box web site that this event has raised thousands of pounds (in excess of £120,000 for local and national charities), and is now in its 44th year. Very well done to them; let’s hope they continue to get the support for this great weekend at Powderham.

Colin Balkwill
Four Morgans represented the Wessex Centre at this now annual event, including Eddie’s new ivory Roadster – hot from the factory. Fifty plus classics arrived, and were arranged neatly around the periphery of the recreation field under a dry but cloudy sky. There were some beautiful cars on display, including a Jaguar V12 convertible, and the familiar Aston Martin DB5. A Vauxhall Cresta won the trophy this year, but the new Morgan Roadster received considerable attention, with a tour under the bonnet, and looks set to make an appearance in the local press. This event gets bigger every year, stimulates an interest in motoring classics, and raises the profile of the Institute of Advanced Motorists. The free barbeque food was, once again, an added bonus.

Roger Gibson
Sun and rain surrounded the Stockland paddock(s) for what has become almost an annual event hosted by Colin and Irene in the summer. Despite the vagaries of the weather over 30 members in 15 Morgans arrived through the showers on a Sunday in July. Others looked out of the window and stayed home, some set out and returned home . . . . some even turned round in their Morgan, headed home, parked up and set off again in a tin box! Either way, all those who arrived on the spectacular hillside which is Colin and Irene’s home were treated to an excellent day out, with plenty of amusement and company. With considerable luck avoided the rain, apart from two brief five-minute showers.

Armed with our own picnics, the first glass of wine or beer took away the stress of worrying about the weather (surely a typically British disease?), and we settled down to a warm pleasant day in the country. Colin had devised much entertainment to keep us occupied - the usual driving tests, ball games, and quizzes kept us on the move. At the end of the day there were prizes for all, even some very nice ‘Morgan’ coasters presented to all those who volunteered to marshal the driving tests. A very nice thought, the items being made and painted by Colin personally (see picture).

Considerable interest was also generated by the appearance of Eddie’s brand new white 2017 Roadster, well up-to-date with the latest spec Ford ‘Mustang’ motor. With due respect to its near ‘virgin’ state it was allotted a parking space in Colin’s barn so that we could all inspect it at close quarters, and where its bonnet was lifted for detailed perusal on many occasions!
A super day; this is what the MSCC is all about . . . . meeting and enjoying each other’s company with a common interest. The photos portray the fun in progress, and we were very pleased to welcome members from Fossilmog and other areas to join in the fun.

_Neville Lear_
We had previously entered Cranmog’s “Constable Weekend” in 2013 and 2015, and very much enjoyed them. So, when we saw that they were running another this year, we put our entry in pretty quickly. The venue for the weekend was, as before, the excellent Stoke by Nayland Hotel, Golf Club and Spa. We have some old friends who live in Suffolk so we were able to combine a visit to them with the Mog Weekend.

So on the Wednesday before the weekend we packed up the Mog and put the first 200+ miles under our wheels and stayed with our friends until the start of the event on Friday lunchtime. After registering and collecting “goody bag” etc. we settled in the sun to have a couple of beers and catch up with Morgan folk that we have met before at various gatherings prior to an informal dinner in a private room in the hotel for the about 80 members present. Entertainment following dinner was provided by a local Suffolk author and wit, Charlie Haylock, who gave a very funny talk on local dialects. This was followed by dancing to two girl singers in “Andrews Sisters” style of 1940s and 1950s favourites, very appropriate for many present!

On Saturday we all went to ex USAF cold war base “Bentwaters” via a very scenic route. There, under a clear blue sky, we and several others dropped a clanger, lulled into a state of over-confidence in our fickle weather we left the tonneau cover off and boarded a bus for a tour of the base. While in one of the enormous hangars, looking at the amazing private collection of vintage farm tractors and equipment, a loud rumble was heard - what was that? Oh heck, thunder! Then the rain came down, too far to get back to the Mogs. So, we expected some very wet seats. Fortunately the rain, although heavy, did not last too long; lesson: never trust the British weather!

