

MIDGE MAGAZINE

MOBC. the Midge Owners and Builders' Club



Autumn
2021



Peter's Midge



Hello All.

I see a few Midges are getting out of the garage as the restrictions relax and there should be a bit more summer if we are lucky. I've not been out driving anything of interest recently, what (as they say) with one thing and another. Most of the cars (2 Midges and an MX5 have been insured but sorned) The road rebuilding project mentioned in the last issue has taken up some time. My main vehicle, the eNV200 has been off the road for some months being repaired after a careless driver impacted the front offside wheel to the tune of £8k. Fortunately there were plenty of witnesses and no contest. It was back in August after a mere 4 months. If I'm short of material I might regale you with the saga.

The week's visit to Shetland provided lovely weather and the winding narrow roads were crying out for a Midge. The courtesy car just wasn't the same, although the electric recharges throughout Shetland were free (!!) which kept the expenses down.

JH.

Welcome to Paul White
(MkII Midge)

Stories and photographs to Secretary Jim Hewlett at
jim@jimhewlett.com or The Old Manse, Tarbrax, West Calder, West Lothian, UK EH55 8XD

Page 1. Editor's rant. Index

Page 2, More on Robert's Midge and a log-jam

Page 3, MOO 846J Looking rather tidy

Page 4, David's scoop. Fresnel references

Page 5. For sale,

Page 6 Colin packs a trunk.

Page 7 A now historical cartoon.

Page 8 So how tidy is your workshop?

Page 9, 10. Dashboard options.

Page 11. Bits and bobs.

Page 12 Shocks for Peter

Page 13 Chris and his joint pain.

Page 14. Linden working on a Suzuki chassis

Page,15. ...still working

Page 16. Tailpipe.



A wee extra to add to Robert's article in the Summer 21 mag. A very smart motor, but there's always a catch.



He met up with Terry Brown at Kedleston Hall/ Park as shown in the Summer Magazine. Don't forget the (password protected) members contact details list on the main website if you want to meet up (now that we are able to).



But how did Robert get such a shine on his radiator grille? Perhaps Belle's friend from page 3

LOG JAMMED Here's a little story to explain why I've done so little Midge building and driving in the last few months (I usually find that a drive indicates some kind of fault but most of us are used to that). This is all down to motorcycles that aren't mine and a generator that is.

A friend is buying a large garage/workshop. He works mainly on large motorcycles, BMW, Harleys, that kind of thing. Two of them are blocking up my garage while he buys this new home for them. There's a hold-up on the sale because of a problem with a legal technicality that restricts who can own the building. That shouldn't take too long to sort out, but at the moment he can't move his bikes anyway because there's a big half finished hill climbing sort of car, apparently made from scaffold poles in the garage. The half built thing needs some cutting and welding to make it roll to its prospective new owner and the electricity has been cut off as the house that provided the electricity has been sold separately. A generator capable of a couple of kilowatts would fix it, and I have one. I tested it at home, no problem. I took it over to the garage and started it. No problem. I stopped it to refill the tank and it never started again... Fuel not blocked, jet is clear, replacement fuel flushed out and replaced, carb cleaned, coil replaced, spark plug replaced. Now it is a bit better in that it fires once if you leave it for an hour or so. I even tried eazy-start (sometimes called Start-Ya-Bastard). No effect at all. Must be the spark then. Spark demonstrating in-line flash thing sometimes gives one flash and the motor almost goes. Then it doesn't. The coil gets its timed low voltage impulse from somewhere inside so I think I'll have to tear it down and find the gremlin, in fact only the weather is stopping me from doing that now. So the lack of a spark locks the bikes up and blocks the garage.

Until I can shift the bikes the two Midges sit quietly, as does the MX5. Both Midges are needing a little attention, and that'll need some room. Still, it means I had a little more time for the mag, and gives me something to do with this 1/3 page that was just staring at me blankly. JH



Before

So MOC 846J has found a new home with Belinda and Ian. Belle wrote...

We run a very small kit car agency, mainly dealing with 60s style BMW Z3 rebodies and no intention to do any more vintage kit cars as in all honesty the SVA can be daunting and we don't have a lot of time.

We already had 2 of our own Merlin plus 2 ford based kit cars that we barely had time to work on but, scouting through ebay one cold lockdown February eve this year this dreary,

dilapidated little one caught our eye and we couldn't resist.

