



"... to uphold the freedom ..."

# CONFERENCE NOTES

## **FBHVC ANNUAL CONFERENCE, 17 OCTOBER 2009 TRADE AND SKILLS**

### **Tony Davies, Director for Trade and Skills**

Tony Davies introduced the conference with a list of key issues

- What do we (our clubs and members) require from the trade?
- Can the trade meet our requirements now and in the future?
- Is skills retention an issue?
- Are some skills endangered?
- From where do we get skills training?
- Provincial training establishments versus national academy?
- How can skills training be funded?
- FIVA trade and skills initiative.

### **Sandy Hamilton, Morris Minor Owners Club**

As a representative of a large club with over 10,000 members, the Morris Minor Owners Club may count on approx 20,000 Minors in the owners 'pool'.

In that context I am asked to pose the question as to what services do club members want to see in future? In relation to specific skills I would have to say that the average club member would not have a clue, indeed it would be a matter of total indifference. What is important to the average club member is the continuing availability of essential service items and spares at a reasonable price and of a quality that is fit for purpose. These items most commonly needed are fuel and ignition components, filters, fan belts, gaskets, brake shoes and linings, clutch components etc.

Many of these items were supplied to the former vehicle manufacturers as OE equipment in branded boxes from the likes of Lucas, Girling, Lockheed, Dunlop, AE, Payen and many others that have disappeared into the maw of industrial conglomerates that, regrettably, have little contact with the UK and certainly not in manufacturing. Such branded products that we may purchase today may bear little resemblance - other than a superficial external shape - to the OE product that we thought we were purchasing. Materials, finish and manufacturing specification may purport to be 'as original' but frequently may be unknown and/or deficient. Many of us will have suffered the inconvenience of a rotor arm or other ignition component that fails after a few hours or miles of so-called service. Accordingly, NOS stock is assiduously sought after from AJs and the like, but for any components with a flexible component - seals, belts etc - how reliable is that 25-40 year old component given that storage may have been in less than ideal conditions?

For many years we have been fortunate that national and local accessory stores carried stocks of these components and that their procedures ensured that they would weed out unsatisfactory suppliers. However, these commercial outfits need to shift stock and it must be accepted that components for historic vehicles will rarely meet their requirements now that current vehicles share very few of these systems and common components. The universal adoption of fuel injection and the electronic control systems to meet the constantly increasing and severe emission control standards is but one example, individually designed lighting and centralised 'bus bar' wiring two others.

Clubs with spares operations perform an invaluable service in supplying items that are specific to their marques and/or models as well as many of the service items. The latter may be common across ranges in the former BMC/BL, Rootes or Ford empires. Some clubs have commissioned unique items themselves, other models have specialist commercial suppliers with a national or international customer base that provides volume. In view of a shortage of NOS stock and with few exchange items to refurbish, one of the Minor suppliers required a source to remanufacture swivel pin castings. A supplier was found, samples provided and the new raw product was delivered. Unfortunately, during machining, the castings were found to irrevocably cracked and useless. The supplier (overseas) had apparently ignored - if they even knew - the correct heat treatment and stress relieving techniques. As these swivel pins incorporate the front stub axle you will appreciate the considerable safety related implications.

There are successors to many of the former UK manufacturers comprising the former BMC/BL and Rootes companies although they are regrettably no longer manufacturing in the UK and have offered no product support to the ancient models for many years. Other makes such as Armstrong Siddeley and Alvis have been out of production for over 40

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years but do enjoy some excellent trade support. Some of the records of these older manufacturers has been preserved, not always intentionally and sometimes to sheer happenstance or persistence, and in some cases includes technical content. I am informed that component drawings and material and technical specifications are included and this is a most crucial reserve of knowledge that is of inestimable value in helping to keep out vehicles functioning, indeed to meet the FBHVC mission statement.

Some of these holders are commercial organisations, perhaps formed as a trust, others are museums or individuals linked to a club or held by a club directly. I have been told in some instances, when a parts supplier wished to investigate the possibility of remanufacturing a specific component that there was a distinct lack of interest from the copyright holder/organisation and a less than realistic attitude to fees. In other words access to the record was perceived as a fortune-making exercise that should command an extortionate fee. I do appreciate we live in a litigious world that is ruled by avaricious lawyers and mean spirited risk assessors - and at this point I should stress that some of my best friends are lawyers and that I was a credit risk assessor in a previous life - so boys please withdraw the potential writs. Seriously, it may be the time for these document holders to re-consider their approach and it may be an avenue that the FBHVC could broker to the benefit of all. After all, better to have some sales and income on the back of a realistic fee than no income at all and bad will from those who cannot obtain replacement parts.

I said earlier that most club members think little about skills levels when they appraise their vehicles or projects. Some may wish to undertake much of the work themselves only passing on the work where they do not possess relevant knowledge or equipment. Others have neither the knowledge, nor confidence, let alone the time so need the specialist. Most of you will know and use a local garage or specialist probably with at least the proprietor and perhaps another employee with relevant experience of our vehicles in period. Looking around the room, I am confident that we knew many such establishments when we started motoring. How many remain and how many of those we know today have personnel of our age? How many of those will be in existence in 5-10 years time?