However the collections were incredible, many of the tractors dating back to World War One were runnable and the collection owner started one very early tractor to prove it. Later, a fully restored 1950s combine harvester was started up and demonstrated all its working functions. The coach then took us on a complete tour of the base including the bunkers where the nuclear bombs had been stored inside multi-layered intense security. Then back to the soggy Mogs, seats towelled off, and in renewed sunshine, off to the seaside at Aldeburgh,
where, as last time, the Morgans were all parked in a reserved area on the seafront and a grand fish and chip lunch was enjoyed by all, accompanied by a jazz trio. The evening was taken care of by a formal dinner, followed by dancing to a trio of very talented guitarists, “Peter Johnson’s Heritage Boys”, Peter himself being a Cranmog member. They play for their own enjoyment and give all their proceeds to charity.

On Sunday, again with sun shining, we all set off for a pre-booked tour of the famous Flatford Mill and all its associated connections to the artist John Constable. Again, reserved parking for the Morgans attracted a lot of interest from the large number of visitors to this popular National Trust site. Then off again on a very scenic run including the famous “Kersey Splash”, a ford in the middle of the village, which always causes a few wettings for over enthusiastic drivers! On return to the hotel all enjoyed a lunch, with a vote of thanks being given to Paul Dunningham and his team of helpers for once again organising such an excellent and enjoyable weekend.

For us it was then a short journey back to our friends for one more overnight stay, and next day, Mog laden up, we set off for home. Following in reverse order a route Babs had worked out, avoiding most motorways, although involving some very tricky navigation, particularly in the St Albans and Hemel Hempstead areas! However all went well until we joined the M4 at Newbury. The weather had been dry up to then so hood down, but then we ran into heavy rain, plus motorway spray. So we dived off the Mway at the next junction and put up the hood. Then followed a very wet run on minor roads for the rest of the way home! Never mind, a great time away and another 678 miles on the Mog’s clock!

photos: Terry Phelps

Terry and Babs Phelps

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**Do You Have An Otter In Your Radiator? - A Cautionary Tale**

As Alex Sully recently quipped, “I know what an Otter switch does, it makes everything ‘otter and ‘otter.” In this case this turned out to be true. Let me explain.

We were looking forward to our holiday in the Morgan, a tour of Northern Spain and Portugal, staying in different Paradores and Pousadas every night and travelling in between every day. We had booked this tour through Brittany Ferries, sailing from Plymouth to Santander and back to Plymouth. The car was serviced, everything was checked, everything seemed fine, and down to Plymouth we went on a hot Sunday in May. Arriving with a couple of hours to spare, we decided to kill the time on Plymouth Hoe. The Barbican was solid traffic. Right in the middle of this we noticed steam suspiciously rising from our car. Not to worry, I thought, it is probably just boiling over - perhaps the cooling fan is not cutting in; find somewhere to park and sort it out - no problem; it will probably cool down anyway when we get moving again.

The Hoe was jam packed and the first parking spot was at the top - no steam anymore . . . perhaps it is cooling down a little?? When I opened the bonnet I couldn’t really believe what I was seeing. There was a switch at the bottom of the radiator dangling loose and only held on by its wires! There was a very slight dribble of water from the 23mm hole in the bottom of the radiator that this switch had recently vacated. Oh **** , I thought (silently, I think - I hope), immediately getting that sinking feeling with the dawning realisation that this car was in no way going to continue today, with this holiday, under its own steam (if you can forgive the pun).

The breakdown service was called and eventually arrived, but it was a “never seen nuffink like that, mate”, which was hardly surprising, since this particular switch (and I may stand corrected on this) only seems to have been fitted to Morgans and Deloreans. There was more chance that the Morgan would fly itself to Spain than get this switch replaced on a Sunday afternoon on Plymouth Hoe. Brittany Ferries were contacted with the sad news, and we arranged to get recovered home, where I could have a better look at it and fix it.

