

*This is a verbatim transcript of a hand written letter from John Bolster to a Mr. Dan Grose in May 1962 and forms part of an archive of White Minor documents held by David Baldock - the current custodian of the car.*

*Chris Lambert 24<sup>th</sup> November 2015*

Garden Cottage,

Fairhill,

Hildenborough,

Kent

Hildenborough 2030

6<sup>th</sup> May 62

Dear Mr Grose,

Yes, I know about the supercharged Morris Minors. They were not called Skinner Specials in their original form.

The first one had a special chassis, but was built to the standard dimensions by hand, of the best steel. It had the cable brakes and the drums were ribbed. In single seater form it did 100 mph timed with Bill Van der Becke driving and then, without the blower, did 100 m.p.g. officially observed. In two-seater form it was then raced at Shelsley and Donington by Peter Skinner.

The other one had an absolutely standard £100 Morris chassis of the hydraulic brake era. It had an extremely light aluminium body by Morris Commercial. It was driven at Shelsley and other sprints by Barbara Skinner, taking some course and ladies records.

The engine had special blocks and crankshafts. The cranks were 100% reliable but the blocks had a short life, cracking at the exhaust valve seats. Zoller superchargers were mounted vertically on special timing cases being driven by bevel gears from the crank front end. The supercharger pressure was around 25lbs sq. in. and the fuel was methanol. The bore and stroke was standard and the side-valve

construction was retained. The 4-speed gearboxes were off J2 Midgets or Hornets. 7000 r.p.m. was often seen.

Barbara's car ("The White Minor") differed from Peter's ("The Red Minor") in having the engine further back in the chassis. I have myself had one of the engines on the bench and recorded over 60 b.h.p. (80 b.h.p. has been claimed but I don't believe it.)

When Morris refused to make any more blocks, the cars were out of action. The red Minor then acquired a 4-litre Hudson engine and the White Minor was later fitted with an 1172 Ford by me. Ted Lloyd-Jones completely rebuilt the Red Minor with hydraulic brakes etc., and it became the Triangle Skinner special. The White Minor, Ford engine, is still on the road but when last seen was extremely tatty. The red car became the Skinner Special when it acquired its Hudson engine, but the white car was always just a Minor.

Another special built by Carl Skinner was a coupe with a Hudson engine called the T.C.S. he also built a Morris Cowley with a M.G. Tiger engine which was called "Smokey".

I hope these few remarks supply the information you need.

Yours Sincerely

John Bolster

*An unsolicited piece of White Minor history came David Baldock's way in this letter from enthusiast John Green, following the publication of a photograph of the car in **The Automobile** magazine in late 1985. This is a typed transcript of the original hand written letter. Chris Lambert November 2015*

“Littlefield”,  
Langley Marsh,  
Wiveliscombe,  
Taunton,  
Somerset.

TA4 2UJ 26<sup>th</sup> November 1985

Dear Mr. Baldock,

I was interested to see the photograph of the “Skinner Special” in the current edition of the “Automobile”. I think it is true to say that I saved the car in the winter of 1963. It happened like this.

Just before Christmas 1962 I bought a bungalow at Higham, near Rochester. Due to the move I had to dispose of a lot of 1929 OHC Morris spares. I was negotiating with Dan Grose (he is still a VSCC member and lives somewhere near Stratford I believe). Talking about Morrises, it transpires that he was very keen to trace the “Skinner”. I began to piece things together (thoughts that is). At the time I was driving a rather nasty Ford 8 Special which I had built using a Morris Minor radiator and shell. I remembered chatting to a chap in a garage in Dartford who recalled (on seeing my car) Mrs Bolster (Barbara Skinner) buying petrol therefor a Morris Special. John Bolster must have still had the pig farm near Meopham before he moved to Tonbridge (or was it Edenbridge?). I also had a memory of seeing something in Motor Sport as well.

After a lot of searching I found an advertisement with a Ford Special wearing a Morris radiator at Gold Seal Cars in New Cross. (may be 1960-62). I expect I could find the advert again given time. I was fairly sure it was the same car and when Dan came to collect my Morris bits he went in search of the Skinner. The car had been sold but eventually the vendors reluctantly divulged the name of the buyer. Dan went to an address in Heston, Middlesex. It was clearly the Skinner and registered PKJ 274 (still is I presume). It had been bought by C.H. Jockel and John Fitzpatrick (not Mellerigique) as a joint venture. They had stripped off the original body and were about to throw it away. They wanted to fix a fibreglass body such

as were readily available then. Dan persuaded that whatever they did to the little car they should at least keep the body panels.

Anyway, Dan took my Morris parts away in his Goggomobil and I thought little more about it until sometime in 1972. Richard Burke (husband of Rosemary Burke) advertised for details of the Skinner because he wanted to build a replica. I wrote telling him much of what I have told you. I also wrote to the Heston address and in September received a letter from John Fitzpatrick. He was by this time the sole owner. The fibreglass body had not been fitted and the original body had been retained.

At about this time Richard Burke died suddenly before I could write. I never did manage to find the right thing to write to Rosemary and I have felt guilty ever since.

I saw the car advertised last year (?) in Motor Sport and toyed with the idea of pursuing it. It always seemed appealing to try and re-enact the 100 mph - 100 mpg thing. I had no idea that original engine still existed. So there it is. I still have letters from Dan Grose, John Fitzpatrick and Richard Burke, as well as some photographs taken by Dan Grose as it was in 1963. The only other thing that comes to mind is that I think it was true to say that Barbara Bolster was killed in an accident in fog on River Hill near Sevenoaks, but I don't think she was driving the Skinner.

Incidentally the "Skinners Union" with straight \* Hudson engine lived quite close to here(at Silverton) for many years. How sad that it should now be consigned to a museum. It must have been pretty hairy.

Apologies if I have rambled on a bit. I hope some of this will be of interest.

Yours Sincerely,

John Green