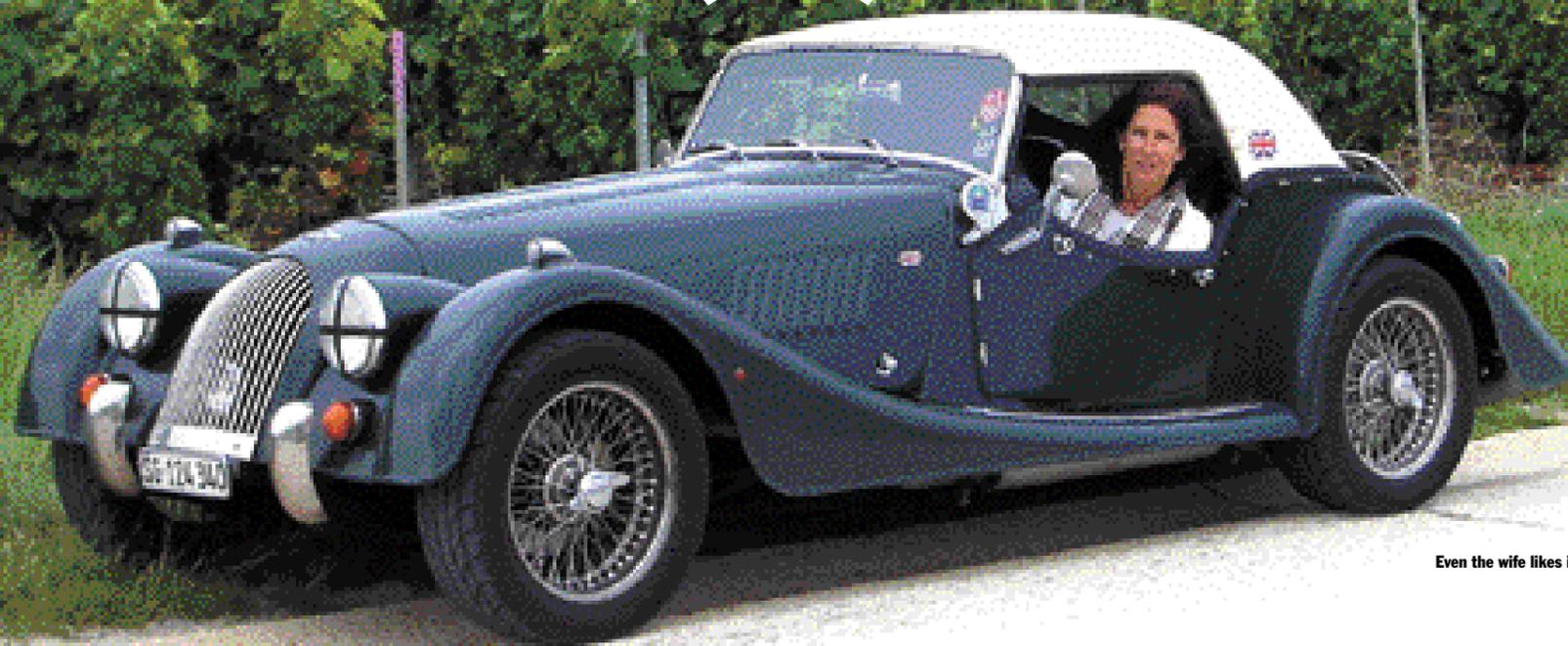


Modifying a Le Mans '62 (+8)



Even the wife likes it!

The headline may outrage some readers. 'Modifying' a Le Mans 62.' Such acts on rare cars should be punished with at least a five years revocation of Morgan cars!

But hold on, even I could not follow the policy of British engineers: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it!" Everything I changed could be easily reinstated – without any evidence like drilled holes or similar, with the exception of the modification to the rear number plate mounting, described below.

Let's start from the beginning. Our 4-Seater had become our normal 'day to day' vehicle, and because my beloved wife was driving it more herself and I missed the thunder of a V8 painfully day by day, we agreed that it was time for a '+8'. But we had to be quick. The rumours of the end of the production of the Rover engines were getting louder and louder in those days.

