

MOG LOG



SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 2024

The only car club in the area devoted to a car currently built by Britons, for a manufacturer owned and managed partially by Britons.....THE British car club!

**PRESIDENT
EDITOR
TREASURER
MEMBERSHIP CHRMN.**

Judi Boyles
8422 Garland Road
Dallas, TX. 75218-4333
214/321-1648

secretarytexmog@att.net

WEB ADDRESS:

www.TEXMOG.COM

MORGAN MOTOR CAR CLUB

REGALIA
Jeff Smith
2720 Wexford
Plano, TX. 75093
jsmith6844@gmail.com

HISTORIAN
Bill Boyles
8422 Garland Road
Dallas, TX. 75218-4333
214/321-1648

wmj3@att.net



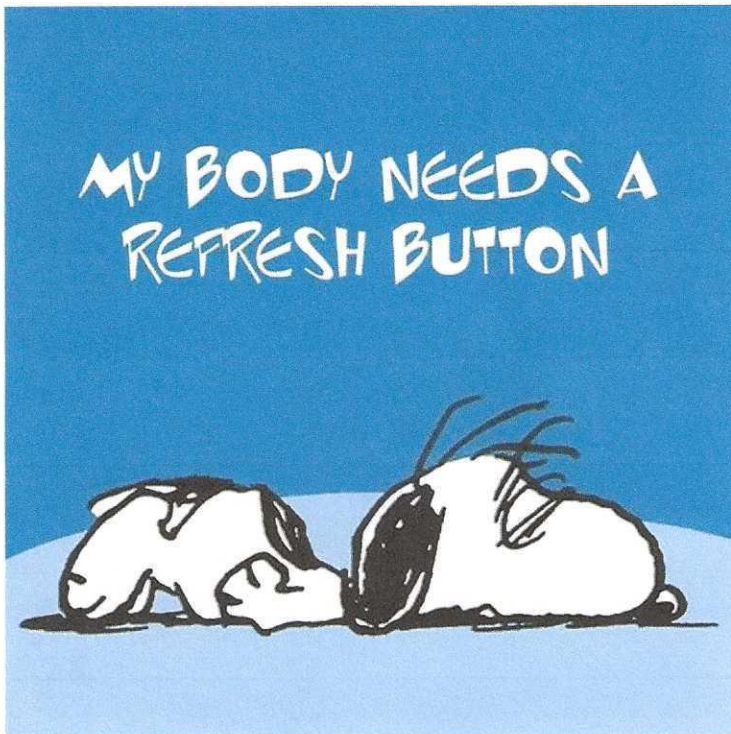
YOU NEVER REALLY
LEARN TO SWEAR UNTIL
YOU LEARN TO DRIVE.

To steal ideas from
one person is
plagiarism, to steal
from many is
research.



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RUNNING ON



OVER AND OUT!

Check the website, www.texmog.com

Remember our next NOGGIN' and NATTER is SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14TH at THERED TRUCK CAFÉ in PLANO.

PLEASE R.S.V.P. FOR THE PARTY ON DECEMBER 8TH!



MORGANS...ROAD CANDY!

MMCC CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NOTE: New entries and revisions are in italic type

Entries in bold type are official MMCC events

Check the Calendar entries often for changes of dates, events and other alterations or updates

2025- Have an idea for an event you would like to put on for MMCC, pick a date, a time, a place and send me an email at: secretarytexmog@att.net.

MEETINGS

Dec. 14th Red Truck Café
Sat. 10am monthly meeting

EVENTS

Dec. 8th MMCC / NTAHC joint Christmas party
Sun. 1pm See flyer in newsletter

News of further events will be welcome.





NORTH TEXAS AUSTIN HEALEY CLUB

Welcomes Our Friends

MORGAN MOTOR CAR CLUB

For

Fellowship, Food and Festivities

The Christmas Party

Sunday, December 8th at 1:00 pm

at: Ed & Lisa Canada

11527 Clipper Circle

Frisco, TX 75036

Delicious Traditional Holiday Meats and Fixings will be provided

Please Bring Your Favorite Dish to Share! B.Y.O.B

New This Year: Bring a gift (+ or - \$20.00) Receive a Gift

Please R.S.V.P. by November 30th _____

NTAHC: Barbie Bucy call/text (817) 480-4831

EM: stuckonbarbie@gmail.com

MMCC: Jeff Podmers call (817)625-2061

EM: jeff.bev50@gmail.com

Here's to ano

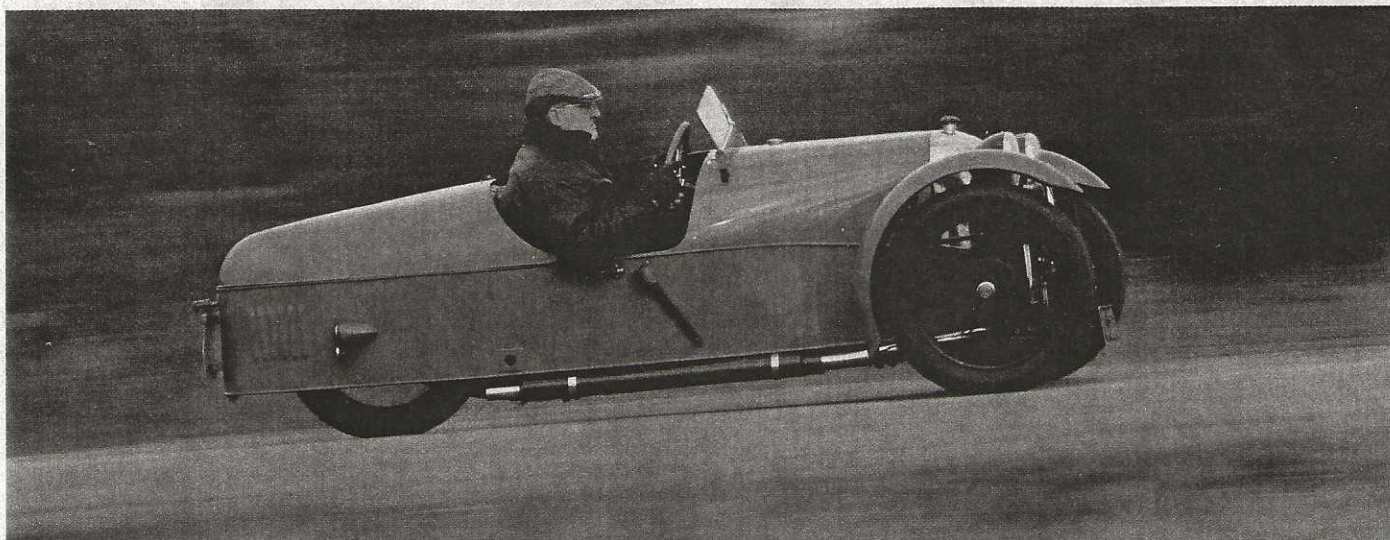


ther century



*For 100 years Morgan has pursued
its own unique approach to building
lightweight sports cars.
With centenary fever imminent,
now's the time to try one*

