

AUTOMOTIVIRUS LASTS 61 YEARS

Automotivirus – it's the disease I contracted from my first ever Morgan a topical analogy by Barrie West

*At RAF Hawkinge gaining a gliding licence as an ATC Cadet .
The Mark 3 glider was like flying a brick. I am crouching bottom left.*



The recent celebrations marking 75 years since VE day weren't just about marking the past and the sacrifices of our predecessors – they were also about generating a nationwide feeling of togetherness at a time when the UK needs as much of the fabled Blitz Spirit as it can muster. There's no doubt at all that, in the end, this kind of spirit will see us through the coronavirus disaster and life will return to something like normal again. In the meantime, for those of us who are afflicted (or maybe that should read 'blessed') with an obsession with all things automotive, this has been a time when we've been able to take stock.

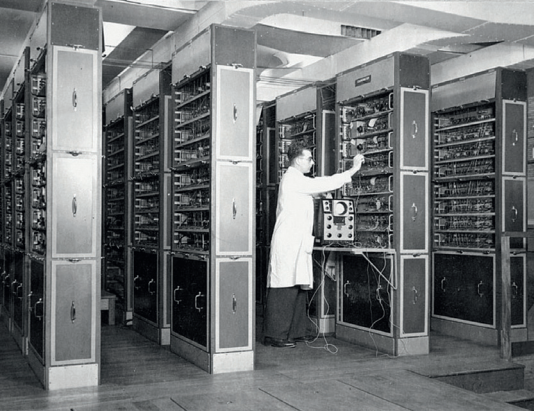
The sepia tinted photographs and footage from the past which dominated the media in the run up to the celebrations underlined the ways in which the motor industry dragged the image of the vehicles being produced and driven through the 75 years that followed post-war austerity. Winning this new 'war' will only make those of

us who are addicted to the thrill of classic motoring even more determined to enjoy the kind of handmade tradition that the Morgan car company represents. We just have to hope that the oncoming revolution in electric vehicles and eco-friendly driving will leave at least a little room for the unique thrill of the Morgan brand.

My own journey – back when I sat behind the handle bars of a bike rather than a handmade steering wheel – began in 1958, when I was 15 years old and starting an

**1. 1928 Morgan Super Sports Three Wheeler
the real onset of the Automotiviris at 16 years old**





LEO ONE the world's first business computer. All valves and resistors. Now resides in the Science Museum!

8 year printing apprenticeship in Old Woking, Surrey. Living on Albert Drive meant that I was just down the road from the original McLaren racing team, and Woking in general seemed, for some reason, to be a hub for people interested in motoring innovation.

Saving up my starting wage of 30 Shillings a week (£1.50 in modern terms), and topping it up with the extra I earned from a Saturday job in a bespoke men's outfitters in Woking, I pulled together enough to invest in a Vespa Scooter. Despite the Vespa I never embraced the Mod lifestyle, being drawn more toward the world of jazz, and it was probably these leanings which took me to Guildford Art School on day release from my printing training, and soon I was determined to become not only a qualified printer but also a typographer and graphic designer.

To shift things from the workplace and back behind the wheel, it was in 1960 that I purchased my first Morgan – a Super Sports with a JAP water cooled engine. A few of the interesting details behind this purchase include the fact that it cost me £15, that I could drive it despite not having a driving licence, and that unaffordable insurance premiums of £16 per annum meant I had to sell the Morgan after a year. Affordable or not, however, this marked the start of my lifelong automotivirus – yes, the infection had kicked in.

Between 1961 and 1963 I spent many hours in the company of the Woking 'in-crowd'. Like lots of bright young things of the era we spent our time congregating in a coffee bar, in this case The Crowns Coffee Bar. At weekends, the raucous partying included trips to the Wooden Bridge in Richmond, Eel Pie Island and the Marquee club in Wardour Street, drawn to these particular



6. An Austin Mini Moke a fun family steed. for Jennie myself and the Kids. Very cold on a frosty morning



18. The VW Kubelwagen, quite something for a district nurse to arrive in to her patients



20. A Porsche 911S is an even greater way to arrive to a patient and when parked outside the surgery caused an envious stir with the practice Doctors!



12. A Morgan+4 purchased from John Dangerfield, Bristol, this car really almost caused an early divorce as Jennies Car, I took my Sister out on it's first drive! Whoops!



