

# SOUTHERN FOURS AND EIGHTS

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHERN MORGAN GROUP MOGSOUTH VOL. SPECIAL - 9/13

## Peter Morgan

*MOGSouth still remembers. We remain forever joined by the spirit of this man, and of his car.*



Photograph John Bentley

Peter Henry Geoffrey Morgan (November 3, 1919 – October 20, 2003)

*Continued Next Page*

**A**s we reflect back on the 10 years since Peter's death and look at what has transpired at the Morgan Motor Company, we can still see Peter's influence. It's certainly obvious in the Roadster and new Plus 8 but perhaps a little less so in the M3W and the Aero. It's obvious that Peter Morgan's presence will not soon be erased from the factory in Malvern. He was the Managing Director of the Morgan Motor Company (MMC) for four decades (1959 to 1999) and most likely the driving force at the Factory, starting a decade earlier. The period following WWII was certainly trying for all, but maybe just a bit more demanding for the automotive industry. Many automotive icons were lost during the war or resurfaced briefly only to see their own demise in the turmoil of the 1940s.

One could argue that it was simply Peter's passion that saved the MMC. For the MMC, it was a roller coaster ride in war-ravaged England, with the post war demands on materials and exports, the boom era of the overseas markets, followed by the racing successes of the 50s and 60s. Then came the emissions and safety regulations of the 1970s and 1980s, uncertain international dynamics in the 1990s, followed by the emergence of the internet and information age. As significant as these events were to the MMC, I suspect it was more the way they were addressed, by Peter, that allowed the MMC to survive while others failed.



## A TRIBUTE TO PETER H.G. MORGAN 1919 - 2003 The Telegraph News

Peter Morgan, who died on Monday aged 83, was chairman of his family's motor car company and involved in every detail of the marque's development for more than 50 years. Morgan is one of the world's oldest motor manufacturers and the oldest anywhere still controlled by the family which established it. Their custom-built sports cars attract a loyal following, and the waiting list for the 700 vehicles produced annually is currently more than a year. Peter Morgan expanded from the success of his father, H F S Morgan, who had built the company on the reputation of its three-wheelers, which combined light weight with power.

The timeless design of the cars was, even then, instrumental in their success. A Morgan three-wheeler won the French Cyclecar Grand Prix in 1913, and was still in production 26 years later; the Plus 4 chassis remained substantially unchanged between 1936 and 2000; and the Plus 8, Peter Morgan's great innovation of 1968, is still in production.

In 1990, television viewers were given an opportunity to see the company's philosophy in action, when Sir John Harvey-Jones devoted an episode of Troubleshooter to Morgan. Harvey-Jones was horrified by what he saw; interviewing the foreman of the chassis shop, who had been there 30 years, he said: "You must have seen a lot of changes in that time." "Not really, no," came the laconic reply.

Morgan ignored the guru's advice to double production and increase prices dramatically, preferring to keep the loyalty of those who loved the cars. Peter Morgan pointed out that not all of Sir John's ventures had been as successful as his time at ICI. He also maintained that it was a good job that he had kept to his policies - or the recession immediately afterwards would have affected the company badly. Viewers seemed to agree; orders increased dramatically as they sided with Morgan's, rather than Sir John's, opinion on how cars should be built.

Peter Henry Geoffrey Morgan was born on November 3 1919 at Chestnut Villa, which stood next to the company's Worcester Road factory. A party was held in the carpenters' shop to celebrate his arrival, and he, and his four older sisters, grew up with the factory workforce as part of their extended family. Young Peter was woken up as a boy by the sound of the steam engines (which ran the factory's lathes) being started each morning. He attended the Link School, Malvern, before going on to Oundle.