So, I started to watch the English used car market very closely – it should be a RHD anyway. Meanwhile the numbers of brochures of the aftermarket sellers grew week by week. I came to realise that all the

interesting models were missing exactly those items I desperately needed. Aware of this wish-list, my wife's eyebrows nearly reached the sky. She seriously stated that these offers are priced more on the level of Prada or Gucci than on a level of the 'usual' aftermarket car parts! Tough times ahead!

Fortunately, I got some help. By chance I heard from the factory that one of their long-term customers would soon be taking delivery of a new Aero 8 GTN. He was in need of additional space and one of his six very special Morgan cars had to be sold. A LM 62 +8 was for sale – but a quick decision had to be made. A week later and this car would be advertised in the "used car locator" on the Morgan website.

A Le Mans '62! Imagine: limited number of production, only 40 +8s built, less than 2,000 miles on the clock. And the best thing, equipped to my deepest needs! No new dashboard needed, it included the right



How mean does this look!

steering wheel, a nice fuel cap as well and a hardtop – in case we like to Morganeer in bad weather. I would never, ever change anything on such a rare car. It has to be as original as it left the factory, and all the aftermarket brochures may go to the garbage immediately.

This must have been reassuring to my wife, when, in November 2004, I explained why the investment into some new furniture had to be postponed. My gambit was successful. Some weeks later I drove from the Birmingham area back to the Alps in my new LM 62. Indeed, the intention not to change anything on the car lasted for several months.

But..., the rear number plate mounting! A shame, and in Switzerland, legally not required at all. Finally it was just not acceptable any longer. LM62 or not – I could not look at it anymore. However, the mounting and the cover of the under body are made as one sheet. So the use of metal shears was inevitable. But my inhibitions were overcome, and with good results.

After cutting the mounting I was able to relocate the input of the original fog and reversing lights and the new adapter for the number plate now takes up one of the original light fittings for the registration.

So far, so good. Besides driving around, taking care of everything (and greasing the kingpins), I did not do anything with the car. But I was still considering the old issue of the hot air at the air intake. I sought a smart solution like I had already done to our 4/4.

Because it is a RHD it is impossible just to fix a tube down under to let fresh air stream onto the filter. There is no space between the steering rod and the tanks of the hydraulic liquids. An air tube to be fixed at the front near the radiator and back to the air filter was not an option because of aesthetic and technical reasons. There is very limited space in the radiator area, and it is still a long 'warm' way for the air going back to the filter.

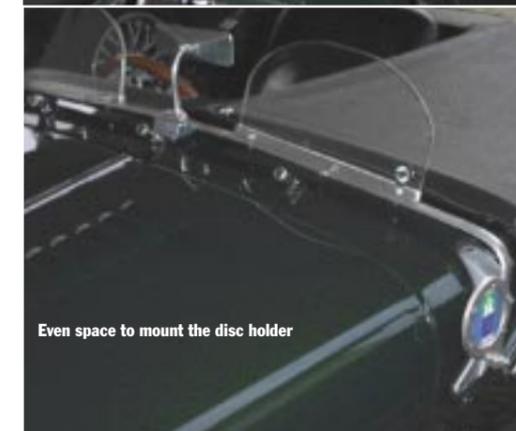
At some point the idea was born to build a box around the air filter to draw fresh air through the louvers of the bonnet. I guess I was inspired by the reverse louvers of the new Roadster. There are already enough bolts and holes in this area to fix such a box without drilling any additional ones. A prototype made out of cardboard was designed very quickly and this was the template used to cut a sheet of alloy. With a little folding, cutting and filing – the new air box was ready. At its head the same gasket used at the heating box was utilised to assure that only fresh air was suctioned through the louvers. For aesthetic reasons I covered the box with the same material they originally used to cover the heating box.

The result? Power enhancement: not noticeable. However, when I measured the temperature of the air at the filter, it was the same as the outside temperature, whereas before it had been something around 140°F to 160°F. Mission accomplished – for whatever reason.