My partner Ian arranged to buy her, on a whim, for £2000. I was a little worried as could see she wasn't correctly registered (still working on that one and looking for original owner!) and so felt it may be a little risky but, she deserved a lift so off we went 3 hours down the road to the sunny midlands to pick her up.

When we arrived despite peeling wood, rotten tyres, chocolate box connectors throughout, a Sainsbury's orange juice bottle for the washers, holes in floor and a lovely "sat for 30 years" smell we fell in love right away and named him Brum.

We decided there and then that Brum would come to any summer shows we were allowed to do so, within days we had Brum fully stripped, powder coated all the important metal parts and new bearings/bushes...the jewson lot. We even sent the grille to a local metal polisher and he did an amazing job for only 50 pound, a real bargain.

Our lovely neighbour at our workshop in Silchester, Hampshire (111 customs) took the metal work for spraying whilst we set to the task of getting rid of all the rotten wood and refurbishing

Every part of the car came out, apart from the engine as we plan to remove that in winter, when we are not using Brum. We carpet lined the back and interior keeping it simple and fairly cheap with the stretch type roll carpet that we use in the back of our z3 replicas to fill the boot voids.

Again with budget in mind (as he is to be a fun car that comes out at car shows with Nellie the skeleton as a passenger) we used fish tank pipe rolled in normal vinyl to



During..

line the new dash shape for now, refitted and rewired original dials and set about getting her to run

First time out, she broke down on a blind bend, second time out, uphill with a not so great handbrake (on the list now!) and had to be pushed to the car show! having spent time and effort changing carbs etc he runs really well now but, I'm determined as time allows that engines coming out this winter for a full refurb (at present only had new gaskets/carb etc but, running well enough for summer fun)

The experience has ticked a lot of boxes for us, me in particular. I now feel much more confident to go on and

take on older cars. In fact, i found the rebuild so much easier than the ECU based modern cars i usually bang my head against the wall about. The Herald is a simple yet surprisingly good base. I do love the heralds as they stand originally but, they don't get as many smiles and waves as our Brum and at the end of the day, with all of us...its all about the smiles these little buzz bombs give us and others.

I hope that someone will be able to pop up and tell us his history, how did he come to be in the midlands with a lovely elderly chap that sells cars for people from his home, where he lived for the last 20 or 30 years and, if anyone has any original build pics receipts etc. I'm hoping the distinctive "moo" numberplate will ring bells with an enthusiast that knows this little car well.



and After!

We have no intention of selling Brum so he's been decorated with company logo etc courtesy of the lovely vinyl wrappers (doodle signs) on our farm park but, were somewhat addicted now so we will definitely be looking for more sickly midges to fix up and pass to new owners. BW.

I have Belle's contact details if needed. JH



David Hicks has taken up the panel bashing challenge and said...

I had some off cuts of aluminium sheet so I thought I would have a go at making some air scoops / vents for the Midge. I used some wooden bats / slappers and a bag of sand and then tidied things up with a hammer and dolly. For my first efforts at metal forming I was quite pleased. My Midge is Triumph Herald 13/60 based so I needed to cut the side panel to clear the pancake air filter. the louvres were cut through by a previous owner so I removed them altogether and riveted on a panel with a circular hole to allow for the air filter. In the future I might



make my own side panels as that is all part of the fun of owning a Midge - there's always an excuse to potter in the garage. PS, Does anyone know how resistant K&N air filters are to water and dust ingress?

'Blinking obvious once you know'.

One of the modern versions of old equipment has an odd flaw that you may wish to note. Most indicator and brake lights have a yellow or red coloured cover and that is divided into little squares or ridged circles. The little squares are actually fresnel lenses, so they have specific direction built in. The fresnel lens became quite important in light-houses because it gathered light from a relatively dim lamp and focused it into a narrow beam which was seen more easily by distant ships. An ordinary lens would have been very heavy and very thick. For our purposes the indicator and brake lights are focused in front and behind so the relatively dim lights are more visible where it counts. The reason I mention this is because alternative bulbs such as LED do not emit light from exactly the same place in relation to the reflectors and lenses, so the fresnel lenses do not work as well and consequently you may be less visible. For the same reason repositioned or repurposed lights may be pointed in subtly different directions. This is particularly relevant to the Lucas type glass dome type as they are quite accurately made, and so more precise in their intended direction so if mounted pointing off the 'horizontal' they may shine in the wrong direction. To find out where your light is directed I'd suggest a large white card be moved around the light at night or twilight. A brighter patch in one direction should be obvious. Midges don't go out much at night, so it's probably not going to be of huge importance unless you run into a really picky MOT tester. Fortunately the non-illuminated red reflectors, (often built into tail lights) use 'box reflection' so they work from 0 to 45 degrees from the perpendicular. JH.