WORDS MIKE GOODBUN PHOTOGRAPHY CHARLIE MAGEE



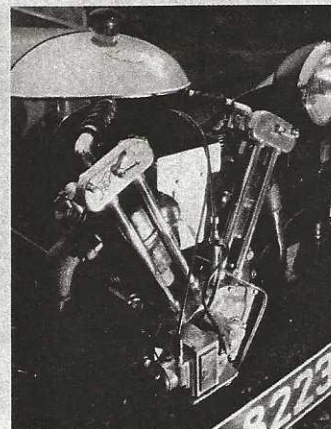
Insect-like Super Sports Aero was dubbed by Morgan 'a very demon on wheels' and came with a certificate attesting it would do 80mph

THERE'S NO other word for it – Morgan is an anomaly. In an industry where cutting edge technology and fashion dictates the future, it's made its name by sticking to traditional methods and having a healthy disregard for fads. It doesn't seem concerned by what other sports car manufacturers are up to, because even if it *did* Morgan would still choose to go its own way.

Since 1909 these single-minded vehicles have defied the odds: from a rector's son's determination to go car manufacturing alone, to three-wheelers outpacing Bentleys at Brooklands, and the fact that you can still buy a fundamentally Thirties car brand new today. Since Morgan's inception there have been two world wars, two global financial crises, and a systematic erosion of the British car industry. Yet Morgan is still going, in the same family's ownership, and – for the last 89-and-a-bit years – from the same compact Pickersleigh Road site in Malvern Link, Worcestershire. It must be doing something right.

Malvern garage owner Henry Frederick Stanley (HFS) Morgan was aged 28 when he built the prototype Morgan Runabout with engineering help from the great-grandsons of steam railway pioneer George Stephenson, and John Black, who was knighted in 1943 and later became chairman of Standard-Triumph. The skeletal three-wheeled machine featured a 7hp Peugeot V-twin engine, independent front suspension and a 90bhp-per-tonne power-to-weight ratio. It took a year to build – and as soon as it was finished Morgan's friends wanted one too.

Black's input centred on the front suspension design, introducing an arrangement that still supports the front wheels of today's Morgans, except the Aero 8. Despite popular myth, it's *not* of sliding pillar type, but should be referred to as a sliding axle. Crucially, the vertical pillar that supports each stub axle is attached to rigid chassis links at both ends – it doesn't slide at



1930 Morgan Super Sports Aero

Engine 1096cc, V-twin, ohv per bank, twin-choke carburettor **Power** 40bhp @ 4200rpm **Transmission** Two-speed manual, rear-wheel chain-drive **Brakes** Drums front and rear **Suspension** Front: independent, sliding axle, coil springs, hydraulic dampers. Rear: swing arm, quarter-elliptic leaf springs, friction dampers **Steering** Direct with reduction gear **Weight** 300kg (660lb) **Performance** Top speed: 80mph **Fuel consumption** 45mpg **Cost new** £150 **Value now** £35,000

all. The stub axle is simply sandwiched between stiff springs on the pillar (one acting in bump, one in rebound), which allow it to slide up and down with the movement of the wheel. That's it. There was only around an inch of suspension travel, and no dampers were fitted to road cars until the Super Sports Aero of 1927.

By the end of 1910, and with financial backing from his father, the Runabout was being offered for sale with V-twin JAP power. And a fledgling retail emporium called Harrods became the first Morgan dealer. Yes, *that* Harrods.

Two years later, with overwhelming demand thanks to the tie-up with the Knightsbridge store – and the development of two-seater models – Morgan & Co's garage on Worcester Road, Malvern Link, became the Morgan Motor Company.

As early as 1921 buyers attracted by the lightweight, low-tax, fuel-efficient Morgan, were having to wait a year for theirs to be completed. That element of Morgan

