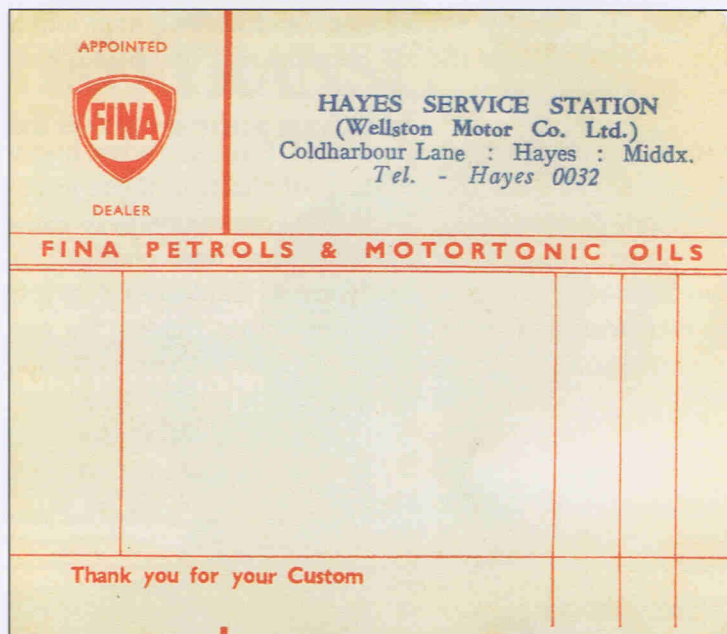


# A BUSINESS IDEA

Harry Stone called me into the office one day and said "You live near Hayes in Middlesex, would you call into Hayes Service Station (the company operated under a tenancy agreement with FINA, the petrol and oil company), as the manager is in hospital, see that everything is okay and bank the money each morning." Perhaps he thought that while I was doing this I was not hitting low bridges with his commercial vehicle stock. Hayes Service Station in Cold Harbour Lane consisted of a forecourt, 4 pumps, tyre bay, lubrication bay with ramp and the manager's office. It was 16 miles to Hayes from Hampton, if I cut through London airport which was not allowed, but remember I had worked there and knew if stopped by police what to say to get through.



I should have mentioned that Rene and I were married in September 1962 and had bought a new home in Hampton, Middlesex, we had driven to Dorset on honeymoon in my company car a 1960 Austin A40 Countryman.

So every morning I drove to Hayes, six days a week, banked the takings etc. The A40 was due for a change, there were far more interesting good used cars in stock so I would leave the A40 on the forecourt with a For Sale notice on it whilst there. It wasn't long before a customer of the garage bought it. Thereafter I used a variety of used cars. I would usually leave Hayes to go back to Tottenham showroom at midday and often from there make sales calls in that area. My daily commuting of Hampton to Hayes to Tottenham and back to Hampton was 65 miles plus calls and other journeys, so it was rather nice having the use of a dark blue Jaguar MkII 3.8 automatic. It was noticeable how much less tiring it was not making hundreds of clutch operations and gear changes, particularly on the North Circular and around North London. The first night I took the Jaguar home I went to drive it through my front gates and onto the drive when there was a grating sound and loss of forward drive. Panic, I got out and found that because of the slope up from the pavement, the short tube that the gate bolt dropped into had gouged into the sump.

Fortunately it had not penetrated the sump and cause oil to leak out. I jacked up the front of the car, a side at a time, pulling a piece of plank under each wheel and letting the car down and backing out. Needless to say the car stayed in the road after that until I got round to cutting the obstruction down to drive level.

The Jaguar MkII 3.8 moved on and I found myself using a scruffy A40 again which had come in part exchange. The door lock was broken as was the boot lock. One lunchtime a fog descended and by 2:30 pm I could only just see the other side of the road. At 3pm I left for home, 24 miles away. Before even getting to Muswell Hill, driving at a walking pace, I asked a lorry driver, who was hanging out of his cab for better vision, if he knew what it was like on the North Circular. "Okay" he shouted. I passed an underground station and thought of abandoning the car and trying to get home to Hampton that