On Plymouth Hoe, by the way, we experienced a lot of good and some bad. The bad was watching our ferry sail out of the Sound, Santander-bound; and the good was all of the offers of help and sympathy from passers-by, of which there were many. It usually went something like this. “What a beautiful car, what is it?” “It’s a Morgan.” “What’s all that water doing underneath it? Oh, what a shame!”; but everyone was very friendly and it helped to pass the time.

The next morning, at home, we revamped the holiday with Brittany ferries (who were very good) to depart from Plymouth on the Tuesday, catch up with the tour en route, and return as originally planned. Berrybrook had one switch assembly in stock, so I dashed down there on the Monday morning, returned and installed it, but as I had suspected aluminium cylinder heads and overheating do not mix very well. When the engine was restarted, oil was seeping out from the back of the cylinder head/block (a known weakness on these engines), but bubbles in the header tank meant serious trouble. Eventually, further inspection showed that the head had warped and that the valve seats had moved slightly. As I am writing this now, the head is still away for skimming and recutting of the valve seats. Reluctantly we abandoned the idea of taking the Morgan and used our Audi instead.

It was still a fantastic holiday, though. We had a fast run on the second day after disembarking at Santander to catch up with the tour in Portugal, but the rest of it was fine. The roads over there are fast, smooth and empty with spectacular views in the mountains, and the views from some of the smaller scenic routes, especially through the Picos Mountains, were stunning with some quite challenging driving involved. Those of you who have stayed in the Paradores chain of hotels and equivalent Pousadas in Portugal will know that they are something special, either an historic
beautiful building, or have incredible views, or both. The view from our bedroom window in the Pousada de Viana do Castelo, Portugal, on The Monte de Santa Luzia above the town of Viana do Castelo, was reckoned to be one of the three best views in the world - looking out over the town, estuary and coast line! Excellent!

OK, you are all asking, just what is this Otter switch, where is it, and why can it pop out of the radiator like that? The Otter switch is manufactured by Otter Controls Ltd (http://www.ottercontrols.co.uk), who are a controls company of good repute. The switch operates the radiator cooling fan on and off at pre-set temperatures. There does not seem to be a problem with the switch action itself, but in the way that it is mounted; although a very clever design, it seems to be more suitable for a static application where easy removal is significant. The switch is held in a hole at the bottom of the radiator inside a rubber grommet, and secured by a stainless steel spring clip (see pictures showing the damaged grommet, the switch assembled and the component parts). What seems to have happened in our case is that the rubber grommet has deteriorated in some way, and because the clip holds the switch in the radiator by utilising the strength of the grommet, of which one end is in compression against the hole and the other end is secured by the clip, the whole lot let go under the hot water pressure in the radiator.

The switch, according to a certain Mogparts online catalogue, was fitted to +8 5-speeds and +4, 1985 onwards; my car is a 1999 +4. Facet list a very similar looking switch assembly that was fitted to some Rover cars. I plan to carry a spare rubber grommet in the car from now on, thus ensuring that this will never happen again! Melvyn Rutter lists two types, one for £1.95 and one for 63p. If your car has one of these switches installed and you would like to replace the grommet or carry as a spare, let me know and I will order more at the same time. The clip is stainless steel and the switch seems robust, so only the grommet seems likely to fail. If your car is affected, have a look around that area for any signs of coolant leaks and as a preventative measure I suggest that when you change the coolant, replace the rubber grommet around the switch.

Anyway it was such a good holiday, even in our tin-top, that we intend to do something similar in the same region next year, but this time we hope that all will go to plan and that we will be in our Morgan!

photos: Pete Turner

Pete and Jill Turner
“Do you still have all your fillings?” This was the first question from the man with the Porsche. After a careful check, the answer was “yes” – and the Morgan did not shake itself to pieces on Ireland’s bumpy roads. I have to admit, though, that I did find a screw and two washers in the passenger footwell on day seven (these have now been replaced into a vacant hole beneath the dashboard).