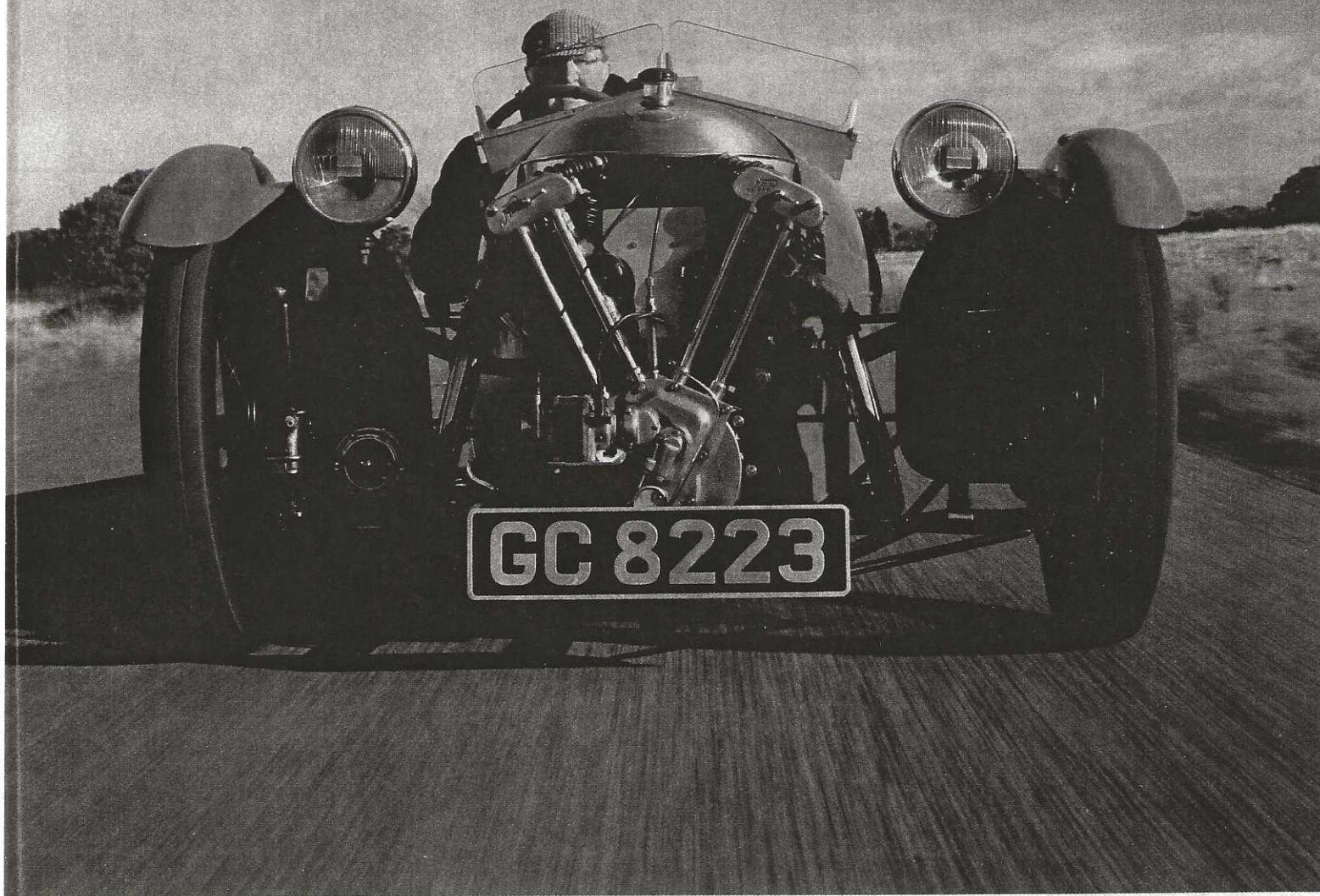
ownership reached its peak in the Eighties (when else?) when the deposit-to-delivery window grew to eight years – long enough for more than one would-be rival manufacturer to complete the born-to-bankruptcy cycle.

HFS was an advocate of the 'racing improves (and sells) the breed' philosophy, and in 1927 the ultimate roadgoing embodiment of that arrived: the Super Sports Aero, a 60mm lower, higher-performance version of the standard Aero three-wheeler.

The Super Sports traded on Morgan's racing successes with a clear purpose – speed. The brochure stated: 'We can honestly claim that it is not only the fastest three-wheeler in the world but that its performance is better than that of any car costing three times the price. Here is a car destined to break all previous records for automobiles of its class – a very demon on wheels.'

Powered initially by a water-cooled JAP (JA Prestwich) 10/40 V-twin, then a range of air-cooled or water-cooled Matchless MX units from 1933-39, every £150 Super Sports came

WITH TWO SPEEDS, NO REVERSE AND NO SPARE WHEEL, IN THE ECHELONS OF EXTREME MORGANISM THIS IS THE PINNACLE



MORGAN DEVOTION

A GREAT sense of community is one reason why Morgan has succeeded where others have failed and why owners have no qualms about driving their three-wheeler, for example, to Denmark, Germany, Holland, or the Czech Republic, as Bob Derricott has. The mad cars and (madder) Englishmen ethos typifies Morgan ownership, and is why you'll find Morgans have entered virtually every motoring challenge going. London-Sydney Marathon? Check. Peking-Paris? Check. Carrera Panamericana? Check. You get the picture...

And what other manufacturer engenders such devotion among owners that it devotes a whole section of *its* website to photos of *their* cars? See the Photo Gallery section at www.morgan-motor.co.uk

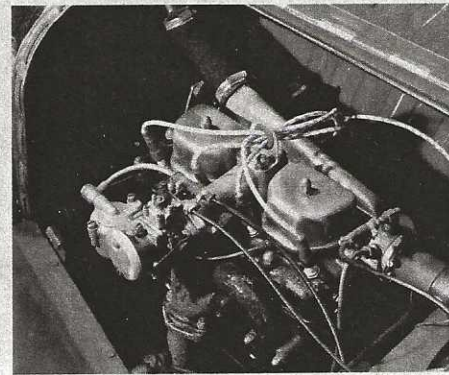
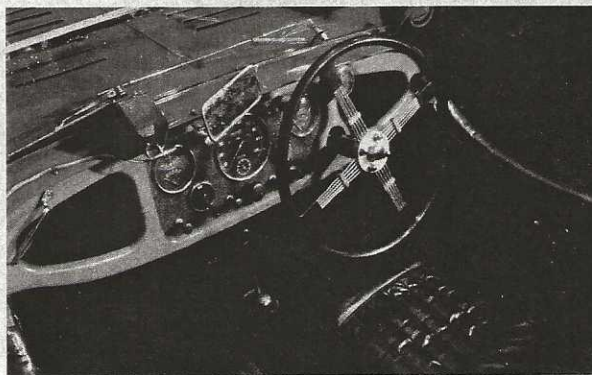
The spirit of Morgan shines through in these snaps:

- 1 David and Amelia Potts' Moggie in Switzerland**
- 2 Morgan trio at the Simplon Pass, Switzerland**
- 3 Newlyweds Bart and Simone from Holland**
- 4 Morgan touring in South Africa**





Torquey Morgan 4-4 added a fourth wheel and established the Morgan look and structure – steel chassis bearing an ash frame covered with metal panels



1939 Morgan 4-4

Engine 1122cc, in-line four-cylinder, overhead inlet valve/side exhaust valve, single Solex carburettor **Power and torque** 34bhp @ 4500rpm; 52lb ft @ 5200rpm **Transmission** Four-speed manual, rear-wheel drive **Brakes** Drums front and rear **Suspension** Front: independent, sliding axle, coil springs, telescopic dampers. Rear: live axle, semi-elliptic leaf springs, friction dampers **Steering** Burman worm-and-nut **Weight** 685kg (1512lb) **Performance** Top speed: 74mph; 0-60mph: 28.4sec **Fuel consumption** 35mpg **Cost new** £210 **Value now** £15,000

with a certificate stating it would do 80mph. In the right hands, racing versions topped 115mph.