16. Morgan +8 our first foray into a red Morgan, the virus really had set in at that time

spots by our love of jazz and stars such as Chris Barber, Ken Collier, Humphrey Lyttleton and George Melly. When it came to transport the more well-heeled members of our group favoured the likes of an Austin Atlantic, a Zephyr Zodiac and, in the case of my friend Chris Bonson, the classic London Black Cab owned by his father. It was an eclectic crowd of interesting personalities, including the likes of artists, gunsmiths, trainee policemen, students, nurses and models.

This wild and bohemian lifestyle was tempered and grounded by the quasi-military discipline and aeronautical leanings of time spent in the Air Training Corps (ATC). During my time there I gained a gliding licence and flew as a passenger in a wide range of aircraft. The interest in mechanics which fed into my love of all things Morgan was only piqued further by the chance – thanks to a CO with access to an interesting range of aeronautical kit – to spend my time dismantling Tiger Moths, Meteors and Merlin Engines.

Down from the skies and back on the road....my next

investment in wheels took the form of a group of five of us sharing the purchase of a 1938 Packard Straight 8 saloon. One of the investors happened to be an electrical apprentice at Vickers Aircraft, based at the Brooklands race track, and he rewired the car, but to little avail. Despite the best wiring loom of any Packard on this side of the Atlantic, the combination of rust and thirst led to the Packard spending most of its time standing idly in a selection of Woking gardens before being towed on that final trip to the scrapyard.

At that time I managed to get my hands on an Austin Seven Ruby 750cc special with an aluminium body. I drove it for a couple of years, mostly back and forth from the double day shift of my printing job and four days a week learning all about typography and graphics at Guildford Art School. Days at work and evenings at school was an intense but inspiring combination, as was an additional car in the shape of a Wolseley 14 Special. Some friends of mine helped to make it even more 'special' by chucking out the entire body and installing a bright red, marine



21,22 and 23. Citroën 2CVs and the first of the fleet studio cars. Very Arty!



35. Our first Porsche 930 Turbo purchased from Tom Hartley at a fraction of todays values. Nice Colour!



28. A Landrover 110, an ex work Perkins diesel engine conversion. Great load hauler. Very noisy bur served us all well

style ply slab two seat alternative in its place. Yes it looked very strange from the bonnet back, but it was undeniably light and fast, so much so that I knocked the big ends out racing back from Weybridge to Woking at 80mph. It then spent an immobile year attracting double takes in the front drive of the house where my girlfriend's parents lived, before making a final trip to the scrap yard. Did her parents mind? I can't imagine they relished the situation, but my prospects as a husband clearly outweighed the strange sight of the Wolseley and, as I graduated from art school and ended my apprenticeship, I also got married to Jennifer, their daughter and now my wife. They got a scrapped Wolseley, I got Jennifer and a year spent living in their house in Ottershaw, just down the road from the spot where Ron Dennis set up the new McLaren racing facility. That's what I call a pretty good swap.

Nothing acts like a cure for automotivirus quite like the arrival of kids. The birth of my daughter Sarah (followed by my son Jason) saw me turning away from car madness and taking a job as a Form Designer with Rank Precision



58. Yet another Morgan +8 very pretty and well appointed with extras. About halfway through the whole experience



17. Range Rover V8 Mk One. One of todays, escalating assets. The the fuel costs were more than prohibitive

Industries in Shepherd's Bush. Combine an annual salary of £800 with a 100% mortgage and, somehow, we end up managing to purchase a new house in Chatham, Kent, which involves a long daily commute via Victoria and Hammersmith and also sees the arrival of my son, Jason.

Back then Rank Precision Industries was a fledgling company known mainly for Rank Films (the ones that started with the musclemán hitting the gong) and Pinewood Studios, but in time it would become a huge endeavour incorporating Rank Xerox, Rank, Strand Lighting, Rank Hotels, Nikon, Pentax, Rotel and more. My own work for them involved getting to grips with the new, advanced, high speed printing system Xeronic supporting LEO One the world's first business computer for J. Lyons the bakery giant. This system generated 26,000 characters a second and was extremely fast but undeniably underused and, after having been made Head of Form Design with installations in Germany and Italy as well as RAF Hendon, I went on to start my own graphic design business, taking on the underutilised capacity of



75. Our second Porsche 930 Turbo again kept for a year and subject to a major front end fire due to faulty wiring loom. Thank the stars for good insurance cover!