For Sale

Ieuan Reeve posted ...Hi all. Anyone got any interest in this? It runs and drives, but needs plenty of finishing off. I'd say it's 85% complete. I've got everything to finish it but I've just lost interest. Looking for around £2000. I have the V5, and it's still a Triumph Vitesse. Located in North Wales. The first posting was on facebook but I can redirect enquiries. JH



Unfinished Midge for sale. Hi all. I have made the difficult decision to sell my Midge. It is over 50% finished with a lot of new parts. I am asking in the area of £3000.00

If you are interested and would like more photos or contact number please message me. I am in Devon.

I'm not sure of value but, engine runs rolling chassis has been serviced, ply body new, new spitfire fuel tank, etc. Registered under a Q plate and therefore OK with DVLA / IVA

George. 07894350200

I've re-printed this as I've had several enquiries about available Midge projects and wanted to make sure everybody had seen it. I also had an unfilled half page.



Colin Clarke has been busy.

In the MOBC we've had a few boat tails and beetle backs. This is either a new idea or a really old one depending on how far back your memory goes. Room for a spare petrol tank and a decent sized picnic. The spare wheel has also found a novel and rather neat mudguard based mount.



Very neat. We can now easily distinguish between a Midge and an Elephant...
I'll let you work it out....
Do try to keep up at the back.



Germany's BMW Admits Failure in Making MG Cars and Sells the Mark Back to the British



I thought a few would appreciate this cartoon from the Los Angeles Times syndicate in 2000. It is quite a historical document in its own right involving the perceived attitudes of union, workers and management, Lucas parts, oil leaks, modernity and the class divide. The story is set before the British again sold the marque (mark in the US) this time to the Chinese car giant SAIC in 2007 (via a convoluted secretive and shady series of take-overs, sales, offers and administrations). Things have somewhat, changed again since then. Cecil Kimber, the founder, may be spinning like a crank-shaft, but MG is again a respected brand, albeit Chinese, and the hexagonal badge lives on.

The great MOBC annual tidy garage and workshop competition.

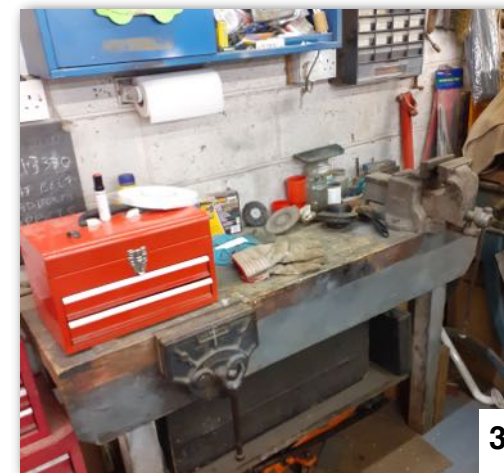
An MOBC tradition that goes back centuries, well, a couple of months.



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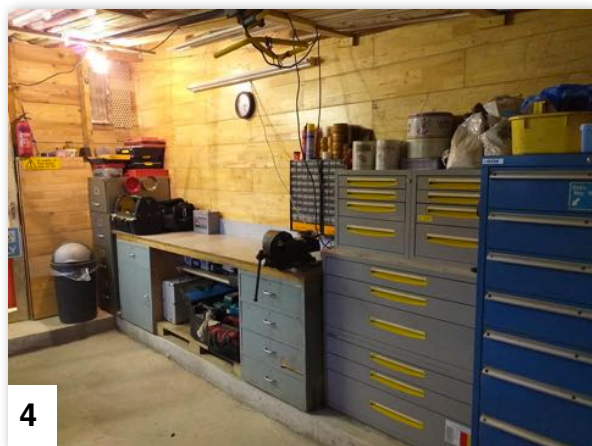


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3

Garages and workshops, well several entries came in. ^ Top row (1) James Orr, Tidy, Warm, (as is his garage). Electric door! (2) Mine, I'm lucky enough to have a double one, but tidy I'm not. (3) Peter Hubbard's, I wish I was that tidy although I see he does have some vices. Lower rows. (4) Ken Nicholls. He gets two photos because it's so new (and this might account for how it is so tidy). (5) Yannick Bodemer, that may be taking tidy too far. Very neat roof structure good effort, best newcomer.