Young Peter's first interest was in locomotives, rather than motor cars - though he had a tandem two-seater pedal car made at the works which, unusually for the firm at the time, was a four-wheeler. In 1935, the family moved to Cannon Hill, an Adam house near Maidenhead in Berkshire. Peter enjoyed Oundle, which promoted engineering and had a machine shop, carpentry lessons and even a foundry - "especially intriguing," Morgan thought. "I used to make little brass aeroplanes and things like that." At home he learned to drive in the grounds of his parents' house, in the Ford-engined four-wheeled 4/4 prototype which his father had rejected, after deciding to use the Coventry-Climax engine. He longed for a three-wheeled twin, but his father refused; after Peter narrowly avoided toppling over in an F-type three-wheeler on holiday in Cornwall, the old man felt vindicated.

Peter left school in 1936, but was at first unsure whether to go to university or engineering college. But, convinced of the value of practical training, he went to the Chelsea College of Automobile and Aero Engineering. He remained there from 1937 until 1940, and then worked briefly for the British Ermeto Corporation. He anticipated working for the



Photo MMC Brochure

family firm, but hoped first to join Rolls-Royce or Rover. By this time he was racing the family's cars at tracks such as Brooklands and Donington. (He later led the Morgan team to victory in the RAC Rallies in 1951/52.)

The outbreak of war altered his plans; he at first attempted to sign up for the Royal Navy, but after being rejected on account of his eyesight, joined the Royal Army Service Corps, working in the motor shop. From there he was posted to Freetown in Sierra Leone with the Royal West African Frontier Force, before taking over the Army workshops at Nairobi, where he stayed for the remainder of the war. He toyed with the idea of remaining after demob in 1946, but was persuaded by his father to return home. He joined the board at £9 a week, and was soon working as a draughtsman alongside his father.

The break in production during the war years helped Peter in his adaptation to the four-wheeled market, and although the late 1940s and early 1950s were a tricky time for the company (one of the few periods in which it registered a loss), the export sales of sports cars held up fairly well. The first model which Peter Morgan was principally responsible for developing, the Plus 4, replaced the 1.5-litre engine with a 2-litre model. It raced successfully, and eventually won the 2-litre class at Le Mans in 1961.

In 1968, Morgan launched the Plus 8, which was at the time the fastest car available for the money, and used the General Motors 8-cylinder engine later adopted by Rover. The model, which will remain in production until next year, became the longest-running car produced by the company. After his father's death in 1959, Morgan paid diligent attention to the export market, building strong support, particularly from America and Germany. Fifty per cent of the company's sales are now to overseas buyers. He continued to be optimistic about the firm, and took great pride in the win at Le Mans. "The other thing I'm very proud of," he said, "is that I've never had to make anybody redundant."

Peter Morgan was a charming and courteous figure, extremely popular with all those he met. He remained active after his retirement from the day-to-day running of the firm in 1999; he enjoyed travel and collecting stamps, and ran a small-scale railway in his Worcestershire garden, which delighted his grandchildren. Three weeks ago, he drove up the Prescott Hill Climb - at some speed - in his V 8, licence plate AB 16. He remained Chairman of the Board, and continued to come into the office until only a week or so before his death.

Morgan married, in 1939, Jane Christie. The marriage was dissolved in 1972; she died in July this year. He married secondly, in 1982, Heather Williams. She survives him together with his children from his first marriage; his daughters Sonia and Jill, who both serve as directors of the company, and his son, Charles, who now runs the firm. (Oct 2003)



## **PETER MORGAN**

## **SPORTS CAR ENTHUSIAST WHOSE GENTLEMANLY STYLE KEPT**

**Bill Wykeham, The Guardian, Nov 2003 HIS FAMILY FIRM AT THE FOREFRONT OF A NICHE MARKET**

There is something uniquely British about a prewar-styled, canvas-topped Morgan sports car. Its anarchic handling and barely adequate creature comforts are outweighed by the excitement and sense of freedom generated behind the wheel, so lacking in much modern machinery. Customers wait years to buy one and, extraordinarily for a producer of fewer than 1,000 cars a year, the Morgan Motor Company is renowned around the world.

Presiding over this eccentric marque for more than half a century was Peter Morgan who has died aged 83.

