

## The Modification of Morris Mini Minors and Austin Se7ens in Scandinavia in 1960

**Introduction.** R.G. (Bob) Seymour became a Service Engineer for Nuffield Exports Ltd. in 1958. Bob spent seven weeks in Scandinavia during the Spring of 1960 and the following are his recollections of the modifications that were carried out on Morris Mini Minors and Austin Se7ens (ADO 15s) at that time.

**Background.** The production of the new ADO 15s started at the Austin Motor Company's Longbridge plant on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1959 while the production of Morris Minis Minors commenced at Morris Motors' Cowley plant on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1959. This was several months before the vehicles were made known to the public in order to allow Austin and Morris Distributors to have adequate stocks of the cars to sell at the time of their public announcement.

There is evidence to show that the production of ADO 15s at Cowley started at eight vehicles per hour and that Austin Se7ens and Morris Mini Minors were produced on both assemble lines. It is known that due to shortages of the unique parts for Austin Se7ens and Morris Mini Minors, eg front grilles, name plates, horn buttons etc. any items that were available were fitted to the cars to maintain production. There was a rectification section at Cowley where the incorrect Austin and Morris items were removed and then replaced with the correct items. The section also rectified other assembly faults.

Both the Morris Mini Minor and the Austin Se7en, were announced to the British and foreign press on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> August 1959 at the Fighting Vehicle and Development Establishment (FVRDE) in Cobham, Surrey. The public had to wait until Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> August 1959 when a road test and a specification of the Austin Se7en appeared in 'The Motor'. The official advertising campaign for the cars started on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1959.

When the manufacture of the ADO 15s commenced they were being built with several inherent faults, which were found following subsequent testing, and modifications were then introduced. A considerable number of ADO 15s had already been exported to Sweden and Denmark \* before the faults had been discovered so BMC decided to modify as many cars as possible to rectify the faults prior to their public announcement. Some of the unmodified cars were sent back to England and BMC sold these cars at a reduced price to staff members.

The modifications were to be carried out under the management of BMC's (both Austin and Morris) Service Technical Departments and as a Service Engineer I was sent to Scandinavia on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1960 to supervise this work on the cars which had been sent to Sweden and Denmark. I was accompanied by 25/30 men (I cannot remember the exact number) from the Morris Mini Minor and Austin Se7en production lines at Cowley and Longbridge, some of whom were trimmers and some of whom were mechanical fitters, who were to carry out the modifications on the ADO 15s.

Although the Austin Motor Company and the Nuffield Organisation had merged in 1952, the companies were operated separately in many ways and a polite cooperation existed between the two companies. Nevertheless, you were either a 'Morris Man' or an 'Austin Man'.

The project to modify the ADO 15s deeply involved both the Austin Motor Co. and Morris Motors Ltd. and full use was made of the facilities and personnel of both companies. Mr Alec Issigonis's main office was at Longbridge where much of the development of the ADO 15 had been carried out: the Longbridge plant having suitable space and facilities for this work. Mr Issigonis spent from Monday to Thursday at the Longbridge plant and he stayed at a hotel in Droitwich. On Thursday evening, he drove to his flat in Oxford and spent Fridays at the Cowley plant. This joint effort helped to integrate the two factories and at all levels there was much cross cooperation.

*\* Denmark was recognised as a special market for the UK due to a trade agreement involving Danish dairy products and bacon which were being imported into Britain in large quantities. In exchange for this, the British car import tariffs were favourable and, as a result, many British cars were sold in Denmark. Prior to the launch of the Morris Mini Minor in Denmark, there was a very successful advertising campaign called 'You need a Partner'. On the day of the announcement, the Partner was revealed to be the Mini.*

**The Task.** With the help and cooperation of the Morris distributor in Denmark and the Austin distributor in Sweden three 'modification' lines were set up, one in Malmo, one in Odense and one in Copenhagen, in order to carry out the work necessary for the modifications. The Morris distributor in Denmark, DOMI (Dansk Oversoisk Motor Industri), kindly allowed us to have our meals in their senior staff canteen where Union Jack flags had been placed on the tables.

The rectification work carried out on the ADO 15s consisted of the following:

- 1) Water proofing the ADO 15's ignition system using a rubber cover over the distributor.
- 2) Pop riveting extensions to the roof gutters and hand drilling holes in the roof gutters to provide rain water outlets. This was to prevent rain water cascading over the edge of the roof gutters and into the car via the door seals and windows.



