



2024 Morgan Plus 4: Radical wild-child or faithful follower of tradition? Ancient and modern compared...

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The new Morgan Plus 4 is visually very similar to a rich bloodline of cars from Malvern. Putting it head-to-head against a 1956 example, what does a 68-year age gap look like? George Loveridge reports...

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Once upon a time, it was seen as revolutionary to equip a Morgan with 4 wheels, let alone heated seats. Morgan has been building cars on English soil in Malvern since 1909. Their stories of craftsmanship are enough to melt your heart with patriotism. Production of the Plus 4 model began way back in 1950 and paused in 1969; 19 years is a fairly acceptable life span for a marque's model. With the 4/4 and the Plus 8, among others, carrying Morgan for a while, 1985 saw the return of the much-loved British Sports car. Today in 2024, we have another new example.

2024 Morgan Plus 4



The last major update for the Plus 4 came in 2020, so think of this as a facelift of that car. Over the previous version, we have a new front splitter, wider front wings and a revised numberplate plinth. Unusual on a new car though, round headlights, but that's just Morgan through and through. A common misconception that has grown across various car meets and race paddocks over the years is that Morgans have a wooden chassis. That is false. Of course, they have, or at least did *back in the day*, have a wooden frame which aided the car's handling characteristics. This 2024 car has a bonded aluminium body which allows it to retain the title of a light-weight sports car. To the rear, they've removed quite a lot. Therefore, we've just got one pair of lights on the rear wings that command the rear, brake and indicator lights. The rear diffuser has also changed to encompass a twin exit exhaust which was usually the privilege of the V8 models.

What is the interior like? Well, Morgan is charging quite the premium with this Plus 4 so you would expect some technologies from the present day. Overall, the car is wider than Morgans gone by, so you do benefit from extra interior space. You still get plenty of wood,



but you do have to pay for it, £540 please for the walnut lower dash rail. Ouch! With the roof down, the cabin is of course nice and airy with a limitless amount of sky. Modern appointments include a Sennheiser premium audio pack, blessing the car with Bluetooth connectivity and quad speakers. Moreover, you get as standard comfort seats which sit low down in the cabin to retain a sporty feel. Overall, I like the new layout, the driver and passenger have their own side of the car and don't brush shoulders sitting next to each other. The general visuals of the interior are reminiscent of a British sports car. And as aforementioned, heated seats. Blasphemy!



What if you want something more traditional? The real thing if you like. Well, the used car scene is certainly a buyer's market at the moment... Not that this car is for sale, but let us glance at this 1956 Plus 4 to see where Morgan have strayed from the straight and narrow.



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1956 Morgan Plus 4



Again, from the outside, it's a Morgan! Driving the two cars through rural West Yorkshire, passers-by were treated to two *old cars*. As is standard, the older car is smaller than the 2024 car but still has a timeless road presence. 15-inch wheels fill the wheel arches nicely and provide a healthy amount of sidewall to absorb more of the bumps than the leaf spring rear suspension. This specific car has had the front bumper and overriders removed to reduce weight and give it a sporty appearance. Both cars still benefit from louvres in the bonnet, which on the 1956 car do genuinely aid with cooling, whereas I'd like to think that the newer car can keep cool without them. The sidelights sit on top of the front wings and are really nice art deco styling features, and truly give a sense of 1950s motoring. From the rear, we have a spare wheel fully exposed to the elements, a single exit sport exhaust and a central fuel filler cap. Mostly though, it's typical Morgan on the exterior, just with some 2020s touches rather than 1950s.

The interior is where you notice the age gap the most. As you'd expect, there really isn't a lot going on in here. A black leather seat back supports both occupants together rather than



having individual bucket seats. This time, we do have the famous walnut dashboard that houses beautiful Smiths gauges. For the time, the driver is provided with a lot of information. The central cluster houses a speedometer, and a combined dial showing the fuel level, oil pressure, water temperature and charging status. To the right of the steering wheel you'll find the all important rev counter. No stalks here, the headlights are switched on from the centre of the dashboard on a rotating dial, and the non-self-cancelling indicator control is located adjacent to that rev counter. The layout is simple, and everything falls off the steering wheel. The most notable differences however are a lack of column stalks, seatbelts and heater.



On The Road

The 1956 car really revives a sense of motoring from a bygone era. In front of you, you are presented with this huge Brooklands-style, thin-rimmed steering wheel. No power assistance of course. But because this older car weighs much less than 1,000 kgs (2,204 lb),



you don't need the extra help. The pedal box is narrow with just enough room to heel and toe, which is essential! Fitted to the likes of D-Type Jaguars in the period, this '56 Plus 4 has the infamous Moss Box, an H-pattern 4-speed gearbox. It's notchy yet unforgiving. Back to our rev-matching then as each gear has to be perfectly timed and calculated both on the way up and the way down. Get it right, and there aren't many things more satisfying. Get it wrong, crunch! The all round hydraulic drum brakes work very well for their age, but will overheat if used excessively.

Although not having driven the 2024 car, I know already that things are very different. Essentially, the 21st century makes this car something that anyone could get in and drive. For instance, we've got a small black leather steering wheel thanks to the Sport's Performance Pack. Moreover, there is room for a normal person to use the pedals, rather than an elf in ballet shoes. This time we've got a six-speed manual gearbox from a BMW, which goes into gear whenever wherever. Amazingly, the car tips the scales at 1,044 kgs (2,302 lb) which is such an accolade considering that it has airbags, a brake servo, a catalytic converter etc.