It was somehow fitting that he was born in a house next to the company's factory in Worcester Road, Malvern, where his father, HFS Morgan, had established the business 10 years earlier. After the Link school, Malvern, and Oundle, he studied at the Chelsea College of Automobile and Aero Engineering (1937-40), and joined the Royal Army Service Corps. From the motor shop, he was posted to Freetown, later Nairobi, where he was put in charge of army workshops.

Demobbed with the rank of captain, and following a brief period with the United Africa Company, Peter joined the family firm in February 1947. Under his father, it had been successful in the three-wheeler market that the tax policies of the day encouraged. Peter's arrival coincided with its decline, and so he focused on the development of the Morgan 4/4 - four wheels and four cylinders.

A skilled draughtsman and engineer, he took an interest in all aspects of the motor manufacturing process, which, on a Morgan, still involves many craft techniques. The postwar years were difficult times for car manufacturers, with exporting a priority; even today half the firm's output goes abroad.

In 1951, the Morgan Plus 4, a two-litre development of the 4/4, was launched, eventually adopting the more streamlined bodywork produced today. Peter campaigned relentlessly for the new model in trials and rallies, achieving a premier award in the Exeter trial and team prize in both the 1951 and 1952 RAC rallies. His enthusiasm for motor sport later led to the involvement of Chris Lawrence, whose class win at Le Mans in 1962, driving a Plus 4 SS, was factory-backed.

Following his father's death in 1959, Peter became chairman of the company, by which time the world of car manufacturing was going through fundamental change. Manufacturing efficiencies and improvements were producing major competition for Morgan; both MG Sports Cars' MGB and the Triumph TR4, for instance, offered similar performance and more comfort, with wind-up windows and quick-release hoods. One of Morgan's attempts at a solution, the Plus 4 Plus, a closed coupe with fibreglass body, was not a success. On the other hand, the Plus 8, launched in 1968, became the "in" car of the moment; it was bought by the likes of Mick Jagger, and enjoyed 35 years in production.

Peter took a gentlemanly approach to management, concluding deals with handshakes or murmured agreement. During the industry's most turbulent period of labour relations, in the 1970s, the Morgan workforce soldiered on, content in their attractive Malvern environment; they felt part of the family business.

Peter's love of the simple life - operating his garden railway, collecting stamps, driving with his dog in the passenger seat or campaigning for the RSPCA, particularly against the live export of animals - moderated any desire to increase car production or profits. Whether by accident or design, this meant that demand for Morgans always exceeded supply, making their ownership a financially attractive prospect.

When asked at motor shows why he had not produced more user-friendly models, better protected from the elements, Peter maintained that there were only ever going to be a small number of people who would be happy owning a Morgan, which, in any case, was more comfortable than a motorbike.

Always putting charm ahead of litigation, Peter built a worldwide network of dealers, who served him loyally, often preferring not to process warranty claims they had fulfilled for fear of offending him. However, he was also a shrewd negotiator, notably with Rover in obtaining the use of their all-aluminium V8 engine to make the Plus 8 so special.

In a celebrated television programme in 1990, the BBC's small-business trouble-shooter, Sir John Harvey-Jones, for once found no welcome for his recommendations for improvements at Morgan, in this case that the company try to double its production and raise prices by a third. But while Peter had no interest in seeing how sales would fare in an open market, in subsequent years output per week rose from eight to 11, the highest level since the 1920s, with each vehicle produced in 17 days rather than 48. Ironically, the attention generated by the programme boosted the order book, and, three years ago, Harvey-Jones himself saluted the new, all-aluminium Aero 8 model in a follow-up series.

In 1999, Peter passed operational control of Morgan to his son Charles, who became managing director, while he stayed on as chairman. As well as Charles, Peter is survived by Sonya and Jill, the two other children of his marriage to Jane Christie, who died last July; and by his second wife, Heather Williams, whom he married in 1983.





Peter had many passions, but always the flame for motorsport burned very bright. In the early years Peter competed in the 4/4 and then moved on to the Plus 4. And in many cases, when he wasn't racing, he was in support.

