

# Ian Hope's British Car Collection

When Harry Midgley, Will Keith and I headed off to Ian Hope's British Car Collection on April 8, 2019, the absence of museum signs and directions added to my "where-the-heck-are-we" feeling after leaving Napier for Te Awanga on Hawke's Bay. Fortunately, this was Harry's sixth trip to New Zealand and, as our driver & tour director, he always knew where we were and how to get to our destinations.



We arrived at "The Worlds Largest Collection Of British Motor Vehicles" at around noon. With over 500 closely-packed & stacked British cars, it was a sight to behold. Furthermore, the stacks were ceiling high with lines of bumper-to-bumper cars separating the stacks. Plus, there were approximately 70 Morris Minors most of which were collected from Ian Hope's relatives in the 80's when he started collecting British vehicles thirty-some years ago. Although many of the cars are "parts cars", apparently 80% of them still run.



Once inside, it was easy to get separated and lost amongst the vehicles. While searching for Morgans, I was startled and a little in awe when Ian Hope pulled up behind me in his electric scooter while making his rounds. I introduced myself and we had a brief chat and I asked if he had any Morgans in his collection. He replied, "not yet" and then asked if I had a Morgan, and I responded "yes, a Plus 8". He pointed to an available space amongst his dizzying collection of cars and said "this space is for your Morgan when you're ready to display it in my museum". I eventually asked if I could take his picture and he cheerily said OK, and off he went.

Not wanting to miss anything, I proceeded to navigate the narrow passageways perusing stacked & floor level cars while stopping regularly to get photos of British vehicles, some of which I've never actually seen before. Needless to say, it was somewhat overwhelming. Upon approaching the main office and the adjacent stairway to the

upper floor mezzanine area towards the far end of the building, we met again and Ian Hope asked if I would like to go upstairs and watch him play the piano. I agreed and he got out of his scooter and we proceeded upstairs where Will and Harry eventually joined us along with one of Ian's close friends. In addition to a variety of memorabilia, ceiling suspended airplanes and automobile artifacts, he had player pianos that use piano rolls of which he had roughly 700 as I recall. A few included Medleys by Eddie Cantor, Gershwin, Bing Crosby, Fats Waller and Hoagy Carmichael. When he sat down and played (no pedal pumping as his player piano was hooked up to a vacuum cleaner) the music





seemingly reverberated throughout the entire building. It was memorable!

After enjoying Ian Hope playing his player piano for us, we ended up having a nice chat with him in his office where we eventually said our good byes and thanked him for graciously welcoming & accommodating the three of us. During our visit he mentioned that his nephew, who was on his way into the building, would be the next museum proprietor. Hopefully Ian Hope’s remarkable collection will remain intact as his museum had a truly personal touch.

On August 28th, Will Keith emailed Harry and I sadly reporting that he had read an article in Hemmings Motor

News announcing that Ian Hope had passed away in June just two months after the three of us spent a rainy day at his museum where we had the pleasure of meeting him. As Will said, “another real life character has passed, leaving the world a little less interesting”.

Attached are a few photos of the cars in Ian Hope’s fabulous collection:

Editor



**Above L:** Morris Minors.



**Above R:** A red 1938 Austin 7 beside a green 1947 Austin 8.



**Above:** 1954 Austin Healey 100/4, BN2



**Above L:** A blue 1939 Jowett 8 beside a red 1937 Jowett 10. **Above R:** The Lowest Priced Closed Car In New Zealand in 1937, a 1937 Ford Fordor with an 8 HP engine and a 40-45 miles per gallon rating.

**Below Photos:** Various Rows & Stacks of British Cars.





**Above Photos:** A 1938 Austin Conway Cabriolet on the left and, on the right, a red 1936/37 Austin 10 in the foreground.

**Below Photos:** Stacks of British cars and Morris Minors, the main focus of Ian Hope's British Car Collection..