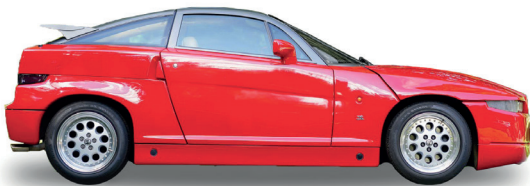
79. A Colin Musgrove +8 with a special 4.6 blueprinted engine. Ferruccio Lamborghini was pretty taken by this car on a trip we made to Italy

the Xeronic system to deliver as a free agent for current customers, other divisions of the Rank Organisation and many completely new clients.

My next vehicular adventure arose as the result of a brush with suspected TB and 3 months in a sanatorium. Although the TB was never medically proven, 3 months on full sick pay enabled me to save enough to buy our first family car, a Mini Van. What the X ray which led to the suspicion of TB actually picked up was probably scarring caused by a Mark One Consul gearbox falling on my chest ... If you suspect there's a story to be told there, you'd

be right. The car in question had been purchased by me for £15 and driven from Shepherds Cross to Chatham in top gear. The result? A burned out clutch, an investigation on my part and the aforementioned gearbox to the chest, after which the Consul took the familiar trip to the scrap yard.

Needless to say, my automotivirus was now fully inflamed again., and the cars I drove probably helped to fuel the perception of the time that people working in graphic design and advertising earned lots of money. This was often a false perception, but what can't be denied is that we tended to value our cars as an expression of



88. Another very interesting Italian offering the Alfa Romeo Zagato SZ. The styling like a many of Zagatos designs are an acquired taste



65. Alfa Romeo 2000 Veloce Spider another icon Pininfarina design that provided us with a lot of pleasure



93. and 101. One of two Ferrari GTB 355's we owned and both purchased from Bob Houghton. Fast but scary to maintain!



60. Ferrari 400i a really elegant Pininfarina Design and a real experience to own and drive. A real motorway express

personal taste and style, pretty much regardless of what we could realistically afford to drive. For me, moving the new business back to Ottershaw and purchasing the aforementioned parents' house coincided with swapping the Minivan for a Mini Moke and this was followed by a run of Volkswagens, including the Beetle, 1600 Fastbacks and 411 Estate. So far, so 'sensible family car', but the arrival of funds in the form of a legacy meant that I could splash out on an Orange Plus 4 from main dealer John Dangerfield in Bristol, followed by more splashing out, via an auction, on a large Victorian house in Worpleston near

Guildford. Like many of the cars I've fallen for over the years, the house needed lots of loving care and attention, and to help fund proceedings Jennie worked as a district nurse.

Even this work fed into my automotivirus, however, as she started doing her rounds in a VW Kubelwagen, before moving on to an Orange Porsche 2.2S, which used to belong to legendary DJ Simon Dee and was delivered to us by Nick Faure, a well-known Porsche racing driver. It more than lived up to this prestigious backstory by proving to be one of the best Porsches I'd ever driven, offering road holding which much surpassed the 930 Turbos that followed later.

Other cars included a red Morgan which, when we parked up to spend the weekend at The Feathers in

Ludlow, looked so striking that it prompted the landlord to assume we'd decamped there for a dirty weekend! Driving back home through Great Malvern we both commented that we'd like to one day escape the rat race of Guildford and come to live in such beautiful surroundings. Throughout this period, as we built the business, we worked our way through a number of Porsches, Renaults for the staff and a 110 Land Rover with the first Perkins diesel engine. All the while I was buying and selling cars at prices that would seem ridiculous today, up to and including our first Porsche 930 Turbo. Wonderful though many of these cars might have been, nothing, for me, could match the handmade craft and unique style of my Morgan +8 in Brown and Cream.

By 1979 I was happily trading cars as a pastime, buying and selling via adverts in the Sunday Times and Country Life, when I happened to spot something else rather desirable for sale at auction – a water mill in Hereford, just next to our dream destination of Malvern.

I jumped into the brown and cream Morgan, headed down to Hereford and stopped the auction by putting in an offer, and all without Jennie having ever laid eyes on the place.