The west coast of Ireland, at the very edge of Europe, had seemed a fascinating place to visit. The mountains and coastlines, the musical and Irish-speaking cultures, and the relatively sparse population outside the larger towns and cities attracted us in a way that Scotland had before. We did worry (a bit) about the weather, but it did not deter us. We joined a mixed marque tour, with an MG B Roadster, Jaguar XK8, BMW coupé, and a couple of Porsche 911s. All, except one of the Porsches, were older than our 2006 4/4. We met the Jaguar and MG B in Holyhead, and caught up with the others at the first hotel in Galway. A camaraderie developed, and we enjoyed comparing notes at the end of each day having selected different variations of the route. It was also fun to meet one of the other cars unexpectedly in the middle of nowhere, or at a hopeful coffee stop.

Having driven over 400 miles to arrive in Galway, we opted to visit Galway City on foot the next day. A ‘hop on, hop off’ bus tour took us round the city, where we spotted a couple of salmon fishermen in the River Corrib in the centre of the city – a healthy sign. We also saw famine roads dating from the devastating potato famine (1845), and Claddagh Village (supposedly one of the oldest fishing communities in Europe). There is no fishing, and no industry in Galway City now, but it is a hub of hi-tech research and development (e.g. biotechnology). The ancient heart of the city was a network of pedestrianised narrow streets, trendy and buzzing with activity. We walked to the cathedral, amazingly only 52 years old. It looks dour from the outside, having been developed in part from the old prison wall; inside it looks vibrant and welcoming, sporting a ceiling of Canadian redwood, and an organ of 2000 pipes.

We selected Sunday to drive through Connemara, along the coastal B (R) roads past Blue Flag and Green Coast beaches to Connemara National Park, returning to the hotel past the Maumturk Mountains and Joyce’s Country. Much of this part of Galway seemed bleak and boggy, and reminded us of Caithness. At one village we were held up for about 20 minutes by a religious procession, which gathered strength as it passed each household. I wondered if the priest collected his flock this way every Sunday. It was damp and drizzly, we were on holiday – we went with the flow. Peat has been and is still used as a fuel here, and there was plenty of evidence of this. The Visitor Centre taught us something of the history of the region, including the old white peat block in a cottage window . . . a source of illegal liquor. The weather improved as the day wore on, and we aimed to visit the remote Kylemore Abbey during the afternoon. Kylemore Castle and Estate was constructed by Mitchell Henry in the C19th as a romantic gift for his wife. Here he developed the largest Victorian walled garden in Ireland, with 21 heated glasshouses, and in 1893 he began generating his own hydro-electricity using water pressure from Lough Touther on top of the mountain. In 1920 a community of Benedictine nuns moved here from Ypres, when their abbey
was destroyed in WWI. The nuns remain in residence at Kylemore, and until recently they ran the Kylemore International Boarding School for Girls there. The return journey to the hotel was rather slow, partly due to sheep and partly due to the many undulations and rough road, with many twists and turns. It was, however, a very sunny and scenic route through the mountains.

Monday saw us moving south via Limerick to Kerry and our splendid hotel in Killarney. We enjoyed the coastal B roads to the south of Galway Bay and past the Cliffs of Moher. One stretch here enabled us to experience fully the worst of Irish road building, and the benefits of Suplex suspension. The views across the Bay to Connemara were quite hazy, as we found ourselves in hot sunshine under high pressure for the next few days. Killarney is well-known for its delightful jaunting cars, which were everywhere – as was the less delightful aroma of horse poo. We were tempted to try a jaunt, but opted instead to drink cold beer under the gazebo in the hotel garden, where others in the party joined us.