Both vehicles are very different, but that's to be expected with nearly 70-years between them. Each of them however are just as advanced in their own respective eras. Such as a 0-60 mph time of 9 seconds back in 1956 was blistering, nearing the likes of an XK120 Jaguar with a much larger engine. Although with the tasty modifications, this Lawrence Tuned beast will most likely shave a few tenths off that. The contemporary car will hit 0-60 mph in 5.2 seconds which is still very impressive for a manual petrol engine car.

Verdict

Putting these two together is almost an unfair comparison. Yes, they're both the same model, just from different times. However, technology has come on lightyears from the 1950s. A lot of Morgan enthusiasts look down on these newer cars, but they're all forgetting a few things. Morgan have always used other people's engines, and they've always added new technologies as they've become available. Back in 1956, the idea of a windscreen wiper motor could have been a bit of a stretch to fit as standard, just like an active sport's exhaust



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is to the new car.

But, for me it has to be the 1956 Super Sport. You couldn't use it every day, but that's just the point. With the prices that these new and classic Morgans are, you want driving them to be an occasion. And a 4-cylinder BMW power unit just doesn't give the same flame spitting fun as a set of Webber carburettors do.



Wheels-Alive Brief Specification

2024 Morgan Plus 4



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Engine:

BMW 2.0-litre TwinPower Turbo, inline-four-cylinder

0 - 60 mph: 5.2 seconds

Top Speed: 149 mph

Max power & torque:

255 bhp @ 5,500 rpm; 350 Nm (258 lb.ft) @ 1,450 rpm

Transmission:

Six speed manual, rear wheel drive

Suspension:



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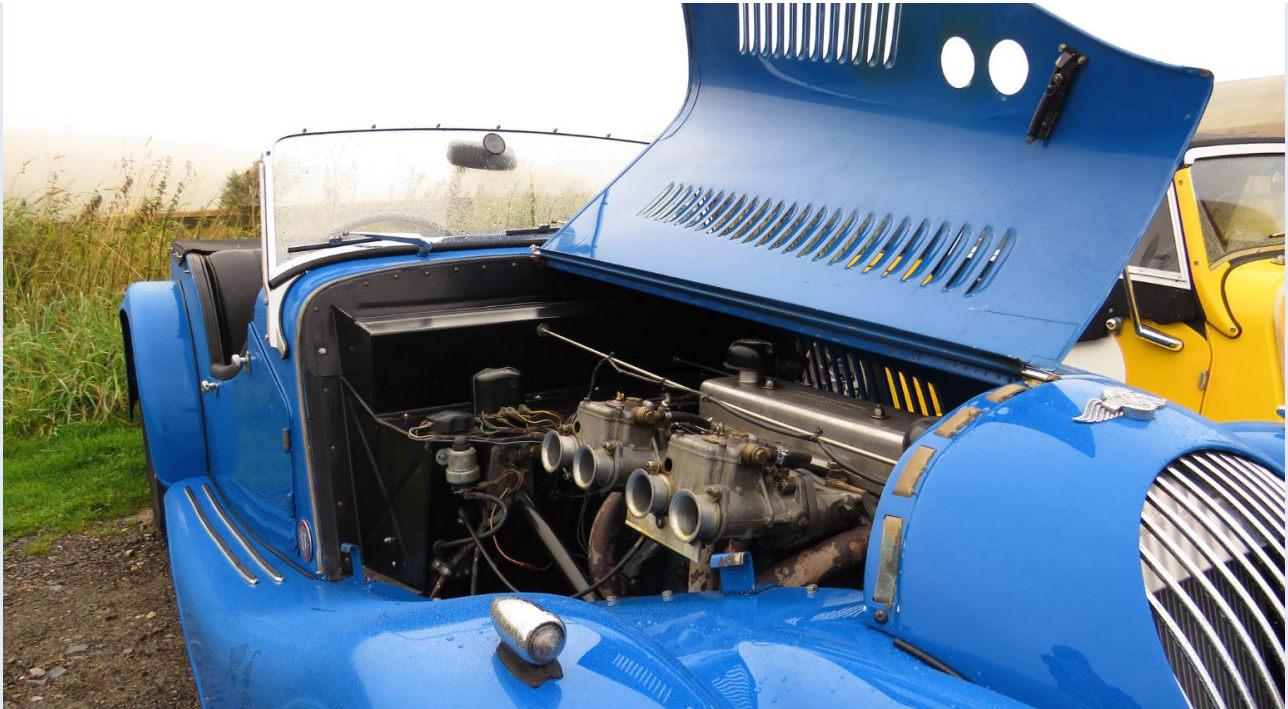
Front: Double wishbone with front anti-roll bar

Rear: Nitron springs and single way adjustable dampers.

Consumption: 39 mpg

Wheels-Alive Brief Specification

1956 Morgan Plus 4



Engine:

Standard Triumph, 1991cc, naturally aspirated, 4 cylinder

Upgrades: Lawrence Tune Conversion, Twin Webber Carburettors, high-lift cam shaft, lightened fly-wheel, oil cooler,

0 - 60 mph: 9 seconds

Top Speed: 120mph

Max power:

120 bhp @ 4,500 rpm

Transmission:



Four speed manual, rear wheel drive

Suspension:

Front: Sliding pillar

Rear: Leaf springs

Consumption: Is that important? Smiles per mile.