Here were, I suppose, three attractions in the offering as I prepared to visit Jonathan Harmer early in August. First, I had been cooped up too long and it was a day when the sky was filled with fluffy clouds and the sun shone — a day too good to stay tied to the keyboard of my faithful Apple Mac. Second, I was to drive to the village of Egerton, through a delicious part of the south described as England's Garden and into the very heart of Kent's hop country — where the most delectable beer in the world is brewed. Third, a positive magnet, I was to meet a man who shared my passion for motor sport, a fellow enthusiast who raced vintage MGs and who was just as likely to while away the time showing proper concern for such things as camshaft profiles, carburettor jet settings, and the right line to take through Becketts — with 7000 rpm protesting and a horde of MG T racers snapping at one's tail lights!

Of one thing the reader may be sure, though Jonathan Harmer is a 'play-hard' sort of fellow, enjoying, as his motoring trophies reveal, his 'on the limit' racing with the MG Car Club, he is without doubt also a 'work-hard' sort as well, which is why I didn't get all my own way with the interview. Truth is Jonathan was eager to tell me of the Farmura connection, while I was pressing him into revealing something more dashing, perhaps some racing scoop. I'll put this down to his sporting modesty, telling myself meanwhile not to forget my journalistic raison d'être, which is firmly embedded in turf. That stated, I suspect that something in the air of Egerton generates motor sport mania, for in a village of less than one thousand souls there's a fellow who races Bugatti's; a classic car restoration buff; a Ford Rally Cross champion; the youngest ever Mini Cross champion, a kid of just 16... and there's Jonathan, who is simply potty about MGs and crazy enough to race them — I tend to like that in a subject.

Born and raised in Egerton, where for over 50 years his father farmed apples and strawberries, Jonathan, 44, recalled driving his first car — an Austin Ruby that cost £8 — when he was just eight years old! He and his brother used to take a hose and saturate the grass around the orchards in order to practice hand-brake turns — he grins when remembering how relaxed his father was about such high spirited activities, grimaces on recollecting his returning home on one fateful occasion, after a lengthy absence at school, to discover that the trusty Ruby, stripped down like a 'racer' of course, had been buried in a quarry — part of a tidying up plan for the farmyard! He could, he swears, take me to within ten feet of the burial plot.

Though with Farmura for some 15 years, seven as managing director, Jonathan did not immediately follow in the family business, rather he became a 'travel bug' after finishing school, setting off (with full parental blessing, let it be known) to 'see the world' — a trip that took him to South Africa and later to Rhodesia where, but for the changes that were taking place, it's life in the fast lane for Farmura's Jonathan Harmer, as DAVID WHITE reports.
place politically, he well might have remained, for he fell in love with the grandeur of it all, describing Rhodesia as 'near to paradise.' In the event he stayed for a year, working variously as salesman and Land Rover delivery driver, before returning to England to take a place at university and later to live in London and work at being 'something in the City', in his case broking insurance.

Meanwhile farming of all varieties was in a state of flux, and changes were being thrust upon the community. Jonathan's father saw the 'writing on the wall', perhaps a good deal earlier than most, and sold the farm's land (a very shrewd move, as it turned out), at the same time acquired the business that is Farmura Limited. History will show that Jonathan's father was one of the first to successfully farm using both organics and synthetics - integrated management as it is now properly balanced management system you'd form - let's call it the triangle, with cultural maintenance, organics and synthetics - shows the greenkeeper in its place at university and later to live in London and work at being 'something in the City', in his case broking insurance.

There is a wind of change, greenkeepers generally are becoming more aware, keener to learn and to educate themselves...