*At the first ever Goodwood Motor Racing Meeting in 1948, in front of 10,478 paying spectators, Peter Morgan came second in the up to 1100cc sports car race. In 1950 The Morgan Plus Four was introduced and won the RAC Rally Team Award in 1951, 1952 and 1953. Again, Peter was part of each team. In 1976, 1978, 1979 and 1980 Morgan won the British Racing and Sports Car Club (BRSCC) Production Sports Car Championship. Even when Peter Morgan was appointed MD in 1957 he carried on racing.*

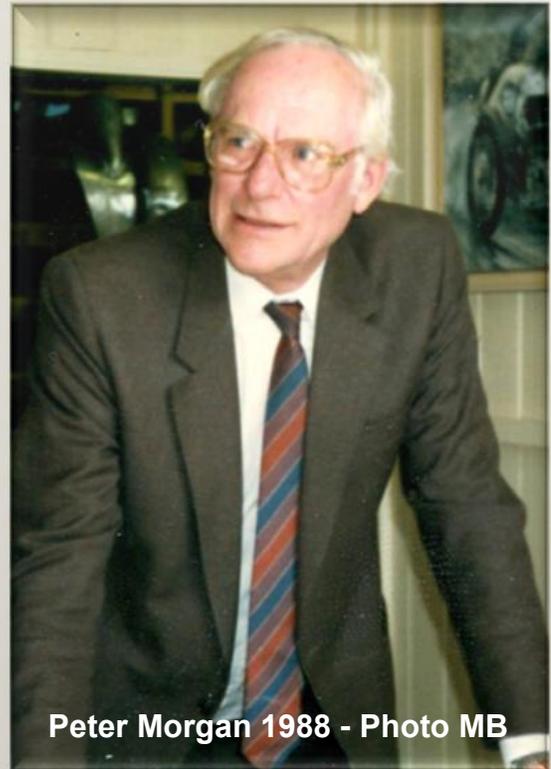


**1962 Le Mans Class Win**

*The senior managers at Morgan were Peter, Cecil Jay and George Goodall all of whom were successful Morgan racing drivers. The company was being managed by motorsport enthusiasts!*



**Toly Arutunoff's SCCA Win 1981**



**Peter Morgan 1988 - Photo MB**





Los Angeles Concours d'Elegance

*Peter was the driving force behind the production of Plus 4 Plus. A car that was never accepted by the public, for a number of good of reasons. It was first announced at the 1963 Earls Court Show. Only 26 were ever manufactured. It was an undesired car at the time, but one that is now highly prized.*



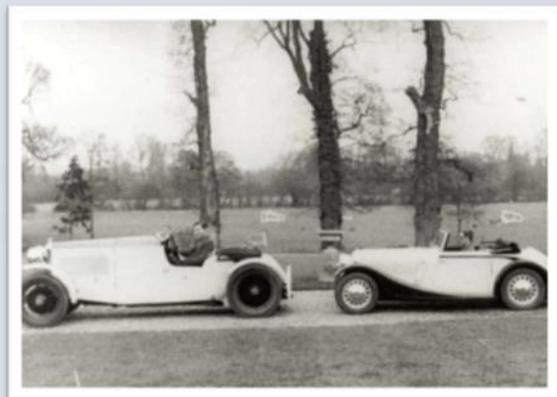
Peter's Daughter, Lady (Sonia) Jane Colwyn in the advertisement



*Peter loved all Morgans but the high luxe Drop Head Coupé (DHC) was one of his favorites. Perhaps he loved it for the creature comforts, or that he had won a number of competitions in both the 4/4 and Plus 4 versions or just that it was the top of the Morgan line for many years.*

*The Avon Coupé was the DHC prototype. The prototype introduced new features such as the fixed windshield, high doors, trafficators, wood trimmed interior and custom body work.*

*The DHC carried on from the 4/4 to the Plus 4. The DHC production ended with the Plus 4. However, there was a single Plus 8 Drop Head Coupé built for Peter's first wife, Jane.*



Peter Morgan, as a youth, in 1938 in the Avon Coupe DHC Prototype (#600). (First Morgan DHC) (Photo - Jake Alderson.)



