

# MINOR MATTERS

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# Flower power

If you visited the RHS Chelsea Flower Show earlier this year, you may have spotted a beautifully-restored Smoke Grey Traveller nestling amongst the flowers and foliage in one of the display gardens.

Photos Zac Ware



The car formed the centrepiece in the display of the British Plant Nursery Guide, a website set up a few years ago by horticulturalist Gilly Pollock. Small independent plant nurseries can find it hard to compete with the web presence of the larger garden centre chains, and the BPNG website gives them the opportunity for greater exposure and publicity than they could achieve on their own.

All well and good, but where does the Morris Traveller come in? 'Many of the nurseries are quite small, so people wouldn't necessarily want to make a special trip just to visit them,' explains Gilly. 'They're often in a nice part of the country though, so we came up with the idea of 'Jolly Jaunts' — pre-planned routes using smaller, scenic roads and taking in local places of interest.' The routes

can be downloaded from the BPNG website, and aim to encourage people to combine a trip to a plant nursery with a gentle countryside meander and visits to other local tourist attractions.

Gilly wanted a 'mascot' for Jolly Jaunts, and the Traveller seemed the obvious choice. 'They're cute, charming and nostalgic, and convey exactly the image we wanted', she says. But the car created far more interest than she had expected, and the Traveller has become firmly associated in people's minds with the British Plant Nursery Guide. So when Gilly began to display at the Royal Horticultural Society shows last year, she naturally wanted their display gardens to feature a Traveller.

'I knew there was a Morris Minor centre »»



in Bristol, so I looked them up on the web and found Charles Ware's. They were very helpful and lent us a Traveller for the Hampton Court Flower Show last year. We've also used a Cotswolds company called 'Great Escape', which hires out classic cars.' For this year's prestigious RHS show at Chelsea, however, it was again Charles Ware who supplied the Traveller.

'We were happy to help', says Zac Ware, who helps run the well-known Morris Minor Centre following his father's retirement earlier this year. 'We'd just finished work on a 1971 Traveller, including a complete respray, so it was ideal.'

The car belongs to MMOC member Malcolm Bull, who is also an official of the Morgan Three Wheeler Club. In addition to the Traveller he owns no fewer than eight Morgans, two Messerschmitts, and a Minor pick-up, which he intends to rebuild himself.



Picnic tea complete with knitted cupcakes!

'Royal honeymoon' luggage



'Charles Ware have restored and updated the Traveller for me and I intend to make it my daily transport. It's also ideal to take to shows with my collection of classic folding caravans — a Chateau Mobile, a Portafold, a Mini Motel, and a Kid.' Charles Ware's upgrades to the Traveller include a 1300cc engine and Sierra 5-speed gearbox, Marina front disc brakes and servo, alternator, and electronic ignition. Internal comfort has been improved with reclining front seats, stereo radio and CD player, and heated rear windows.

### Royal Wedding

The display at Chelsea followed a tongue-in-cheek 'Royal Wedding' theme, based on the conceit that Will and Kate might have taken their honeymoon in Cornwall. Alongside the Traveller, the stand featured an oak-framed 'beach hut' built by Chris Nutley of Sussex Oak Framers, a company specialising in traditional wooden frames for houses, barns and other buildings.



'We met Chris at the Hampton Court show,' recalls Gilly. 'He came to our stand and had a look at the Traveller — and then later emailed us to say that he'd bought one!'

The Traveller's rear doors are open to reveal the 'royal luggage': period suitcases, books and magazines, straw hat etc. A picnic is set out nearby, complete with 'Will and Kate' china and a tea-set from one of the oldest surviving British potteries, Burleigh of Stoke-on-Trent; the much-photographed knitted 'cup-cakes' were a last-minute inspiration.

The Traveller's number plates added an authentic touch. Gilly copied the idea from the car in which Will and Kate left Buckingham Palace at the end of their wedding day. A surprise gift from Prince Harry, the 'JU5T WED' plates adorned Prince Charles's dark

blue Aston Martin DB6 Mk II, which had been lent to the couple for the occasion.

The display at Chelsea, created by leading garden designer Claudia de Yong, attracted a good deal of interest. The Traveller was central to this, according to Gilly. 'People would stop to look at the car and chat about their own memories: So many people remember family holidays in a Minor, trips to the seaside and so on. We heard a tale of someone giving birth in one, and one man even claimed to have been conceived in one!' The official RHS photographer returned to the stand several times and is reported to have considered it the 'most photogenic' in the entire show.

Gilly admits that she doesn't currently own a Minor, but this may soon change.

'I've always had a soft spot for them, although my family never owned one so I don't have childhood memories of them like many people. We're seriously thinking of buying one though.'

Go on Gilly, you know you want to — and we hope to welcome you as a member, too! ●

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 See more pictures of Minors at [www.britishplantnurseryguide.co.uk](http://www.britishplantnurseryguide.co.uk).  
 Plants for the display at Chelsea were supplied by: *Coolings* (Kent), *Caves Folly Nurseries* (Worcestershire), *Burncoose Nurseries* and *Duchy of Cornwall Nursery* (Cornwall), *Herbs for Healing* and *Newent Plant Centre* (Gloucestershire), and *Thompson & Morgan* (Suffolk).