

The Pre-History of OHMOG, 1974-1984

Sandy Marovitz

In Dayton, September 1-2, 1984, the Ohio Morgan Owners Group, ie., held the first of what would become a continuing series of official annual meets in late summer and early autumn. A classy poster in yellow and black against white background was included in the registration packet for that inaugural meet. It centers on a Morgan roadster drawn from a three-quarters perspective. Although that poster was not signed by the artist, the one in red and black against white that was printed for the next year's meet in Dublin, Ohio, is very similar in style. Beside the left rear wheel of the Morgan on that print is the tightly written name "COX," which would make it the second of an extended line of imaginative posters, T-shirts, *OhMoggie* covers, and other items that Bob Cox created for the Group as its principal artist. We remain grateful to him for the outstanding service he provided for some two decades by publicizing the Group so well.

Overlooked in tracking the history of OhMog's annual events from its formal election of officers in 1984, however, is the founding of its precursor club that began ten years earlier called the "Ohio Morgan Owners". The idea behind the Ohio Morgan Owners was conceived by Bob Burrows (Worthington) with the help of Jim Cole (German Village, Columbus), Jim Jones (Grove City) and Walt Squires (Dayton) in March 1974. As the club's unofficial coordinator, Bob Burrows, assisted by his wife, Linda, created a newsletter that informed Ohio Morgan Owners of multiple annual events that occurred from that date to 1984 when the club became the more formal Ohio Morgan Owners Group – OhMog-our Morgan club of today. Between 1974 and 1984 the Ohio Morgan Owners became well known well enough across the U.S. and internationally in Morgan club circles to be mentioned or have their Morgan's pictured in several Morgan books of the late 1970's, including Colin Musgrove's *Moggie*, Gregory Houston Bowden's *New Edition of Morgan, First and Last of the Real Sports Cars*, Chris Harvey's *Morgan: The Last Survivor*, Ken Hill's *The Four Wheeled Morgan Volume No.2*, as well as two by John Sheally, *Morgan in the Colonies* and *Morgan: Pride of the British*.

Since then, with the leadership of its elected officers and support of its members year by year, OhMog has continued to evolve and expand. In its official, formal status, the Ohio Morgan Owners Group is approaching its twenty-fifth anniversary, which will occur in 2009. It is time now, at last, that its founder receives the recognition he deserves because the organization literally began with him when he pushed the button to start it. Fortunately, he kept good records of the club's growth over that decade, and I am heavily indebted to him for the abundant details he sent to me, suggesting that I use as many or few as I thought suitable. This account of OhMog's pre-history has

been drafted largely from those details of the past and from the additional written information that Bob generously sent to me.

Not yet the owner of a Morgan but eager to find a classic roadster early in 1974, he responded to an ad in the *Columbus Dispatch* and found one available; it was a shabby-but-running 1963 +4 owned by a fellow living in an apartment with only one chair and a mattress on the floor. Bob learned that the seller's wife and child had left him because he traveled a lot and when at home was spending too much time working on his recently purchased Morgan. She had departed with all their possessions while he was away on a weekly business trip, leaving a note saying that the Morgan must go if he wanted to reconcile. He made his choice, Bob promptly bought the +4, and soon after his purchase the "Ohio Morgan Owners" sports car club emerged. Although the roadster was all original, it had been repainted three times and needed a complete restoration including an engine rebuild. After restoring it beautifully, Bob still owns the car.



