'BOOMERANG' MINOR Australian CKD saloon returned to the UK has been restored to its former Oz glory

MORRIS MINOR MAGAZINE

THE BEST SELLING MORRIS MINOR MAGAZINE

ISSUE 203

MUDDY MINOR V8

- MORRIS MINOR REPLACEMENT
- CONVERTIBLE BUYERS GUIDE
- BRAMPTON BREWERY VAN
- WORKSHOP FEATURE
- NUFFIELD NOSTALGIA

£3.95 JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2013

03

9 772049 650003 >

THE MINOR ROVER V8 4X4

Words and Pics Mikael Friis

It started with an idea to fit a V8 engine in a Morris Minor - and it ended with a Minor Rover V8 4x4 almost 15 years later!

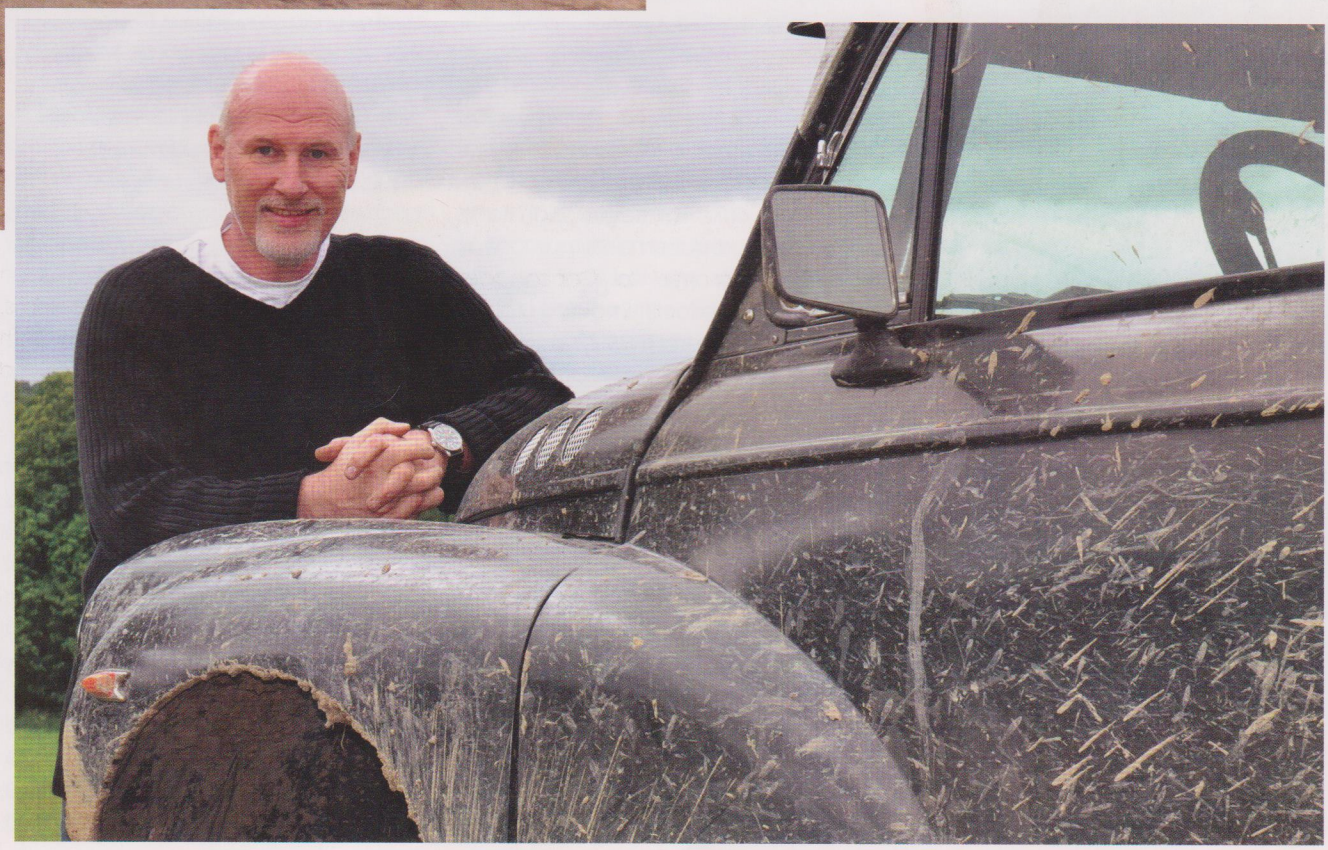
It was a dark and stormy night - in 1981. There I was, a happy 23-year-old in need of an inexpensive car that could carry me back and forth to my studies in Copenhagen some 50km away from my home in Graested Denmark. The choice fell on a 1967 Morris Minor 1000 that was Danish registered, which I bought from a retired midwife. It was pretty easy to repair and inexpensive to run and in good condition with a fresh MOT. It was also a hit with the ladies, I have loved Morris Minors ever since! Unfortunately my first Moggy was written-off after a road accident in combination with the lack of comprehensive insurance to save money I was a poor student! I had meanwhile moved to Copenhagen and therefore could live without a car. After graduating with a degree in business economics and later a degree in journalism - and after a period of steady work - there was money in the bank again.