Peter Morgan, a few years later, with Neville Crawford's Plus 4 DHC (#6853). (Last Production DHC) (Photo - Elwyn Crawford)

### Morgan Drop Head Coupé Production

1	Avon Coupé DHC Prototype 1938	(SN500/600)
163	Series I DHC (1938-1951) <u>56 Pre War</u>	(SN373 - SN2081)
117	Plus 4 Flat Rad DHC (1951-1953)	(SN2101 - SN2756)
433	Plus 4 Round Cowl DHC (1953-1969)	(SN3024 - SN6853)
51	Plus 4 4-seater DHC (1951-1955)	(SN2227 - SN3428)
1	4/4 (Round Cowl)	(Not Known)
1	Plus 8 DHC (Mrs Peter Morgan, MMC)	
767	165 of which are known to still exist (per G. Wilburn Listing)	



## A GLOBAL SALUTE FROM EMOG

*[Peter lived to see the age of the internet, but I suspect it wasn't something he thought much about. He might be amused to see that MOGSouth (and most other clubs) have gone fully digital with email communications and web site publishing. One of the most significant benefits of this new internet age is the ability to reach out and immediately touch the other members of the Morgan Community, at any location, whether here in the US or at some remote location across the globe. There have been several attempts to organize this internet communication, some better than others, but one that was preeminent at the time of Peter's death was eMOG. On the occasion of Peter's death, eMOG organized a global tribute to the man, a tribute that has since been copied but will likely never be duplicated. Ed.]*

*"The [eMog] Moderators have received numerous inquiries and comments off-group from Pub regulars, lurkers and even non-participants as to what gesture would appropriately mark PM's passing. There is a need amongst us to reflect, in some way, how his life touched ours.*



*Of all the ideas and suggestions put forth, one seems to stand out and capture the imagination and heart more than others. We are a community, scattered over 33 countries, joined by his joy and our own in this little eclectic car. Any tribute should reflect this bond of spirit and how widely it has spread.*

*We would like to suggest a unique salute to PM.*

*AT AN APPOINTED TIME, coinciding with the Memorial Service to be set by the Factory, we shall each start all our thousands of Morgan engines wherever they may be, and reflect for five minutes on the ties that bind us to Peter Morgan and to honor him for that gift. All of us here are fortunately placed to create this and make it reality . . . if politics and turf are put aside and good will rules. Working together with everyone who can participate or help, we can excite a 1,000,000 horsepower salute for PM around our small planet. Doubtless his spirit will note the time to turn each ignition key or press each starter button.*

*We have just been informed by the Works that the Memorial Service will be held on Saturday November 29th [2003] at the Malvern Priory. This would seem to be the date most appropriate for the proposed Salute.*

*Gentlemen and Ladies prepare to . . . **START YOUR ENGINES** . . . in a salute to the Gentleman of Gentleman, Peter H. G. Morgan. May the full song of Morgan pipes be heard round the world in unison. "*

**Lorne Goldman, eMOG**

## THE eMOG TRIBUTE TOUCHED A CHORD WITH THE WORLD

*“I have now heard from some within the closest circle. They felt the Salute was wonderful and there could not have been a better tribute. When they explained its global significance to the non-Mog dignitaries present, I was that told you should have seen the grins.” It seems we have another Peter Morgan legend to treasure but this one we all had a hand in.”*

*“I have over 50 emails from Germany alone and there were 7 times that number who visited the PM Salute page on GoMoG. It will be forever impossible to know how many cars were involved but I can tell you what we DO know. The salute page had 3387 separate distinct visitors in 22 days. We contacted about over 1200 people and sent out close to 4500 emails. I received almost 700 emails from 32 countries with questions on the time or manner.”*

*“Lots were from groups or clubs or centres. Many were from unaffiliated Morgan owners. In every case and corner with only one exception, there was overwhelming support.*

*The largest majority participated on their own as I did without anything or anyone with them but their Morgan(s).”*



MOGSouth was there, e.g. Lance Lipscomb at the appointed time.



