

# Charles Ware

8 November 1935-4 July 2015

Charles Ware, founder of the renowned Morris Minor Centre and passionate advocate of 'durable car ownership', died in July at the age of 79. MMOC Chairman **JOHN FRYE** shares some personal memories

**CHARLES WARE** – affectionately known to many of us as Charlie – was one of life's originals. There have been many such in the history of the MMOC, and the passing of each one of them has taken something out of the world.

Charles opened the Morris Minor Centre in 1976, the same year as the MMOC was established, and came to our attention through his activities and magnetic personality, together with his advocacy of the sustainable (Charli-esque, someone once called it) Morris Minor. He persuaded a generation of would-be skid-kids to opt instead for the steadier thrills of one of his revamped Minors.

In 1999 Charles was delighted to be only the second ever recipient of the Reg Job Award from the MMOC, in recognition of his efforts at preserving the Morris Minor and securing their continued use.

He had of course made the acquaintance of Ray Newell, who is still the Club Secretary, and at one of the National Rallies organised by Ray we decided, at Charles's suggestion, to have a 'Best Chassis/Underside' competition. Charles was to be the judge and agreed to present the awards. During the course of the afternoon Ray was approached by a middle-aged lady who advised him that while seated in her car, enjoying her picnic lunch, she could hear some unexpected tapping noises coming from the underside of the car. On opening the door to investigate she was confronted with a pair of legs sticking out from under the car. It was Charles. He was on judging duty and enthusiastically tapping away with a small hammer. On enquiring politely as to what he



was doing, she was advised by Charles that he was 'examining her chassis'. He allegedly added: 'And very good it is too, Madam.' This was typical of Charles: habitually unfazed but always courteous and debonair.

Charlie came to one of the Norfolk rallies soon after this incident, and was seen busily tapping away with his hammer, sounding out chassis legs and what not. One of the local Icenii Branch members asked me, 'Whass' he a-doin'?' Charlie heard him, and said: 'There may be some rot in your chassis leg.' 'Well blast me, bor,' said the individual concerned, 'What make ya think that?' 'Because it goes 'thud' when it should go 'ping' when it's tapped,' quoth Charlie. The reply was triumphant: 'That don't go ping when that there leg's fulla two and a harf gallons a' Waxoyl.' That could have been the only time when I detected a faint tinge of pink on Charlie's cheek!

In all seriousness, when it comes to matters Morris Minor, Charles had a vision. He pursued that vision with a passion, and his book 'Durable Car Ownership' summarises his ideas. Credit to him, he made his vision a reality and in the process saved many Morris Minors from terminal decline. Through the efforts of his son Zac and all the staff at the Morris Minor Centre, his passion will live on.

In the MMOC Charles will be long remembered for espousing the same ideals encapsulated in the aims of our organisation, namely the preservation and continued use of the Morris Minor. At the same time he will be fondly remembered for his enthusiasm, sense of humour and general bonhomie – and for the lasting friendships which through his love and passion for 'durability' he created.

Amongst a large congregation the MMOC was represented at his funeral in Bristol on 21 July by Andrew Stone and Sandy Hamilton. Fittingly the coffin was brought in Andrew Bywater's black Morris Traveller hearse. ●