



Used 'Classic Morgan' Buyers Guide

This guide to buying a 'classic' Morgan (as against a 3-wheeler or Aero range Morgan) can be used in conjunction with our "Are you considering a Classic Morgan?" document – available separately if required.

Although you may be used to buying cars, Morgans are a little different, and we hope this guide will help you to achieve your dream of owning one of these beautiful cars.

Body and paintwork

Check all the body panels - look for even gaps between panels, evidence of paint repairs and corrosion.

There is meant to be a sizeable gap between the bonnets and the wings. Also, the fit of the bonnets around the bonnet cowl and bulkhead is rarely symmetrical.

Morgans can come with aluminium or steel wings and both can corrode, so check around the sidelights, wing edges and wing beading. Paint cracks around the headlamp pods are common. Check that there is a panel join under the doors - it may look odd but it's meant to be there!

Has the car had paint repairs, if it has, ask why? The front end and wings can be prone to stone-chipping, so respraying to remove stone chips is fine. If the respray is due to corrosion or accident damage, you'll need to convince yourself that the repairs have been done properly. We often find repairs undertaken by non Morgan specialists aren't as good as they should be...

Wood frame

All classic Morgans have an extensive wood frame made from ash. This is mounted onto the chassis and then the body panels attach to the frame. You'll want to satisfy yourself, as far as it's possible, that the ash frame is sound and without rot. Unfortunately, a lot of it is hidden from sight.

Three areas that can be relatively easily checked are the door rockers (the area of frame under the bottom of the doors), the sillboards and the door hinge posts. If these are suspect, it's fair to assume there'll be problems elsewhere. Don't confuse play in the hinges with movement in, and hence problems with, the door hinge posts.

You should also be able to get a bit of a look at the rear 'goal post' which the number plate panel screws onto and which can badly rot.

You can take a 'view' on the likely condition of the ash frame from the overall condition of the rest of the car. A car that's seen 'better days' could well have hidden woodwork problems.

From 1986, the ash frames were Cuprinol treated as standard. On a well looked after Morgan with a Cuprinol treated frame, rotten wood is unlikely to be a problem, but just to be on the safe side, check as much of the ash frame as you can.

Chassis, bulkhead and valances

The chassis are made from steel and can rust in a number of areas. Galvanised steel chassis are less prone to problems than ungalvanised. From 1995 on +8s and +4s, and 2000 on 4/4s, chassis were galvanised as standard. Previously it was an optional extra.

Regular steel chassis can rust, amongst other places, by the front crossmember - open the bonnet and look in the corner with the triangular plate. Also check the area around the front foot wells and at the rear crossmember. On older cars with lever arm suspension, check the shock absorber mounting plates as these can puff out and distort. Galvanised chassis can on the very rare occasion crack, so it is best to check.

In the engine bay on pre 1998 cars, check the mild steel valances and bulkhead for significant corrosion. Light surface rust is common, particularly on the top of the bulkhead, and is not a concern. There is a double skin on the driver's side valance which can be a water trap. Depending on their location and size, rust holes can be an MOT failure.

Post 1998 cars have stainless steel valances and bulkhead and as such these will not be subject to corrosion. You still need to check for signs of accident damage, e.g. distortion in these panels (this point about accident damage of course applies to the earlier cars as well).

Brakes, steering and suspension

Front and rear brakes can partially seize and rear wheel cylinders can leak. This is particularly so on cars that haven't been used much. So check the car pulls up in a straight line. There are no servos before 1992 as a general rule, so you will need to adjust your foot pressure accordingly - i.e. press very hard!

Check for bad steering shakes on road test. Is it just wheel balance or something more, for example worn king pins and bushes? King pins/bushes normally last no more than 20,000 miles so on higher mileage cars ask have they been replaced? Assessing wear in king pins takes experience and many people get it wrong (for example, we're always being phoned up by MOT testing stations who have no experience of Morgans and who are unsure if the 'play' in the king pins is normal).

Uneven front tyre wear can be an indication of kingpin wear, or it can be the tracking (alignment) is out of adjustment, or it can be a sign of accident damage.

The steering on Morgans fitted with the later 'Gemma' steering box or rack and pinion steering should be direct with little free play. Morgan's fitted with earlier steering boxes will have more free play. It's normal that Morgan steering doesn't 'self-centre' particularly well after turning a sharp corner, e.g. into/out of a road junction.

Check for leaking shock absorbers and broken or worn springs. However, Morgans may not sit level - even brand new ones can have 1 - 1.5" difference in ride height from side to side!

Other mechanical checks

The earlier Morgans, and all +8s, may well have oil leaks from the transmission, and perhaps minor ones from the engine area. So don't worry unduly about minor leaks (you'll probably never be able to stop them!) but do be more concerned about major leaks.

