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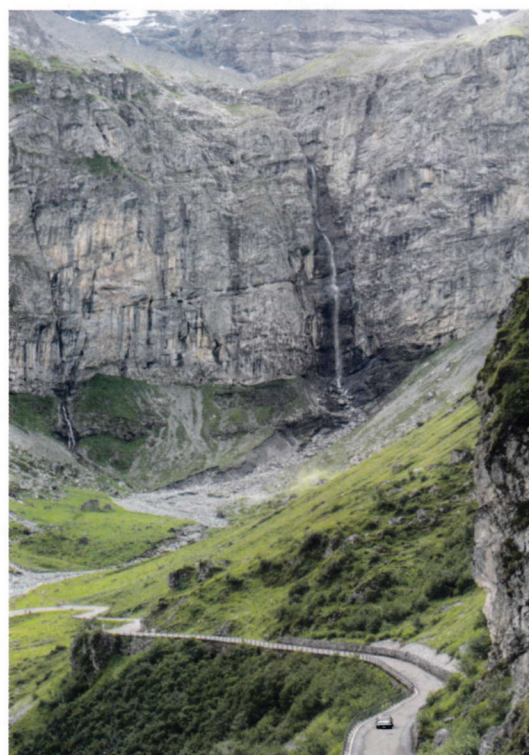
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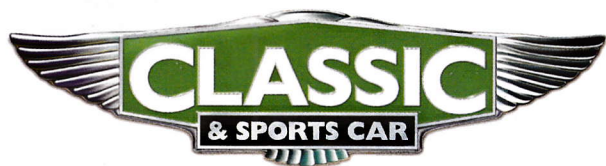
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Welcome

Every now and then, a picture falls across my desk that forces me to pause whatever I'm doing and take some time just to drink it in. Often that's because it's a beautiful car, other times a stunning location, or it may simply be because our Tony Baker is such a talented lensman. This month it was the amazing opening group shot of our Morgan cover story, which is arguably none of the above (apart from being a Baker original, of course). The reason it made me stop and stare, however, was because of the number of cars – and the knowledge of just how much effort must have gone into making it happen.

Part of that's down to the dedication of deputy editor Malcolm Thorne, who had been stressing about this one for quite a while, but as always we're reliant on the generosity of the owners who are willing to give up their time and to share their fabulous cars. So a big thanks to them all – particularly because it was a long day and the weather wasn't always the glorious sunshine of that image.

While I'm on the subject of thank-yous, I'd also like to pay tribute to the Morgan Motor Company, which gave us permission to use part of its famous Malvern site as a location – and where better to shoot a group of Morgans than there?

And finally, from one evocative location to another, I'm thrilled to announce the launch of The Classic & Sports Car Show in association with Flywheel and Bicester Heritage. Taking place at the historic Oxfordshire venue in June 2018, the event promises to be packed with fabulous classic cars, military vehicles and stunning aircraft, and should become an unmissable date on the calendar. For full details, turn to p19.

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Plus ça change...



It's easy to associate the name Morgan with a car from a single mould but, as **Malcolm Thorne** discovers, the Malvern firm has produced a spectacular range of models over the years

PHOTOGRAPHY TONY BAKER/MORGAN MOTOR COMPANY



'WITH EXPERIENCE, THESE THREE-WHEELERS ARE VERY ENTERTAINING AND RAPID MACHINES INDEED'

Clockwise: Super Sports is an exhilarating way to travel; simple cabin with hand controls; MX2 is the air-cooled, overhead-valve variant of Matchless 'twin'

In our rapidly evolving world, it's reassuring to know that certain aspects of life remain constant. Come home after an extended absence and those institutions will be precisely as they were when you left: the Queen's head on stamps, the sticky joy of Marmite, the calming but incomprehensible delivery of the shipping forecast (just why is it so good if Rockall is rising?). And from an automotive perspective, there will always be Morgan.

To the average bystander, this is a company that builds 'old-fashioned sports cars'. Give them a pencil and they'll probably be able to draw you one – all swept wings, low-cut doors and running boards. Morgan is a singularly stubborn firm that does just one thing, always has done, and always will. We all know that, right?

Wrong.

This minnow from Malvern might be best known for its ash-framed sportsters in the 1930s idiom, but over the course of its 105-year existence the company has produced a startling array of models. Putting this group of cars together threw up three-wheelers and four-wheelers; engines of two, four, six and eight cylinders; two-seaters and four-seaters; spartan roadsters, close-coupled coupés and even a pretty little drophead. We have a Z-section steel chassis, a tubular affair and some fancy bonded aluminium; crash 'boxes, modern manuals and, believe it or not, an auto. We've got performance ranging from adequate to bonkers, and styling that goes from charmingly archaic to radically avant-garde. There's simply no such thing as 'a



Barrel-back body style of F Super neatly houses spare wheel. Right: Ford 10hp unit – earlier F-types had the 8hp version; more conventional cockpit

Morgan', but rather a vast and varied family. For our photoshoot, we drew the line at a dozen different models, all of which assembled at the famous Pickersleigh Road factory.

