

Having read a large number of memories on Dave's page they have set me thinking.

I started my apprenticeship in 1956. I lived in West Bromwich and my apprenticeship was the other side of Birmingham at Bordesley Green. I had to walk one mile plus to catch a bus to Birmingham. Members of the old Midland group may remember where the buses crossed the boundary between West Bromwich and Birmingham, they had to stop at the Hawthorns by the Albion ground. A new ticket had to be purchased to go onto Birmingham. If bus was early the driver would get out for a smoke, the times I was on a bus with the driver smoking and a bus pulled up behind and then drove on, I was left wondering if I will be late for work. When reaching Birmingham at Snow Hill I had to walk across the city centre to catch a bus to Bordesley Green and then a half mile walk, we had to be in before 8 am a manager would push in the queue at 8am on the dot and close the book, any one after that was late, the managers were all though to be illegitimate. The reverser started at 5.30pm.

After surviving the travelling and the weather, a young man's heart turned to other things, a motorbike. I put the idea to my parents', the quick answer was NO. My father pointed out the average was, I would fall off it somewhere, somehow or under something. It was a no go.

Aside of my story. My father's statement came true some years later, we had a new apprentice, big mouth, big head and new a lot of nothing, he wanted a big and faster motor bike than his elder brother, he purchased a Triumph Dolomite, the census of opinion was he would not last. Apparently, he hit something and as he was going over the handle bars, they started to close towards the petrol tank and squashed his cheeky bits. He was in hospital for several weeks with his legs wide open.

We found a Bond mini car, three wheels, two at the back and one at the front with a powerful 125cc Villiers engine over the front wheel. It had stood for some time. I had to make a new hood and side screen and reupholster the seats but it ran. It had the later rack and pinion type steering not the bobbin and wire, the brakes worked only on the back wheel and continually rusted up. The silencer had given up, my father found an old military fire extinguisher a tube. We had an input pipe welded in, filled it with wire wool and a tail pipe added, it made a lovely noise. A lot of my friends had motor bikes and offered to sit with me while learning to drive. Then came the Suez crisis, learner drivers could go out by themselves. That was all very well but I still was not too sure when to change up. I realised there was a loose switch on the dash and when it started to rattle it was time to change up.

I passed my driving test for a motorbike, it was my every day car even though it suffered with aluminium fatigue. The head lights were mounted just behind the bonnet, they were removed due to them flapping in the wind. The holes were patched over and parking lights fitted, a single head light was bolted to the front bumper. The tyres which were fitted when I purchased the car wore out very quickly, we took one to a tyre depot, it was a tyre for a wheel barrow, the last owner was a builder. To start the engine, there was a leaver roughly where a gear leaver should be, bolted to the floor. A wire was attached to the leaver, through a hole the bulk head and then attached to the kick start leaver. You pulled the leaver back operating the kick start, if you were lucky the engine started. Unfortunately, the continual pulling of the leaver to start the car, the wire was slowly cutting the hole in the bulk head into a slot. I had a problem with a loss of power and large quantities of blue smoke was coming out of the exhaust. I was returning home looking at the cloud of smoke behind me through the rear-view mirror. I turned round to look and there was a police car behind me. The bell went, now what, outclimb out of the car, up they came, I explained I did know what was causing the smoke and I was on my way home. After walking around the car looking at my licence the comment was 'the numbers on the number plate were too small', it is a motor bike. I found out you have to decoke the ports on a two-stroke engine

The twin Family Morgan then came into my life, KV 8519, now owned and rebuilt by Ian Hughes. I found the car in Atherstone which at the time was on the A5, now bypassed. How to get it back to West

Bromwich, this is where my motorbike and car owner friends came in. They were all offering to drive it back, it was a runner of sorts, it was in the winter. We started in daylight but it soon went dark and the car was losing water. We were stopping and knocking people's door asking for water and it started to freeze. We managed to get home and start the rebuild. The Bond was very useful for carting things around, wood, sheet aluminium, the engine bottom half to Alpha bearings. The Morgan was finished and the Bond had to go.

Only having a motor bike licence, there was a problem with the reverse, it had to be blanked off, officially the gear should have been removed. I fitted a blanking plate to the selector rod, it looked good but I could reverse if I held it in gear. Now for a full car driving licence, I went for the test the examiners comment was 'I do not have to go in that thing, do I?' I had failed before I started, which I did. Next test, I asked the examiner if he wanted the hood up, no. I did the full circuit with out the emergency stop, we where on the road to the test centre and then the 'Stop'. The examiners comment 'the brakes on theses are not too good so I left the Stop until we had a clear road'. Good man and I passed.