Dave Bondon's 4/4 Racer



*“eMog alone has about 1600 Morgans. My guess is that minimum amount of Morgans that turned the key or crank would very conservatively be over 3000 and as high as . . . who knows?” “I AM sure of one thing . . . the number will grow with the retelling for decades.”*

**Lorne Goldman, eMOG**



## MORGAN STATUE APPEAL

*In early 2004 a statue was proposed in memory of the founder of the Morgan Motor Company - the UK's sole remaining British owned car manufacturer in Malvern, Worcestershire where Morgan cars have been hand built for over 100 years. This resulted in the design for a life size 'living statue' of founder H.F.S. Morgan, his son and the iconic Morgan 4/4. The statue by the UK's leading sculptor, Leslie Johnson FRBS, supported by English Heritage, received planning permission to be located outside the Priory Gatehouse built in 1480, is set to become a major tourist attraction in the West Midlands and the UK.*

*[Note - Be Advised that MOGSouth has already donated as a club, however should you wish to donate as an individual, go to [www.morgan-statue.org](http://www.morgan-statue.org). Ed.]*



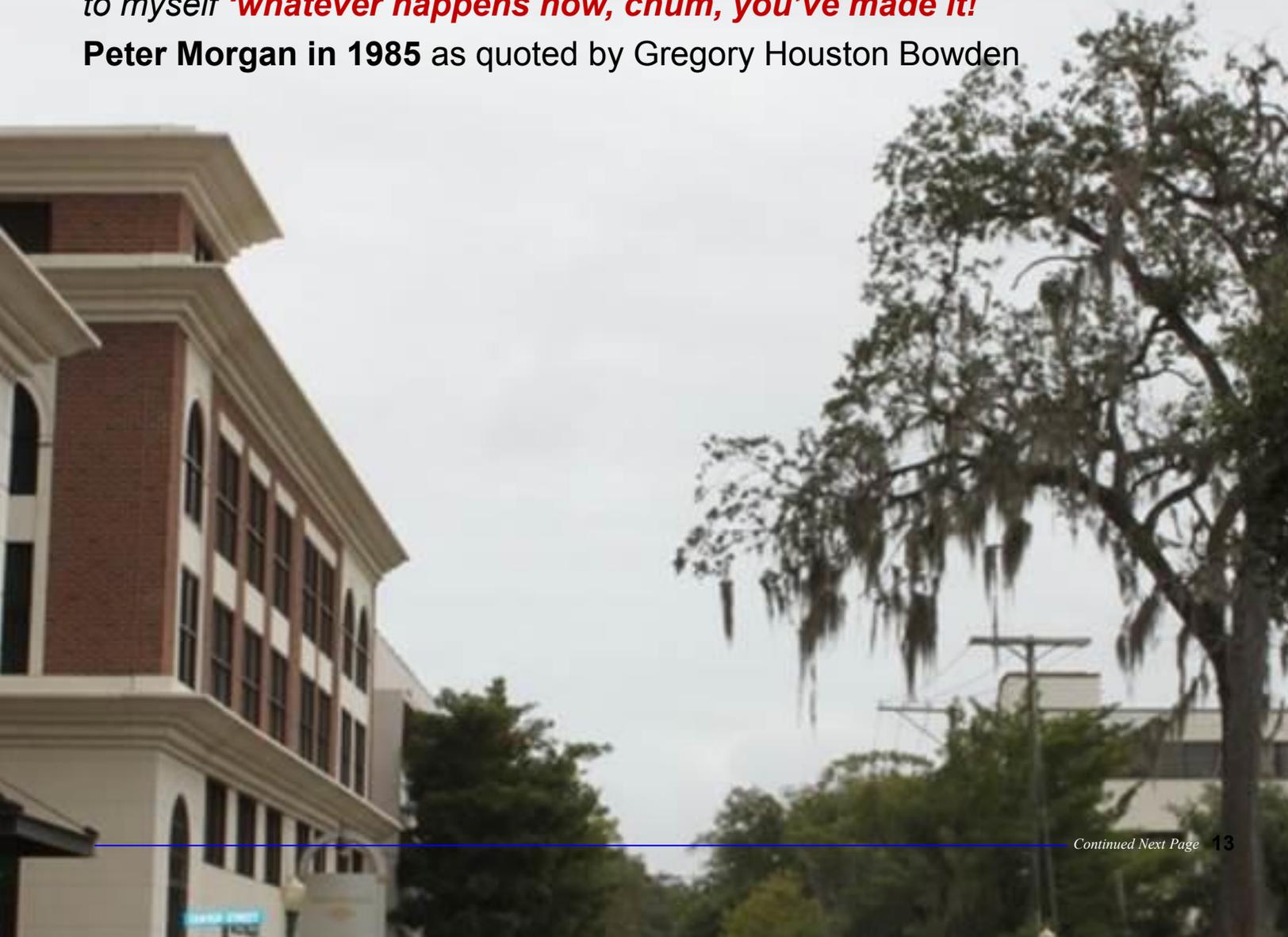


Peter was determined not to chase volume at all cost, as luckily the Morgan Motor Company avoided the financial difficulties that ended the other noted British car makers. The MMC survived while the likes of Allard, Alta, Alvis, Armstrong Siddeley, Austin Healey, Frazer Nash, HRG, Jenson, Jowett, Lagonda, Lea Francis, Singer, Sunbeam Talbot, Triumph, and Wolseley, all went under. Morgan became, and remains to this day, the only independent, family owned, survivor of all the British pre-war sports car makers.