A rapid pace of development, in particular to counter the threat from Austin's diminutive Seven, saw two-speed cars supplanted by three-speeders (with luxuries such as reverse). Detachable wheels replaced those that couldn't be taken off without major dismantling, and a change to barrel-shaped rear styling was phased in from 1934 to house a spare wheel that you now took with you.

Bob Derricott's magnificent beetle-back Super Sports Aero is a 1930 JAP-engined model – the two-speed, no reverse, no spare wheel one. In the echelons of extreme Morganism this is the pinnacle.

The unfamiliarity of its configuration, with all the major mechanical parts on show, entices you to spend hours studying it before attempting to get in. With rockers doing the cancan on each cylinder bank it seems alive – more like an insect than a car.

Lowering yourself in, you end up barely eight inches from the ground, huddled close to your fellow occupant with just the vee windscreen to protect you from the elements. It's not to everyone's taste, as Derricott

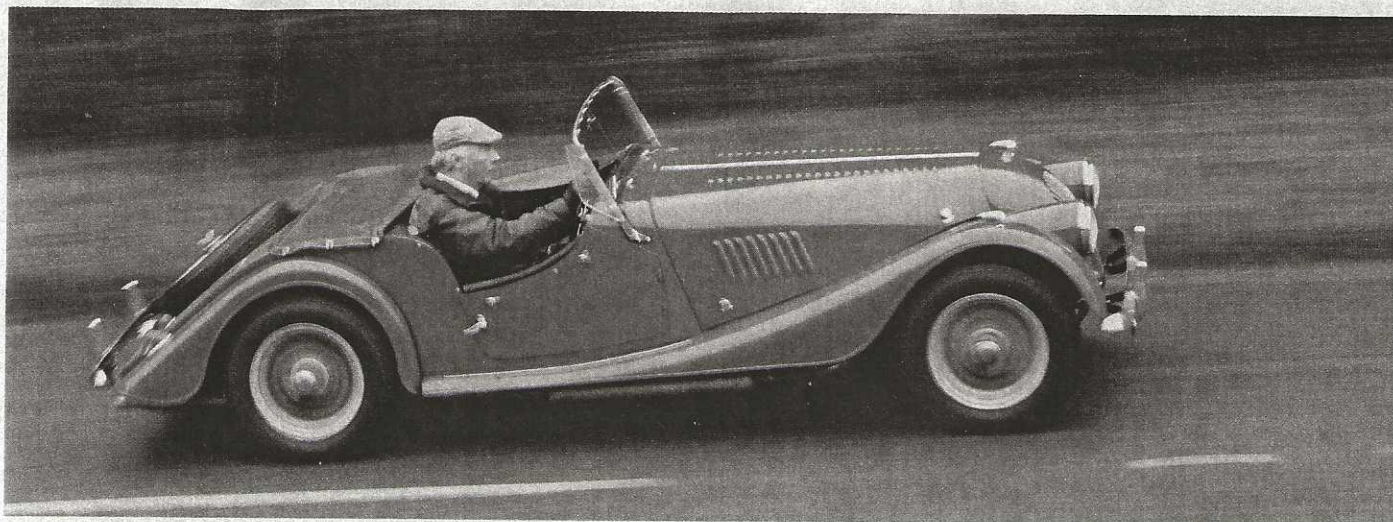
recalls: 'Its first owner was a musician in a dance band, who told a tale of meeting a girl at a party. She got very excited when she heard he had a car... He got as far as the first corner with the girl, his saxophone and a music stand in it before she "volunteered" to get out.'

Driving this car is a convention-defying challenge. The throttle is a lever on the steering wheel, alongside mixture and ignition controls; the foot brake originally operated the rear wheel brake, the handbrake the front wheel brakes (although Derricott's, like many others, has been adapted to switch those operations around) and to change gear you tug an external lever to move between two differently geared chains driving the rear wheel. Then there's the oil flow: the JAP has a constant-loss lubrication system, fed from a two-gallon tank. The driver adjusts the flow using a knob on a sight gauge on the dash – around 20 drops per minute is ideal.

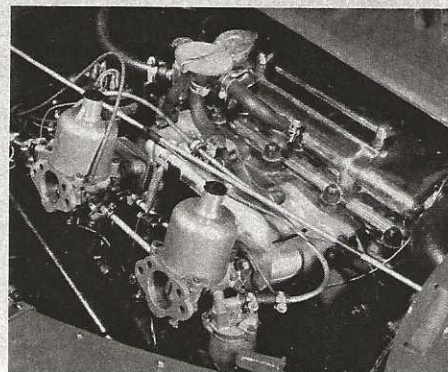
Get your head round all that and you'll soon be hitting a steady 45mph cruise, the wind battering your forehead, and a rhythmic 'putt-putt' from the straight underslung exhaust pipes. You're conscious of a lack of wheels at the back, but it doesn't feel unstable. That said, I'm not volunteering to top 100mph in one.

You're looking at £25,000-35,000 for a good Super Sports Aero, but even the Morgan Three Wheeler Club reckons 'prices have gone silly' lately. Club chairman Brian Clutterbuck says: 'You could buy a brand new V6 Roadster for the same money as this car.' Joining the club before buying is essential as it will help you assess whether any car you're considering is a good buy. It also holds an extensive stock of mechanical parts, underlining the level of support owners can enjoy. Clutterbuck says: 'Practically everything is available, either through the club or from specialists. You can even get new JAP, Matchless or Blackburne engines made – for around £15,000 – although it's unusual to have to go to that extreme.'

