



The 2019 Pre-war Minor Network Moonrakers' Rally Marlborough, Wilts 7th-9th



The traditional rally photo taken by Jonathan Martin in St. Georges Church car park, Manton

Rally Report— Toby & Linda Sears

June 2019 saw the 10th PWMN rally and this year we returned to the old market town of Marlborough, Wilts, on the north edge of Salisbury Plain, with Marlborough resident and long-term Minor owner Ken Martin and his wife Kate stepping up as hosts.

The customary Friday evening welcome and the Sunday evening farewell were held at the Castle and Ball Inn on the High Street. On the Friday the rather nice glossy rally handbooks, packed full of information about the following two days of tours around surrounding lanes, were handed out - along with the all-important picnic lunch and cream tea vouchers - as old friendships were re-kindled and new ones made. The rally was named "Moonrakers" after an 18th century legend about Wiltshire smugglers who avoided arrest by passing excisemen as they were retrieving barrels of brandy they'd hidden in a lake by pretending they were simpletons who were raking the reflection of the moon on the water because they thought it was cheese. Whilst that may or may not be true, the Moonrakers' rally certainly looks set to achieve legendary status in the PWMN annals

thanks to the impressive line-up of 21 Minors, plus several Wolseley Hornets, three MGs and an Austin, with models ranging from a rare special coupe to tourers, two-seaters, semi-sports and saloons (both overhead cam and sidevalve), spanning 1929 to 1934. The Minor, of course, gave birth to the MG Midget and Wolseley Hornet, both close relatives to the Morris Minor.

Saturday morning saw all 27 pre-war cars and four moderns, crewed by around 60 eager rallyists, assembling at St George's Church in Manton before heading off on the day's 82-mile drive around central and southern Wiltshire. Young enthusiast Dan Brockway had been burning a lot of midnight oil to rebuild the engine of his unrestored, oily rag, 1932 saloon and was looking forward to clocking up some miles to run it in but sadly suffered a leaking carburettor float, which made him and dad Derek non-starters (although happily they were able to swap to a modern to still take part in the drive). The rest of us shook, rattled and rolled our way to a coffee stop in Amesbury via chocolate-box villages, B roads and leafy lanes - dodging another young club member Andrew Miles along the way who had



Friends re-united—Photo Kate Martin

to pull over just around a blind bend to tighten some pesky self-loosening wheel nuts on his special coupe! Fortunately he was soon on his way again and although a clutch of rallyists sailed past the entrance to the coffee stop after forgetting the golden rule of 'do whatever the instructions say rather than blindly following the car in front', it wasn't long before everyone was back on track and tucking in to tea, coffee and biscuits.

Once back on the road, the route took us through sunshine and showers almost to Salisbury via the beautiful Woodford Valley, and then across to the Prince Leopold Inn at Upton Lovell for lunch, where, between polishing off pre-ordered picnics or a la carte dishes, rallyist Trevor Wilkinson served up the day's tastiest treat - a working float from the stash of spares beneath his Minor seat to get Dan Brockway's car back on the road for Sunday. Appetites satisfied, Wiltshire's winding lanes beckoned again, taking us back north past white chalk horses on hillsides, fields of poppies and mock village Copehill Down (where our soldiers practice urban warfare) on Salisbury Plain and through the odd sharp shower. After stopping for fuel, Roger and Inka Burnett were the second to suffer a break-

breakdown but fortunately it proved to be temporary after no less than three fellow rallyists vied for the honour of offering up a spare coil. Camaraderie at its best.