The adventure begins with Bill Higginson's MX2 Super Sports, and adventure really is the operative word. We'll start with the obvious: yes, it has four wheels, but one is a spare that's neatly integrated into the tail. And it has a motorcycle V-twin strapped to the front – in this case a 998cc Matchless; over the years the bewildering array of powerplants also included JAP, Anzani, MAG, Blackburne and Blumfield.

But that's just the beginning. Assuming that you're little bigger than a jockey (bulkier drivers need not apply), wriggle your way into the tiny doorless cockpit (avoiding the hot side-mounted exhausts) and the head-scratching really begins.

The three-spoke wheel is adorned with a perplexing array of levers and cables, there are but two pedals, and by your left knee there appear to be two gearlevers. The larger of them actually operates the front brakes, while its stubbier partner controls the three-speed reverse-gate crash 'box, which sits just ahead of the chain-driven rear wheel – before 1932, they were all two-speeders. There is a footbrake, but that's for the rear only. The other pedal is the clutch, because the throttle is a thumb-operated lever. This is not a car for novices in heavy traffic.

Overcome the confusing controls, though, and it's easy to fall in love with this bizarre little *bolide*. It is a wonderful device, feeling like a cross between a biplane and – dare I say it – a lawnmower, and offers the unique joy of being able to observe the valvegear jiggling up and down from the comfort of the driver's seat. Don't dismiss it as a mere novelty, though – with experience, these three-wheelers are very rapid and entertaining machines. It is a truly remarkable contraption, albeit "more of a 'bike than a car", according to its owner. That's an apt description, but with the later F-type, Morgan began to consider slightly more conventional designs.

Examine Malcolm Lamb's F Super from the nose and it looks every inch the typical 1930s sports car, yet this is still a three-wheeler. Introduced at the Motor Cycle Show in 1933, the F-type can be viewed as the link between the original motorcycle-engined models and the



Clockwise: flat-rad Plus 4 carries echoes of the F-type's front end; charismatic interior; four-cylinder engine sourced from Standard Vanguard

MORGAN SUPER SPORTS MX2

Sold/number built 1933-'39/na

Construction tubular steel chassis, steel panels over ash frame **Engine** Matchless ohv 998cc V-twin; 39bhp @ 4600rpm

Transmission three-speed manual, RWD

Suspension: front independent, by sliding pillars, coil springs rear quarter-elliptic leaf springs **Steering** epicyclic reduction **Brakes** drums **Top speed** 73mph (MX4 model)

Price new £128 **Price now** from £30,000

MORGAN F SUPER

Sold/number built 1933-'52/1216

Construction Z-section steel chassis, aluminium/steel panels over ash frame **Engine** cast-iron, 1172cc sidevalve 'four'; 22bhp @ 3500rpm **Transmission** three-speed manual, RWD **Suspension:** front independent, by sliding pillars, coils rear quarter-elliptics **Steering** epicyclic reduction

Brakes drums **Top speed** 74mph

Price new £132 **Price now** from £30,000

MORGAN PLUS 4

Sold/number built 1950-'69/6853

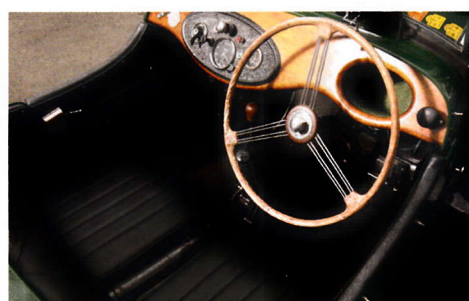
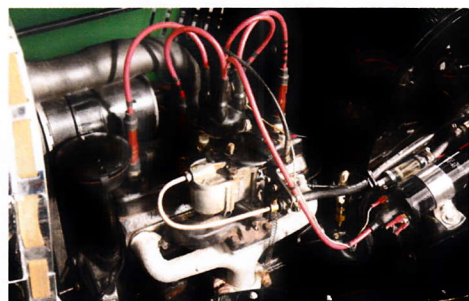
Construction Z-section steel chassis, steel/aluminium panels over ash frame **Engine** cast-iron, 2088cc ohv 'four'; 68bhp @ 4300rpm; 112lb ft @ 2300rpm **Transmission** four-speed manual, RWD **Suspension:** front independent, by sliding pillars, coil springs, telescopic rear semi-elliptics, lever-arms **Steering** cam gear **Brakes** drums **Top speed** 85mph **Price new** £652 **Now** from £30,000

later four-wheelers. Powered by a water-cooled 1172cc sidevalve 'four' from the Ford Ten, the F Super is surprisingly rapid – *Motor Cycling* having reported in period that 70mph and more was within reach – while its acceleration and ride also received considerable praise.

