

Morris Minor 1000

Published: January 31, 2013

Author: Kim Henson

Online version: <https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/morris-minor-1000/>



Two door and four door saloon versions, plus a Traveller (estate), seen here lining up in the sun in Cornwall. The club scene is very active for Minors.

One of the best loved British classic cars of all time, the Morris Minor/1000 still makes a great deal of sense in the 21st Century. Kim Henson takes a look...

It is now 65 years since the Morris Minor was launched as a thoroughly modern small car, which (engine excepted), at the time, it was. Replacing the Morris Eight Series E as the smallest model in the Morris line-up of family cars, the Minor arrived in 1948.



Inspired by (Sir) Alec Issigonis, the new car featured all-new bodywork styling and construction, plus innovative torsion bar front suspension and precise rack and pinion steering. The Minor was dynamically responsive and handled exceptionally well compared with most other vehicles of its time; its ride quality was excellent too. It was certainly not a fast car by today's standards (indeed it was still powered by the well-proven but relatively low-powered Morris Eight type 918cc sidevalve engine), but all the same gave reasonable performance compared with other small cars of the era.

The Minor's interior was surprisingly roomy for up to four adults to travel in comfort, and the boot, while not huge, provided reasonably generous luggage accommodation.

A little more power was provided by the adoption of the Austin Motor Company's willing overhead valve 803cc engine (from their recently introduced A30). This was installed from 1952 in the new 'Series II' Minors which replaced the original 'MM' versions, following the merger of Austin and Morris to form the British Motor Corporation (BMC).

The Minor was very significantly improved again in 1956, and the revised car was known as the 'Minor 1000'. This was due to the use of BMC's new 948cc 'A' Series engine (a stronger and more powerful version of the previous 803cc unit). In conjunction with a new, remote control gearbox and a higher final drive ratio, the new car was faster and more rewarding to drive. The engine was also more durable than that of its predecessor (and indeed was eminently tuneable to produce more power if required).

Another increase in power output came in 1962, when the latest 1098cc version of the A Series motor was employed. With 48 bhp produced by this unit, together with a slick-changing, baulk ring synchromesh type gearbox, plus a higher axle ratio, the revised model (still designated Minor 1000) was easy to drive, lively for its time and capable of cruising at 70 mph or more.



The Minor was produced in two and four door saloon form, as a four seater 'Tourer' (later named Convertible), estate car ('Traveller'), pick-up truck and van, so there are Minors out there to suit all needs.

Despite the fact that the last Minor was produced in 1971, the cars remain easy to own and inexpensive to operate, and are still highly practical for everyday running, where required.



Saloon versions were offered in two door form, or as a four door model like this. The four door saloons are less commonly encountered.

Spares back-up is exceptionally good, with virtually all components likely to be needed being available through a range of specialists, and prices are competitive. In addition the club scene is very active.

Fuel consumption is impressive (typically between 42 and 47 mpg on long runs), and insurance costs low (many special schemes are available at cost-effective premiums, even for young enthusiasts).

Asking prices start at around £100 for a restoration case (which will almost certainly need much time and money spent on it) and for saloons and Travellers usually rise to around £4,000+ (although 'concours' examples can fetch much more). Having said that, tidy examples can still be found for between, say, £1,500 and £2,000.

In every case, convertibles and commercial versions are relatively scarce and now seen as more 'desirable' than saloons, so asking prices are typically around 10-20 per cent higher.

The main club catering for the cars is:



WHEELS-ALIVE!

www.wheels-alive.co.uk

The Morris Minor Owners' Club; www.mmoc.org.uk

MMOC, P.O. Box 1098, Derby, DE23 8ZX.

Tel: 01332 291675 (8.30am – 3.00pm G.M.T.); Fax: 01332 290661



The distinctive Traveller estates provide more luggage space than the saloons. The woodwork is an integral part of the body structure and **MUST** be sound!



Demand today for Minor commercials is extremely strong. This particular Minor van was in fact sold as an Austin version, complete with a slightly different grille.





The A Series engines used from 1956 (948cc, then 1098cc) provided plenty of power for their time, frugal fuel consumption and ease of maintenance. Underbonnet access is excellent, and do-it-yourself maintenance on a Minor is very straightforward.

WHAT TO CHECK?

As with most post-War cars, structural corrosion can be a major concern. Most aspects can be repaired, but if the lower section of the car is seriously rusty, renovation costs can add up (especially if you cannot undertake the work yourself).

Check in particular the floor pans, 'chassis' strengtheners, front and rear suspension mountings (especially around the rear ends of the front torsion bars, and in the vicinity of the rear spring mountings). The extremities of the wings, the lower sections of the body sides on two door saloons (just ahead of the rear wheels), and the boot floor are other areas to inspect very carefully.

Note that many convertibles have been converted from two door saloons; indeed, kits are available for this purpose. However, the work needs to have been carried out properly, and the asking price should be lower than for a 'factory' convertible. It is wise to seek guidance from Club sources if you are intending to buy a drophead version.

If you fancy a Traveller (estate), make quite sure that the woodwork forming part of the rear bodywork is strong. This is an integral part of the vehicle's structure (that is to say, it is NOT just cosmetic), and can be expensive to replace.

The mechanical components are renowned for longevity, but the engines will eventually start to smoke due to worn piston rings and cylinder walls. Look for excessive smoke (from the exhaust); this will be seen in the rear view mirror when accelerating away after descending a long hill.

Check for worn/rattling big end bearings, especially on the sidevalve units of the MM



versions, and the 803cc units used in Series II models until 1956; these are prone to wearing after relatively low mileages. Check for untoward rattlings from the 'bottom end' of the later engines too (948cc and 1098cc units), although these are far stronger and will typically run for at least 120,000 miles before major attention is due (given proper routine maintenance).

Check the gearbox for weak synchromesh action, jumping out of gear on the 'over-run' and for noisy first and reverse gears.

The final drive units often whine a little at higher speeds (usually this is nothing to worry about), but loud clankings/bearing noises mean serious trouble.

Minors MUST have the front suspension/steering joints re-greased regularly (ideally every 1,000 miles or so), or the joints will suffer, and in the worst case scenario the suspension may actually collapse. Repairs are time-consuming and can be expensive.

VERDICT

Minors are still among the easiest and most effective classic cars to own and enjoy.

PRICES

(Note: These figures are approximate and do not apply to 'concours' examples, which may fetch considerably more).

Saloons/Travellers: Rough, £100. Good, £1,200-£2,500. Top notch, £4,000+.

Convertibles/commercials: Rough, £200. Good, £2,000-£3,000+. Top notch, £5,000+.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Built:

MM (sidevalve): 1948-52



Series II (803cc ohv): 1952-56

1000: 948cc, 1956-

1098cc, 1962-71

Bodywork:

Two door saloon, four door saloon, estate (Traveller), van, tourer/convertible.

Engines:

In-line four cylinder.

MM (sidevalve): 918cc, 28 bhp

Series II (overhead valve): 803cc, 30 bhp

1000 (overhead valve): 948cc, 37 bhp

1000 (overhead valve): 1098cc, 48 bhp

0-60 mph:

Series II: 50+ sec

1000 (948cc): 30 sec

1000 (1098cc): 24 sec

Top speed:

MM: 60+ mph

Series II: 62 mph

1000 (948cc): 75+ mph

1000 (1098cc): 80 mph

Typical fuel consumption:

35-45+ mpg