This is mainly attributable to Peter's insight into the market, knowledge of the strengths and limitations of his product and foremost, his impassioned leadership of the MMC.

*"When I reached the grand old age of 65 in November 1984, I had a tremendous feeling of relief at having reached the 75th anniversary of Morgans and the magical age with the Company still alive and well. I said to myself **'whatever happens now, chum, you've made it!'**"*

**Peter Morgan in 1985** as quoted by Gregory Houston Bowden



Peter Morgan was quoted as saying, *“there are more reasons for not buying a Morgan than for buying one”*. This was quite an innovative marketing approach, but resulted in the multi year ‘waiting list’.

The Morgan Motor Company culminated the celebration of its Centenary (100 year anniversary) in Cheltenham, UK on the 1 - 2 August 2009.

Peter always enjoyed these Company milestones and would have been very proud that the MMC reached this mark and continues to this day.

Obtaining this enviable status has to be, in large part, attributed directly to the drive and passion of Peter Morgan. Without his leadership, the MMC would have simply been another chapter in automotive history.

As a real motoring enthusiast he made sure that the Morgan Motor Company survived by producing a product that he loved, and that the marque enthusiasts loved. The cars and Peter himself left the Morgan Motor Company with a huge following of worldwide fans.

*“Of course there will always be more modern, faster and better handling cars on the market, but none can match the Morgan for sheer personality. This is Peter Morgan’s legacy.”* (Michael Palmer - 2011)