Like its forebear, it was blessed with high-geared and remarkably direct steering, plus the firm's trademark sliding-pillar front suspension. Unlike the earlier machine, though, it's fitted with what we would today consider to be conventional controls, while the chassis was beefed up with Z-section members replacing the tubular structure. *Motor Cycling* summed up by describing it as 'a genuinely fast vehicle of the true sporting type', adding that it had 'a capacity for maintaining high average speeds'. What's more, 'ours' even has doors.

If the three-wheelers come across to the uninitiated as a peculiarity for hardcore aficionados, the 'flat-rad' four-wheelers must surely be the archetypal sports model for flat-capped chaps. Morgan's first car in the traditional sense of the word arrived on the scene in 1936, when the diminutive 4-4 (four wheels and four cylinders) joined the fold (*C&SC*, December 2016). Production was halted during WW2 but quickly reinstated in '46. Then, in 1950, a slightly larger, more powerful and faster variant was added to the line-up – the appropriately named Plus 4.

Like its earlier siblings, that car was available in a range of body styles. Although the two-seater roadster is the most racy, family-orientated four-seater versions were also offered – the example belonging to Chris Morgan (no



A family business

Henry Frederick Stanley Morgan – known as HFS or ‘Harry’ – was born on 11 August 1881 in Moreton Jefferies, near Malvern. An early interest in engineering led to an apprenticeship with the Great Western Railway, but he left at the age of 23 to establish ‘Morgan & Co’. The business offered vehicle repairs, sales and even chauffeur-driven hire cars, then in 1909 HFS built his own three-wheeler. The single-seater Morgan Runabout (pictured below) used a Peugeot twin-cylinder engine, and was first displayed at the 1910 International Motor



Cycle Show. The warm reception it received encouraged him to put it into production. The first Morgan agency was the Harrods store in Knightsbridge.

In 1912, HFS married Hilda Ruth Day, and in 1919 a

son, Peter, joined their four daughters. By 1935, HFS had moved the family to Berkshire and delegated much of the day-to-day business to his works manager, George Goodall. He died at the age of 78 in 1959, the year after Peter had become MD. It was Peter’s determination that led to the marque surviving and he remained at the head of Morgan until he died in 2003. Peter’s son Charles later had a stint as managing director, but left in 2013.

relation) being a particularly excellent specimen.

Like all early Morgans, space is at a premium for generously proportioned drivers, especially thigh room beneath the beautiful Bluemels Brooklands wheel. The cockpit is nothing like as petite as those of the three-wheelers, though, and rear-seat passengers get a positively generous amount of space – even if perching over the axle puts your face well above the top of the windscreen and directly in the flight path of unsuspecting insects. From the driver’s seat, the view ahead is particularly charming, with a set of ivory-faced dials in the centre of a solid wooden fascia that has the delightful appeal of a 1930s radiogram. There’s no rev counter on this car, but you do get speed, amps, oil pressure, fuel level, water temperature and the time of day.

Out on the road, the Morgan feels not unlike a sidescreen Triumph – hardly surprising, given that its motor is a Standard Vanguard 2088cc unit. On a single Solex carb, the performance is perhaps not quite as lusty as its Coventry contemporary, but piloting the Plus 4 is a very

pleasing experience, with remarkably precise steering, excellent brakes (this one has been uprated to discs at the front), and not an ounce of flab to spoil proceedings. The ride on smooth surfaces is firm but not as unyielding as you might expect (thanks, no doubt, to the deep tyre walls), and the whole thing feels taut and nicely controllable. It’s lovely – even down to the oft-maligned Moss ‘box, which, although it won’t be rushed, very much suits the character of the car.

If the Morgan experience thus far seems a little spartan, the next car in our line-up more than addresses the matter. Although closely related to the four-seater – mechanically, there are but detail differences – Malcolm Lamb’s beautifully restored drophead is an almost decadent variation on the theme. Climb through the suicide door (it’s the only four-wheeler here to feature them) and in spite of the car sharing most of its fixtures and fittings with its close relation, the ambience is quite dissimilar.

