

The survivor!



Morgan Larsson from Bålsta in Sweden has owned many fine sports cars but when he finally got the opportunity to buy the car he first saw at the age of two he could not resist. Good things come to those who wait and after 25 years Morgan finally became the owner of the car of his dreams, a Healey 100 BN2 and “The Enthusiast” was present when the car the car emerged into the light of day again.

Text and photo: Johan Ålander
Pictures by the kind permission of Teknikens Värld

It's the second week in September 2005 and I am taking a nap on the sofa. The telephone is ringing and half dazed I grab the receiver.

"Hello it is Sven.... I've got a great story for you"

Still half asleep and knowing quite a few Sven's I started to wonder which Sven was on the line. Eventually the caller confirmed that his name was Sven Larsson when he excitedly announced....."My son Morgan has bought a 1956 Austin Healey", nothing too exciting so far, however I was soon wide awake when he added....."its only had one owner and has not seen daylight since 1974! This can not be true, to find a 50 year old English Sports car in the first owner's garage, now that is a real story!

It was true, and a few days later we are in Vallentuna just outside Stockholm standing outside Raimond and Alice Karlson's house. Sven and his son Morgan had brought a trailer to help liberate the 100 from its involuntary rest. But why has the beautiful sports car been standing in the garage since January 1974?

Raimond tells us that in 1956 he worked as a salesman at Ostermans who were a BMC Dealership selling Austin Healey among other cars. Raimond wanted a sports car and was keen to own a Morgan, however Ostermans were unhappy that one of their salesmen should own a Morgan so they offered him a deal on a BMC model. Despite his job to convince people all day long that the Austin A30 was an excellent car he preferred an Austin Healey 100, even though he had to pay for it himself!

The price of the BN2 was 14.500 Skr, but if he skipped the Morgan the Healey was his for 12.000 Skr so suddenly he was the owner to one of history's most beautiful sports cars. In 1956 if you have a sports car you had to take part in race-meetings which is exactly what Raimond did, he joined the recently formed Stockholm Sports Car Club, where he is still member number three!

After enjoying many long trips together in Europe during the late fifties Raimond and Alice decided to get married and yes..... of course the honeymoon trip was made in the Healey. Unfortunately Italy was experiencing terrible weather and at 70 kph the side screens could not stop the rain and Alice remembers it was almost as wet inside the car as outside!

Life went on for the Karlsson family and their beloved car enjoying more trips to foreign countries mixed with trips around the block. Alice worked as a wine-tester and featured on the Dona' Alicas sherry labels whilst Raimond opened his own car dealership. A new boat was bought and sadly there was less time to spend on the red sports car. On the 24th of January 1974 the 18 year old car was taken to the MOT for the annual test. No problems, the test man just noted some minor rust in the rear wings and Raimond drove the Healey home to his garage to take it out again when flowers filled the ditches in spring.

And there it lay. Soon you could not see the car for the blankets that had been laid on



MORGAN, TWO YEARS OLD, IN THE FRONT SEAT OF HIS FATHER'S MORGAN



HERE YOU CAN SEE THE CHAIN FOR THE RADIATOR BLIND



THE BN2 IN MORGAN'S GARAGE



THE KEYS ARE HANDED OVER



the body to protect it. These were covered by cardboard boxes with various contents including an almost complete collection of Teknikens Värld (motor magazine). Then they began to add gardening tools and all the usual odds and sods relegated to the garage and after a couple of years you could not guess there was a car in the garage at all!

The Larsson's were official main agents for Morgan cars in Sweden for a couple of years. It is not confirmed how the young Morgan got his name but we think his parents love of cars

must have influenced their choice!

It was the summer of 2005 both families celebrated together and during the evening their conversation raised the question of the Healey and whether Raimond and Alice would ever consider selling their Austin Healey.

The subject had been raised in the past but just as before no positive answer was forthcoming, however an unforeseen influence would soon affect things when their local authority insisted that all household oil

storage tanks should be inspected.

Oil tank?...do we have one?.. Raimond wondered, and after thinking for a while it dawned on him that their

tank was concealed behind the mountain of cardboard boxes, gardening tools and piles of car magazines. All

arranged on and around the blanket shrouded shape that resembled an Austin Healey 100.

Raimond discussed the matter with his beloved wife and they decided that it was time to sell the Healey to Morgan. He had in fact promised that it should come to a good home where its untouched original condition would be appreciated. As the families had known each other for so long there was no doubt about that.

And that was the reason why Sven called me. So that I should be able to watch the opening of "Aladin's Cave"

After we opened the garage door Sven and Morgan carefully inflated the original tyres which were fine and to our surprise the 100 rolled out without any problems, no seized brakes just a steady movement that slowly exposed the oil tank that was the reason for the whole show.

Fortunately the soft top was up and had probably saved the whole interior. When we opened the trunk we found the necessary motor goggles and hoods that Raimond and Alice wore to avoid stiff necks and ear ache! Their torch, oil cans and other tools were also found there.

After this interesting September day the Healey now has pride of place in Morgan's garage. The thirty year old dust has been washed off and the body has been polished, the brakes have been serviced and some routine maintenance has been completed and the car is being enjoyed almost in exactly the same condition as it was 50 years ago!



MORGAN TOGETHER WITH ALICE AND SVEN AT A SPORTS CAR MEETING IN SWEDEN IN 2006

This story was first published in the Swedish Austin Healey Club magazine 'The Healey Enthusiast' and our thanks go to its Editor Tommy Lyngborn who translated this for us to enjoy. I did not know this story existed, he had witnessed my excitement when I saw it at the European Meeting in Sweden earlier this year and when I heard this story I thought UK owners might enjoy it too.

I had the pleasure of seeing this car at the European Meeting in Sweden earlier this year and it was a real delight. It was entered in the standard class of the concours competition which Peter Dodson and I were judging and frankly it didn't stand a chance. You could have polished it until your hands bled but it could not compete with the latest base and lacquer paint finishes, its leather was cracked and its carpets were faded. Its engine bay was clean but nonetheless it bore the oil film of thousands of miles touring Europe, its chrome was tarnished yet there was a magical aura surrounding the car.

Morgan could see that I was smitten and took great pleasure describing its history, he even knew the date when the parking dent occurred in the front left hand wing! (he flatly refuses to repair the dent!)

It took me a while to realise this was a rare car, not only because of its originality

but because it was built for the Swedish market and this involved modifications which initially had me stumped and take my word for it, cars built for smaller export markets deserve closer inspection.

I don't mind admitting my initial confusion at the circular plate on the bulkhead with a small section of pipe extending from it? I then noticed a similar bore of pipe crossing the header tank of the radiator extending downwards out of sight?

On a hot sunny day in Sweden it made no sense yet I was relieved when the answer dawned on me after a few minutes.....the chain was missing but the pipe provided the route for a chain that originally controlled a blind that could be raised or lowered to adjust the amount of air reaching the radiator!

Quite bizarre considering the equipment we now install to improve cooling yet back when this car was providing daily transport during bitterly cold winters this blind would have been essential to maintain a running temperature suitably high enough – oh how times have changed!

I sincerely hope Morgan continues to enter his car for concours even if his chances of winning are slim!

Steve Norton



ME JUDGING "THE SURVIVOR" AT THIRD EUROPEAN HEALEY MEETING IN SWEDEN 2008