

MORRIS 8 DOX 835 FULL HISTORY

On March 25th 1938 Miss Annie Gumbley drove her 1934 Austin Seven saloon AOH 96 to Smith's Garage Bournville (yes the suburb of Birmingham with world famed chocolate connections!) to trade it in against a new Morris. Paying the balance of £88 5s 10d cash, and with the receipt signed over a 2d stamp, she took delivery of DOX 835 a smart new maroon Morris Eight Series II 4-door saloon with sliding head and aluminium number plates. The list price on the Invoice was £149 0s 0d plus £1 1s 4d delivery, plus a hefty extra of £1 0s 0d for those smart plates. An hours run around Bournville with the garage proprietor completed the transaction, and she returned to 14 Thorn Road.

After very little 'running in', a few days later Annie and her family (four adults and one child in the car) loaded up the rear carrier and set off for Gunwalloe near Helston in Cornwall. A 14 hour trip in those days; quite a trip for five and their luggage in a new car! Over the next 28 years the car was rarely at rest for long averaging about 2000 miles each year overall, even being on the road during the war as the owner was a Nurse and was allowed extra petrol coupons. Insurance in 1942 cost £9 0s 0d less 25% no claims discount. Annie later married and became Mrs Farman, and subsequently the car moved with her to 36 Mulberry Road, half a mile or so away.

All servicing was carried out by her brother, but any repairs were usually dealt with at Wards Garage in Oak Tree Lane where the car was garaged each night. During the 1950's the engine was rebored, new shock absorbers were fitted and the lighting upgraded. One incident on the road marred an otherwise good record; in the 1960's a rear wheel/half shaft/hub assembly started to part company with the rest of the car due to an incorrectly fitted tab washer after servicing the brakes. Current users who do their own repairs beware!

In 1966, at a mileage of just over 68000, Mrs Farman decided to stop driving and reluctantly to sell the old Morris. This was where I came into the picture.

My first memories of motoring are from the early 1950's when our family car was a 1934 Morris 10/4 saloon JO 9546, or 'old jo' as it was affectionately known. The various trips and events associated with this car in my formative years probably account for my continued interest in Morris cars.

I passed my driving test as soon as I was seventeen in 1965 having been taught by my father in the current family saloon, a 1955 Ford Consul SOJ 372. Experience gained on driving this three-speed car with a 'non-synchromesh' first gear was to prove invaluable when I started driving my first Morris!

Soon after the first flush of success of passing the test disaster followed. Owing to my complete lack of experience of real driving I wrote off the Consul after only a few weeks.

Following this upsetting event, I decided that perhaps it was about time I bought my own car. For some reason no-one seemed too keen to let me borrow their own cars any more!

I sold my bicycle for £25 and started hunting for the right second-hand car.

John Handford, a colleague of my father, contacted me to say that the aforementioned Mrs Annie Farman, the elderly aunt of his wife Christine, had regretfully decided to part with her 1938 Morris Eight DOX 835. As she had owned this car from new, she was concerned that it went to a good home as it did need some care. In October 1966 I was taken for a spin in the car by Mrs Farman, and I purchased it on the spot for £25. For some reason I recall being surprised by the peeling chrome on the gear lever and the almost 'matt' paintwork, but somehow it cried out for help. I had bought my first car!

The car had done 68500 miles from new in 28 years and was completely unspoilt and original. However it's maroon paintwork had become very dull, and it's wings were going rather rusty. But it did have an MOT certificate, it ran very well, and it's back seat was still 'mint' beneath the cloth cover!

After a good clean inside and out, a cut and polish and a bit of filler and paint on the wings, it looked very smart indeed.

Subsequently I carried out various jobs and adjustments and used it as my everyday transport for the next two years, adding a further 15000 miles. The car proved reliable and never let me down on the road.

It did numerous journeys of up to 100 miles or so, and in addition I used it for trips to Dorset and the New Forest, Beaulieu, Cambridge and Colchester. I joined what was then called 'The Morris

Eight Tourer Club', and the first club event that Dox attended was on Sunday 31st June 1968 when I turned up at the Spring Driving Test event at Cromford in Derbyshire. I even drove the car around Silverstone circuit later that year after a race meeting!

I particularly remember returning from Lulworth Cove one night (150 miles) without trouble, to have a half-shaft break ten minutes later as I put the car in the garage!

I must have had time on my hands in those days, as I kept a diary of daily trips and costs; it is almost unbelievable to recall that four gallons of petrol cost £1 1s 2d, an MOT 15s, and a new cut-out box £4 5s 6d from John Wrigley. But annual salary then was a mere £375.

