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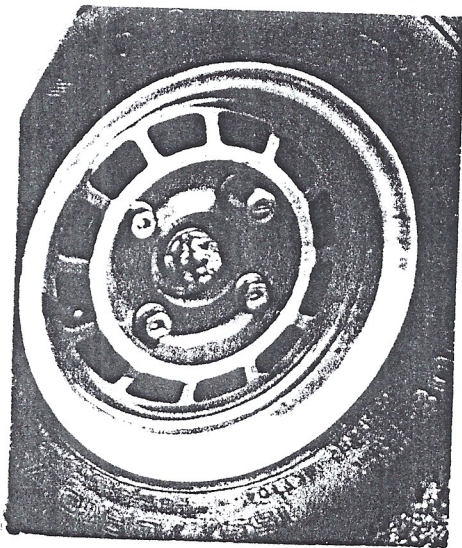
**Lisa Grant's Minivan has big ambitions — when it grows up it wants to be a BP fuel tanker.**

**A**s we are taking the pictures of Lisa Grant's pretty little van, a BP fuel tanker rumbles past behind the car. Its paint job does look rather similar, I have to remark. All joking aside, I am informed, it is actually the same. There's the small matter of 20 ft difference in length, and the van can take a mere six gallons of fuel, so I can't see BP buying up Minivans with a vengeance, but still that paintwork... it's a dead ringer.

What could possibly be the reason behind this bizarre circumstance? It all goes back to when Lisa was looking for a car suitable for carrying her golf clubs to the driving range during the time that

husband David was away. The couple had had a Mini before but the thought hadn't yet occurred to them that a Mini might be the ideal car for the job. All Lisa knew was that she wanted something that stood out. Driving past a BP garage, they spied on the forecourt a whole host of interesting machinery for sale.

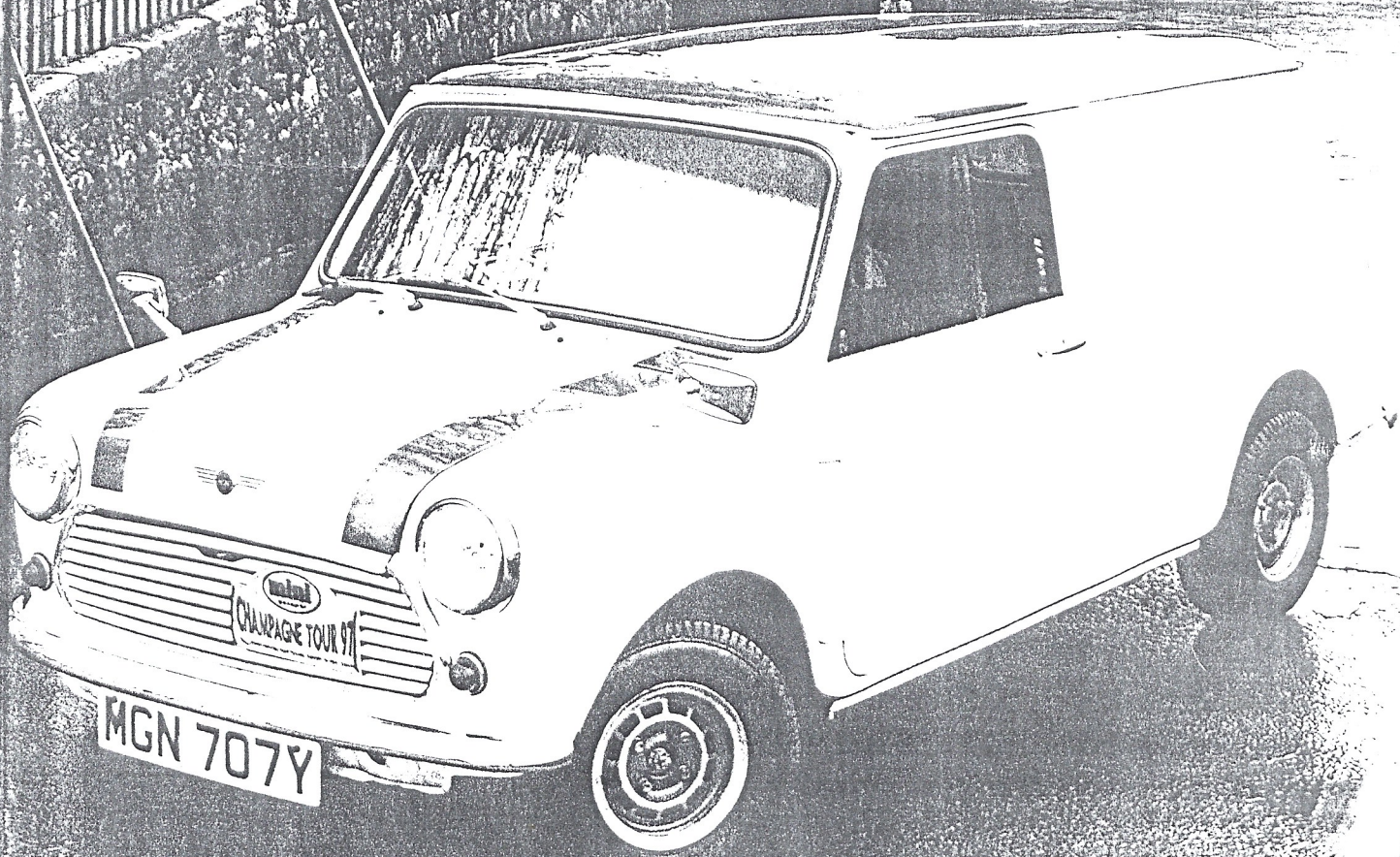
David recalls: "Sandwiched between a Lamborghini Espada and a Jaguar MkII was a little green and white Minivan with a 'For Sale' sticker on its windscreen. We went to have a look and discovered that it had been a guinea pig for an apprentice to practise paint spraying at the garage. That explained the BP livery: they wanted to make it look like a >