At first she wondered if I'd lost my mind (or lost it even more than usual), but she soon saw what I saw in the mill and, over time we transformed both the main



89. TVR Cerbera with a straight six which sounded like a bag of nails but did it move. Colour was a serious statement!



70. Lancia Gamma Coupe another icon Pininfarina design converted from automatic to manual



81. Jaguar E-type S1 disappointing to drive at speed with such narrow tyres but with all that a great looker and a solid classic



97. Our last Morgan +8 4.6 Injection built for us in these colours with green leather supplied from a client. Not everyones taste! I thought it was great!



104. Our current keeper a Morgan Challenge Cup Roadster. Now almost cured of the automotovirus.!



111. A Mercedes 420SL 107 Series. One of the real great style icons and again another long keeper.

The business that funded my automotivirus is in lockdown right now, and the team are all working from home. Wests Design team work from a very special Live/ Work Studio project on the Harewood Park Estate, an amazing initiative of HRH The Prince of Wales and the Duchy of Cornwall



HRH The Prince of Wales on a recent visit to the property in discussion Jennifer and Barrie
Photograph: Charles Sainsbury-Plaice

building and a separate barn, which became Wests Studio. The rest of our team also chose to move with us, setting their families up for a new start in a wonderful part of the world.

The Morgan +8 which took me to the water mill was traded for a light green model which we drove to collect through Spain, the Camargue and the French Alps before arriving back in the UK. I've added a list of cars which have passed through my hands to accompany this article – and there are far too many to include right here – but highlights have included a Ferrarri 400i, a Morgan +8 in navy blue and brown and cream, an Alpha Romeo Spider 2000 and another Porsche 930 Turbo in black. Adventures along the way have included picking up a red 4.6 Colin Musgrove+8 at Bill Wykeham's dealership in London.

I took this speedy car on a road trip through France to Italy via Modena, where we stopped at the Lamborghini Winery to explore the adjoining auto museum. Before we knew it we were being introduced to no less a figure than the man himself - Ferruccio Lamborghini. Although more into wine than cars by then, he was none the less deeply smitten with our red +8, telling us he'd once purchased something similar for his girlfriend.

Did I settle on the red +8? What do you think? Once back in the UK I worked my way through a less than impressive Carmine Red E Type Coupe S1, a red Ferrari 355GTB, a TVR Chimera and two more disappointments; a TVR Cerbera, which we had to return to the factory in Blackpool and a Zagato SZ which was fantastic to look at but not so great to drive. Ticking both of these boxes was perhaps our final Morgan +8 4.6 in Bright VW blue with bright pea green upholstery. I chose this colour scheme myself and had it custom made at the factory, having taken my cue from a BA flight meal menu.

A Ferrari 355GTB came with frankly eye-watering maintenance costs, something which is never an issue with a Morgan, and another favourite was a Lancia Fulvia 1.3.

So what have I learned from my many years of automotivirus? Well, a new Audi can be replaced every 15 months without having depreciated and without needing new tyres or servicing in the meantime, and while this is very impressive and reliable in its way it's also more than a bit boring, and the new hybrid and electric cars will never replace the look, feel, driving experience and even smell of a brand new Morgan.

Cars that have passed the 5 year test for me include an

Aston Martin Green and Silver Challenge Cup Roadster, and a 1987 Mercedes 420SL 107 Series – to my mind the last mainstream mass produced car worth bothering with. Both today's Keepers.

One thing you might have noticed is that I haven't given the dates for any of the Morgans I've owned, with the exception of the first. That's because, as far as I'm concerned a Morgan is a timeless car and always will be. To put it simply – nobody ever scraps a Morgan. I like to think my love of timeless design, effortless quality

and unique style is now reflected in the work delivered by Wests. If driving all of these cars has taught me anything it's never to settle for less than the best, and that combining form with function in perfect balance creates a user experience like no other.

I'd like to thank Matti for letting me have the opportunity to rant on (and on) and also Richard Thorne, who sold me the Roadster and is the most passionate dealer on this marque I have ever met. And as you might guess, I've met quite a few. **MOG**