Over the next two days we fell in love with Kerry, and felt that we could happily live there. The coasts and mountains provide terrific scenery, they speak English (although, for some, Irish is still the native tongue), they drive on the left, and they will remain in Europe.

We took the Ring of Kerry for the first day, and this is where we met the only other Morgans seen on the entire trip – a cluster of five German (?) mogs travelling in the opposite direction. Towards the western tip of the loop we took to the Skellig Ring along the R565 to Portmagee. This was to prove a highlight of the entire tour. The 20-25% climb to the viewpoint put the Morgan through its paces, and the narrow, steep, winding roads were exhilarating to drive, taking us past coastal scenery that took your breath away. We could see the rocky, pointy Skellig Islands 5 miles away, which provided a difficult, though appropriate, setting for some shots in the newest Star Wars film. From Kenmare the Ring of Kerry took us back to Killarney via Moll’s Gap on another sinuous mountain road. A great drive today.

Our choice for Wednesday: the Dingle Peninsula. Heading out via Tralee we took a figure of 8 route, and were keen to drive up and through the Conor Pass. We could see the low cloud over the mountains and hoped it would lift. It didn’t. As we climbed, visibility dropped to not much more than 10 metres, and although the hood was down we obviously needed lights and wipers continuously. The views were non-existent, unfortunately, and we descended into Dingle, and
out of the cloud, for coffee. The lanes out towards Slea Head gave us superb views out to the islands at the very west-most point of Ireland. We returned to the hotel looking forward to fish, chips, and Guiness.

The long drive to Waterford took us through the Caha Pass into County Cork. The views could inspire poetry, but we found the road surfaces significantly rougher. Glengarriff, Bantry, Skibbereen, and on to Clonakilty where, with difficulty, we finally found somewhere to park for lunch. Kinsale, Cork, and then we found a lovely garden centre a short distance off the main road where tea and cake was provided. The very friendly lady here helped us with our local pronunciation (Eochaill = Youghal = “yawl”), suggested where we might eat in Waterford, and told us to make ourselves comfortable in the hammocks in the garden. There is a technique involved with hammocks, which we resisted. As we left, a chap with a rather patched up yellow Triumph Spitfire engaged us in animated, enthusiastic chatter about the Morgan, before he drove off with an enormous plant pot. The hotel at Waterford Marina was the venue for our last night in the Republic, and there was an end-of-term air about our group meal there. We had really enjoyed Ireland once again, and had discovered so much that is worthy of a second visit. The organisation of the tour was first class, we had been supplied with a very detailed route book, and other useful supporting information which enhanced the trip. Our tour companions had shared our enthusiasm for motoring, and our evening rendezvous had been almost as noisy as our noggins.

Our return ferry from Dublin sailed in the evening, so we took a leisurely stroll through Waterford on the final day and looked at the sparkling displays in the House of Waterford Crystal. The little ferry from Passage East across Waterford Harbour took us into Wexford, and we followed the scenic route north. As it turned out, this took us past Ireland’s only listed Morgan dealer, Kirwan’s Garage Ltd in Camolin. Of course, we called in, entirely unannounced, and were met with typical hospitality. Our front suspension was greased in no time, even though it was lunch time, and we were on our way via Arklow to the Avoca Valley. We took a short walk to the Meeting of the Waters, a tranquil place immortalised by Ireland’s ‘bard’, Thomas Moore, and called in at the Glendalough Visitor Centre for tea. The cloud was down again as we drove through the Wicklow Mountains, to eventually penetrate the Dublin traffic and check-in at the port.

Our wheels touched Welsh tarmac just after midnight. We were tired; it had been a long, exciting, busy week. But . . . would we do it again? – of course we would. And, looking back, I’m pretty sure our Morgan received more attention, more smiles and ‘thumbs up’ than the Porsche did! I’m biased, and I do still have all my fillings.