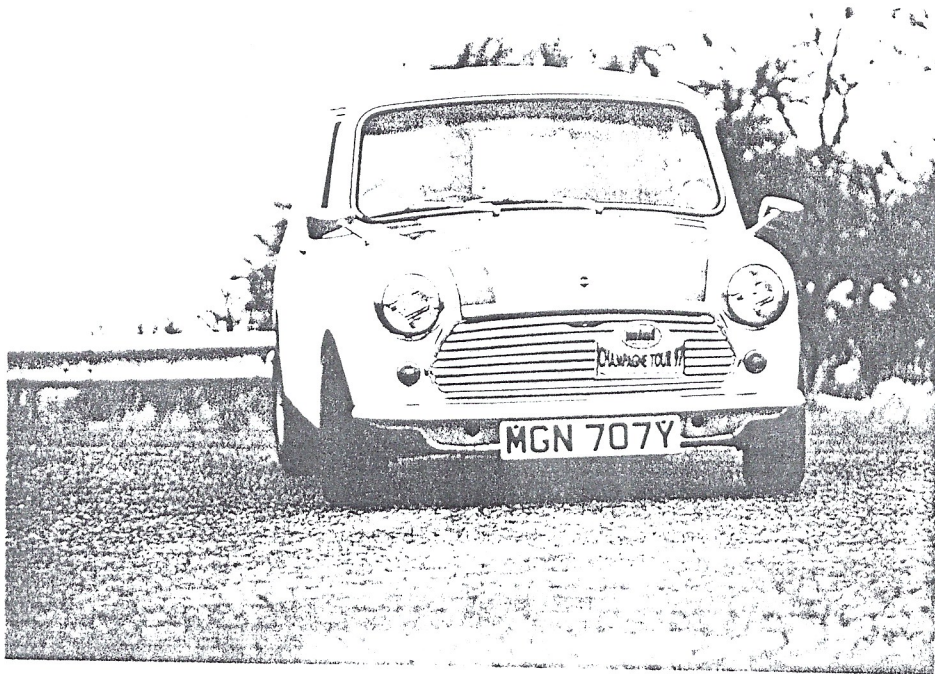
Right. Lisa and David gave up David's company Renault Laguna for their Minivan.