Bob Burrows with his 1963 Morgan +4 Roadster

His desire to restore the +4 led him to M M & M Imports in Derby, Ohio, south of Columbus. There he met Don Simpkins, the owner, and saw his recently imported Morgans, new and used, among other vintage English cars. Simpkins introduced him, in turn, to Jim Jones, as an excellent mechanic in Grove City, who checked out the TR-

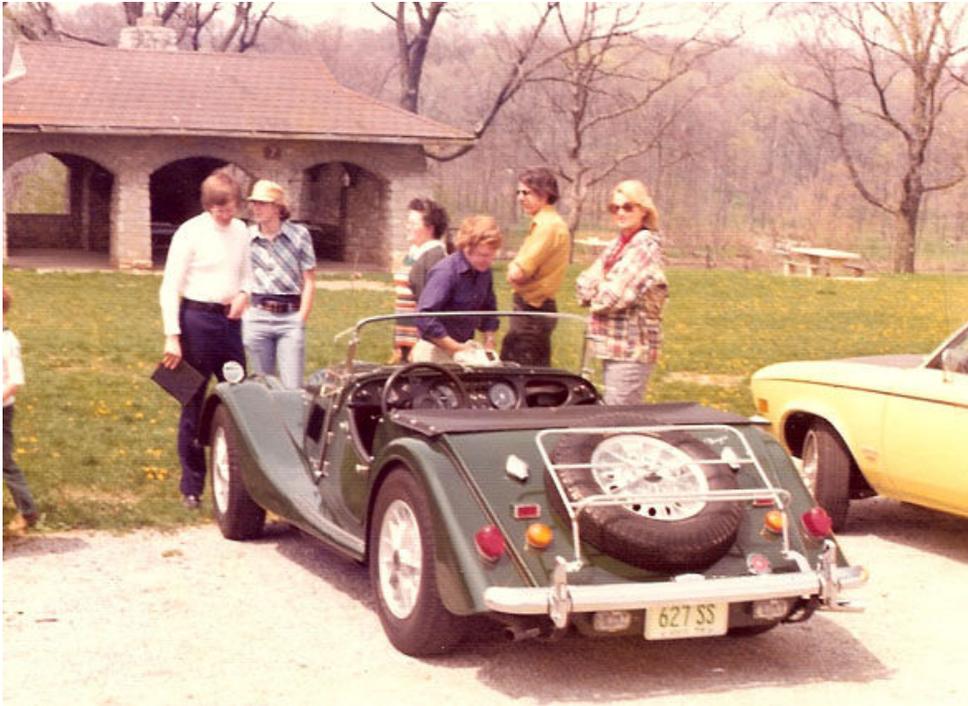
4 engine and eventually rebuilt it. While seeking garage space to store and work on the Morgan, Bob met Jim Cole, who was in a similar situation with a newly purchased Morgan. As a result of this amazing coincidence, Jim and he got together the next week to see each other's Morgan and compare notes. Soon after finding a garage, Bob contacted Jim and received from him a list of local Morgan owners, including Walt Squires from Dayton, who had just purchased a 1971 +8. At their next get together, Bob and Jim discussed the idea of rounding up the names, addresses, and phone numbers of any and all Morgan owners in Ohio to share technical information on Morgan restoration, parts suppliers, mechanics, and specialist services.

Jim Cole, Jim Jones, Walt Squires, and Bob then met one evening in late March 1974 at Schmidt's Restaurant in German Village to discuss forming an informal Morgan car club that they would call "The Ohio Morgan Owners." They developed an initial address-and-phone-number contact list supplemented by names supplied by Don Simpkins and various people to whom he had sold Morgans in Ohio. They then contacted those listed and organized an initial Morgan-owner gathering in May at a picnic area along the Scioto River where they met and looked over the Morgans that most were seeing for the first time.

Fifteen owners showed up at that picnic with a dozen Morgans: five +4 roadsters including Bob's 1963 stripped of paint, Jim Cole's 1964 +4, a 1961 +4 drophead coupe owned by Jerry Boston, Charlie Miller's 1970 4/4 roadster, Jim Jones's 1962 4/4 competition roadster, two +8 roadsters including Walt Squires' 1971 British racing green +8, and even a rare 1964 +4+ fiberglass coupe. Equally important, a few additional names were added to the owners list.



