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'Jelly mould' still seen as a British icon

DESPITE its rounded, 'jelly-mould' body, and the fact that even the newest models are 32 years old, the Morris Minor retains a loyal following.

Viscount Linley and The Beatles' producer Sir George Martin own a Morris Minor, of which a million were built between 1948 and 1971.

Like original Volkswagen Beetles, old Morris Minors are kept on the road because there is always someone willing to restore any that come on the market if ever an owner loses interest.

Brian Elliott, editor of *Minor Monthly*, a magazine dedicated to the car, said there were probably no more than 20,000 of the cars left in Britain.

The car's popularity is due to its solid design, ease of maintenance, and reliability, Mr Elliott said.

"And, of course, it is a British icon," he added.

The most common modern improvements owners make to Morris Minors are heaters, electronic ignitions and modern brakes.

GREEN CREDENTIALS:

Charles Ware shows off the award he gained for his restoration work

PICTURE:
Richard Lee

Reward for Minor minnow

BATH businessman Charles Ware has tackled the motor industry head on and proved the classic Morris Minor car is the future.

Last manufactured in 1971 - before catalytic converters and other pollution-reducing features became standard - the Morris Minor would seem an unlikely candidate for environmental recognition.

But Mr Ware, 68, was sure of the car's worth and has received a top national award for proving the car can be environmentally friendly to own and run.

Mr Ware's company, the Morris Minor Centre on Lower Bristol Road, restores old cars. He still has a stake in a parts manufacturing facility in Sri Lanka.

"What I showed was that running a durable car, like a Morris Minor and any car that is made to last, is actually infinitely better for the environment," said Mr Ware.

"The present way the car industry operates means there is a great cycle of constantly making new cars and scrapping them after ten years.

"My whole philosophy is that if something was well designed in the first place,

By Helen Burggraf

and is still useful, then why junk it?"

The award, a silver Green Apple Environment medal, was given in recognition of Mr Ware's hard work.

"It shows the environmental and financial advantages of owning a durable car, compared with ownership of an automated modern car," said Roger Wolens, of the Green Organisation.

"There wasn't a natural pigeonhole for Mr Ware. "But the manufacturing category was the most appropriate home, and I think he got the recognition he deserves."

Mr Ware received his award at a ceremony hosted by Trade Secretary Patricia Hewitt.

"I was pleased to get the award and particularly in that category," said Mr Ware.

"They called me a minnow of the industry." The Green Organisation is an independent, non-profit group that has issued the Green Apple awards for the past nine years as a means of promoting best environmental practice around the world.

Winners are automatically shortlisted for the European Environment Awards.

Mr Ware's case for the Morris Minor was based on his idea of a durable car - one that would stand the test of time.

"A car which is kept running for decades consumes fewer resources than modern cars," Mr Ware added.

"Today's cars are designed to last little more than a dozen years."

He added that cars such as the Morris Minor consumed only 20 per cent of the resources used in modern car production.

Mr Ware said the car's value depreciated over a ten-year-period by ten per cent, compared with an 85 per cent depreciation of a modern car during the same period.

"In addition, running a durable car costs at least 30 per cent less overall than its modern equivalent," he said.

Mr Ware believes that cars should be treated like houses and restored as soon as they show signs of wear.

He renovated Georgian properties in the city in the 1970s, and says cars should not be tossed out like fashion.

In 1984, Mr Ware wrote a book on the subject, called *Durable Car Ownership - A New Approach to Low Cost Motoring*, published by the Morris Minor Centre.

COMMENT - PAGE 10

Ups and downs of 'Champagne Charlie'

IN the 1960s and early '70s, Charles Ware was a millionaire property developer dubbed Champagne Charlie by the tabloids for his lavish lifestyle.

In 1971, more than 500 people attended one of his more infamous parties at his home at 10 Royal Crescent, going through as many as 300 bottles of wine, dancing through the night to two live bands, and attracting the watchful interest of the police, according to news reports of the day.

Mr Ware helped to save and restore blocks of historic Bath properties, and even claims a role in helping to preserve the Theatre Royal, which he briefly owned.

Property prices plunged in 1975 and

within the space of a few months, he went bankrupt.

"I lost all my Georgian houses," he said.

Too poor to get back into property developing again right away, Mr Ware began attending car auctions, and in the dilapidated carcasses of neglected Morris Minors, discovered his new Georgian townhouses.

"You have to cut your cloth according to your means," he said.

"You don't have to have a lot of money to conserve a Morris Minor, whereas you do to conserve a house."

Mr Ware no longer lives in the Royal Crescent, but off the London Road in Bath.

And his own car isn't a Morris Minor, but a 1982 BMW.



BUILT TO LAST:
an advertising poster for the Morris Minor dating from the 1950s