1959 side gutter with no drip rail.



1960 drip rail, these were added in May 1960.



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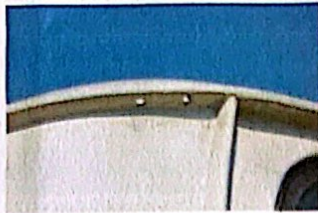
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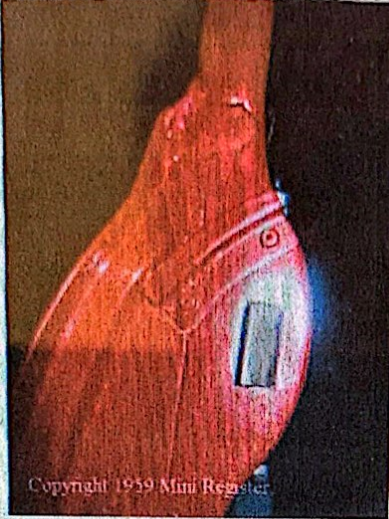
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In a service memo, pop riveted drip rails could be retro fitted, these look different to the factory type above as

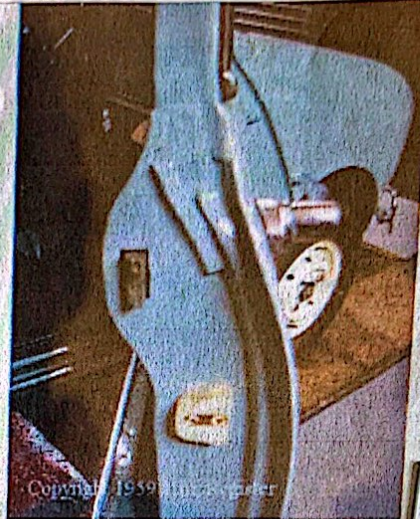


Very early cars should have hand drilled drain holes in the rear gutter corners. Some have no holes at all.

3) Fitting rain water diversion plates above the door locks on the closed part of the doors.



Mid 1950 door showing the lock protector still riveted in place but the drain hole is now through the conventional rubber hose through the bottom of the door. The deflector would later be incorporated in to the door moulding rather than riveted on separately.

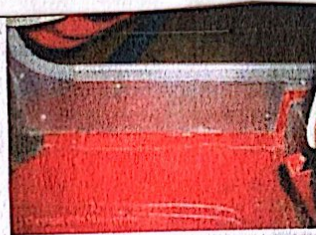


Later Mk1 style door showing the water deflector plate as part of the door pressing.

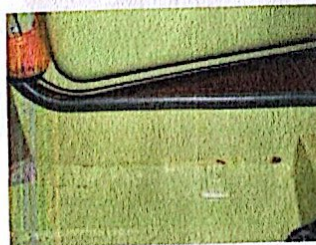
4) Sealing the holes located on the interior of the sills.



All 1959 cars have flat sills as part of a one piece floor pressing with separate inner sill.



The inner sill on 59 cars showing the two inner drains to let water into the car.



Later inner sill with no interior drain slots.

5) Sealing of the welded joints on the underside of the body to prevent rain water entry into the car.\* The floor pressing and its reinforcement had been designed the 'wrong way round' which allowed rain water to enter the car between the spot welded joints – see image 1. The expensive correction, which was introduced on later cars, involved a

redesign of the floor pressing and placing the reinforcement internally so that rain water could exit under the car – see image 2.

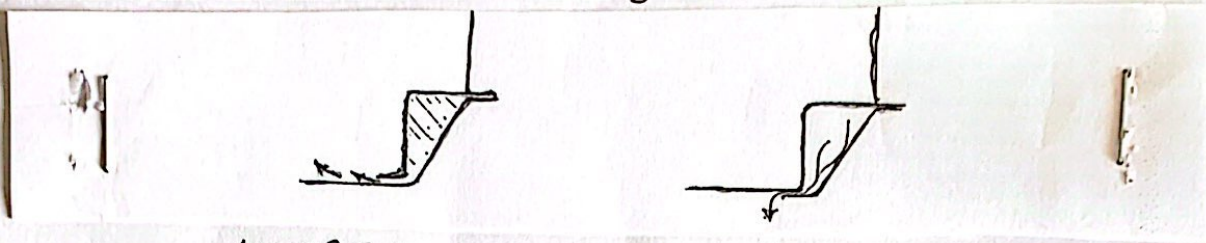


IMAGE 1

IMAGE 2

6) Replacing the horse hair seating with a more acceptable variety.