Whilst these modifications have been more or less 'invisible,' I was increasingly annoyed by the rear drum brakes, as they only looked good just after maintenance. John Duncan, who had done the first service for the original owner, supplied two alloy



Perspex aeroscreens and no extra drillings to the body



Even space to mount the disc holder



drums. The mounting was easy and the result, at least visually, perfect. It is not that I had any doubts concerning the technical solution, but shortly after I finished the assembly I heard of another Morganeers accident, probably caused by too strong rear braking. You should never ignore such an alert! So I hurried to a local brake testing service to check the balance of the brakes. All-clear, 160 in the rear, 240 in the front... everything OK!

So, it appeared that everything had been done and aesthetically settled. Everything? Then I saw the Lightweight's spare wheel cover, which had been launched, combined with my LM's hardtop. I considered how to do something like that. No, I did not ring the factory to ask for the price of the Lightweight spare wheel cover. Again I got some help locally. A friend knew of a sheet metal shop which uses a "slotting" tool very similar to the one used in Malvern.



Rear view mirror and its unique mounting



The louvered back panel prior to painting



Much better rain tyres than the original race type 'Yokos' fitted. Unusual place for a spot lamp, to say the least



Finned brake drum

I measured the needed diameter and a couple of days later I had my cover, and at a price which was far from the price of Prada or Gucci. With this I was confronted with a problem - searching for the right paint. The larger producers of car paints could (or would) not help, so a phone call to Malvern was made. No, there is no code number for Le Mans Green, but for a 'small fee' of £ 180 one litre of the "golden green" can be mixed, and no, it is not possible to send it by mail - it had to be picked up personally! However, a local paint shop then mixed a batch according to a sample. Only from a certain angle in a certain light is there a very, very small difference from the original paint, and I do not recognize the variation anymore.

Then spring arrived and along with it the time to put the hardtop back into the garage. By the way, this is something which is done much easier and faster than assembling the soft-top! Now, as I gazed at the car with its low line body without the spare wheel - something was disturbing the flowing lines.

Exactly, the windscreen! You may guess what happened - 'Brooklands' are desperately needed! I had never been convinced by a folding screen and drilling through the leather above the dashboard to fix classic aero screens would never happen to my car. But at the International Morgan Meeting in the German Alps at Jungholz I saw a solution. Although it could be bought from the Morgan agent in Stuttgart, I started to build it myself. With some help from a manufacturer, using lots of acrylic glass and alloy, two screens were made. I found all the relevant fittings of alloy were already available. The construction itself was easier than I expected. In a first step a bar of alloy was fixed at the original mounting of the windscreen, then the bulkhead was covered with some blankets and the bar was folded over to the other side. At the now-horizontal positioned bar I measured with a tight wire where holes for mounting on this side should be located. After disassembling the bar on the right side, the holes on the left side where drilled and the bar was fixed on the left side. Again the blankets were used to protect the bulkhead, and folding the bar back to the right side. Unbelievable, but I really experienced it. It fits!

The screens are fixed in U-profiles which are screwed with polished cap nuts onto the bar. Also the search for an alternative fitting rear mirror was not as difficult as I had feared. EBay had a brand new mirror for a Goggmobil (a very, very small German car of the 50s) for little money. This mirror seemed to be tailor made for my needs. It had a mounting plate made at a right angle so it could be screwed to the bar as well as to a rubber block which stabilizes the bar in the middle of the car.

Very British - or better, very Morgan-like. I now had to sort out the problem concerning the wires for the wind screen defrosters. I cut the wires and assembled normal electrical fittings and placed it on the top of the dashboard, just like in the Lightweight. Originally I preferred a solution with a smaller fitting made from audio parts which could totally disappear under the dashboard leather, but this fitting melted after 10 minutes!