Automotivirius contagion from 1959 to 2020

1. **MORGAN 3 WHEELER SUPER SPORTS (GREEN)**
2. PACKARD STRAIGHT EIGHT SALOON
3. WOLESLEY 14 SPECIAL MARINE PLY BODY
4. AUSTIN SEVEN RUBY SPECIAL
5. FORD CONSUL MK 1
6. AUSTIN MINI VAN
7. **AUSTIN MINIMOKE**
8. VOLKSWAGON BEETLE
9. VOLKSWAGON 1600 FASTBACK
10. VOLKSWAGON 1600 FASTBACK
11. VOLKSWAGON 411 ESTATE
12. **MORGAN PLUS 4 (ORANGE)**
13. RANGE ROVER MK1
14. CITROEN DYANE
15. CITROEN GS CLUB
16. **MORGAN PLUS 8 (RED)**
17. RANGE ROVER MK1
18. **VOLKSWAGON KUBELWAGEN**
19. TRIUMPH SPITFIRE
20. **PORSCHE 911S**
21. **CITROEN 2CV**
22. **CITROEN 2CV**
23. **CITROEN 2CV**
24. MGB SPORTSs
25. PORSCHE 911
26. AUDI 80 ESTATE
27. PORSCHE 911SC TARGA
28. **LAND ROVER 110 DIESEL**
29. PORSCHE 911 CARRERA
30. RENAULT 4 ESTATE
31. RENAULT 4 ESTATE
32. RENAULT 14
33. RENAULT 14
34. RENAULT 14
35. **PORSCHE 930 TURBO**
36. **MORGAN + 8 (CREAM/BROWN)**
37. VOLVO 245 ESTATE
38. VOLVO 245 ESTATE
39. LAND ROVER 110 V8
40. RENAULT FUEGO
41. RENAULT 18 ESTATE
42. RENAULT 5TL
43. RENAULT FUEGO
44. FORD ESCORT XR3
45. FORD ESCORT XR3i
46. FORD ESCORT XR3i
47. RENAULT 18 ESTATE
48. HONDA SHUTTLE
49. CITROEN FAMILIELE CX
50. VOLKSWAGON GOLF
51. SAAB 95 WHITE
52. **MORGAN PLUS 8 (LIGHT GREEN)**
53. VOLKSWAGON POLO
54. VOLKSWAGON POLO
55. VOLKSWAGON POLO
56. VOLKSWAGON POLO
57. LAND ROVER 110 V8
58. **MORGAN PLUS 8 (NAVY BLUE)**
59. VOLKSWAGON GOLF KARMAN CABRIOLET
60. FERRARI 400I BLUE
61. VOLKSWAGON POLO
62. VOLKSWAGON POLO
63. VOLKSWAGON POLO
64. VOLKSWAGON POLO
65. **ALPHA ROMEO SPIDER VELOCE 2000**
66. LAND ROVER 110 V8
67. SUZUKI JEEP
68. SUZUKI JEEP
69. **MORGAN + 8 (CREAM/BROWN)**
70. **LANCIA GAMMA COUPE**
71. LAND ROVER 110 V8
72. HONDA CIVIC
73. MERCEDES 124 ESTATE
74. SAAB 900 TURBO
75. **PORSCHE 930 TURBO**
76. MERCEDES 124 ESTATE
77. HONDA CRX
78. ALPHA ROMEO SPIDER MK 2
79. **MUSGROVE MORGANPLUS 8 (RED)**
80. RENAULT CLIO
81. **JAGUAR SERIES ONE E-TYPE**
82. RENAULT CLIO16V
83. SAAB 900 TURBO DROPHEAD
84. MERCEDES 124 ESTATE
85. RENAULT CLIO16V
86. TVR CHIMERA
87. TVR CHIMERA
88. **ALPHA ROMEO SZ ZAGATO**
89. **TVR CERBERA**
90. MERCEDES 124 ESTATE
91. SAAB 900 TURBO
92. ALPHA ROMEO GTV 3000
93. **FERRARI 355 RED**
94. TVR CHIMERA
95. RENAULT CLIO16V
96. RENAULT CLIO16V
97. **MORGAN PLUS 8 4.6 (VW ELECTRIC BLUE)**
98. VOLKSWAGON BEETLE MK 2
99. MERCEDES E CLASS ESTATE
100. AUDI A2
101. **FERRARI 355 RED**
102. AUDI A3
103. AUDI TT
104. **MORGAN V6 ROADSTER (SILVER/GREEN)**
105. AUDI TT
106. LANCIA FULVIA 1.3S
107. AUDI TT
108. AUDI A6 ESTATE
109. AUDI A1 BLACK
110. AUDI A6 ESTATE
111. **MERCEDES 420SL 107 SERIES**
112. AUDI A1
113. AUDI A6 ESTATE
114. AUDI A2
115. AUDI Q2
116. AUDI A6 ESTATE