

Saint on Three Wheels

A Saint Christopher medal was just one of the factory fitments of the 1930s Morgan Runabout's dashboard



WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK J. McCOURT

The recent introduction of the Morgan Motor Company's new "3 Wheeler" has rekindled the motoring public's interest in this venerable firm's original product. That earlier car went by many names, including Runabout, Aero and Super Sports, in its 1909-1953 lifespan, and roughly 30,000 examples rolled out of the Malvern, England, factory in that period. While today's motorists view those trikes as wildly unusual assemblages of motorcycle and automotive components, the Morgan driver's compartment was surprisingly conventional...with some exceptions!

Our feature Super Sports is a 1934 model belonging to Robin Garner and Mark Mason; this couple accomplished a complete restoration of the car with the help of Robin's Morgan enthusiast father, Ron. Your author got a delightful ride around the seaside town of Hull, Massachusetts, where the photos were taken, wedged into the slightly offset left

(passenger) seat, shoulder to shoulder with Mark at the wheel. The instrument panel, about a foot away from our chests, appeared simple, with some odd parts. He'll explain what we're seeing.

"All the way to the left is a brass plaque advising a gearbox oil level check every 600 miles, and using Castrol oils. Next to that is a brass cylinder with a sight glass; that's an adjustable oil feed we added to give extra oil to the rear main bearing of the engine, which normally only gets oil that's splashed around inside the engine. This wasn't fitted from the factory on this car, but would have been used on a car with a constant-loss oil system: When you started the car, you'd set the knob for a steady drip, which was the only oil the engine got. The oil would get splashed around inside the engine, and burnt up, instead of returning to the oil tank. The drip would, ideally, be set to feed oil at the same rate the engine burned it," he explains. "This car has a

recirculating oil system, so the oil from this drip feed would be returned to the oil tank with the rest of the engine oil."

Mark continues, "To the right of the oiler is the latest in 1930s safety equipment: a Saint Christopher medal. Saint Christopher is the patron saint of travelers, and every Morgan trike came with one, factory-stamped with the chassis number. Above is a manual dynamo cut-out switch installed by a previous owner.

"On the left of the oval dash panel is the ignition and switch that controls the charging and headlights: The left two positions offer a summer (regular)

or winter (high) charge rate, and the right two positions control side lamps only or headlamps and side lamps. The two switches between this and the speedometer were installed by a previous owner and aren't currently used. The chromed thing above the speedometer is the dash lamp; it twists to turn on," he notes. "Under that lamp is an auxiliary power port; this was where you'd plug in a trouble lamp or electric windshield defroster. The black button to the right is the horn push, with the lever below controlling headlamp dipping. Below that is the ignition light, and to its right, the ammeter."

The steering wheel contains controls for spark advance (left lever), throttle and choke (right levers). That hand throttle is the de facto gas pedal, as the two foot pedals operate the clutch and rear brake, while the front brakes are activated with a hand lever; other levers control gear-shifting and decompression. The only form of heat that a trike owner got was that which came from the engine and exhaust, Mark says, and when the optional windshield wiper was fitted, it was a self-contained vacuum-operated unit that was controlled by a knob on the screen-mounted unit itself. 🚗