Trip distance: 1608.4 miles
Fuel economy: 43 mpg (Ford Duratec 1.8L)
What we learned

- Everyone we met was friendly and spontaneously helpful, and, of course, the Morgan stimulated a lot of conversation.
- Signposting was always very good, and often exhaustingly comprehensive.
- On most days we spotted at least one mobile speed camera.
- We filled up mostly at Topaz, Maxol, or Inver petrol stations; there was none of my favourite BP or Tesco Momentum (and, despite this, the engine ran as well as ever).
- Morgans are scarce here, and we learned that second-hand Morgans are like hens’ teeth.
- The Guinness seemed lighter and smoother than I remember it from 20 years ago.

Roger and Carole Gibson

MEMORY LANE

The photograph below was taken at a Wessex Centre event within the last five years. What, and where, is the event? If you have a better memory than me you might even manage to say what year it was, and even what month!

(answer: bottom of page 20)
CONTINENTAL TOURING
Learning the Hard way

After fifty years of driving Morgans of most types, both in the UK and abroad, you would have thought there wasn’t much more to learn. Last year’s trip across France to Italy and back in our 4/4 1600TC was to prove otherwise!

A three-week trip, 3,000 miles plus, was planned and our car was scheduled for a serious partial rebuild and paint before we went. Always allow plenty of time for preparation, but needless to say our car arrived back from this extensive work much later than expected, but with a month to go, so no problem! Carrying out all the usual mechanical servicing work, a fast run down the bypass was undertaken to warm the oils for a routine change . . . then the speedometer stopped working. After the oil changes, investigation showed the cable had broken between the gearbox drive and the little intermediate gearbox that TC models use to correct the cable speed to the speedometer head. After a fight to get this apart, (did your know that one side of this little gearbox has a left hand thread?), I discovered that the broken cable had in addition seized solid and stripped the little right angle drive gearbox on the side of the ‘Abarth’ 5-speed gearbox. This was not exactly in the most accessible position, so I abandoned my DIY attempts for repair and returned our 4/4 to Tim Ayres of ‘New Elms’ with a plea for help in view of the time scale for our holiday. Thanks to Tim and his persistence with the parts suppliers, the car was returned fully operational just 2 days before our departure, so I wasn’t able to do as full a check of everything as I normally would.

We set off across France in the most diabolical weather, torrential rain, spray, poor visibility - all of which continued for 5 days. This was then repeated on the journey back through France when it rained continually for another 4 days and the Louvre was evacuated because of floods, and the roads around the Loire became impassable. During these periods many basic principles of Morgan travel were brought back to us . . .

1) All Morgans leak to some extent. This varies from the occasional drip (normal UK rain) to absolutely soaking (French continuous rain).
2) Maps and travel documents left on the floor get very wet indeed.
3) Holiday luggage planned to be carried on the rack in normal conditions, has to be carried inside, and is extremely difficult to extract with the hood up, even from the relatively capacious interior of a 4-seater, and it’s not made any easier by water pouring down the back of your neck.
4) Morgan bonnets leak, so rain is deposited all over ignition systems, and can lead to mis-firing, . . . all of which is extremely difficult to fix in continuous torrential rain.
5) When dealing with 4) above it is easy to run out of WD40, and the Swiss don’t understand what it is; then when you track down an equivalent they won’t accept payment in anything other than Swiss francs (we didn’t have any by this time).
6) Also when dealing with the problems in 4) check everything . . . a stalled, non-starting motor was finally cured during a brief respite in the rain, when the distributor top on my Fiat TC held on with screws, could be removed and finally, properly dried out.
7) In preparation for much driving in wet conditions, ensure that the wiper blades are adjusted so they don’t hit the screen frame. Adjust demister ducts so they demist the screen in front of the driver . . . my blanking pieces had been removed and not replaced from the rebuild. Ensure heater can be shut off to fully cold for driving in very wet humid conditions, when the entire inside of the car is misted up!