L to R: Jim Cole (white sweater), Walt Squires (at bonnet), Jim Jones (blue shirt with white badge view Charlie Millier's (bent over) 1970 Morgan 4/4 Roadster



Jim Cole in white views the 1971 Morgan +8 of Walt Squires in purple



Mary and Perry Doermann with their 1963 Morgan +4 Roadster with Jerry Boston's 1961 Morgan +4 Drop Head Coupe

After Bob and Linda were married in July, they expanded the list by contacting all known Morgan owners in Ohio for whom they had addresses, aiming to organize a recognizable club to serve Ohio and adjoining states. They intended to bring Morgan enthusiasts together for informal meets, picnics, and other “fun” events, particularly during the summer and fall months. The more serious side of club activities would

include the dissemination of technical information on Morgans, such as tips on the availability of spare parts, restoration help, and recommendations of good local mechanics and body shops. The club's stated purpose was supplemented with the current list of Morgan owners; all were asked to fill out a spec sheet on their Morgans and to check their current address and phone number for accuracy. They were also requested to identify Morgan owners they knew who were not on the list. The club was proposed without dues to initial members. As hoped, this opening letter brought much of the information sought.

In August 1975 about a large group of the Morgan owners named on the expanded list met in September at Stouffer's University Inn parking lot near OSU. This meet was called a "Morgan Unconcourse" to attract driven Morgans; there was no judging in order to encourage as many owners as possible to attend. Nearly 46 Morgan people attended this first "official" meet with some 20 Morgans, including +4's, 4/4's, a +8, and a rare 1947 Series I drophead coupe, and Bob's recently restored 1963 +4. Somehow Bob had learned that Sandy and Nora Marovitz had brought a 1965 four-seat back from Greece to Kent several years earlier, so he contacted them, and they drove down; thrilled to see so many other Morgan owners in Ohio, they promptly joined the club.

After this great start for the fledgling "Ohio Morgan Owners," Bob became the club's unofficial president. He and Linda distributed newsletters on upcoming Morgan events to the growing list of Ohio Morgan Owners over the next nine years. They were greatly assisted in setting up future events by Morgan families represented by the Bessts, Coles, Hannahs, Brokaws, and Joneses to name but some of the early club members. A few months later Bob celebrated his unofficial leadership position by purchasing a second Morgan, a 1967 low-profile +4 with right-hand drive. In May 1976 the Ohio Morgan Owners got together in Columbus again at a joint meet this time with the Triumph TR-3 Club of Columbus and the Jaguar Association of Central Ohio. About seventeen Morgans were present there.

The third annual meet and picnic was held in Newark, Ohio, on May 22, 1977, in a scenic private park reserved by Dave and Mickey Hannah, who lived nearby and hosted a casual cookout there. The meet included a light-hearted judging of the participating Morgans with certificate awards to the winners. Also on view was the ongoing restoration work of Dave's +4 Super Sport at the nearby Hannah home. Over 25 Morgans were present at the meet.

By this time 81 Morgan owners were on the club's mailing list. During the summer, Bob and Linda purchased still another Morgan, a solid 1958 +4 that ran beautifully, but they kept it for only about four months in order to trade it for a rough but rare dual-spare 1949 4/4 Series I dhc from Windsor, Ontario. That acquisition marked the beginning of a seven-year ground-up restoration of this promising gem in the rough. Also, that autumn, on their return from a year of teaching in Japan, Nora and Sandy retrieved their four-seat in Columbus, where they had left it to be restored by Al Kraft while they were away; they were well pleased with the results.

[Note: Eliminate 49 DHC at this location. Show with other 3 winners at 1980 National Washington DC Morgan meet]

That October all Ohio Morgan Owners received a proposal from the Mid-Ohio Austin Healy Club to establish formally a Central Ohio British Car Council. The aim was to form a mutual organization to benefit all British car clubs in the area by, first, improving the fellowship and communication of local British clubs, second, increasing general membership participation, third, creating a minimum working effort on combined club activities and a maximum enjoyment to all, fourth, increasing potential parts locations and possibly generating bigger discounts on larger quantities, and finally, setting up a schedule of events.