In 1991 I bought my next Morris Minor - just for fun. I bought it from a retired nurse with 160,000km on the clock. It looked great, but it turned out that the car under its light blue paint was really rotten. I should have thrown it away, but I stripped the car, repaired and repainted it and it did me well for many years. For many years I used the Morris Minor as my 'company car' when I worked as a freelance truck journalist, clocking up more than 100,000km together without any problems. When it passed the 350,000km both body, engine and gearbox needed a thorough renovation, and I had to consider its future. The Morris Minor was still my car of choice I then spotted a Minor with a V8 on the Internet. It was my destiny, from that very moment I decided to build a Morris Minor V8. Unfortunately my Moggy was beyond repair, but I managed to salvage some of the parts such as doors, bonnet, and boot lid for my Minor V8 project.

Difficult project in Denmark

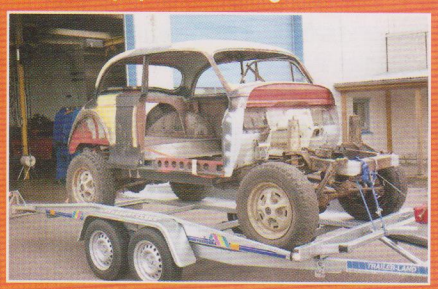
I knew of course that it would be more than difficult to get such a vehicle

registered in Denmark, so I presented my plans with a detailed description to the Road Traffic Authorities. I was referred to the 'Danish Institute of Technology' to have a series of calculations and drawings made. At the Institute they wouldn't start work before they had received a deposit of DKK 50,000 + VAT (£7,500). They refused to even guess at how much the total bill would be. Moreover the Road Traffic Authorities would not guarantee that the car could get through inspection even though I followed the instructions to the letter, a sort of a lottery ticket, if you know what I mean. This was really a deathblow to my Morris Minor V8 project, but I wouldn't give up my dream without a fight. I thought perhaps the solution could be to build the car on a solid frame, for example, a Range Rover Classic. I submitted my revised project to the Road Traffic Authority, and to this day

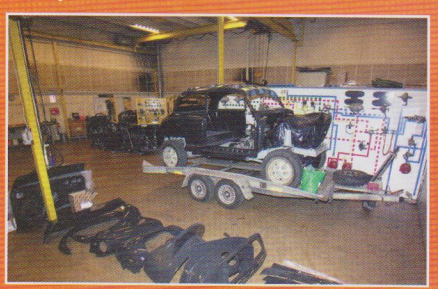


Why not build a 50/50 mix of a Range Rover and a Morris Minor?

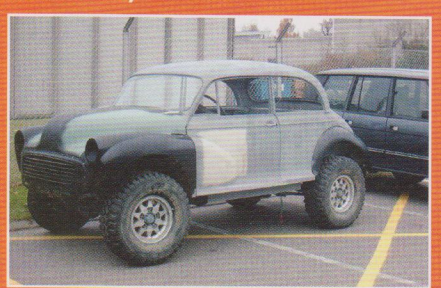
Minor body split to be lengthened



Fitted with a Range Rover bulkhead and floor panels



Freshly painted wings, doors and the rest of the bodywork components ready for assembly



Test fitting of tyres, unfortunately they were too big. Note the blue Range Rover is the donor car for all the mechanical parts.

I remember exactly what the 'friendly' man said on the phone, "Well, if it is done properly, we will probably find it hard to refuse approval!" My decision was made I'd build myself a Morris Minor with a V8 plus four-wheel drive! This was back in 1995.

For the sake of registration and technical requirements it was necessary for me to find an old chassis as a donor. In England I found a Range Rover from 1972 and I got the car shipped to Denmark, by now its 1996 and the project began for real. I removed the Range Rover body leaving a rolling chassis. At the same time I had my 1962 Morris Minor as the body donor.

Longer and wider body

The Minor body was too small to cope with the Range Rover's wheelbase and track width, so the body had to be extended and widened. According to the official target for the track and wheelbase, respectively, the Minor body was 8" too narrow and 14" too short for the Range Rover track width and wheelbase. Before the body was cut in 'four quarters' a temporary adjustable cage of square profiles was welded internally in the body, so it was possible to keep track of the 'four body-quarters' until they were aligned and welded together. Then a new Range Rover bulkhead and floor panels were welded into the front part of the body and a custom build floor in the rear part of the body. The chassis itself was also modified with a shorter front and rear overhang so it would fit the length of the body. By inserting the original Range Rover bulkhead and floor panels I could mount the pedal brackets, brake booster, steering column etc. without major problems. This also saved me any discussions with the authorities on strength, functionality and reliability of the brakes and steering systems, as they were practically unchanged compared to the original Range Rover items. By using original Range Rover floor panels in the forward part

of the body, I could also mount original Range Rover front seats with integrated safety belts, avoiding having to calculate and document the strength of modified seat belt anchor points.