Jobs that I had to do were repairing rust damage to the chassis at the running board brackets, new front springs, new kingpins, a new cut-out, remetalling the connecting rods and recovering the sliding head.

In September 1968, something strange must have happened to me because I decided to sell the car and to get a 1964 Hillman Imp 695 MOK instead. What was going on? I received £110, and I very clearly remember thinking what a terrible mistake I had made as it drove off into the distance for the last time. One item that I kept as a memento was the enamelled badge from Smith's Garage Bournville which had always been on the dashboard.

So that was the last I would see of DOX 835.....or was it?

Over the next few years I had no time for old cars but in 1976 I decided to search for another Morris 8. I found FPK 381 a 1937 two-door Series II. Just after I got it back home, fate seemed to intervene. My father's colleague John Handford was travelling back from Wales with his family in the car with him, and he phoned us to say that they had spotted DOX for sale outside Swan Garage in Tenbury Wells. After recovering from the shock, I offered to buy it back and arranged to collect it.

But before doing this, another strange thing happened. I needed to get rid of FPK 381 to make space for my beloved DOX 835; amazingly the next day someone knocked on my door and offered to buy it. I had not had time to advertise, it was pure coincidence; so off it went and in came Dox. I often wonder if it went to a Morris Register member.

Can you guess what my first task was on being re-united with Dox? I refitted the Smith's Garage badge back onto the dashboard!

I had sold the car for £110 in 1968. I bought it back for £120, it was dirty but otherwise as I had sold it and its mileage had increased by less than 2000 miles.

The poor old thing then rested for years in my garage, from time to time used by my two young children to 'go on holiday'.

Between 1988 and 1991 I stripped it down, assessed the situation and made outline plans. I needed minor body repairs mainly to rear wheel arches and lower rear; a full engine overhaul; a complete re-spray; brake rebuild; tyres and tubes; steering/springs/shackles; radiator; headlining; sliding head; wings and running boards. Everything else was cleaned, checked, painted, chromed and put aside. I was surprised to find chalked on the body behind the trim the words Adderley Park so maybe the body was assembled locally not in Oxford as I had previously thought.

Nothing much happened then until 1996 when I had time to get back on the case.

I prepared, shot blasted and zinc sprayed the chassis having restored it in fine detail. Then I enamelled it black in the back garden. I trial fitted all panels, then sent it all to John Pye in Stirchley for a full respray using an area of mint original paint to match the colour. I reassembled all the running gear onto the chassis.

I had all the engine components back from Coventry Boring, and assembled them in the shed. When the painted bodywork came back, I was very keen to get it finished.

Even my friends at the Claverdon Noggin started to believe that not only did the car exist, but indeed it would be on the road 'soon', as I had been saying for ages. For goodness sake I was a Life Member of the club but hadn't a car on the road. Enough was enough.

Frantic efforts in April and May 1999, including fitting the engine from underneath without a hoist, and Dave Brown getting it started for me, led to an MOT pass and a Third Place at the Claverdon Concours.

It was finished mechanically and bodily but I now had to restore the interior and fit a new headlining and carpets. The headlining was easier than I expected and this job 'topped out' the restoration in May 2000.

I put as many miles on the clock as I dared in order to run- in everything and to boost my confidence in Dox again. It overheated to start with as the engine was very tight; I had fitted the fuel gauge sender upside down enabling me to run out of fuel with great ease; and I had to be relayed home one night on my way back from the Leysters Noggin due to condenser failure. Otherwise it has been totally reliable.

I have since had the steering box rebushed, have installed a new crown wheel and pinion and the garage in Welford on Avon have replaced the gearbox bearings.

I have had great enjoyment from Dox , I appreciate the kind things everyone says, and I must admit that I am proud to have won several awards. But the most rewarding was at Thoresby Hall when, in Millenium Year, I won three First Prizes at the Morris Register National Rally. Mind you a First Prize at Chatsworth in 2002 was great fun too and made the trip worthwhile!

Recently I have continued to use the car and have attended various events. In addition I took the car back 'home' to its 1938 address where Annie Farman's sister-in-law Dora was still living until she passed away in 2005. She and other members of the family were reunited with Dox, they each had a ride in it, and several photographs were taken. A good time was had by all!

Dox is best suited to meandering around quieter parts of England in the summer months; at her own pace without too much pressure from other road users. There are plenty of events that fit the bill and I look forward to meeting other Morris Register members and enthusiasts in the future.

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