Engines shouldn't blow smoke from the exhaust and should run smoothly and quietly, and with a good oil pressure showing on the gauge. Temperature will normally be in the 85 - 100 degree range. Be warned that cooling capacity on +8s can be pretty marginal, and sometimes these cars will run hotter than is desirable. Upgraded radiators and/or fans may be required if this is the case.

Check the radiator as these are prone to leaking on all Morgans.

Gearboxes and transmissions should be reasonably quiet, and gear changes easy, though perhaps a little 'notchy' on Rover engined cars. Assuming it's a Morgan with a full synchromesh gearbox, gears shouldn't crunch when changing. Occasionally people have problems (through 'driver error') in changing gear smoothly in a Morgan - a little more care or practise can work wonders!

Otherwise go for a drive, check everything works, the car drives in a straight line and handles correctly (but don't expect the most supple of suspension!) and enjoy your road test!

Weather equipment

Check the hood and tonneau and make sure they fit!

PVC hoods shrink with age and it can become very difficult, or indeed impossible, to put the hood and tonneau on (particularly if they've rarely been used).

Mohair hoods and tonneaus can fade, get very dirty and can become baggy with age, so again check they fit.

Check that sidescreens are a reasonable fit, but don't be surprised if there are gaps or uneven lines between sidescreen and windscreen and/or hood.

Hood and sidescreens are standard equipment on all Morgans (except for a couple of limited edition models). Tonneaus are standard on all Morgans up to 2003 and the introduction of the 'Easy-Up' hood, thereafter they are offered as an option.

Miscellaneous

Always have a look at a car's history. It will give you a picture of how the car has been looked after, what has been done and possibly what might need doing in the future.

Genuine full service histories on older cars are rare. For a Morgan to have a full service history it needs to have been serviced **every** year or 5,000 miles, whichever comes first. 'Comprehensive' rather than 'full' service histories are probably a more reasonable norm.

At the risk of generalising, Morgans that have been serviced by garages which are not Morgan specialists, tend to decline in quality over time as not all service items or worn items are picked up on and corrected. If we bring such cars into our showroom, we invariably find it takes us a bit of extra work and expense, to get them up to the standards required.

We think it's always worth carrying out a check with HPI, or a similar company, to ensure a car doesn't have a 'hidden past' – certainly we do it for all the cars we take into our showroom. HPI checks should flag up if the car has been written off by an insurance company or is on finance (if you buy a car with outstanding finance on it, then it legally remains the property of the finance company until the finance is paid off...).

Valuing a Morgan is not a clear cut exercise. There are not enough Morgans in the market place for the different mainstream buyer's guides, e.g. Glasses, to bother with trying to value them. The valuations in the buyer's guides in classic car magazines are often horribly wrong (usually significantly under-valuing Morgans). We also frequently find that Morgans advertised privately are priced higher than they would be through a Morgan dealer!

Sometimes visitors to our showroom or website initially feel very confused as to why two similar looking Morgans have very different prices. There are always good reasons which we are very happy to explain. We take great care to properly assess our cars and then use this assessment and our experience of the Morgan market place to value them fairly.

At the risk of stating the obvious, the following factors will affect the value of a Morgan:

- Age
- Model
- Mileage
- Overall condition
- Colour
- Accessories
- Service history
- Dealer or private sale (the latter should be cheaper!)

As just one example of price variability, with older 4/4s there can be a £5,000 - £7,000 difference between a car in exceptional condition fitted with lots of extras and a more 'tired' looking car with a basic specification.

If you're wondering about the pros and cons of buying privately or through a dealer, or whether a dealer is doing everything they should, then hopefully the list of what we do for our used Morgans will help put things into perspective. This is as follows:

- Very thorough check over and assessment of a car – mechanical, structural and condition. This typically takes us around 3 hours.
- Remedy problems identified by this check
- Full valet
- Carry out an HPI check
- Offer test drives on our insurance
- Service the car before sale
- Provide a new MOT
- Provide a warranty
- Help with finance or insurance recommendations if required
- Offer a part exchange service if required
- Arrange delivery if needed (extra cost)
- Give as much advice (hopefully objective!) as you would like on Morgan ownership

We are always happy to give advice about Morgans, be it buying, selling, servicing or upgrades to an existing car. We can also offer an inspection service if you are buying a car privately. So if you are in any doubt, or need any help, please contact us.

Contacting us

If you would like to chat to us about buying a Morgan, or any aspect of Morgan ownership, then the best people to talk with are:

Phil Benfield
Julie Wallinger
John Bellenger

Our general contact details are:

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