Morgan's original design had served it well (and continued to do so until the outbreak of war in 1939) but in 1933 it introduced the Model F, with four-cylinder sidevalve Ford power and simpler controls such as a foot-operated brake pedal acting on all three wheels simultaneously – fancy that. Its more conventional car-like styling, with an enclosed engine behind the front wheels and headed by a flat-fronted, arched radiator, set the template for future Morgans. But by now buyers wanted four wheels, and for 1936



Long louvred bonnet, running boards, big four-spoke steering wheel – sound familiar? Sixties curved-rad cars like the Plus 4 made a virtue of nostalgia



1968 Morgan Plus 4

Engine 2138cc, in-line four-cylinder, ohv, two SU carburetors **Power and torque** 104bhp @ 4700rpm; 132lb ft @ 3000rpm **Transmission** Four-speed manual, rear-wheel drive **Brakes** Discs front, drums rear **Suspension** Front: independent, sliding axle, coil springs, telescopic dampers. Rear: live axle, semi-elliptic leaf springs, lever-arm dampers **Steering** Cam-and-peg **Weight** 838kg (1848lb) **Performance** Top speed: 110mph; 0-60mph: 9sec **Fuel consumption** 22-25mpg **Cost new** £816 **Value now** £24,000

Morgan obliged, with the 4-4 (four cylinders, four wheels), often called the flat-rad because of its flat radiator.

The 4-4's structure consists of two longitudinal Z-section steel chassis rails and inverted U-section crossmembers, with an ash frame bolted to them and clad in steel body panels. Substitute selected steel panels with aluminium after 1945 and this method of construction applies right through to 2008 roadsters. Says Morgan main dealer Richard Thorne: 'At shows we always get asked: "Do they still have a wooden chassis?" Morgans have *never* had a wooden chassis, only Marcos can be said to have had one – and even that was a monocoque.'

Under the bonnet sits a diminutive 1122cc Coventry Climax, as used in Triumph's Southern Cross. Its 34bhp doesn't sound much, neither does 52lb ft of torque, but with less than 700kg to pull it's torquey enough for the 4-4 to outpace the Triumph. Maintaining a strong torque-to-weight ratio has been one of Morgan's longest held rules of engagement.

Getting in is far harder than the three-wheeler, and you wonder how you're going to fit your legs around that broad four-spoke

Continues on page 48



AMERICAN BUYERS LOVED THE MORGAN, OFFERING IT A LIFELINE, AND THEY STILL DO TODAY



100 years of Morgan in motor sport



Nearly 60 miles in an hour

In 1912 *Cyclecar* magazine offered a silver trophy for

whoever held the one-hour cyclecar distance record by the year's end, and HFS Morgan was determined it would be his. Easily fastest in a race at Brooklands on November 9, but trounced within the week, he clinched the trophy two weeks later, covering 59 miles and 1120 yards in an hour in a three-wheeled Runabout – tantalisingly shy of the magic 60mph figure, but just in time to give sales a boost at that year's Motorcycle Show.



Three wheels good

Morgan three-wheelers proved exceptionally quick on hill climb

courses and race tracks, even against four-wheeled opposition. Gwenda Hawkes was the queen of Morgan three-wheeler racing: in 1930 she set 76 world records at Montlhéry in France, ultimately topping 115mph with her JAP-engined Super Sports. Pictured above, Arthur Maskell negotiates a chicane during the 1928 Cyclecar Grand Prix at Brooklands.



Tested to the limit

The *other* hill climbing discipline, trialling, has always been a staple of Morgan motor sport

– with the exception of the Aero 8. Here, HFS and wife Ruth tackle a challenging section of the 1926 Derbyshire Trial in an Aero three-wheeler. Note the weights strapped to the rear bodywork in a bid to improve traction of the single driven wheel.



Don't judge a book...

Denied an entry at the 1961 Le Mans 24-hours for looking too old

fashioned, a Triumph TR-engined Plus 4 Super Sports, TOK 258, became the most famous of all Morgan competition cars when Chris Lawrence and Richard Shepherd-Barron finished the 1962 French classic race first in the two-litre GT class, 13th of 18 finishers. A broken exhaust was the sole issue encountered, and their only opposition, a French AC Ace, retired after five hours.

RUNNING BOARD-EQUIPPED MORGANS SEEMED PREHISTORIC – IT WAS A CRITICAL TIME



SLR – not a Mercedes

Morgan ace Chris Lawrence and works BMC rally

star John Sprinzel joined forces in 1964 to create the special-bodied 130mph-plus SLR (Sprinzel LawrenceTune Racing) for international GT competition. Of the four cars built, three used Plus 4 chassis, the other a Triumph TR4. It was a major threat to Porsche's purpose-built 904 GTS, but development was curtailed after Lawrence suffered serious internal injuries as a passenger in a car accident in France later that year.

A class of their own

In 1985 Rick Bourne, Richard Casswell, Jack Bellinger and Andy Downes founded a one-make race series, the Morgan Challenge. Today the friendly (yet highly competitive) series includes five classes, mainly contested by V8-powered cars, but open to four-cylinder models and a special category for identical factory-built V6 Roadster Lightweights. See www.mogsport.net



Malvern takes on the world

'Big Blue' the 1997 Plus 8 GTR was an extreme

development of Charles Morgan's 1994 Plus 8 race car, and formed the basis of the Aero 8. Designed to compete against Porsche 911s and Chrysler Vipers in the GT2 class of the FIA GT Championship, it featured an aluminium honeycomb chassis and 400bhp five-litre Rover V8. It proved unreliable and aerodynamically challenged compared to the opposition – its best result was 13th in class (27th overall) at the Sebring 3-hours.

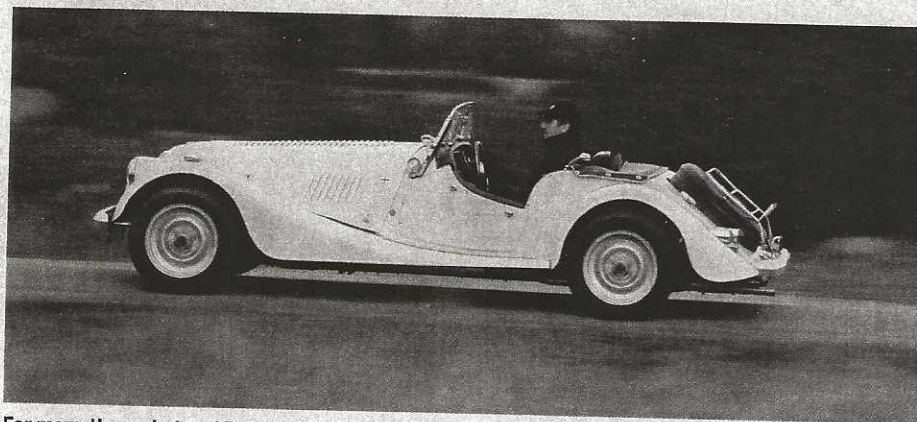


24 heures du Mans, part deux

Morgan returned to Le Mans in 2002 with the DeWalt-

sponsored Aero 8 GTN, driven by Richard Stanton, Steve Hyde and Richard Hay. After 17 hours of running the engine failed, but two years later the silver and blue works Aero 8 was back at La Sarthe with Hyde, Neil Cunningham and Adam Sharpe. It ran out of fuel, needed two new radiators and was out of action so long it didn't cover enough distance to be classified as a finisher – but it *did* cross the line 24 hours after the start.

