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"MOLLY", MY MORRIS 9

Lean see you questioning my heading "Morris 9?" You will have heard of a Morris six, eight, ten, twelve and many others but NOT a nine" but stay with me, all will be revealed.

In the past I have owned a very nice Morris eight two seater, a 10/4 with dickie seat, and a sports bodied Empire all with open bodies. I love the feeling of driving along, wind in hair enjoying the countryside and that feeling of exhilaration it brings. There is one downside however, particularly here in Wales – RAIN! Now SWMBO although very tolerant, made it known that trying to shelter under a golf umbrella was no substitute for a "tin roof" and as both of us are well on the wrong side of seventy I was reluctantly inclined to agree.

I like to keep an eye on the Pre-war car market, always looking for something different although not wanting to stray from my favourite marque, the Morris! In this vein I spotted an advertisement a year or so ago for a very interesting car that warranted further investigation.



Designed in 1937 for the 1940 Car Show, this particular vehicle was an interesting mishmash of existing Morris components with a liberal sprinkling of technical advancement unheard of on the average pre-war car. True to the practice of the day, the backbone of our car is the chassis, in this case fully boxed with tubular cross members. The suspension, traditional semi-elliptical springs at the rear but on the front, fully independent with coil springs and anti-roll bar, both dampened with hydraulic shock absorbers. (The independent front suspension I understand, was intended for the Morris 10 but



dropped because of cost).

The steering, again strayed from the norm in that it is rack and pinion, very common today of course, but practically unheard of in the late 1930s. This super light and very positive system makes this car a joy to drive. The steering column is also adjustable for length by some three inches, a boon to anyone of ample proportions.

The brakes follow the traditional Morris practice with a Lockheed hydraulic system. This operating on nine inch drums with twin leading shoes on the front and single leading shoes on the rear. The hand brake is cable operated on the rear.

The engine is a modified Morris 10 over head valve unit driving through a four speed gearbox via a eight inch Borg and Beck dry clutch. This in turn drives a Hypoid rear axle to fifteen inch pressed steel wheels.

The cooling system is pump assisted and incorporates a thermostat with a by-pass. As an aside, I had overheating

problems with my engine and discovered that the original type thermostat that incorporated a sleeve to open up or close off the by-pass had been replaced with a "standard" waxstat type. This left the by-pass permanently open so that the coolant only circulated around the engine block and not through the radiator. I discovered that original type thermostats were as rare as hens' teeth so modified the system. I made up a blanking plate to fit between the thermostat housing

and the by-pass pipe, drilling a one eighth of an inch hole through the blanking plate to allow air to bleed through the system. I also drilled a one eighth inch hole through the flange of the thermostat and fitted it with a split pin "Jiggler" to prevent air locks in the engine block. Problem solved...! The body of the car is a modified Morris 8 Series E four door sliding head saloon. The interior is leather and retains that air of luxury with the associated and unmistakable aroma of pre and early post war cars. The dash and associated interior wood trim is polished mahogany complimented with a full instrument array. A heater was an optional extra but in common with many cars of the era the cockpit is warmed by the gentle flow of hot air permeating through the many "vents" between the engine and passenger compartments.

Being all steel construction the car weighs in at 20cwt. 3qr. (1054 kg) so with a relatively small one and a quarter litre





engine performance is not startling. It will still achieve the National speed limit - eventually, but is more comfortable around the 50 mph mark. At any speed it is a joy to drive particularly on A and B roads although it is equally at home on a duel carriageway or motorway. The independent suspension means that it sticks to the road like the proverbial and the rack and pinion steering ensures that it goes exactly where it is pointed.

The electrics are 12 volt fed by a standard dynamo and controlled by a two bobbin regulator. The battery located within the engine compartment is contained in a metal box with a mica insulated lid held closed by two over centre catches. Twin Windtone horns give a very robust warning if needed and the "Cyclops" passing light that little extra illumination on dark nights. The original semaphore indicators have been fitted with flashing festoon bulbs and supplemented with modern flashing lamps via a two bulb modification in the sidelights and stand alone amber lights to the rear.

The car also has the advantage of an integrated four ram hydraulic jacking system – a boon to those who, like me, find it increasingly difficult to crawl underneath.

During a relatively short production run of only six years, just 8336 of these cars were produced, of these 6131 were the early production saloons, 904 were open tourers and 1301 (of which mine is one) were the later updated and final production saloons.

By this point, dear reader, you will undoubtedly guessed Molly's true identity, but let me just summarise. She has a Morris 8 Series E body and a Morris 10 engine and transmission so technically she is neither a Morris 10 nor Morris 8 but something in-between, and as the only thing between 8 and ten is nine – SHE MUST BE A MORRIS 9! unless of course, you know better...! Cyril Ridley





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