With the three-position hood fully closed, this is a snug and intimate place to be, and it



Clockwise: profile shows off flowing lines of the drophead; twin carbs for this version of the big ‘four’; wooden dashboard gains a rev counter

‘PILOTING THE PLUS 4 IS VERY PLEASING, WITH NOT AN OUNCE OF FLAB TO SPOIL PROCEEDINGS’



MORGAN 4/4 ZETEC

Sold/number built 1993-2006/na

Construction Z-section steel chassis, steel and aluminium panels over ash frame

Engine iron-block, alloy-head, 1796cc 'four'; 121bhp @ 6000rpm; 115lb ft @ 4500rpm

Transmission five-speed manual, driving rear wheels

Suspension: **front** independent, by sliding pillars **rear** live axle, leaf springs; telescopic dampers f/r

Steering recirculating ball to 1999, rack and pinion to 2006

Brakes discs/drums

Top speed 111mph

Price new £16,256

Price now from £25,000

MORGAN PLUS 4 PLUS

Sold/number built 1964-'67/26

Construction Z-section steel ladder chassis, glassfibre body

Engine cast-iron, ohv, 2138cc 'four'; 105bhp @ 4750rpm; 128lb ft @ 3350rpm

Transmission four-speed manual, driving rear wheels

Suspension: **front** independent, by sliding pillars, coil springs, telescopics **rear** live axle, semi-elliptic leaf springs lever-arm dampers

Steering cam gear

Brakes discs/drums

Top speed 110mph

Price new £1275

Price now £100,000-plus



Clockwise: Plus 4 Plus was a marked departure for Pickersleigh Road; TR4 powerplant is running on non-standard Weber carbs; cabin is more spacious



Clockwise: cowlad was introduced in 1953, and set the definitive Morgan style; Zetec engine for featured car; interior subtly modernised

immediately transports you back to the genteel world of mid-20th-century Britain. Aside from the poor rearward vision with the hood erected, this feels like a very usable little car. There's a big luggage area behind the bench seat, while, on this example, the dashboard furniture provides the bonus of a rev counter. With the top down, the differences are less acute, although you do feel less exposed than in the more basic car – a corollary of the higher door tops. Weighing in at perhaps a hundredweight more than the four-seater, the drophead's performance is marginally inferior, but it's a gorgeous vehicle that combines vintage charm with post-war ability.

It may seem odd today to consider the antiquated styling of a Morgan as a hindrance to commercial success – it's become very much the firm's *raison d'être* – but by the early to mid-1950s, the square-rigged flat-rad was looking decidedly *passé*. A facelift was called for, and with it was born the quintessential Morgan that's so recognisable today: the so-called 'cowl-rad'.

First seen in 1953 and mildly reworked in '54, the reshaped nose and faired-in lamps created a distinctive look that, although far from cutting edge, was noticeably more modern than the previous design. It remains the Malvern staple some 63 years on: Stuart Blake's eye-catching yellow 4/4 (a dash replaced the hyphen in '55) is no oldtimer, but it's as representative here as any sextagenarian example. This is the shape that defines most people's perception of a Morgan.

Settle into the cockpit after the flat-rads and the updates are far-reaching. From seats to fascia to trim to steering wheel, it all feels curiously modern, yet the similarities are just as noticeable as the differences. This feels like a younger version of the same recipe – slicker, quicker,

'THE PLUS 8 IS AN
ENTICING BLEND OF
RETRO STYLE AND
DRAMATIC PUNCH'

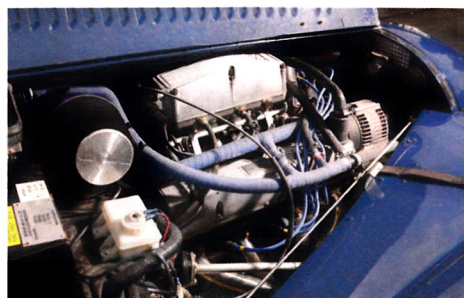


From main: featured
Plus 8 has the wider body,
introduced in '76; various
iterations of Rover's V8
were used; luxurious cabin

more efficient and no doubt less demanding to own, but with the same inherent appeal of the earlier models. There's a more modern gearbox and powerplant – a 121bhp, fuel-injected, 16-valve, 1796cc Ford Zetec in this car – plus better brakes and wider radial tyres, but the defining characteristics remain unchanged. You've still got the Z-section chassis, the sliding-pillar front and semi-elliptic rear suspension, not to mention the same ash-framed body. Think of it as a 1930s house with modern creature comforts such as central heating and double-glazing: period charm without the penitence. Performance is in the brisk rather than blistering category: 0-60mph comes up in 7.8 secs, while top speed is in the region of 110mph, but the 4/4 – the entry-level four-wheeler – is about nimble progress rather than outright pace.

If the adoption of the now-iconic cowl-rad was mere titivation, a veritable revolution hit the streets of Malvern in October 1963 in the form of the Plus 4 Plus. Clothed in a glassfibre body-shell penned by John Edwards of EB Plastics in Stoke-on-Trent, the inspiration for it came from that firm's Debonair kit. The underpinnings were those of the standard Plus 4 of the day – which is to say a 2138cc, 105bhp, twin-carb 'four' from the contemporary Triumph TR4, and Girling disc brakes on the front. The result is a particularly intriguing vehicle.