# nker



Words by Chris Lees  
Photography by David Wigmore



BP tanker, though they stopped short of putting the yellow stripe down the side."

The couple were immediately taken with it. After some negotiation, in which the garage owner offered to install new Mayfair seats and new carpets, Lisa became the proud owner of this unusual Minivan.

The 1982 van was originally run by the Gas Board, but despite this it had obviously been well cared for. It was Ziebart rust-proofed from new and has none of the dents and abuse which you might expect. The BP garage had been using it for some time as a repository of sweets for its shop, before dragging it out for the equivalent of a dodgy haircut by a first-time student.

In fact the paint job is very good. Certainly there's a couple of runs in evidence but the thickness of the paint gives it a real lustre. David reckons the van was probably sprayed several times for practice, and then given a lacquer finish. The green on the roof and bonnet was

**It's a van  
on the  
outside but  
inside it's a  
limousine**

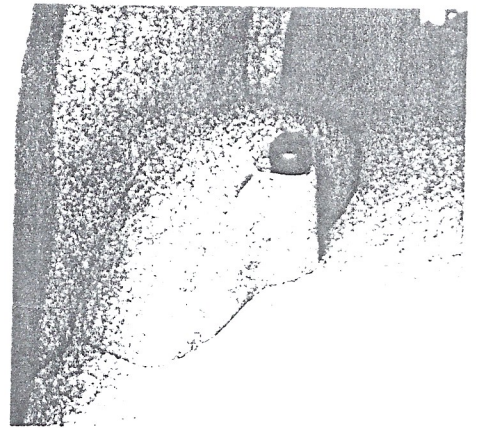
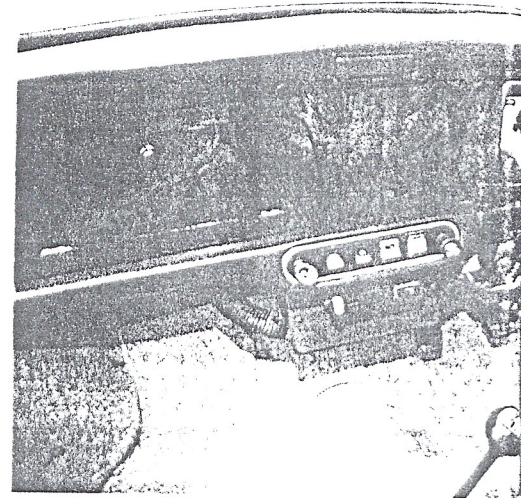
matched specially to reproduce BP green, while the white is something akin to BMC Old English White. Even the wheels (from an 1100 Special) were dipped the same colour green.

When Lisa bought the Mini, the engine was smoking badly and before long the gearbox went too. It was decided to do a thorough mechanical overhaul and the couple went to their local mechanic, Roger Moore (so that's what he's doing now). Lisa can't resist the temptation to say "He's a saint", and

she certainly appreciates the difference a healthy new drivetrain and braking system make. It's all very much standard mechanically, with a 998cc engine and unmodified running gear.

Lisa and David have added a few cosmetics in the year they've had the car. The Yardley walnut dash came from Mini Spares and contains a twin-dial instrument pack from a Mayfair. The carpeting throughout is

impressively comprehensive — just about everywhere you look there is grey carpet: the doors, the floors, even the sides of the rear load area. The garage supposedly fitted them to suppress noise, but it doesn't seem to have much effect. One person at a show asked what glue had been used to stick



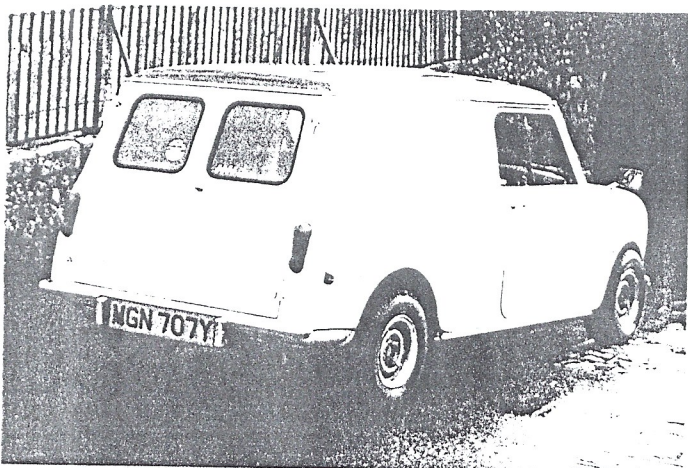
Above. Looking at the car you'd think Lisa and David had shares in a carpet manufacturer.