ALL MORGANS WILL MAKE YOU SMILE - THEY'RE BASIC, NO-FRILLS WEEKEND BLASTERS AND PERFECT FOR THAT



For many the archetypal British gentleman's sports car, the Plus 8 combined olde-worlde charm with real grunt by uniting traditional Morgan looks with a feisty Buick-derived Rover V8 engine



1988 Morgan Plus 8

Engine 3532cc, V8, ohv, electronic fuel injection **Power and torque** 192bhp @ 5280rpm; 220lb ft @ 4000rpm
Transmission Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive **Brakes** Discs front, drums rear **Suspension** Front: independent, sliding axle, coil springs, telescopic dampers. Rear: live axle, semi-elliptic leaf springs, lever-arm dampers **Steering** Rack-and-pinion **Weight** 887kg (1955lb) **Performance** Top speed: 122mph; 0-60mph: 6.1sec
Fuel consumption 20mpg **Cost new** £17,700 **Value now** £20,000

steering wheel. Once you have, it rests a few inches from your chest, your forehead similarly close to the windscreen, and your right arm forced outside in true gung-ho fashion. Positive camber on the front wheels gives light, if vague, responses from the worm-and-nut steering, which has you sawing at the wheel enthusiastically from minimal speeds.

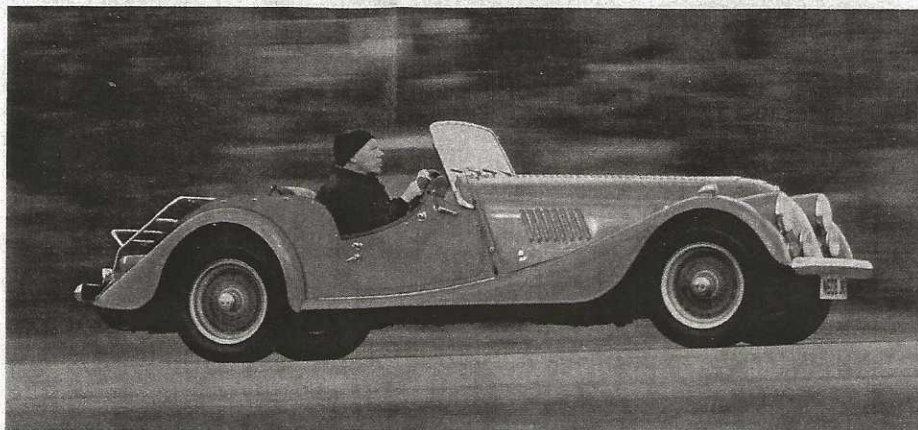
The buzzy Climax motor is mated to a four-speed Meadows gearbox with synchromesh on the top two ratios and a tricky inverted shift pattern: first is where you'd expect to find third, top where you'd normally select second. Let the clutch up and there's instant eagerness, followed by boundless momentum – like the insect has turned into a terrier.

Early 4-4s like this are harder work than later models, but rarity adds a premium – expect to pay close to £20,000 for a good one.

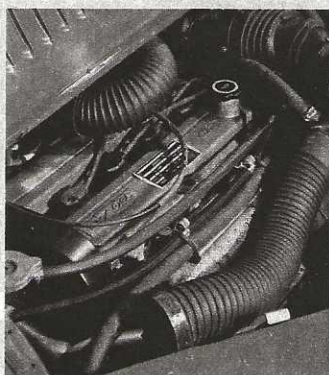
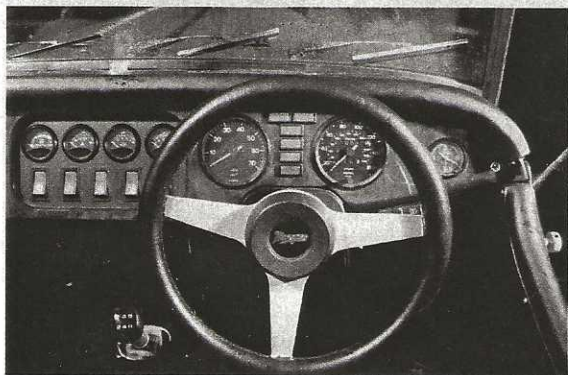
In the search for more power, HFS experimented with a 2.2-litre Ford flat-head V8 under the 4-4's bonnet, but settled on the two-litre four-cylinder unit from the Standard Vanguard (where Sir John Black was now chief executive), creating the 1951 Plus 4. Morgan naming convention thereafter puts higher performance Plus 4 models above the regular 4/4s. With a 100mm longer wheelbase, 50mm wider track, revised suspension and hydraulic rather than cable-operated brakes, the Morgan had started to grow up.

From December 1953 the instantly recognisable cowled-radiator Morgan face developed, more down to dwindling supplies of stand-alone headlights and suitable radiators than anything else. Some thought it looked too effeminate, but Triumph engines

Celebrate 100 years of Morgan



Morgan has made cars bearing the 4/4 name for more than 70 years – an unparalleled feat that has earned the car a place in the Guinness World Records book



1996 Morgan 4/4

Engine 1796cc, in-line four-cylinder, dohc, electronic fuel injection **Power and torque** 121bhp @ 6000rpm; 115lb ft @ 4500rpm **Transmission** Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive **Brakes** Discs front, drums rear **Suspension** Front: independent, sliding axle, coil springs, telescopic dampers. Rear: live axle, semi-elliptic leaf springs, lever-arm dampers **Steering** Rack-and-pinion **Weight** 840kg (1850lb) **Performance** Top speed: 111mph; 0-60mph: 7.8sec **Fuel consumption** 25mpg **Cost new** £16,256 **Value now** £17,000

from successive TR models allied to refined aerodynamics continued to up performance, and the USA offered a new world of sales.