An initial meeting of the Morgan, Jaguar, Austin Healy, and Central Ohio Triumph clubs was held on November 2 at the Airport Holiday Inn. The concept of a British Car Council was well received, and a tentative schedule of the next year's events was arranged, including a display of vintage British sports cars at the indoor Northland Shopping Mall. After this first meeting, the MGA Club was contacted and invited to join the Council.

In January 1978 a letter was distributed to all Ohio Morgan Owners announcing that the club had joined with other British car clubs in central Ohio to become a member of the British Car Council. The letter also announced a "Get-Acquainted" banquet at the OSU Golf Course Club House on February 18 to explain what the British Car Council was all about. In addition, the letter requested—for the first time--\$5.00 for membership dues, a further sign of the club's increasing maturity. The money was needed to cover the increasing copying and mailing costs to an expanding list of Ohio Morgan Owners, particularly in light of the proposed busy schedule of 1978 club activities. Forty-eight members of the seventy-eight listed owners submitted their dues.

On Saturday and Sunday, April 15-16, 1978, the club participated in the Council's indoor Northland Mall display. Seven Morgans from central Ohio were on review, including a restored +4 rolling chassis owned by Dave Hannah. In April, July, and September the Ohio Morgan Owners participated in three amateur sports car rallies sponsored by the Triumph TR2-3 Club.

The following year, they held their 4th annual spring event by sponsoring a vintage British sports car meet at Stouffer's University Inn on Sunday May 28, 1978. For this event, invitations were sent to all of the British Car Council sports car clubs; it included an open cash bar and a Sunday lunch buffet. The club presented awards to the best cars for each marque. After a scenic sports car tour to Delaware, Ohio, a pot-roast dinner at the Holiday Inn ended the meet.

Many Ohio Morgan Owners caravanned down to the national Morgan meet held about a month later, from June 30 to July 2, in Luray, Virginia. Ohio Morgan owners were well represented with national awards won by Morgans owned by Jim and John

Besst, George Brokaw, Jerry Boston, Walt Squires, Charlie Miller, and Bob Burrows. The club also presented Award Certificates to owners of their favorite Morgans during this event. It was enhanced by the attendance of Peter Morgan, president of the Morgan Car Company, Ltd, whom many members had a chance to meet.

In September the club met in Granville, Ohio, for brunch at the historic Bryn Mawr restaurant followed by an afternoon tour of the city's numerous gift shops and historic homes. All the Morgans were parked on the Town Square. The meet ended with dinner at Charlene Cole's quaint 19th-century restored home in Granville.

The following month brought the first Ohio Morgan Owners logo; designed by the president, it presented the front view of a flat-rad Morgan equipped with Lucas PL headlamps. It was soon recreated into a solid brass badge manufactured in England and sold for ten dollars each. Because the initial supply of 115 sold out in less than three years, a second batch of 90 using the original design was made available.



Original Ohio Morgan Owners Club Brass Badge

On April 21, 1979, the club met informally with members of the Morgan Club of Washington, DC, at the home of Jim and Karen Besst in Grove City. The DC Club members brought slides of previous national Morgan meets and answered questions from Ohio Morgan Owners who might consider attending MOG 9. (Several members did go to that national meet and win awards there.) At the end of April the 2nd Annual British Sports Car Show was held at the indoor Northland Mall Shopping Center. Six Morgans were among the 36 vintage British sports cars on display. Among them were Jim Besst's 1958 4/4 roadster, John Besst's 1961 4/4 roadster, George Brokaw's 1961 +4 dhc, John Smith's 1968 4/4 roadster, Jim Cole's 1964+4 roadster and Bob Burrows' 1963 +4. Jim Besst also displayed his 1932 3-wheeler engine, and Dave Hannah exhibited his completed +4 roadster wooden body frame.