From the waist down, it's strikingly attractive, although the turret-like top and small side windows lend the profile a certain naïveté; it is not entirely resolved, but that makes it all the more fascinating – in much the same way as a



MORGAN PLUS 8

Sold/number built 1968-'04/6130 (all)

Construction steel chassis, ash frame, steel body panels **Engine** all-alloy, ohv, 3946cc V8; 190bhp @ 4750rpm; 235lb ft @ 2600rpm

Transmission five-speed manual, RWD

Suspension: front independent, by sliding pillars, coils rear live axle, semi-elliptics; telescopics f/r **Steering** rack and pinion

Brakes discs/drums **Top speed** 124mph

Price new £12,999 (1984) **Now** £30-50,000

Daimler Dart. The first thing that you notice as you climb in is the remarkable amount of space – plus the absence of a running board to step over. This is also the first Morgan that doesn't really feel like one: the full-width body provides occupants with considerably more elbow room, and the architecture of the cabin is very different – to such an extent that you begin searching for familiar Malvern cues. The sprung wheel, floor-hinged pedals and dials are recognisable, yet the overall effect is anything but. The black fascia and small bucket seats feel more Triumph than Morgan, and you can easily imagine this being a stillborn project to replace the TR3 with a fixed-head GT. Alas, although the Plus 4 Plus was not quite stillborn, only 26 were built.

Improved aerodynamics combined with a kerbweight no greater than that of the standard Plus 4 roadster mean that the coupé is a keen performer, but although the handling was praised by testers in period, the decidedly vintage ride was somewhat at odds with the grand tourer pretensions of the sleek new shell. Furthermore, at £1276 it was twice the price of a standard Plus 4. The car was doomed to be a commercial failure, which really is a shame – it's a niche model, but has a very genuine appeal.

If the Plus 4 Plus failed to convince buyers, for almost four decades the next car in our line-up offered what many considered to be the ultimate Morgan experience, melding an enticing blend of retro style with dramatic punch. Introduced in 1968, the Plus 8 utilised Rover's brilliant 3.5-litre, all-alloy V8 in a widened and lengthened Plus 4 chassis to create a well-planted and torque-rich

hot-rod that could sprint to 60mph in a touch over 6 secs and on to a maximum of 124mph, making it a seriously fast conveyance.

Regularly updated in line with the engine's continued development, the Plus 8 would eventually be equipped with a 220bhp, 4555cc, fuel-injected unit pumping out 260lb ft of torque in a flyweight package, but the concept remained unchanged. This docile dragster was as happy to potter as it was to race for the horizon, but as *Motor* reported after testing the 3.5-litre version: 'The usable performance is immense... a reservoir of power can be unleashed from 500 to 5000rpm in any gear to devastating effect,' adding that, 'all you hear is the unmistakable burble of a fine small-block V8, which all our testers found addictive'. It's little wonder that some 6232 found buyers over the course of the model's 36-year production life.

When the Plus 8 was finally pensioned off in 2004, Morgan was left with a vacuum to fill: a traditional sports model with greater performance than the four-cylinder cars. The gap was plugged by the Roadster. Powered by a 2967cc Ford V6, it may have lacked its eight-cylinder predecessor's bewitching woofle, but here was a car that, at 0-60 in 5.4 secs and 135mph, was even quicker. A brief drive in Brian Cowell's immaculate red example is enough to confirm that the Roadster's improved weight distribution also made it slightly more nimble.

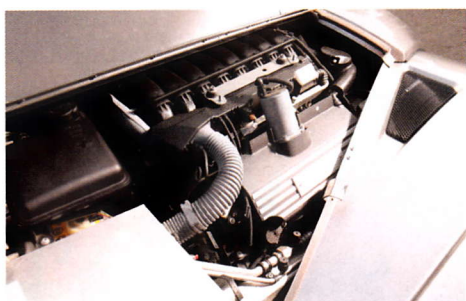
Some may have lamented the passing of the old V8, but for those seeking ultimate performance – and to whom the Roadster was two cylinders short of a picnic – a radical new beast



The Aero 8 was the first model to use Morgan's new aluminium chassis. Below: the interior is a blend of retro and modern; stylish script badge

had sallied forth from the factory two years earlier. Enter, stage left, the Aero 8.

