

Bant Rally 2014 - 40th anniversary rally of the Dutch Morris Minor group



Going Dutch! 5 June – 9 June 2014

Finally the day arrived that five couples from the Northants Branch set sail to Holland to attend the 40th anniversary of the Dutch Morris Minor Club. Back in November 2013 it seemed like ages away when we first talked about the trip and now, on that Thursday morning in June, we were getting the cars packed and ready to go. Well....that's what we thought.....

Just the evening before, on the Wednesday 4th June, we had our Morris Minor Run-out organised by Terry and Tom and what a lovely evening that was. The weather was on our side and all the cars that took part behaved very well. Just as most of us headed back to The Bell in Finedon, the car of John Banks decided on having a puncture.....Oh great.....and this car was also going on the trip to Holland the very next day..... But we needed not to fear as 5 or 6 or even 7 strapping men sorted out a spare tyre for the car and off we went again.

Once upon arrival at The Bell we learned that Eric's car had cut out on one of the roundabouts but he got it started again.....Oh great.....and this car was also going to Holland the very next day..... Was this a sign of things to come?

Anyway, Thursday came and just as Terry and Maggie and John and Jackie were about to set off in their Moggys a phone call came in from The Wilsons. Their car played up badly; it coughed and spluttered and they were only in Wellingborough. We decided to meet up at the services in Thrapston as planned, so there Terry was able to tweak a few wires and luckily Eric's car sprang back to life once more! Nothing obvious seemed to be wrong so we carried on with our journey down the A14 as we needed to meet up with John and Issy at the other side of Cambridge. Once we were together we headed towards Harwich without any further problems at all.....well, a little blond moment from Maggie nearly made everybody turn around twice.....

While queuing to get on board the night boat, a bus-load full of Taiwanese people spotted our Morris Minors and also a couple of three wheeler Morgans. Within minutes we were bombarded with these lovely people wanting to take pictures of themselves with our cars; they probably have never seen anything like it and it was funny to see them so excited. Jackie had quite a chat with a couple on their honeymoon, also travelling on that same bus!

The crossing was very smooth and gave us a much needed night rest. However, woken up at 6.30am to the tune of 'Don't worry, Be happy' came as a bit of a shock to our systems as it was only 5.30am English time! Never mind, we had enough time to get ready for breakfast and that definitely filled us up for quite a while; you never know when your next meal is coming so always make sure you eat plenty! Something you learn

from being in the scouts..... Unfortunately, we had a delay of over an hour before we could get off the boat and that worried Maggie as we arranged to meet up with Kevin and Bridget at The Zaanse Schans. They travelled two days before us to Holland, where they spent a nice time in Amsterdam. We soon let them know by mobile phone that we were on the way and after a nightmare of road works and detours all 5 couples met up at The Zaanse Schans near Zaanstad, just above Amsterdam.

A lovely, typically Dutch place with working windmills, clog



making workshop, cheese shop, Dutch houses and little streets, cafés etc etc; all laid out how it used to be in the olden days! We had a great time wandering round while the weather became really hot! Of course some of us tried the Dutch appeltaart with the whipped sugary cream and that was delicious.....something that would be repeated several times during the rest of our holiday..... Then when it was time to leave this great place, Eric's car had other thoughts! It was not going to start.....What now? It seemed that the lights were left on but not sure as why. Okay, now 5 men were trying to work out where goes what under the bonnet, with starting wires going from negative to positive several times and a few flying sparks but without results. Then all of a sudden the engine came to life and we were on the road again. PHEW.



The last leg of our journey took us to Enkhuizen, where we took the road dyke called Markerwaarddijk between the IJsselmeer and the Markermeer. You could see the difference in the colour of the water on either side of the dyke. The Markermeer is more cloudy due to the

stagnant water in the lake. It was supposed to have been turned into another polder but the lake became a popular spot for holiday makers, so the government decided to keep the lake as a nature reserve. The road ended in Lelystad, where we followed the edge of the IJsselmeer and saw over 35 wind turbines neatly in a row. We were now crossing from one polder into another, namely the Flevopolder into the Noordoostpolder and the landscape was extremely flat as you can imagine. You could see for miles and miles. Most of the trees are not older than 50 years old as they were only planted during the 1960's and 1970's.



We arrived at the Eigen Wijze camp-site in Bant in the late afternoon but as we stayed in a B&B in Lemmer, we only had time to register our group and pick up our program for the weekend. We were all keen to carry on to the B&B to unload our cars and have a rest. The farm that is now turned into a B&B was absolutely lovely! Our rooms were very nice and spacious, with their own en-suites and a view of the meadows. We had the use of the kitchen and dining room/lounge which was very handy. The breakfasts were plentiful although for some it can never be enough: John Banks made his own cooked breakfast one morning with stuff he brought from home!