1979 Columbus Ohio Northland Mall Show with Jim Cole's 1964 Morgan +4 Roadster, George Brokaw's 1964 Morgan +4 DHC and in foreground John Smith's 1968 Morgan 4/4

Our club participated with other British Car Council members in the Ohio Village car show on July 15, 1978. Over 200 classic cars were on display, dash plaques were provided, and some of the participating Ohio Morgan Owners garnered awards. Ohio Village provided additional entertainment since the village was showing long forgotten crafts such as metalworking, weaving, blacksmithing, candle-making, and baking. As an added attraction, a giant car- parts flea-market was made part of the show.

In addition to the events announced for 1979, the initial club newsletter of the year included Bob Burrows' request for the names of volunteers who might like to take over as unofficial president and contribute new ideas on the direction of the group. He wrote that increasing work commitments were putting excessive demands on his free time, and it was becoming difficult for him to continue giving so much time to the expanding club. Because no one responded at that time, he and Linda continued to handle the club mailings and oversee relations with other groups. No fall meet was held that year, however, because their move to Worthington gave them no time to organize one.

The first newsletter in February 1980 detailed the continuing Morgan restorations of some of the members, including those of Bob's 1949 4/4 series I dhc, Jim and Karen Besst's 1965 +4 four-seat dhc, David and Mickey Hannah's 1961 +4 roadster, Gary Keswick's 1964 +4, and Fred Richards' 1958 +4. The newsletter also contained a helpful list of all known Morgan parts and service providers with a supplement on how to order parts directly from the Morgan factory.

The fifth annual Midwest Morgan Meet was held June 27- 29 that year at the Potawatomi Inn in Pokagon State Park, Angola, Indiana. Among the many Ohio Morgan Owners who attended were about eight couples who caravanned from Columbus to the meet, which included a Saturday concourse climaxed by an awards banquet that evening at the Auburn-Cord-Dusenberg Museum in Auburn. This classic event celebrated the 70th anniversary of the Morgan Car Company.



Ohio Morgan Owners caravan to 1980 Midwest Morgan Meet in Angola IN.

L to R: Bob Burrows 67 Morgan +4, Jim Besst's 58 Morgan 4/4, Chuck Kistler's 56 Morgan +4 Four Seater and John Besst's 61 Morgan 4/4

Again several of the Ohio Morgan Owners attended the Washington, DC, Morgan Club national meet at Luray, Virginia from August 1 - 4. Approximately 20 Morgans from the club were on display there. Early the next month, also, seven could be seen at the British Car Council Indoor Northland Mall Vintage British Sports Car Show. At the end of September, Bob and Linda hosted the fall meet that began with lunch at their new Worthington home. It was followed by a mini-tour in the Morgans to the antique shops in scenic Dublin and Powell, Ohio. The tour ended at the Whaling Station Restaurant. Over 46 Morgan Owners attended this event.

As in 1980 a large contingent of Ohio Morgan Owners attended the DC Club national meet in 1981 and 1982. The latter year especially brought welcome recognition when Karen and Jim Besst's rare and beautifully restored 1955 +4 four-place dhc won first place in its class, Dave and Mickey Hannah's 1961 +4 Roadster won second place in the +4 roadsters competition, Charlie Miller's 1978 4/4 four-seat won best of its class, and Bob Burrows took second place in the flat-rad dhc class with his recently completed 1949 Morgan. The club was particularly gratified to be the first