The rear seat is also plain and little more than a bag over the padding. The rear wheel arch is also covered.



Basic seats were of cloth material. These are 59 style basic seats of the correct pattern. Black piping indicates a Morris.

7) Replacing the poor quality carpets with sorbo backed carpets of better quality.

*\* BMC's Press Officer, Norman Milne, recalls driving back to Longbridge in the pouring rain up the newly opened M1 in a Mini after the 1959 Motor Show: 'I had piles of press releases on board on the floor in the back that were ruined. The car had filled to the gunwales with water'.*

Three days after our arrival in Scandinavia, there was a meeting in Stockholm to discuss procedures. Those who attended the meeting, as well as myself, were Mr V. Dixon, an engineer from the Austin Motor Co. and Mike Storrer who was representing Mr J K (Jimmy) Hoare of Morris Motors Ltd. and who was my boss. We were expecting Mr Bob Lambert of the Morris Motors' Experimental Dept., but he was unable to attend the meeting.

Initially, the major problem while carrying out the modifications was a lack of materials being sent to each location in the right quantities and at the right time. This caused massive difficulties as without an adequate supply of the materials men would be standing around with nothing to do or if there was a shortage of one item, it was not easy to move men from one job to another and especially from one location to another.

The following are quotations from some of the cables I sent to Cowley. (It should be noted that the only quick way to communicate with Cowley at that time was by cable or telegram).

'25<sup>th</sup> April 1960. Unless trim material immediately to hand cancel arrival of trim team to

Odense 30<sup>th</sup> trimmers required same time as material stop important to advise action by return stop'

At a later date I sent the following cable: 'Urgent stop Odense operation halted due to non supply of many parts and tools stop please check against list of R. Lambert'

Mr Hoare responded to my cables by asking me to write a compressive report about the problems.

While on his way back to Cowley from an overseas trip, Mr Hoare arranged to stop off in Copenhagen to collect my report. I do not have a copy of my report, which was dated, if I recall correctly, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1960, but have recorded it was five pages long. The report concluded that if we had the parts required we could finish the job on approximately five weeks.

After reading my report, Mr Hoare arranged for a meeting. The situation became so acute that I complained bitterly to Mr Hoare. I explained that I was suffering from a lack of sleep due to worry and letters to my wife at this time expressed my frustration and indicating that I was fed up with the situation.

Some of the men were getting restless due to being idle and either wanting to go home or visit the tourist places in Scandinavia. Although one man returned home due to family problems and another was sent back to the UK after he had committed a misdemeanour, there was, generally, very little difficulty encountered with any of the men involved with the modifications. However, one man, who was working at Malmo, was injured when a drill broke and the broken part went into his wrist just missing a vane. He was taken to the local hospital where he was treated properly and a bandage was applied.

Despite my report, things didn't get better immediately but time and patience improved my situation. I made some very good friends, especially with Leif Petersen the Service Manager of the Austin distributor in Odense with whom I was later able to spend some useful time.

Some three weeks after writing my report, on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1960, Mr R (Bob) Lambert, of the Experimental Dept. at Cowley, who was coordinating the various departments concerning the modifications of the ADO 15s, visited Denmark. We had an useful meeting and discussed in detail the practical / technical problems about the jobs on hand. Bob Lambert and I got on very well and we both agreed we should have had our meeting before the job of modifying the ADO 15s had started.

Soon after Bob Lambert had returned to Cowley, the situation improved enormously as the outstanding parts to carry out the modifications became available, which enabled the jobs to progress in a more organised manner. I was involved in a lot of travelling at this

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time moving from location to location. In those days, the trip from Malmo to Copenhagen was by ferry. These ferries were smooth and fast being powered by Parsons Steam Turbines. There is now a road / rail link between Malmo and Copenhagen, which was opened in the year 2000.

Having completed the modifications on the ADO 15s successfully, the men who had carried out the work returned to the UK. A short time later, on 4<sup>th</sup> June 1960, I returned to the UK so the work involved in modifying the ADO 15s had taken about seven weeks. It could have been much quicker if the initial problems that had been encountered while starting the work had not taken so long to resolve.

R.G. Seymour  
August 2022.