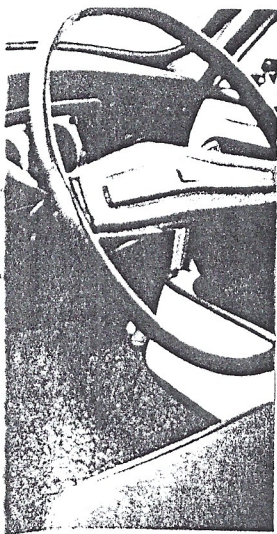
the carpet down, and Lisa would like to know too — so she can choose a better one, since part of the carpeting on the sides fell on her head last summer.

Other little cosmetic improvements include a tinted screen top, current Mini bonnet badge and grille, chrome wing mirrors and a rear foglamp. Alongside a chrome rocker cover, David gave Lisa some chrome wiper blank covers as a Christmas stocking filler. She thought they were earrings!

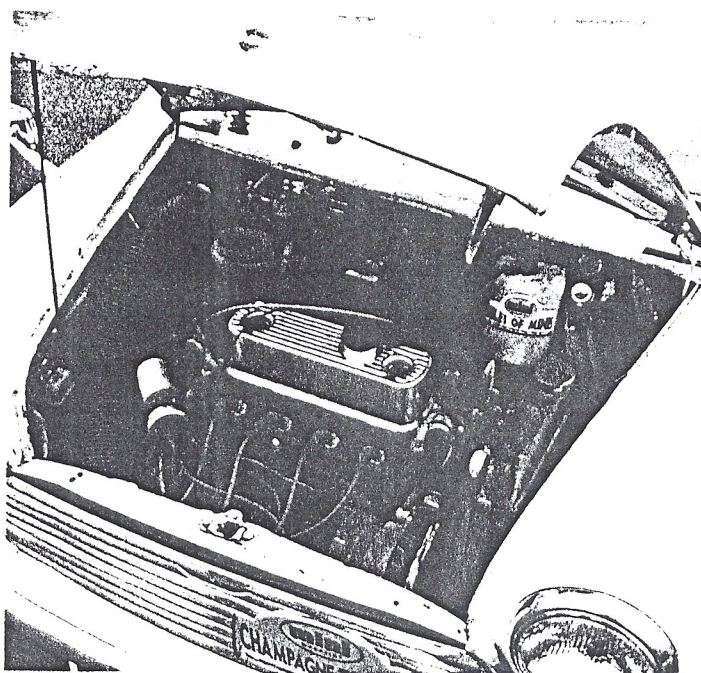
The Minivan actually replaced David's company Renault Laguna (he does have a kit car called a Wyvern for occasional use too). None of his colleagues could quite believe that a Minivan was ousting his company car, and quite a few eyebrows were raised at Lisa's city workplace when her new two-door turned out not to be a BMW coupe but a British Leyland era Mini commercial. The van has now become the couple's main car.

There is a precedent in the family for a Minivan. David's parents (who live in





Right. Engine and running gear are all standard apart from the chrome rocker cover.