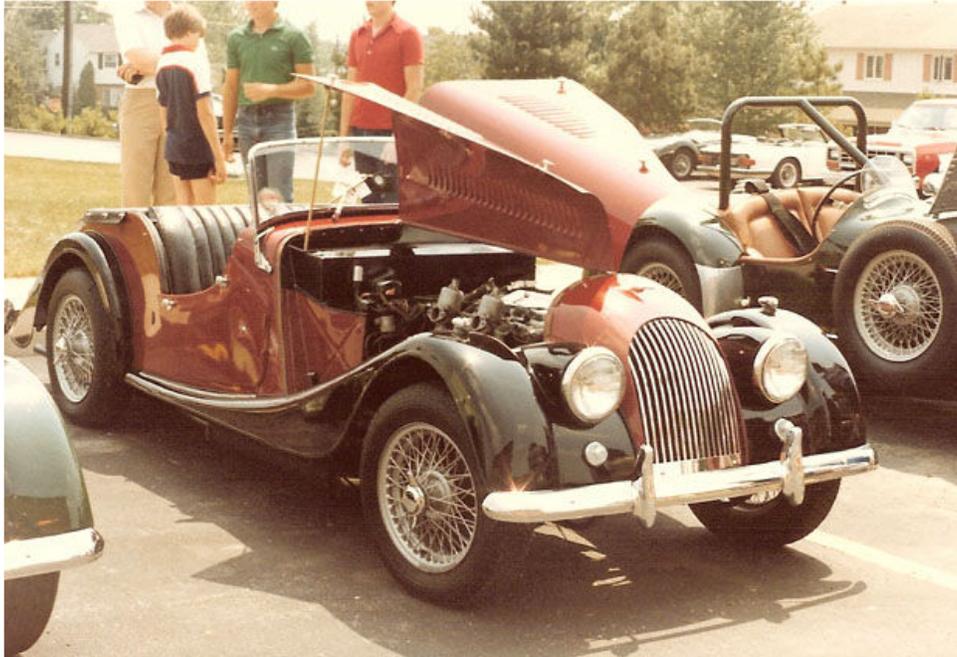
Morgan owners in thirteen years to show the +4 four-seat dhc and a Series I dhc at the national meet.



Karen Besst's rare 1955 Morgan +4 Four Passenger Drop Head Coupe



Bob Burrows' 1949 Morgan 4/4 Series I Drop Head Coupe



David and Mickey Hannah's 1961 Morgan +4 Roadster



Charlie Miller's 1978 Morgan 4/4 Four Seater

The newsletter for 1983 provided details on the planned 75th Anniversary of the Morgan Car Company that was to be held the next year in Malvern, England, during the week of July 21, 1984. (The Ohio Morgan owners who did attend that celebration were the Bessts, Hannahs, Wassers, Paytons, and Bob Burrows with his son Tom.)

In June 1983 the British Car Council Vintage British Sports Car Meet held in Worthington was well-attended by all the council clubs; the Ohio Morgan Owners had over 20 cars there. The last event that year was a “Brats and Beer Bash” sponsored by Charlie Miller in Springfield at George Rogers Clark Park on Oct 15. At the end of the picnic, it was decided by the Ohio Morgan Owners to expand the club’s activities with a professionally printed Ohio Morgan Owners publication.

Because he could no longer continue to spare the time to continue as president, unofficial or not, Bob Burrows resigned after nine years in office. This led the membership to establish a more formal organization with a full compliment of officers. For this new phase of the Ohio Morgan Owners, Chas Wasser became the club’s first official president, Dave Hannah became the newsletter editor, Jim Besst became the technical advisor, Charlie Miller became the treasurer, and Dave Jones was made responsible for next year’s (1984) fall meet. With his resignation, Bob duly submitted the current list of Ohio Morgan Owners to Chas Wasser in November to help him and the new officers plan the activities for 1984. It was also decided after the picnic that the current practice of holding annual fall meetings would continue and that the fall event “should become the keynote club activity each year.”

The new formal phase of the Ohio Morgan Owners began late in 1983 when the unofficial club became an official Group—the Ohio Morgan Owners Group, OhMog—and the quarterly newsletter gained a new title, *OhMoggie*. On Sept. 1-2, 1984, the first official meet of the newly established Group met in Dayton at OhMog 1 with a classic poster in yellow and black on white to publicize it. The Group’s pre-history had ended, and after that, OhMog has continued motoring up the road established by its provident founders. Endless thanks go to Bob and Linda Burrows and to all other Morgan Owners who helped us find our way to it and ride along with them since then.