By the turn of the 21st century, pundits could have been forgiven for believing that Malvern would follow the same by-then-archaic recipe for the rest of time – it was, after all, decades since the last radically different model, the Plus 4 Plus, which had bombed. It came as a shock to many, then, when the all-new Aero 8 blasted onto the scene at the Geneva Salon in 2002. Far more than a restyle, this brainchild of Charles



Clockwise: Aeromax is particularly outrageous from the rear; BMW's V8 gives epic performance; the cosseting interior features plenty of leather



MORGAN AERO 8

Sold/number built 2001-2010/na
Construction bonded/riveted aluminium tub, aluminium panels over ash frame
Engine dohc-per-bank, 32-valve, 4398cc V8; 286bhp @ 5500rpm; 324lb ft @ 3600rpm
Transmission six-speed manual, RWD
Suspension: front upper links, wishbones rear double wishbones; coil-over dampers f/r
Steering powered rack and pinion
Brakes ventilated discs **Top speed** 160mph
Price new £62,000 **Now** from £50,000

MORGAN AEROMAX

Sold/number built 2008-'09/117
Construction bonded/riveted aluminium tub, aluminium panels over ash frame
Engine dohc-per-bank, 32-valve, 4799cc V8; 362bhp @ 6100rpm; 370lb ft @ 3600rpm
Suspension: front upper links, wishbones rear double wishbones; coil-over dampers f/r
Steering powered rack and pinion
Brakes ventilated discs
Top speed 170mph
Price new £110,000
Price now £180,000

'DON'T BE DECEIVED –
THIS IS NO WIDE-BODY
VERSION OF YOUR
BOGGO MOGGO'



Clockwise: later Plus 8
uses traditional styling on
the newer chassis; wider
stance is obvious; interior
boasts more room than
earlier cars; famous badge



Morgan was developed from the company's successful GT2 race programme and it ushered Pickersleigh Road into the modern era.

Clothed in an intriguingly retro superformed aluminium suit (a process not unlike vacuum-moulding with semi-molten metal), the chassis was all new, boasting the type of bonded and riveted construction more commonly associated with the aviation industry; the Aero moniker really is quite apt. Power, meanwhile, was courtesy of the Bavarians, in the form of BMW's superb 4398cc 32-valve V8, while sliding pillars and leaf springs were finally abandoned in favour of wishbones all round – bestowing the car with a previously unheard-of ride quality.

With its wind-up windows – electrically operated, at that – and other mod-cons, this futuristic flight of fancy set the cat among the Malvern pigeons. The interior is a mix of the borrowed and the bespoke and, compared to the bleakness of mainstream cabins of the day, is a stunning fantasy world of machine-turned aluminium. Coupled with the extensive use of hide and ash

detailing (the latter is actually structural – the body still incorporates a timber frame), it has the feel of an expensive yacht, but there's nothing nautical about this car's performance.

Launched with 286bhp, it was upgraded during its life to 333bhp, meaning that it could blast from 0-60 in 4.5 secs and top 160mph. The race-bred handling also received praise, with *Autocar* describing the cornering ability as 'close to ideal, with bags of grip, very little roll and a neutral stance even at extreme speeds'. If your idea of a Morgan is an antique built by blacksmiths, you must try one of these.

For all the Aero 8's brilliance, the controversial styling was always a stumbling block, but the same criticism could never be levelled at the sensational Aeromax, which made its debut at Geneva in 2005. Based on Aero 8 underpinnings and originally commissioned by Morgan fanatic Eric Sturdza, this latter-day Deco masterpiece by stylist Matt Humphries melds Bugatti Atlantic and Corvette Sting Ray with tropes from the trad models, and is guaranteed to turn heads

MORGAN AERO PLUS 8

Sold/number built 2012-date/122
Construction bonded/riveted aluminium tub, aluminium body over ash frame
Engine all-alloy, dohc-per-bank, 4799cc V8; 362bhp @ 6300rpm; 370lb ft @ 3400rpm
Transmission six-speed manual, RWD
Suspension: front upper links, wishbones with rear wishbones; coils and telescopics f/r
Steering powered rack **Brakes** discs **Top speed** 155mph **New** £85,200 **Now** £70k-plus

MORGAN 3 WHEELER

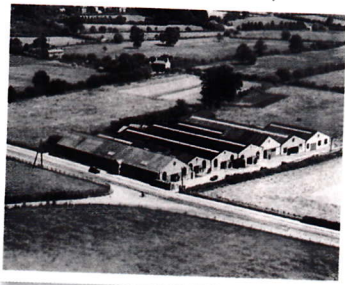
Sold/number built 2011-on/c1600
Construction tubular steel chassis, aluminium body over ash frame
Engine all-alloy, ohv, 1983cc V-twin; 82bhp @ 5250rpm; 103lb ft @ 3250rpm
Transmission five-speed manual, RWD
Suspension: front wishbones rear swing arm; coil-overs f/r **Steering** rack **Brakes** discs
Weight 525kg **Top speed** 115mph
Price new £31,000 **Price now** from £25,000

Historic home

The original Morgan & Co premises were alongside Harry's house, Chestnut Villa, on Worcester Road in Malvern Link. As production of the Runabout got more serious, he was forced to extend the works, but by 1913 the company had almost 70 employees and was fast outgrowing its original site.

