

Who do you *thimp* you are?

Paul Coulter, Edinburgh, Scotland

One of the things that fascinates me about old cars is the history they carry. In the case of my Imps their early histories all outdate my very existence as I wasn't born until 1978, two years after the last Imp rolled off the production line in Linwood.

Whenever I buy a 'new' classic, or any older car for that matter, I like to know its history and so as soon as I have the V5 document in my name I send off a V888 form and a cheque for £5 to the DVLA. After about four weeks a nice bundle of photocopies of the previous V5 documents arrive in the post. I then read them with earnest to see where the cars have been before sticking a few letters in the post with a few up-to-date photos of the car enquiring if the previous owners have any history they can forward on, send photos or call for a chat to reminisce. Given the age of the cars, previous elderly owners buying them in retirement, and the fact that people move house or divorce, etc, more often than not circumstances have changed and you either hear nothing or get a returned letter.

Despite drawing a blank many times I have had success with my Imps recently and I thought I would write in, to encourage other Imp owners to trace the history of their car.

I was informed that my blue Imp (PKE 321M) was originally a police car with Kent Police. It also once belonged to the Imp Club's very own Tim Morgan who rescued it from a garden in Kent

some years ago and kindly sent me photos of its rescue. My V888 form duly returned the firm evidence that the car was indeed first registered to Maidstone Police in 1973. I used this evidence to contact the local constabulary and they kindly printed pictures of the restored Imp in their in-house police magazine. By sheer luck two retired officers read the piece and remembered the car and called to have a chat and tell me some great stories of the car in service. This lucky strike led me to send off a V888 form for my long-term Imp (HHM 572N)...

The first owner bought it from a Rootes dealership in south London, which still operates from the same premises, albeit now a Peugeot dealership. He had bought the car new in 1975 and at the time lived in a very grand house in Fulham. Unfortunately my letter was duly returned from new owners of the home saying they believed the previous owner died in 1977 when they bought the house. However, my research didn't end there as the second owners of the car called me up at my office. They were delighted to hear that the little Imp was still in existence, and I was delighted they were still at the same address. The lady told me how it had been her second



Imp and her favourite car. It was only three years old when they bought it from a local Rootes dealership just north of London. The owner worked in a school in the local village and used it Monday to Friday to driver her and three other teachers to school and back. She and her husband were building a house at the time and her husband later called me to tell me his stories of the car. He used it at the weekends to go to the builder's merchants and ferry wood and 180 welsh slate

tiles back to their building site for their new house! After ten years or so they passed the car on and it made its way up to Oxford where a lecturer owned it for some time. He then moved it on to a chap in Thirsk before he sold it to ex-club member Andy Lyons who drove it all the way back to Scotland in the late 'nineties. Andy used the car for a good few years and sent me lots of photos of it in his ownership before



Ready for the road again
Photo: Paul Coulter

Staring in an episode of BBC's *River City*, set in a close-knit Glasgow community
Photo: Paul Coulter





Thirsk, North Yorkshire, late 'nineties saw Paul's long-term Imp, HHM 572N (a London registration), 'The Dream Machine', in a reflective mood
Photo: Andrew Lyon

it passed to me in 2002 thus completing the jigsaw.

Spurred with enthusiasm I sent off letters to the three previous owners of my latest yellow Imp (KNR 125P). The first owner was an elderly gentleman in Mountsorrell, Leicestershire. Bizarrely he lived only a few doors down from my best man at my wedding. Small world. I found out from local neighbours that he had passed away *circa* 1976 when the car was only a year old. It was then sold to a lady in Coventry who eventually sold it to a garage in Rugby in 1991. Another local lady, Denise Glynn, bought the car and kept it for eight years. She still lives at the same address and sent me photos of the car *circa* 1991 and a letter (see next page). She loved it and the car clocked up some 36,000 miles but she sent it for scrap in about 1999, she remembers. Obviously it was somehow saved from the crusher and the car then disappeared for some years. There is a photo of it looking



1991: KNR was just another cheap runabout. Apparently much loved but...
Photo: Mr Glynn

in a sorry state on Andy's Imp site taken in 2006. It was then MoT'd and sold on eBay where Dougie Scott in Glasgow bought it for his collection. I then bought it from him in January 2010 and lightly restored it to get it back on the road. It is currently off the road needing more work but should be out in time for Imp Ecosse. The third owner has asked if she can see it again when we are in Coventry for the 50th anniversary next year.



...not enough to prevent it being sent to a scrapyard
Photo: unknown

I have really enjoyed researching my Imps' past and hearing the joy in previous owners voices when they hear that the Imps are still alive. I know most will have rose-tinted spectacles but so far all previous owners have spoken fondly of the cars. I would highly recommend spending a fiver and posting a few letters to get a little history of your car. It may also help when coming to sell it. Forms can be downloaded from www.direct.gov.uk.