Friday evening was spent at a local restaurant in Lemmer, a lovely village bustling with little shops and a tiny harbour area. We were lucky with the weather as we watched the sun go down over the top of some big boats while tucking into our evening meals. We finished the evening strolling around the harbour area and that was very pretty to see when the evening lights came on.

Saturday morning we all did our own thing and relaxed while some of us strolled back into Lemmer to pop in a few shops and had a coffee (and apple pie!) near the river. The sun came out and it got very warm again. There was an Auto jumble and entertainment planned at the camp-site in Bant for the afternoon. Maggie and Terry, John and Jackie decided to go down and have a look, but to their disappointment there were only about 8 Morris Minor owners selling items on the big field. There didn't seem to be anything else much going on! Maggie wasn't too bothered as she had other things on her mind....a visit from her sister and niece and a brother and his wife, whom she hasn't seen for over a year.....We had a nice afternoon together, talking and laughing and teaching Jackie a few Dutch words or two. She became almost fluent after the weekend as Maggie's sister and her daughter stayed also in the B&B for 2 nights and more words were taught during the wine tasting evenings.

The Dutch Morris Minor Club organised a barbecue on the Saturday night and that was a compact but very nice event. We bumped into a few Brits who also made the journey to Holland and spent some time chatting with them. The entertainment turned out to be line dancing to hill billy music although neither of our group joined in as we were just enjoying it. Just after we finished eating, we were told to move our table.....Then to

our amusement, a big Frisian old style sailing boat had to be manoeuvred between the guests and their tables to a safer area. The organisers forgot the line dancers needed more space in the entertainment building and also more people turned up to the barbecue than they thought there would be! But it was a pleasant evening and back at the B&B we just chilled and received another Dutch lesson from the sisters.....

For the Sunday was a Drive-Out organised through the scenic countryside. Unfortunately we woke up that day to lots of rain but undeterred we still set off with all the Moggie's on the road. Of course we had the walkie-talkies with us and that provided us with the necessary sing songs and banter. However, at one point that caused a bit of confusion for Terry in what direction we had to go....Ah well, with Issy and John carrying on the right way, The Blissett's car decided on a longer route with The Banks and Wilsons in tow. We used our map book after that and still arrived merrily at Schokland, which was the half-way point of The Drive. Schokland used to be an island. Occupied and then abandoned as the sea encroached, it had to be evacuated in 1859. A government's decision, as the danger of flooding and poverty would be unavoidable for the cut-off island. But following the draining of the Zuider Zee, it has, since the 1940's, formed part of the land reclaimed from the sea. Schokland has vestiges of human habitation going back to prehistoric times. It symbolises the heroic, age-old struggle of the people of the Netherlands against the encroachment of the waters.

Now set up as a museum it gives you an insight in how hard it must have been for the people living there. We listened to the videos and looked at the many photos and spent quite a few hours there. The sun came out too and it became a nice and hot day after all. We found our own way back to the B&B and took a leisurely drive back through some lovely villages and country roads. Some of us decided to go to Urk, a pretty little fisherman's place at the edge of the IJsselmeer. You can walk there along the harbour line and see many boats coming in or out for miles. And for our evening meal time we decided to go back to our restaurant where we enjoyed our meals on the Friday night. We had the usual banter going on and the owners of the place were very pleased to see us again.

Monday morning came only too quickly and after breakfast and our pack-up made, it was time to say goodbye to Maggie's sister and niece and to Issy and John, who stayed on for the rest of the week touring Holland. It was hard for Maggie to leave her family behind, but knowing she would see them for nearly 4 weeks in one go in August, soon made her smile again. But that is a different story.....a trip to China! So, we headed back to Hook of Holland and instead of the smaller roads we opted for the main roads due to time restriction. We had a stop along the way and it was hard to get going again as the weather turned out really sunny and hot. Eventually we made it back to the ferry in good time, so that meant time for food shopping!

Maggie was so chuffed as she and Terry could stock up on their favourite Dutch goodies, what they have been deprived of for over a year! The crossing went very well and was passed by chatting, reading and sleeping (although mainly done by the men). We all decided we had a great weekend away. And then we thought we had it all behind us until we arrived back in England and were hit by an enormous storm on the A14....That was pretty scary as it rained so hard that we had to make a stop at the Cambridge services. You could not see a thing in front of you and the water was coming through in Terry's car. Whilst we waited for the storm to pass (which it didn't), Eric's car was in danger of floating away. He had parked near the locked doors of a Little Chef hoping he could use the facilities. The rain was pouring through the lights of the petrol forecourt roof. A guy was still pressure washing the forecourt and seemed oblivious that it was p....ouring down so hard! When the rain eased off a little, we hit the road again. This time we went a lot slower. We managed to get home safely and although we were tired we were very happy to have done the trip!

Terry and Maggie, on behalf of the Going Dutch Team.

A selection of photos from the trip. I'm sure Maggie & Terry will fill in on the details.....