Peter Morgan, HFS's son, took control of the firm from 1957 (two years before his father died) and continued the established 'stay small-scale' strategy. But by the end of the mid-Sixties – when the sleek MGA was considered old hat – the running-board-equipped Morgan seemed prehistoric. It was a critical time for the company.

Racer Chris Lawrence had instigated a low-line body silhouette from 1962, the Super Sports, which perfected the traditional Morgan shape, but in a move arguably as bold as the later Aero 8 Peter Morgan drew up plans for a thoroughly modern Morgan: the 1964 glassfibre-bodied Plus 4 Plus coupé. Fusing Lotus Elite and Jaguar XK150 styling cues, slightly awkwardly, it was a capable but unloved distraction. Just 26 were built.

It's at this point that the appeal of Morgan seemed to shift: from outdated sports car to a sports car actively bought for nostalgia reasons. That doesn't mean the company stopped developing its products, but its focus shifted. Morgan was in a unique position, and bravely exploited it.

Few other manufacturers could boast such

a continuous or successful lineage, and you only need to look at short-lived copycats like Panther to see how much that means to Morgan's survival. 'They've always remained a family business – the factory, Malvern, the clubs – when the vast majority became too big, too plc-ed and answerable to the City,' says Richard Thorne. 'Morgan has a very British character, and is so highly regarded everywhere. I can't think of a single thing that has quite that appeal.'

Crucially, US buyers loved the traditional car then, offering it a lifeline, and they still do today, being the second largest market for new models after the UK.

Whether Plus 4 or 4/4, from Triumph TR, through Ford Kent crossflow, Fiat twin-cam, Ford CVH, to Rover M16/T16 (not the K-series) and Ford Zetec/Duratec motors, the basic Morgan four-cylinder thrills remain the same. Few drivers will struggle to get comfortable in one of these: the cabin is noticeably longer than Morgan's first four-wheeled offerings, and just switchgear and finishes separate them. Wood dashboards and broad, four-spoke steering wheels, like those of Mike Green's 1968 TR4-engined Plus 4, morphed into the black vinyl and thick-rimmed smaller-diameter wheel of the 1996

Ford Zetec-powered 4/4 we have here. All offer that atmospheric long louvred-bonnet view, with the curve of the headlight nacelles picking out its furthest extremity. And all will make you smile – they're basic, no-frills weekend blasters, and perfect for that.

The stiff sliding axle front suspension is still a feature, as is a bouncy live-axle rear, which can make finding a natural rhythm a struggle on poorly surfaced British roads, but equally makes them natural competition cars – particularly the Sixties Plus 4.

You make your choice based on budget, plus the anticipated reliability and noise of the powerplant. All four-cylinder 4/4s from the Fifties to the Nineties occupy the £12,000-18,000 territory, Fifties and Sixties Plus 4s more like £20,000-25,000. Only the 1.6-litre Ford CVH 4/4, not unkindly referred to as Coarse, Vibratory and Harsh, is a clunker, and the much-loved (raucous) 130bhp two-litre Fiat twin-cam Plus 4 was only produced from 1984-86.

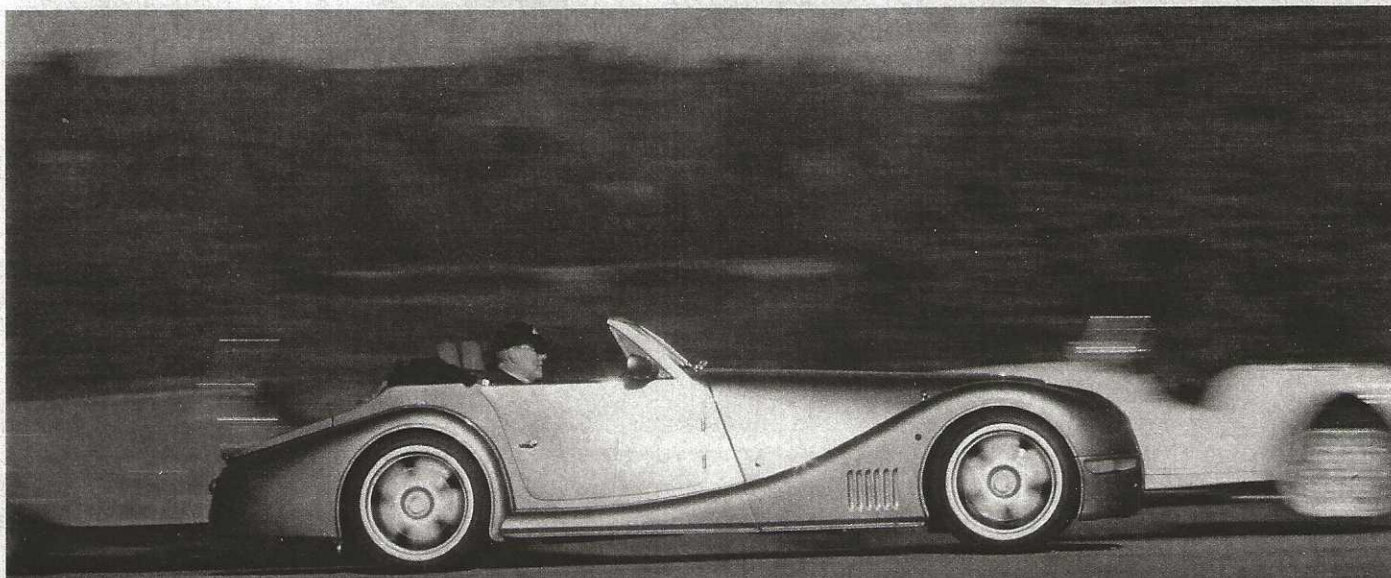
THERE IS, of course, one other traditional Morgan that deserves special mention: the Plus 8. Introduced as a replacement for the TR-powered Plus 4 in 1968, with 160bhp 3.5-litre carburettor-fed Rover V8 power, it remained in production until 2004, by which time it had a super-wide body, 4.6 litres, 220bhp and fuel-injection.