Those with modern vehicles will know of the service departments they inhabit - when the computer says no, then another technician will swap a part (at vast expense) for another. Would this breed be able to satisfactorily diagnose problems with a magneto, for instance, bereft of the laboratory equipment and lacking 'hands on' diagnostic experience? I think not. This is another question for our panel, is there any room, place or opportunity for such experience to be obtained by young people (excepting the small minority already possessing an interest) Are all our future automobile mechanics to be purely diagnostic technicians or fitters?

I still hear calls for apprenticeships to be available and not only from the older generations. On the TV recently there was a young man confronted by John Prescott in a Medway town. The young man said he was very practical and good with his hands but his brain went numb when exposed to books and exams and things and he asked why there were no longer any apprenticeships. John Prescott admitted that: 'We got it wrong on this'. Will our elected representatives have the guts to realise that there is a place for vocational experience and education in a less academic manner than is current?

Finally, what are clubs able to do to help themselves? I would certainly encourage members to continue to use those smaller enterprises where experience has demonstrated suitable skills, not only applicable to our vehicles but also where possible with more modern vehicles. This should encourage continuation of these enterprises and demonstrate an ongoing business for potential successors; a flourishing independent sector is more likely to be sympathetic to our needs and retain and train the relevant skills.

### **Mike Williams, Beaufort Restoration**

Let's start with a précis of the skills to which we refer:

- Manufacture of double curve panels and vehicle coachwork.
- Working various metals, aluminium, steel copper, brass.
- Welding using gas, MIG, TIG, stick, brazing, soldering, lead loading.
- Annealing, patterning, panel beating, wheeling, swaging, folding.
- Ash framing, laminating ply, veneer work, cabinet making, joinery.
- Leather work, fabrics, carpets, stitching, shaping, patterning, sewing, trimming for interiors and exteriors.
- Parts manufacture (small batch or one-off), use of lathe, mills (vertical and horizontal), surface grinder, metrology equipment. Knowledge of materials and processes both ancient and modern.
- Understanding of shaping and preparation for paint. Understanding of primers, oil based paints, nitro-cellulose, two-pack. Understanding of masking, flatting, polishing and compounding techniques.
- Understanding of repair, polishing and plating techniques including chrome, nickel and passivated materials, anodising and phosphating.



- Understanding of engines, transmissions, suspensions, braking systems, steering systems.
- Understanding of automotive electrical systems, coil ignition, magneto ignition, early electronic ignition, wiring, continuity testing, lighting systems, wire colour codes, wire gauges, charging systems.

How do the FBHVC, restorers and tutors set up a curriculum of skills for restoration training courses?

- Set up a group of restorers and educators to brainstorm and come up with a 'by disciple' set of modules – in effect one for each trade.
- Establish on a national basis which colleges have the facilities in both equipment and tutors to run the courses. There has to be at least one per county, preferably more because of the cost of student mobility. As many skills are dying out the availability of tutors could be a serious issue – but there are many of retiring age now who cannot afford to retire and may be able to act as trainers.

What used to happen with training? Originally apprenticeships were a minimum of three years, invariably five years and followed by City and Guilds courses. For the last 30 years Beaufort Restoration have been involved with the Youth Opportunity Programme and the Youth Training Scheme which sends trainees on day release with the benefit of skill transfer in the workplace. There should be a balance in the investment from both employer and government. One downside is the 'once a boy, always a boy' syndrome: after training the boy becomes a skilled man but is still the company's 'boy' and needs to move to another company to escape this. To get around this a group of restorers could operate together, knowing there is a group of trained people available for work.

Why haven't employers invested in their own future?

- Most restorers are small and medium sized employers with no training or HR departments – that function falls to the principal of the company, who is already working 12-15 hours per day just to keep the company afloat. Very little information in clear, plain English is provided to employers and tracking down what is available is difficult and time consuming.
- When YTS and YOP schemes and City and guilds training provided a practical option there was a sense of partnership between employers and government who were both investing in a useful end product.
- We know the restoration industry employs about 27,000 people in the UK, generating income for the government. At Beaufort, with seven employees, we paid in direct taxation £85,000 or just over £12,000 per head in taxes last year. The government is therefore collecting £33 million. As a proportion of Beaufort's turnover the exchequer took over 25%. If 25% of £33 million were put back into training the fund would be £8 million.
- The government thinks it is good to raise the expectations of the young and graduates are emerging in greater numbers, mired in debt and clamouring for any job. How many of them are actually working and contributing to the exchequer? At the other end of the spectrum semi-literate, semi-numerate individuals emerge from education to an uncertain future. Many of these have skills but are put off by 'pre-degree' courses thinking that this is quite beyond them.
- Skill transfer exercise requires one-to-one teaching and is very costly and may result in no paperwork at the end of it.
- Profit margins are just that – marginal – throughout the engineering and automotive industry.

