

Made in Scotland – the human side of the Linwood story

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Birthdays come and go but certain ones stick in the mind as being special.

The first one has no number at all only zero, the other specials have zeros too but they don't mean much until there is at least a 4 in front of it, then we start to get touchy about our birthdays!

Not so the Hillman Imp – as it approaches its 50th birthday things are starting to buzz, cars are being spruced up, fixed up and put on the road again, values are starting to rise to some more realistic levels (even some above realistic) and people are starting to remember the adventures they had with this little car – Made in Scotland.

There was something else Made in Scotland in 1963 and it made its or should I say 'her' arrival around the same time on the 2nd May as the Duke of Edinburgh was opening the Hillman Imp factory at Linwood. Mary Morgan was born as the factory was opened and her father who worked in the transaxle assembly line was as proud as punch.

Mary was to play a pivotal role in the life of the Hillman Imp as can be seen from some of the press cuttings. On the Imp's 1st birthday, Mary shared the car's bonnet and birthday cake in front of the management and press photographers. Both baby and Imp were doing well, putting on the pounds and production figures alike.

The connection did not stop there for on their 10th birthday both were reunited as Mary



AN EXPRESS FOUR-PAGE ANNIVERSARY REPORT ON THE SCOTTISH CAR ALL THE WORLD WANTS

Happy birthday IMP!

—AND THAT MEANS THE BABY, TOO

By MARILYN CUNNINGHAM

HAPPY BIRTHDAY! On a sunny day just a year ago this week, two bonnie babies "arrived" in Scotland. One was blue-eyed, fair-haired Mary, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Morgan of Cherry-crescent, Clydebank.

It was the moment for a double celebration. Five miles away, at the Hooton Linwood factory where Mr. Morgan works on the gearbox assembly line, another "birth" was taking place.

The Hillman Imp Rover now has set the first from Scotland in 50 years, now being announced to the world.

Both had a near identical look. One was a baby, the other a car. And so just as the "Miss Hillman Imp" was being christened, the car was christened.

Disappointed Mary had her very special birthday cake at home. The sponsoring firm was sure the car was to be built in Scotland for 50 years.

MILESTONES TO SUCCESS

THE Imp is rocketing towards a production of 2000 a week. And with sales in so many countries it is reminding the world of a kind of Scots exotica almost forgotten.

MAY 2, 1963

THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH officially opens the Hillman Imp factory at Linwood, near Paisley, and within the first year the car to be built in Scotland for 50 years.

MAY 4

Picture by James Robertson. Care by Lewis.

all on miles



Mary picks the winner

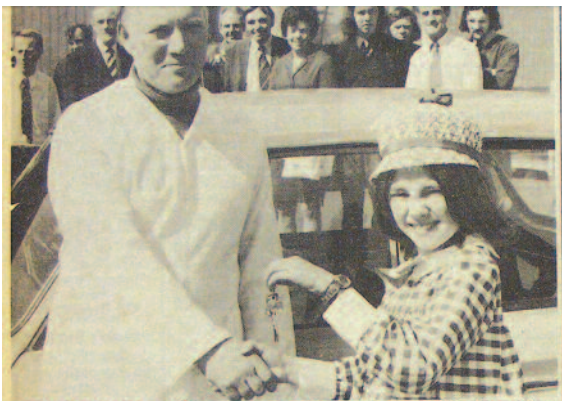
work at the Linwood car plant 10 years ago, and the first Hillman Imp rolled off the assembly line almost at exactly the same time as Mary was born.

As part of the celebrations to mark the 10th anniversary of the plant, Chrysler yesterday raffled a brand-new Hillman Imp among their 8000 employees.

Each was given one ticket for every year he or she had worked at the factory, and Mary drew the winner from among almost 55,000.

Mr David Harper (44), of Chirnside Road, Hillington, who joined the firm in 1963, won the special "birthday" Imp.

For her part in the celebrations, Mary will be presented with a new bicycle.



Sitting pretty in this brand new Hillman Imp car at Chrysler's Linwood is nine year year old Mary Morgan. Mary was given the title of "Miss Imp" as she was born on the same day that the Imps were introduced, and she made a presentation draw. The happy winner of the car is Mr David Harper, who has recently moved from Linwood to Hillington. Picture by Stefan Gut (G66)

Celebrations at car plant

ON Wednesday the tenth anniversary of the Chrysler car plant at Linwood was celebrated. Since it was opened by the Duke of Edinburgh it has had a large impact on the area.

Construction began in May 1961 and exactly two years later it was in operation. The Paisley area was slowly transformed. About 1800 new houses were built at the old village of Linwood along with shops, schools and churches.

The site had been selected, besides other factors, for its nearness to the Pressed Steel factory, which was making car bodies. It has long been absorbed into the Chrysler plant.

The Pressed Steel factory was purchased in 1966 and the combined plant now covers 3,000,000 sq. ft. Employment has reached over 8,000.

A spokesman for the com-

pany told the Gazette that in 1963 they were producing 850 cars per week, now production has been expanded to over 2,220 each week. There are 17 different models for the home and export markets.

"Some of the services required would be sufficient for a medium sized town. It needs enough electricity, for example, to light 3,600 homes," he said.

The development costs of the Linwood plant have been considerable. So far capital investment has totalled £33 million. Expansion is continuing and this year another £750,000 is to be spent on three body panel presses.

To mark the anniversary a special birthday Imp was driven from the production line by Mr Gilbert Hunt, the managing director, to be presented to the winner of a draw on Wednesday.

The name of every employee was put in a drum. The winner was chosen by ten-year-old Mary Morgan from Linwood. Her father started work at the then Rootes the day she was born. As a reward she was given a gold watch.

On May 12 and 13 the families of the employees will be able to see what happens in the factory. The firm are throwing their doors open to wives, girl friends, sons and daughters.

Left: *Scottish Daily Express*, 30th April 1964
 Above-left: unknown but circa 4th May 1973
 Above-right: *Johnstone & Linwood Gazette*, 4th May 1973

presented a Mk 2 Chrysler Imp to a lucky raffle ticket winner, plant worker David Harper, again in front of the management and selected workers at the factory. Mary received a gold watch, a bicycle and her picture in the papers in a stylish pose. There was also the promise of a car for Mary when she reached her 17th birthday but alas the Imp was not to last that long as production stopped in 1976.

But you can't keep good models down and both are up to celebrate their 50th birthdays by inviting all Imp owners (there will be plenty parking available if around the back) to the St James Business Centre (the only Rootes building left standing) in Linwood on Thursday 2nd May. The Fairy, or Imp as we know it, has weathered the storms and is now more popular than ever as will be shown throughout the 2013 events planned to commemorate the anniversary. Its styling, handling and gearchange is still talked about and the car still wins motor sport events all over the world.

Owners are travelling from as far afield as Australia to join in these events so why not join them at Linwood, where it all started. If you own an Imp then you must make the pilgrimage some time in your life so why not this year, either in May for the anniversary or in August at Perth for possibly the biggest National ever held.