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Keep Your Wheels Alive – We Visit Austin Morris Services at Freshwater, on the Isle of Wight

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Happy in his work... Frank Phillips, who runs Austin Morris Services in Freshwater, enjoys helping classic car owners to bring their vehicles back to former glory. He is seen here with



a classic Riley Elf body shell that he has just restored and painted.

Kim Henson makes the Wight move and heads to Freshwater to see how Frank Phillips helps the owners of BMC/BL classics (plus other makes and models) to keep their prized vehicles on the road and looking good...

(Words and photographs all by Kim, except the Escort Harrier shots - courtesy Frank Phillips).

In the course of my work I visit a multitude of vehicle workshops, and it is always cheering to meet people in the trade who are positively enthusiastic in their work, and enjoy what they do. Frank Phillips, proprietor of the well-respected Austin Morris Services in Freshwater on the western side of the Isle of Wight, is a prime example.

Within two minutes of entering his workshop, his enthusiasm and love for the vehicles he is saving, becomes clearly evident, as he speaks with genuine passion about the bodywork projects he is tackling.

On the day that I visited, this week, Frank showed me several BMC Minis (various versions) on which he had worked his bodywork magic, and the results were spectacularly impressive.

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A recent project for Frank was creating this Italian Innocenti style saloon.



What a beauty! Looking superb is this Riley Elf body shell, just reconstructed and resprayed by Frank.

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He is happy to tackle bodywork repairs and restoration ranging from minor jobs to full reconstruction, and although predominantly he works on BMC/BL/Rover classics, he is also adept at tackling other makes. As just one example, recently he carried out some bodywork tidying and spray work on a Ford Escort Mark II Harrier...

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Frank says that his main interest and expertise is in bodywork restoration, rather than mechanical aspects, and if a vehicle is in a forlorn state his preference is for him to receive



a bare shell (or at least a rolling shell) with most components removed, to give him a clear run at rebuilding and repainting the body shell, for the owner to re-fit the mechanical and interior components (etc.) on completion.

If there's rust present, he likes to cut it out completely and weld new steel in place. He is also keen to protect the refurbished bodywork for the future, by the application of rust-resisting coatings as appropriate. He told me that he had never yet had a car come back due to rust re-appearing...

Although he restores many Minis ("I've been working on them since I was 15", he told me), he has also carried out some superb rebuilds on other models, including examples of BL Marinas and Itals (and Frank is also Life President of the Morris Marina and Ital Owners' Club and Ital Register), also MGs. Triumphs, etc, etc. I have seen some of these vehicles (as well as Minis he has restored) and they are refurbished to an impeccable standard.



If you would like Frank to quote for work on your classic, give him a call (and please mention Wheels-Alive), but be prepared for a bit of a wait until he can get to your vehicle. He is very busy and is currently looking at workshop bookings for 2021 at the earliest.

My thanks to Frank for taking the time to talk to me and showing me some of the cars he has recently been working on. I came back to the mainland full of admiration for the skills and dedication of a true enthusiast who is happy to invest his efforts into properly restoring classic cars for fellow owners/enthusiasts.



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Contact details: Frank Phillips, proprietor Austin Morris Services, Afton Road, Freshwater, Isle of Wight, PO40 9UH. Tel. (01983) 755888.

(Note: It doesn't take long to get from any of the Island's ferry ports to Freshwater, in the west).

Facebook page: Austin Morris Services.



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