In November of that year, HFS bought two acres of land on Pickersleigh Road, with the new factory initially working in tandem with the old one: the chassis would be built up at Worcester Road, before receiving bodies, trim and paint at Pickersleigh Road. Following WW1, the latter was extended so that most of the production process could be carried out there. A new chassis workshop was added, with others soon following – by 1922, there were six buildings in all, and seven years later the build process for all Morgans was based exclusively at Pickersleigh Road.

Today, the company offers tours of the factory that enable you to walk through the original parts of the building – where much of the cars' construction is still carried out – as well as the more recent additions, some of which were needed to accommodate production of the 3 Wheeler.



wherever it goes – even in Malvern, where Morgans seem as commonplace as Fiestas.

The cabin echoes the Aero 8, with vast swathes of leather (including a fluted headlining that snuggles up either side of a central roof member), plus similar alloy and timber detailing. Aside from the modern wheel, which looks rather out of place, it feels beautifully tailor-made. The ambience is not unlike a roomier version of the short-lived Marcos TSO, and the Aeromax is almost as rare – just 117 were built.

That it remained a strictly limited-edition special is cause for some considerable sadness, because it's an incredible machine. 'Ours' is an automatic (a six-speed manual was also available) and will cruise along with remarkable docility, but a muted rumble from the exhausts leaves you in no doubt that some serious performance is on hand. Tickle the throttle and the 362bhp, 4.8-litre fastback will roar all the way to a top speed well north of 160mph, while the chassis dynamics are very much akin to the open car, which is no bad thing.

With the demise of the Aero 8 in 2009, and its fixed-head cousin a year later, for a moment Malvern's creative flourish appeared to have fizzled out: the range was reduced to the traditional fare of 4/4, Plus 4 and Roadster, and Pickersleigh Road appeared to have reverted to what – in the eyes of the traditionalists – it did best. But then, in 2011, along came a brace of new models that proudly drew from the company's illustrious heritage, but which were diametrically opposed in their make-up. In the red corner we have the Plus 8, and in the blue corner the 3 Wheeler.

At first glance, the former looks like more of the same, but don't be deceived: this is no wide-bodied version of your boggy Moggo. Beneath the aluminium skin this car is to all intents and purposes an Aero 8, with all the tech that the name implies, including bonded aluminium chassis and wicked amounts of Munich power.

It may lack the slim-hipped elegance of the lesser models – the narrower Morgans have always enjoyed a more resolved shape – but this is a good-looking car, with none of the controversy that surrounded the Aero 8's styling.

And what a marvellously beguiling machine it is, blessed with a soundtrack that passes from a deep and suggestive bellow to a spine-tingling howl as the revs climb. That in itself is enough to seduce the driver, but there's more: with 362bhp and 370lb ft on tap, it feels blisteringly fast, while the steering is nicely weighted and amazingly direct. It's surprisingly roomy, too, but with a cockpit that feels very much like a Morgan should. It's a crying shame that although the Plus 8 is still being built, the factory is taking no new orders for the model, the BMW V8 having reached the end of its production life.

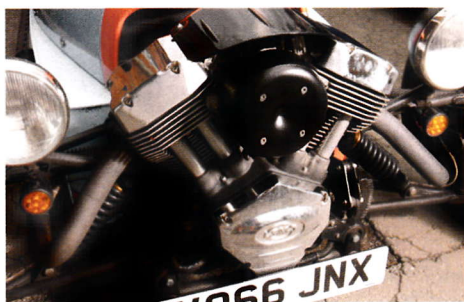
If the high power and tech of the Aero generation is too much, the last car in our line-up is very much the antidote. Launched at the Geneva Salon in 2011, the 3 Wheeler is a spectacular homage to the firm's earliest efforts, and is perhaps the most irreverent two-fingered salute to have emerged from the motor industry in decades, an unsophisticated and joyously impractical machine whose only goal is to make you laugh out loud. And it certainly does that. The theatre begins when you drop into the simple cockpit, where – as in its pre-war cousin – the mood is more light aircraft than motorcar.

With the ignition on, lift the flap that conceals the starter button and give it a jab; the 1983cc S&S V-twin bursts into life and settles down into a lazy motorcycle chug. After the earlier three-wheelers, this one is remarkably spacious, although there's still no room for your right elbow inside the cockpit. You sit low, and if you're of diminutive stature you'll find yourself peering over the scuttle in search of the road ahead, but such considerations ebb away as soon as this eccentric contraption launches you up the road.