I eventually got the car operating properly following an amusing incident at a French hotel, where a final problem with the car not pulling well at top revs was cured by changing the fuel filter. Again in continuous rain the proprietor fixed a sun umbrella under the bonnet at the side of the engine block so I could work in relatively dry conditions! Unfortunately we didn’t manage to get a photo of this bizarre situation.

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Our expedition continued to teach us yet more about continental touring . . .

a)  When lost, and not very fluent with the local language, the two best options for help are receptionists at big hotels, or pharmacists who by the nature of their trade (chemistry) have to speak English.

b)  Travelling on ordinary roads rather than the autoroutes in France is fine; they are well sign-posted and the road number clearly displayed. The same certainly does not apply in northern Italy; you end up driving through endless industrial areas on the outskirts of town and it is very easy to get lost.

c)  When travelling in convoy with someone in a modern car who is navigating, make sure they realise how long it takes to get a Morgan through a toll booth on an autoroute. Because the toll booth is on the wrong side of the car, even with the hood down you or your passenger have to get out to deal with the toll machine; it all takes time, and by then your leader may have disappeared into the distance!

d)  Always make sure to obtain a ticket entering a péage section of the autoroute, even if a preceding lorry has knocked off the barrier and you can drive through; otherwise this will always cause complications at the next toll.

e)  English credit/debit cards don’t always work at continental filling stations, wherever possible fill up at a station with an attendant.

f)  Roads over Alpine passes leading from Switzerland to Italy are sometimes still blocked with snow well into May and are certainly not passable with the likes of a classic sports car such as a Morgan. When faced with this problem, seek local help as in a) above who will direct you over the passes, using a local train!

g)  Over enthusiastic Italians trying to help you erect the hood are definitely something to be avoided at all costs, even if it means hurting their feelings a little.

Having said all this we wouldn’t have missed the trip for anything but I am personally very wary of tackling France again!

photo: Nev Lear

Nev Lear
AUGUST
Sunday 6 August    Treasure Hunt and Noggin
We will meet at 4.00pm on Sunday, 6th August at the Main House, Cricket St Thomas. Follow the signs from the A30 down the private road. At the bottom turn left and follow the signs to the Historic Reception area outside the Main House recognized by most people as the setting for the TV programme "To The Manor Born". Members will be able to use the facilities at the cafe in the house and, if they wish, partake of some refreshment at the cafe before they set off on the Hunt. Afterwards, we will meet, hopefully, at the destination where there will be a wide selection of food that members can choose from as they wish.

Members who would like to join in either on the Treasure Hunt or afterwards should get in touch with Jane and Rob Pring on 01460 72146 or 078333540082 or email pringrob@aol.com

Sunday 13 August
Crown and Victoria, Tintinhull Car Show
4pm- 7pm
Contact the Crown and Victoria if you want to go.

Sunday 20 August 11.00 - 14.30
Thornfalcon Classic Car Show
Just turn up. No need to book. We have 30 club spaces reserved

SEPTEMBER
Wednesday 13 September
Noggin: Flintlock, Marsh

OCTOBER
Thursday 12 October
Noggin: Crown & Victoria

Wednesday 18 October
Factory tour 11.00am.

NOVEMBER
Tuesday 7 November
Noggin: Lime Kiln, Long Sutton

Saturday 18 November
Anniversary Dinner and Awards - Lanes, East Coker
Details TBA

Date TBA November
Sunday lunch. Eddie is organising at Stoke St Mary
DECEMBER

Wednesday 6 December
Noggin: Flintlock, Marsh

OTHER EVENTS NOT PART OF OUR PROGRAM THIS YEAR BUT MAY BE OF INTEREST TO OUR MEMBERS

Sunday 1 October    Brooklands Morgan Day    Website  www.brooklandsmuseum.com

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Morgan Sports Car Club Wessex Centre

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BRISTOL CLASSIC CAR SHOW

Well-done, Mendip Centre, with the ‘Best in Show’ award for the Series 1 displayed on their stand this year.

photo: John Robinson

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