No spare wheel, aero screens, racing filler cap - only some stop watches are missing to underline the sporty spirit of the driver! I found some Russian stop watches available, designed in a cream colour to match the original Le Mans 62 instrumentation, which come with a mounting plate and a quick release fitting, to ensure no additional drilling. I definitely could not attach the stop-watches anywhere on the dashboard, so I built a slightly bigger plate of wood where the plate of the watches could be screwed on. As I want to use the stop watches I was looking for a suitable place - and not in the glove box! The ideal place is below the smaller instruments in the middle of the dashboard. I painted the wooden plate with the same "rough" paint which was used for the small panel of the control lamps. Now it looks like this has been delivered from the factory.

Definitely not delivered from the factory with the car was the additional spotlight mounted behind the front grill. A small spot lamp from the BMW Mini was mounted behind the grille. I did not want to disturb the typical over rider bumper design of the front by installing classic lamps, but additional light is always worth having. It is remarkable that given the position of the lamp in front of the radiator it does not affect the engine's temperature - something that had never been a problem in the past.

Beside these smaller modifications 'Miss TOK' (as we are calling our Le Mans, the original registration was V8 TOK), experienced another, rather big investment: 4 adjustable LEDA shock absorbers. Those of you who are intending to drive a little faster be advised to have a close look to the chassis suspension before considering a power enhancement of the engine. As already documented in an earlier issue of the Morganpost by Achim Gloger from London, the results of this modification are phenomenal! Unlike his car, I am still driving with the original springs but the rear axle was also centred and the car now is some centimetres lower at the back than before. Directly after the LEDA absorbers were installed I could experience what a difference it is to drive with these absorbers. Two well known bumps on the motorway, which normally will kick you 'off line' when you are faster



then 75 MPH have been taken without any difficulties, no nervous rear end, no steering corrections - just driving straight on. At my 'personal' testing road-track with several dips along the track I realised it to be 10-25 MPH faster than before: Whilst in the past 50 MPH have been hard on the edge, now it is not noticeable by going over 60 MPH.

At the same time I changed the old (60,000 miles), original shock absorbers to red Konis on our 4/4-seater. Again, a difference like night and day. Nevertheless, the LEDAs are even better - but I guess this difference is only needed on the racetrack. It could not be stated often enough how important it is to have an optimal "road contact" for the tyres. I directly experienced this when I drove the car with the original Yokohama semi-slicks. After emergency braking the car came to a stand still 8 meters earlier, that is two lengths of a car! Unfortunately those semi-slicks are not made for a long life, they are gone after 5,000 miles and are much more expensive than normal tyres, and I drive approximately 12,000 miles a year. I have found a tyre from Kuhmo rather similar to a semi-slick, the Ecsta MX15. This tyre has proved its outstanding performance on several racetracks, including Goodwood. But I had learned this summer that this tyre is no longer available, so I recently changed to the new Hankook RS 2. After the first 100 miles it seems to be even better than the Kuhmo. We will see...

That for the time being is the story about the small 'outrages' to the Le Mans 62. I am sure most of you now may forgive these little sins to a very rare and special car - as well as the last modification to the sound. Although a little "louder" than the comparable 35th Anniversary types, I missed some of the 'V8 thunder' through the pipes. Incidentally - and



The rear Leda shock absorber

also influenced by a very interesting exchange rate to the US Dollar - I suddenly became the proud owner of two 200cspi metal cats (Maybe my wife will also read this so I have to describe it this way!). After easy assembly, which took approximately half an hour, the big awakening took place (especially for my neighbour, who was snoozing in his garden some way away)! The sound now is deeper and a little louder, but not too much, otherwise it would be too loud for me as well, (particularly when the hardtop is attached). A remarkable result of these catalysts is the power improvement, and while I have not yet measured the power output, I have discovered an increase of 300 rpm in the third gear on my 'bespoke' test road track.

All the modifications that have been made and described here to 'Miss TOK' are very practical. With or without hardtop, with full windscreen or aero screens, with or without spare wheel and /or luggage carrier... oops, that reminds me to improve the brackets of the carrier... So long, I have to go to the garage again!

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Left: The author dining and below, the author driving