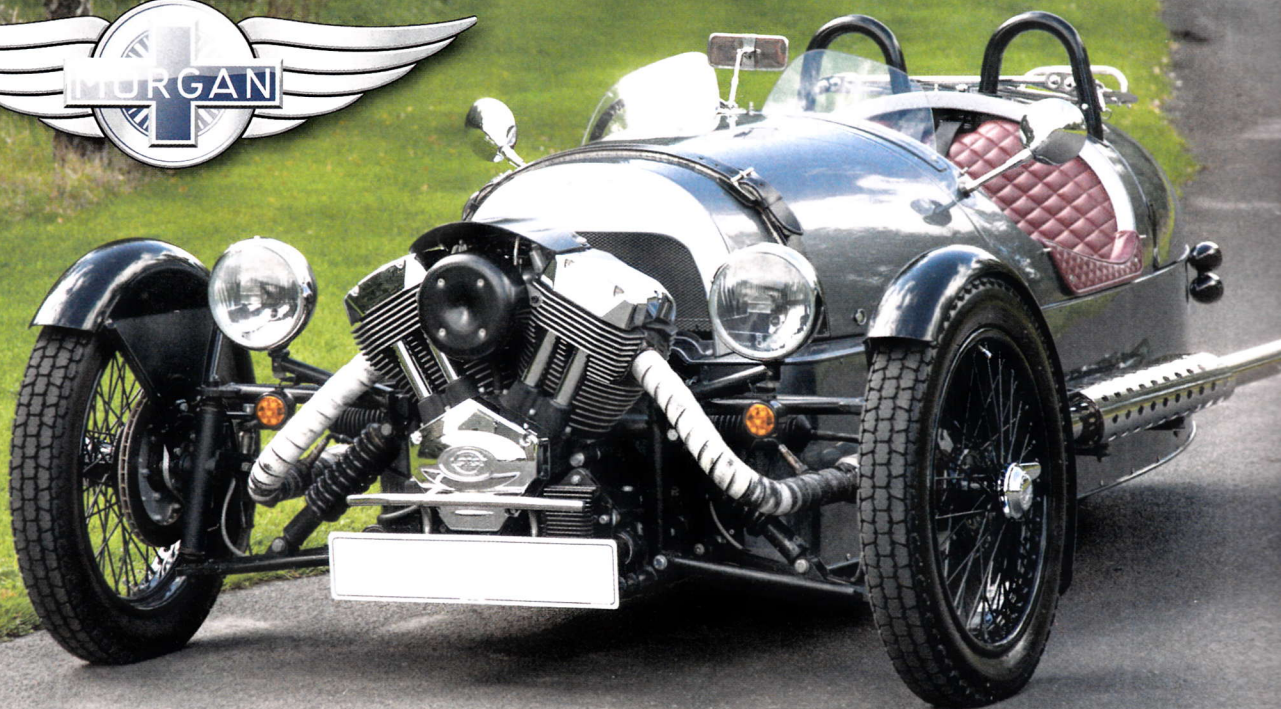
The massive 'twin' doesn't appreciate pottering in too high a gear, and mini-roundabouts reveal a poor turning circle, but on the right road this is a fantastic place to be. The Mazda MX-5 gearbox is a joy, the brakes and tiller nicely weighted, the growl from the engine superb. A few miles are enough to understand why this little tripod has become such a success story for the Worcestershire firm: if Morgans are about driving pleasure, this hits the bullseye.

With such a diverse range, there's a car here for every occasion, but two in particular leave a lasting impression. The Aero Plus 8 is an incredible device that provides enormous thrills and a magnificent soundtrack. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the little Super Sports is one of the most intriguing machines I've ever encountered. It genuinely fascinated me. The two are poles apart, but they share an irresistible charm and prove that there's a lot more variety in Malvern than some might think. *Vive la différence!* CLASSIC

Thanks to the Morgan Sports Car Club (www.morgansportscarclub.com); everyone at the Morgan factory

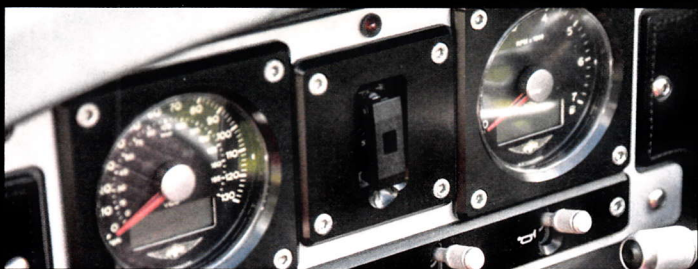


Clockwise: 3 Wheeler brilliantly evokes the original model; thumping V-twin; spartan interior with quilted bucket seats



Morgan 3 Wheeler £28,000

The best classic Morgans plus
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We're delighted to offer for sale this 2012 Morgan 3 Wheeler. Finished in Gunmetal Grey with a Mulberry Quilted Leather interior. This 3 Wheeler has been extensively serviced and has received all applicable upgrades. It's presented with lovely features such as Luggage Rack and Wood Finished Steering Wheel. Having covered only 2,800 miles this truly is one of the finest available for sale.

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