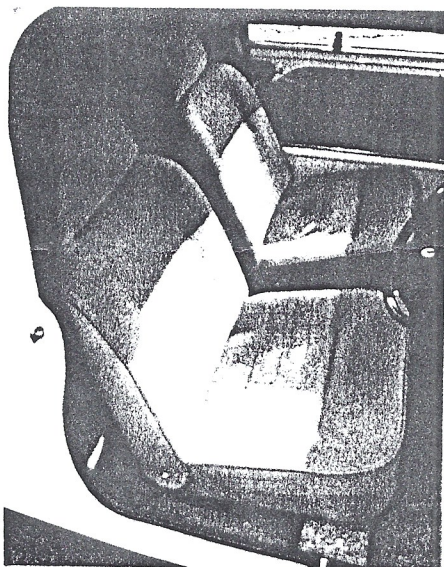


Inverness) owned a van when he was a child, and he remembers long slogs to London in it on an improvised rear seat made by his dad (that sounds familiar, somehow). He also remembers having that age old argument "my dad's car is better than your dad's" with a child whose family had a Vanden Plas Princess R. "Since the Mini has been voted car of the century, it looks like I was right after all," David comments wryly.

So how does driving a van every day suit Lisa? "The only drawbacks are having to pay £1.60 through the Dartford Tunnel because it's classed as a commercial vehicle, and the poor rear visibility. It's a noisy car, of course, but then it is a Mini.

"Otherwise it's great. I've even used it to go to work meetings where it's attracted a lot of attention. Everyone likes it. Most of all, though, it can carry a lot of stuff and it's really easy to load up thanks to the low level rear doors," Lisa says. "My only thing is that everything it carries has to be clean. It may be a van on the outside but it's a limousine on the inside! Another good point is the deep '60s-style door pockets. When we moved house last year, we managed to fit the entire contents of our drinks cabinet in them!

"We do like travelling in our Mini. The club side of things is a bit much for us but we really enjoy events and tours. We went on the Champagne Tour which was really fun, and of course we were able to carry back more champagne and



Above. Mayfair seats add some comfort, but who really cares when you look this good?

Right. Guess which Mini bought the most drink back on last year's Champagne Tour.

beer than anyone else! We also did the Mile of Minis, which was the van's first ever outing," Lisa remembers. "We're also planning to go to the International Mini Meeting in Switzerland and we'd like to do the Italian Job in it — perhaps BP will sponsor us with their logo..."

Insurance proved difficult to arrange initially because it's classed as a commercial vehicle, and because the wheels are classed as a modification. Eventually the van was covered on a classic policy, which works out very reasonably.

## NUTS 'N' BOLTS

### BODY

1982 Minivan with modern grille and bonnet badge, chrome wing mirrors, chrome wiper blanks, rear foglamp, green-tinted windscreen top. Paint: White with BP green roof and bonnet stripes.

### ENGINE

Standard 998cc unit with chrome rocker cover.

### TRANSMISSION

Standard van gearbox.

### BRAKES

Standard drums all round.

### SUSPENSION

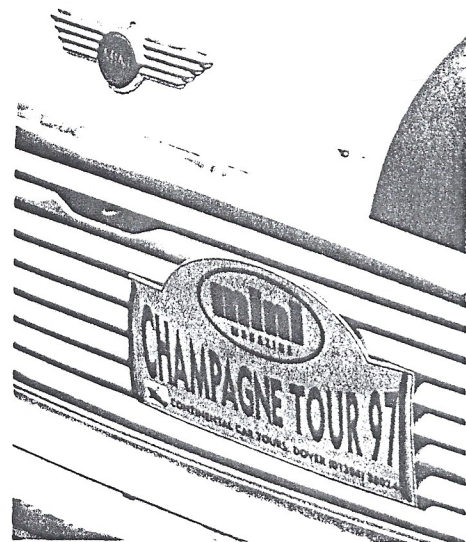
Standard dry cone system.

### WHEELS AND TYRES

BL 1100 Special 5x10 in alloys painted BP green and fitted with Yokohama A008 165/70 R10 tyres.

### INTERIOR

Mayfair seats, Yarley walnut dash, twin-clock Mayfair instrument binnacle, carpeted doors and load bay sides.



Future plans? Lisa would love a Stage 1 tuning kit to boost the Mini's cruising ability. "Acceleration is pretty good on 10 in wheels," she comments, "but by the time it's reached 55 or 60 mph, that's its limit for comfortable cruising." Other plans include fitting a friend's Mountney wooden steering wheel from a Rover P5, getting a radio and trying to do something to quieten the beastie down a little bit. Might we suggest that Lisa and David invest in some shag-pile carpeting?

