

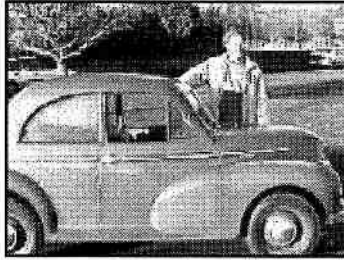
## Village Business

## The Morris Minor Man

To a young Richard Plant the most fascinating place in Shipton was recently demolished Bradley's Garage. It was run by brothers Michael and Bob Bradley and their father Reg. Their skills and interest in anything mechanical showed in the great variety of cars, tractors and lawnmowers etc. Richard found himself drawn to the place and it seemed only natural that the Bradley brothers should offer him his first employment. Richard is the first to suggest that the Wychwoods were all the poorer after the tragic early deaths of Michael and, more recently, Bob.

In 1972, one year after the last one rolled off the production line, Richard purchased a rather scruffy, ten year old Morris Minor Traveller, which had been taken in part-exchange at Bradley's. During evenings and weekends Richard was busy rubbing down and painting, revarnishing the woodwork and generally overhauling the car. When finished he offered it for sale. His first customer was none other than *The Wychwood's* very own Don Salter. "That really started the ball rolling" says Richard. "As soon as I finished one car I looked around for another and the process started all over again, just as a hobby at first." At the end of the 1970's Richard took the plunge and rented a workshop near Witney. In 1982, he and his wife Pauline bought a house on the Green at Ascott where they still live with their children Adam, Emma and Kirsty. The house has a workshop attached so he is able to run his business and enjoy family life simultaneously.

Of course, in 1972 a good proportion of the 1.6 million Morris Minors built at Cowley were still on the roads and Richard recalls several were owned locally. "They were always a popular choice; they are endearing little cars, fun to drive, simple and reliable."



Richard Plant

Over 30 years, surviving numbers have fallen and Richard has had to diversify. "All my work was local to begin with, but recently many of our restored cars have gone abroad to Europe. We also send spare parts all over this country and abroad. An interesting diversion has been supplying cars to film and television companies."

Richard has supplied cars for several feature films and popular TV shows, including 'London's Burning', 'Hale & Pace', and 'Miss Marple'. His cars have been seen in many adverts and videos featuring John Cleese, and Vinnie Jones amongst others. Much of his work is the routine maintenance that such cars require and Richard's customers are many and varied. He has looked after one car for a local lawyer for over 20 years, which was brought brand new in 1968 and has been in daily use ever since, clocking up over 330,000 miles!

The Morris Minor Owners Club holds events all over the country as well as a camping holiday in France each year. "France contains some great Morris Minor roads and I once drove 1600 miles in a week, motoring down to the Mediterranean," says Richard.

Richard considers himself very fortunate to live and work in the Wychwoods, where he has made many friends. Richard is full of praise for local organisations who have improved the village halls, the Wychwood School where his children have flourished and the Wychwood Surgery which he feels is a great asset. Richard is content as he is and has no plans to expand too much, as he is happy to work locally in this small way, feeling that the quality of life takes some beating. He relies on a network of other self-employed colleagues who all help each other out 'in the old-fashioned way'. So if you see Pauline or Richard in their 'funny old cars' please give them a cheery wave.