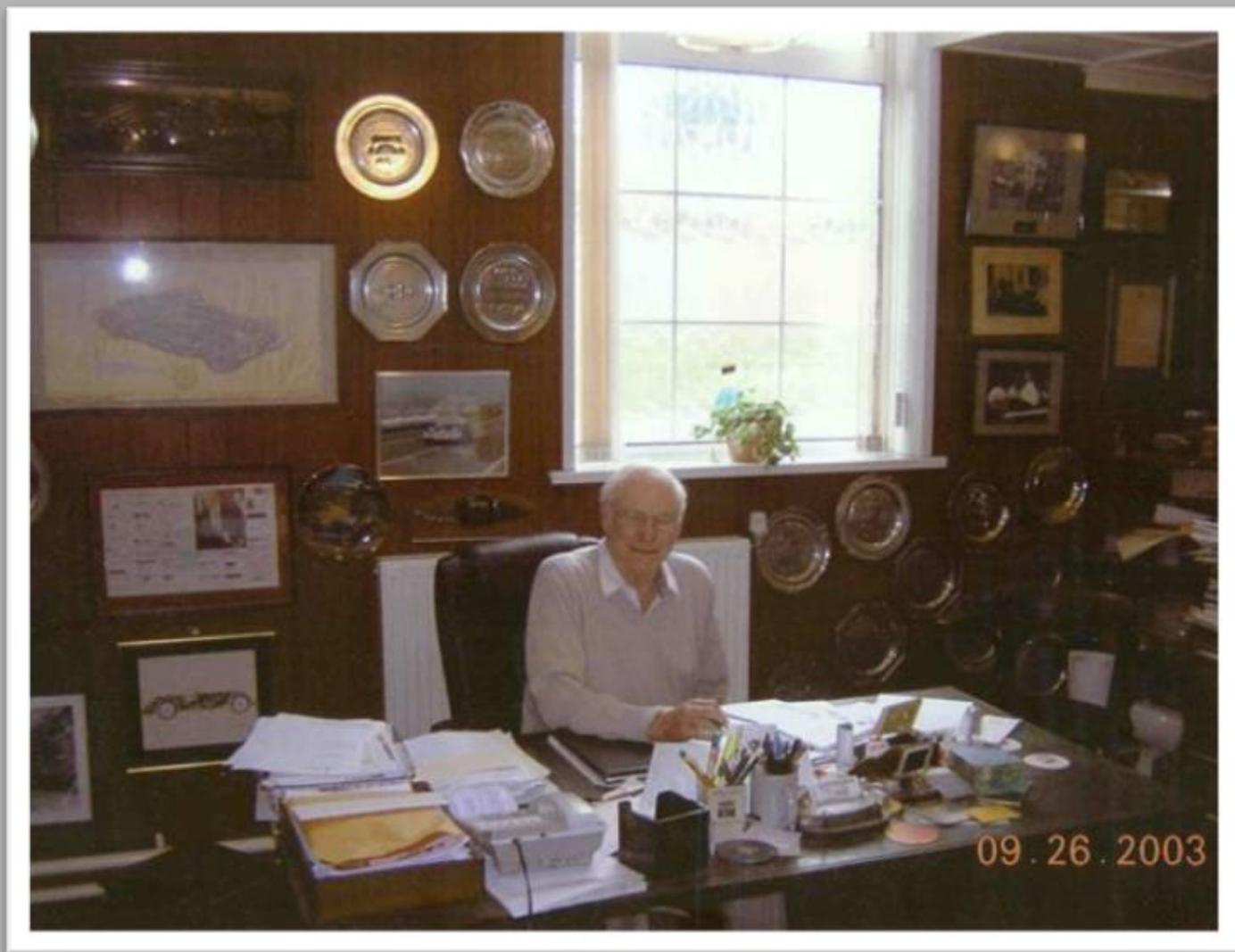
The future of the Morgan Motor Company is very much unknown, with the ongoing changes in factory management, as well as the changes in the MMC's technical direction. However, there have been changes at the MMC before and these changes have for the most part, been positive and been necessary to assure continuation of the marque.

It is our hope that Peter's passion continues in the products and cars of the MMC and that the changes being made have the desired effect and result in a better product and a more stable Morgan Motor Company.

MOGSouth hasn't forgotten Peter Morgan and the MMC that he personally shaped and as we drive our Morgans, whether new or old, individually or together, we are quite thankful for Peter's vision and the wonderful result of his efforts. Among other things, we can remember him for his trusting, gentlemanly nature, his faith in the craftsmanship and skills of his fellow man and his drive and passion for the Morgan Motor Company.

I hope at least, in some small way, the spirit of Peter Morgan still lives among us all!





**Peter Henry Geoffrey Morgan** (November 3, 1919 – October 20, 2003)

# Thank You!

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