With the basic body finished, virtually all other body parts had to be modified such as the doors needed to be extended, whereas the front panel, bonnet and boot lid needed to be widened! It was then off to be sandblasted and painted. In the meantime, I went hunting for another donor car for the mechanical parts, since everything from the old Range Rover 1972 including the body was scrapped. In Berlin, Germany I found a 1988 Range Rover 3.5 EFI Automatic with only 140,000km on the clock. I flew to Berlin and drove the car back to Copenhagen, and then it was stripped in order to "donate" the complete driveline, axles, brakes, suspension etc... to the Minor Rover.

New windows all around

One of the more complex tasks was to fabricate a new windscreen I also needed to fabricate new windows all around. By chance a Range Rover windshield matched the curvature of the widened Minor body and a skilled auto glazier cut a new Range Rover windshield in size and mounted it in a lengthened Minor rubber using two original seals. The side windows were relatively easier to fabricate as both the door and the rear windows are made of flat glass. They were cut from standard automotive glass with the same tint as the windshield and then hardened, as Danish legislation requires. The rear screen was made out of flexi glass as used in motor sport.

Approved!

Time for the final approval from the authorities, the inspection was booked with the inspector that had given advice and guidance in the building process. For tactical reasons, I thought that it would probably be easier to get the car through inspection and approval, when he was involved. And indeed it was. The inspection lasted for more than an hour where all the modifications to the chassis and bodywork were checked and evaluated. The inspector also spent much time studying the documentation for the chassis modifications, I had previously sent a written project description to the Authority, and it is my clear impression that he was pleased with the technical changes to the car. It was not without some pride that I received the verdict, 'Approved', stamped at the bottom of the inspection form. Actually, I was a little surprised that the car was approved at the first attempt after such a comprehensive transformation of a car.

After the approval, I went to the MOT authorities to have the 'new' car taxed. In Denmark new cars are taxed up to 180% of the value for example, net price of a car = £15,000 + 25 % VAT = £18,750, 105 % registration tax of the first £ 9,200, 180 % of the rest = £26,850. Therefore total cost for the consumer £45,600. As we say in Denmark buy one car, pay for three! 'New used' cars are taxed in the same way but based on the actual trade value that's why it was so important to find the oldest car possible as donor vehicle, so the Minor Rover with it's 1972 Range Rover chassis was valued at £1,300 and taxed £1,675.

Well, hardships were not quite over yet, to retrieve the license plates from the authorities I would need to find a sympathetic insurance company. That wasn't easy, they were usually very quiet on the phone when I called and asked, how much is a liability and damage insurance on a 50/50 mix of a Range Rover from 1972 and a Morris Minor from 1962, it wasn't easy. Either they would not insure it at all, or it would be at a sky-high premium. The solution was to get tough and couple the insurance for the Minor Rover with all the family's other insurances. This sort of changed the tune, and the result was a liability and damage insurance at reasonable money. With an insurance certificate my last task was to get the license plates priced at £140! I was then good to go.

Going off-road

Since the Minor Rover was approved, taxed and registered I have fabricated a special front bumper that's larger, heavier and more rugged than the original. In fact is it made of a so-called 'front under run protection device', which is derived from a Scania 4-series construction truck! Inside the cabin there is also progress, virtually the entire car was lined with anti-vibration asphalt slabs. On top of the asphalt I have placed noise absorbing foam panels that have further reduced the noise level - without the car being too quiet. A Rover V8 engine after all powers it, and the sound should preferably be heard especially in the cabin! I have also installed a rugged bolted and welded 6-point interior safety cage in 2" steel pipe. The original Range Rover fronts seats have been replaced with Cobra bucket racing seats to fit 5-point harness belts.

The Minor Rover made its public debut at Land Rover's 60th anniversary event in Denmark at Tirsbæk Castle in late 2008. Since then it has participated in numerous off-road events under Danish Land-Rover Club's umbrella, and it also made a successful appearance at "Scandinavian Custom Car Show" in Copenhagen in 2010 and 2011. In the coming months and years I'll work to finish the interior with some Smiths Telemetric instruments. In the engine compartment a couple of electric fans have replaced the standard item.

And finally I also have plans to build an off-road trailer in 'Morris Minor Traveller style', but that's a whole different story... ... (Ed note: - be sure to tell us about this trailer when it's completed!) ■