

Oxford adventure

In a bid to raise funds for the Red Cross two former students from Oxford are driving their Morris Oxford to Oxford in New Zealand

A 50-year-old Morris Oxford is the car of choice for two intrepid fundraisers as they set out on what promises to be a remarkable journey.

After renting out their homes, giving up their jobs and placing their possessions into storage, May 12 saw Tim Nicholson and Joanne Bowlit set out on the trip of a lifetime as they attempt to drive from Oxford, England, to Oxford, New Zealand, in their 1954 Morris Oxford!

The mammoth trip – during which Tim and Joanne aim to raise funds through sponsorship for the British Red Cross – will see the pair drive through France, Spain, Morocco, North Africa, Egypt, India, Australia and, of course, New Zealand, with the car to be shipped on those parts of the journey that can't be driven.

But how did the idea of such an incredible adventure come about? Tim explains: "About a year ago Joanne and I were discussing taking time out from working. I'd been to New Zealand, but Joanne hadn't and wanted to go. Then I mentioned I'd been to a town in NZ called Oxford, so the idea of starting out from Oxford in the UK came from there.

"At first we thought we'd take a Land Rover or maybe a Toyota Land Cruiser, but when we discovered it was the Morris Oxford Series II's 50th anniversary in 2004, we thought we just had to go from Oxford to Oxford in an Oxford! From that point we thought we'd like to make it really worthwhile, so decided to raise funds for the Red Cross."

The choice of a 50-year-old classic for such a daunting trip might seem like a recipe for trouble, but it's not half as silly as

it seems. "While the car sports 50-year-old technology" said Tim, "it has the advantage that it's over engineered, and also doesn't have any complicated electrics."

In addition, a large portion of their journey will also involve travelling through India where the Hindustan Ambassador (essentially the same car) is still in production. "We expect we could have the Oxford completely rebuilt in India if we needed to!" said Tim.

Tim and Joanne have only owned their 1954 Oxford since April after buying the car from Richard Monk, of Monk Motors in Reigate. Richard was selling the car on behalf of a friend, but had owned it himself in the past and on top of that, he's also the 'spares' man for the Morris Cowley and Oxford Owners club! So when Tim and Joanne met him, they knew they'd found a good car.

"We haven't had the time or money to strip the car completely to prepare it for its trip" said Tim, "But we've fitted an electric Kenlowe fan, a temperature gauge and an alternator as we'll be using an inverter to power our laptop. The car's also previously been fitted with an 1800cc MGB engine in place of the original 1489cc unit, so it's got a little more poke than standard.

"One final modification was to replace the standard horn with a set of air horns – we thought we needed something a little more notable to alert the numerous cows in the road that we'll come across in India!"

Tim and Joanne expect the trip will take them about ten months to complete – but that's just the outward leg. "We think we'll be so attached to the car by the time we get there that we'll drive her back again"

said Tim. In all, they expect to be away for around 18 months.

Through sponsorship, Tim and Joanne are hoping to raise £10,000 for the British Red Cross: "We're funding the trip ourselves so every penny donated will go to them" said Tim.

We'll keep you posted as to the progress of Tim, Joanne and their Oxford – which has been named Florence – but you can also find out how they're getting on by looking up www.oxford2oxford.co.uk. From the website you'll also find a link to www.justgiving.com where you can make a secure online donation. Tim and Joanne would also be pleased to hear from anyone who might be able to help with communications equipment or shipping to help keep their costs down – you can email them at timandjo@oxford2oxford.co.uk

If you don't have internet access, you can make a donation by sending a cheque payable to 'The British Red Cross' to: Oxford2Oxford, c/o Roxane Brown, UK Office, 9 Grosvenor Crescent, London SW1X 7EJ.



ABOVE: Tim at the wheel of the car he hopes will get him and Joanne safely to the other side of the world.

RIGHT: Tim and Joanne with 'Florence' their 1954 Morris Oxford SII, in Oxford, shortly before they left to drive to Oxford New Zealand.