Given what the exchequer earns one might hope that they would have the sense and far-sightedness to reinvest in their producers, although we know this is unlikely. A partnership between government and employers may work or failing that 'Euro grants' or Lottery Commission funds may be fruitful.

Q. Arthur Swann, Austin Cambridge Westminster Car Club: How to motivate youngsters who were mostly interested in electrical gadgets?

A. Some people are naturally practical, but it is difficult.

Q. Mike Hallam, AJS and Matchless Owners Club: Why reinvent the wheel when there is a training structure within the Institute of the Motor Industry?

A. The training available is for the modern motor industry and is not always adaptable.

A. Tony Davies added that the FBHVC had contacted IMI but had not received any response.

### **Howard Warren, Paul Hawkins, CES UK**

CES UK was founded 25 years ago and is committed to being the best in the automotive aftermarket and encourages people to work together. There are ten sites in the north west of England and north Wales and CES UK deals with major brands e.g. Dephi, QH, Shell. Customer and staff training is provided in a number of areas by technical training evenings and on-site training.



The City and Guilds 382 Diploma in vehicle restoration ended five years ago because of lack of demand. The IMI Sector Skills Council is the awarding body for City and Guilds and the IMI Awards. The new National and Occupational Standards qualification now covers the modern industry:

- Light vehicle maintenance and repair.
- Heavy vehicle maintenance and repair.
- Motorcycle maintenance and repair.
- Fast-fit operations.
- Accident repair.
- Body building.
- Parts distribution and supply.
- Vehicle sales.
- Vehicle rental and leasing.
- Roadside assistance and recovery.
- Lift truck maintenance and repair.
- Motorsport maintenance and repair.

Government funding is aimed at 16-22 year olds. NVQ Automotive Vehicle Maintenance, Body Paint, Fitting and Roadside Assistance and Recovery (4101) levels 1, 2 and 3 could be adapted to historic vehicles if the right feedback highlights what is needed. It covers:

- Contributing to 'good housekeeping'.
- Ensuring actions reduce risks to health and safety.
- Maintaining positive working relationships.
- Inspecting vehicles.
- Valeting vehicles.
- Locating and correcting simple faults.
- Enhancing vehicle electrical system features.
- Removing and refitting vehicle basis MET components to vehicles.
- Removing and fitting non-structural motorcycle body panels.
- Removing, renewing, refitting MET units within vehicle systems.
- Removing and replacing vehicle non-structural body panels.
- Repairing non structural body panels.

Colleges do not know what is wanted but FBHVC clubs do and liaison is necessary. It should be possible to find funds for modern apprenticeships through NVQ 4101.

Q. Mike Williams, Beaufort Restoration: Is there a minimum number of individuals needed before a course can be set up?

A. Each college decides on the viable number as they have to buy the courses from IMI. That does limit the number of courses offered. The funding offered should be enough to cover travel expenses however.

Q. Mike Williams, Beaufort Restoration: At what point can the qualification be advertised – if no-one knows about it, no-one will come forward.

A. The FBHVC could perhaps liaise with CES UK and IMI to judge what is needed.

Clive Talbot, Sentinel Drivers Club: Apprentice schemes are tailored to manufacturers' requirements and need to be encouraged by the historic movement. The key is passing down the enthusiasm to sons and daughters.

Q. Stuart Gray, National Traction Engine Trust: There is a wealth of knowledge within clubs – NTET run a proven Steam Apprentice Club. Could the FBHVC start a similar initiative?

Howard Robinson, Autojumbler's Association: An institute needs to be set up, e.g. on an old airfield, with a foundry and an associated college. This needs to be done quickly while there are people still alive to teach the skills. The college could make a profit from the parts it could sell. This should not be limited to cars, but aircraft, boats, steam etc. Modern techniques to make parts for historic vehicles should make manufacturing more profitable and these new techniques must be properly taught.



**Tony Davies, Director for Trade and Skills**

How can the FBHVC help? The Federation could, for example, act as an intermediary to persuade a museum to lend original drawings for parts so that could be remanufactured.

A theme from the conference has been: how to get younger people interested in historic vehicles -but it is less clear how to achieve this. The FBHVC need to talk to the right people, e.g. in IMI, to get the right training courses in place. Enough apprentices need to be found to make courses viable.

The USA and Canada and Germany are further forward with training programmes already in place and through FIVA we are liaising with those countries.

Tim Stephens, Wolseley Hornet Specials Club offered his services to help train others. Trainees and trainers can also be middle-aged redundant workers looking for a new occupation.

Q. Andrew Rodham, East Anglian Cyclemotor Club: Museums have a large spectrum of vehicles and volunteers who look after them – perhaps they do not realise this could be a paid job?

A. The secretary confirmed there approximately 50 member museums in the Federation including those represented through the National Association of Road Transport Museums.

Q. Geoff Armitage, DKW Owners Club: Similar problems were faced by the British Horological Institute where numbers of individuals requiring courses dropped so low that it was not viable to continue. The answer was to offer distance learning and seminars on common problems to back up the theory with practical work.

Tony Davies concluded by thanking all of the speakers.

David Davies closed the conference.