Last stop of the day was in the remote Millstream pub at Marden for a delicious cream tea before heading back to Marlborough. The route was designed to be 82 miles although some may have done more! It certainly whetted our appetites for the dinner and awards presentation at Marlborough Golf Club that evening. The dinner is an informal affair and this year a hot buffet worked very well. **The Gregory Award** for furthest travelled by a pre-war car (not including sea or trailered mileage) was won by Arie Roest who came over from Holland in his Hornet, while his wife Tineke also won the **LAT Plate** awarded to the independently-judged winner of the PWMN photo of the year competition which also provides images for the club calendar. **The Harry Edwards Memorial Trophy** for advancing the marque went to Tony Gamble who has saved and restored many, many Minors over five decades. **The Brian Maeers Claret Jug** for enthusiasm for Morris Minors went to Avril Ovendon and her 1931 two-seater, 'Jemima'. The Final award was **The**



Touring

Weekend Break trophy. Usually awarded to the first terminal breakdown at the rally in order to cheer up the owners, picking a 'winner' was difficult in 2019 as generosity of spirit and spare parts saw both Dan Brockway and Roger Burnett back on the road for Sunday (with no terminal breakdowns over the whole weekend for possibly the first time). However, as Dan broke down first, he gets to show off the trophy on his mantelpiece for a year. Last, but by no means least, Ken Martin was thanked for the considerable time and effort he put in to planning such a well organised rally, and wife Kate was thanked for letting him do it! Of course, none of it would have been possible without Chris Lambert starting the club in the first place, but he and wife Norma took a well-earned back seat for the first time this year, with future rallies to be organised by a different club member each time.

Sunday saw us re-assemble at Marlborough Golf Club before setting out on another (shorter) tour within the North Wessex Downs. Dan Brockway finally got to put his 1932 Morris Minor saloon through its paces, with a steep hill on the first section of the route to Inkpen, via Ramsbury, Hungerford

Common and Kintbury, testing his still-tight engine quite a bit. Following a coffee and some glorious cake, all the cars managed to make it up to the crest of Coombe Gibbet, where fabulous views were to be had across the valley - an area used for training by paratroopers prior to D Day due to its similarity to the area they were to liberate. Onwards through glorious villages and scenic lanes we went until we reached our lunch stop at Crofton Pumping Station. The pumping station's Cornish beam engines, the first of which came into service in 1812, are the oldest ones in the world still doing the job they were intended for, pumping water 40 feet up from a low point of the Kennet and Avon Canal back up to its highest section. The site's strategic importance to the railways meant the pumping station survived into the 20th century and to this day the beam engines are still steamed on 20 days a year, with an electric pump doing the job the rest of the year.

The final breakdown of the weekend saw Paddy Reardon pop a core plug at Crofton - solved thanks to Chris Lambert handing over, and helping to fit, a spare. Thanks also to Peter Elliott who kindly helped out with several of the 'breakdown rescues' during the week-



weekend after travelling down from Scotland in his modern despite having to withdraw his 1930 Triumph Super Seven. It is testament to the spirit of club members that many mechanical failures have been resolved in this and previous years thanks to fellow rallyists carrying anything from a half shaft to a set of points, and being willing to roll up their sleeves to help others fix stuff - even removing a cylinder head in order to replace a rear core plug on an overhead cam car between the end of the Saturday tour and the evening dinner on one occasion!

Once the tour of the beam engines was over an optional extension of the Sunday tour saw some head on to Avebury, where torrential rain meant we chose to view the impressive pre-historic stone circle and henges from our Minor - not exactly in the dry as the downpour was heavy enough to find ways under the

the windscreen and through the hood, but definitely drier than if we had toured the complex on foot! Then back to Marlborough after racking up a day total of 65 miles. Our overall mileage for the weekend was 300 miles - a couple of hundred less than some other years as for us this rally was relatively local, but it just goes to show we can still press our rugged little Minors into sterling service. Rallyists who had not yet headed home joined forces at the Castle & Ball Inn for a farewell gathering on Sunday evening, where we reminisced over rallies past and present, and plotted future ones. Despite the unsettled weather, all agreed that the Moonrakers' rally was yet another successful weekend of vintage motoring and fellowship. Thank you, Ken and Kate for making it happen and to all the rallyists for making it such fun.



“Where do we go from here?”