The Maurice Owen-developed car was an instant sensation, offering 0-90mph in 14.5sec – half a second quicker than a contemporary 4.2-litre Jaguar E-type – and at £1477, it was more than £600 cheaper too. Rolling Stone Mick Jagger had one, as did actor Peter Sellers.

Before 1972 the Plus 8 used the ponderous four-speed Moss gearbox, but Rover's own four- and five-speed 'boxes thereafter gave easier, if heavy and clunky, changes. Arguably the definitive Plus 8 is the late-Eighties 190bhp fuel-injected 3.5-litre version, like Nick Moody's car here, which also saw Morgan ditch worm-and-nut steering in favour of a sharper Jack Knight rack-and-pinion setup.

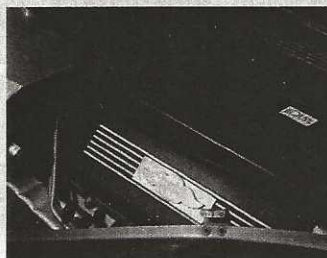
Again occupying £20,000-25,000 territory, it's hard to pass up the Plus 8. Every journey is accompanied by the Rover unit's irresistibly lazy V8 burble, devastating acceleration, and handling that's a dynamic leap over the worm-and-nut four-cylinders cars. Moody's ownership experience affirms the Plus 8's legendary status: 'I had a two-seater 4/4 before, but the kids' legs got too long for that, so I bought the Plus 8 – it's the one I always wanted.'

With the factory still very much alive, parts and technical back-up is as good as you could hope to get. These cars are mechanically tough and their light weight means engines and transmissions are relatively understressed compared to their donor cars. Just about the only thing that can upset a Morgan is the joints of the ash bodyframe working loose over time, or ultimately rotting.



2002 Morgan Aero 8

Engine 4398cc, V8, dohc per bank, 32-valve, variable valve timing, electronic fuel injection and engine management **Power and torque** 286bhp @ 5500rpm; 322lb ft @ 3700rpm **Transmission** Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential **Brakes** Vented discs front and rear **Suspension** Front: independent, cantilever arms, lower wishbones, inboard coil-over dampers. Rear: independent, cantilever arms, lower wishbones, inboard coil-over dampers **Steering** Rack-and-pinion, power-assisted **Weight** 1000kg (2200lb) **Performance** Top speed: 160mph; 0-60mph: 4.8sec **Fuel consumption** 22mpg **Cost new** £49,950 **Value now** £35,000



Aero 8 combines essential Thirties Morgan character and craftsmanship with 21st century technology – though not everyone appreciated its boss-eyed look

But even if your Fifties 4/4 needs a whole new frame, it's only around £3000 and three weeks away.

THEN ALONG came the Aero 8... In the mid-Nineties Charles Morgan – who had joined the family firm in 1986 after ten years as a news cameraman – and chief development engineer Chris Lawrence set about designing the first all-new Morgan since the 4-4. Launched to critical acclaim in 2000 – most criticism was directed at its boss-eyed styling – the aluminium-chassis quad-cam BMW V8-powered Aero 8 is now an accepted member of the Morgan family.

This is a car as forward-thinking as HFS's original three-wheeler, with contemporary double-wishbone race car technology usurping the sliding axle and leafsprings. And as development sees it continuously refined, the original Aero 8 is carving a niche of its own, as Richard Thorne explains: 'I have a soft spot for the purity and lightness of the MkI Aero 8. Later cars are easier to drive, with

features like anti-lock brakes, but I love its minimalist approach. I'd always keep one for sheer fun and track days.'

Dropping into the high-backed driver's seat, the first thing that strikes you is how big the Aero 8 feels compared to the trad Morgan. It seems cossetting, safe, yet still undeniably Morgan – thank the milled aluminium, wood and leather for that. Fire up the 4.4-litre V8 and you release a deep, hard-edged, woofle from the oval tailpipes, soft toned, but with the potential for aggressive NASCAR-like thunder when you want it.

There's none of the traditional cars' fidgetiness, but the same eagerness from excess torque over weight, and – despite devoted Morgan owners' globe-trotting evidence to the contrary – it's the first Morgan in which you'd happily embark on a Continental tour. Importantly, no-one else would have produced this car. No-one else would need to impose such a restrictive styling brief, or be bold enough to sanction something so conspicuously different from

the fashion of the time. The Aero 8 could only be a Morgan.

The Aero 8 – disappointingly if you're buying – has also continued the Morgan tradition of minimal depreciation. Priced £50,000 new, you won't find a good 2001/02 car for less than £33,000 – expect to pay up to £40,000. For such a bold design, the Aero 8 has few Achilles' heels, reckons Thorne: 'They're pretty bulletproof and dead reliable. The first couple of years' hoods are less watertight, but unfortunately the better hood fitted from 2002 is not retro-fittable.'

Peter Morgan died in 2003, passing the baton to Charles, but he would be proud of what the company has achieved since then: a US-spec Aero 8, the AeroMax Coupé, the current 4.8-litre, 367bhp, 170mph Aero 8 with sequential six-speed transmission, and the emissions-free Morgan LifeCar. And as many traditional cars as the factory can build.

When in 1990 John Harvey-Jones dared to suggest modernising Morgan in BBC2's *Troubleshooter*, Peter and Charles Morgan took on board his criticisms. But deep down they knew what would work best for their company: keep the cars light, the company small, and customers who are happy to wait. Who knows what the motoring landscape will look like in another 100 years – but don't bet against Morgan being part of it. **CC**

Thanks to: Richard Thorne and his team at Richard Thorne Classic Cars, 0118 983 1200 (www.rtcc.co.uk) where the Aero 8 is currently for sale; Mike Duncan at Hartlebury Garage, 01299 250025 (www.morgans4sale.co.uk); The Morgan Sports Car Club (www.mscc.uk.com); The Morgan Three Wheeler Club (www.mtwc.co.uk); Owners Bob Derricott, Mike Green and Nick Moody

MMCC MONTHLY BREAKFAST MEETINGS



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