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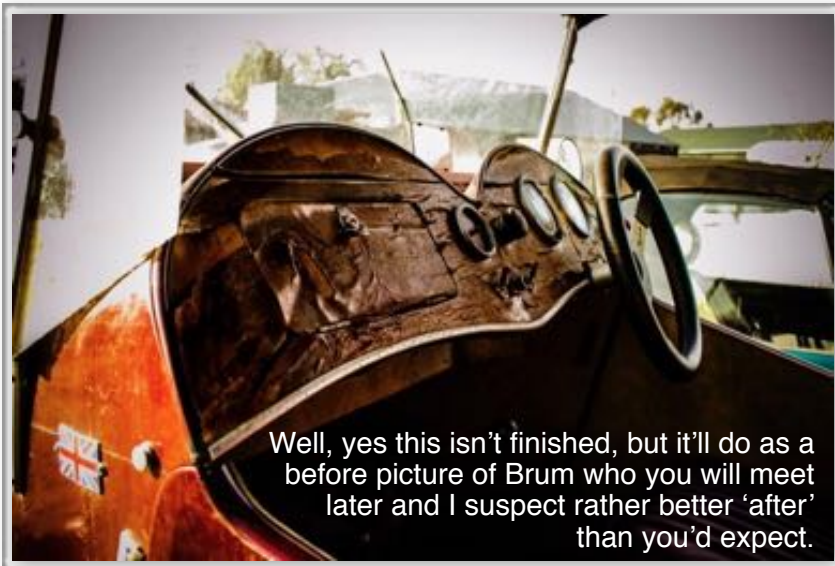
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(6) Paul G and MLE
(7) Chris wants to tidy a bit before anybody looks in (He obviously hasn't seen mine yet)
(8) M Gaubert has a remarkably spacious and well lit setup.
(9) Colin seems to be loitering within tent. You've got to keep your Midge dry by whatever means.
First Prize goes to.....Me. No actually it's Ken Nichols. Well done Ken for a big, hand built, neat garage with dry hard-standing. Is there a beer cooler?



A collection of dashboards, in case you were thinking of a winter project, after you've tidied up your garage of course.





This one is not a competition because different owners like different styles and instrumentation and anyway three or four of them are or were mine, one was in a museum, and one a tourist guide hire from Prague. I'm not entirely sure where some the others came from. A good demonstration of some variations though. One type I haven't got but rather like is the central removable panel. Other examples of garage, workshop and dash are invited for next time.

E10

Remember to watch for the E10 stickers on fuel pumps (page 17 on the summer issue) Petrol with 10% ethanol will be replacing E5 (5%) in the UK. I think it is already found in continental pumps, perhaps our continental members could advise.

There are compensating petrol and diesel additives which can reduce the effects of ethanol and unleaded fuel. 'Super unleaded' may be an alternative as some garages will be selling that for vintage, veteran, classic, and high performance cars. E10 will attack paint, fuel hose and Spitfire type fuel cap seals.

It is not yet clear whether it will damage vacuum advance diaphragms, fuel pump valves and diaphragms, carburettor floats, needle holders, after market fuel filters and any other plastic parts in contact with petrol or petrol vapour.

E5 and E10 both go 'stale' more easily and absorb water from the atmosphere. It can form layers of water and ethanol if it stands for a long time, so if 'laying up' make sure you have drained your tank and fuel line. This goes for petrol lawn mowers, chain-saws, etc too.



UK 2020/21 Events

The Car and Classic site does event prediction so much better than I can, there seems little point in copying their web page, especially as they can update as the months go by. If you go to http://www.carandclassic.co.uk/car_events.php

You can get the information direct, that's where I get it. If something you know about isn't on it, tell me and I'll add it to our pages.

At the time of writing it's all a bit quiet. JH

Shocking Rear Suspension. Peter Vivian

Since the original incarnation of my Midge I've never been 100% happy with the rear suspension. I appreciate the designers were trying to offer independent suspension at the time when most manufacturers were using live axles in all but the more expensive cars but still thought it left a lot to be desired.

I have removed leaves from the spring, added trailer leaf spring 'assistors', replaced the standard shocks with adjustable gas 'shox' and even bought a brand new spring but still couldn't get the right combination of ride height, resistance and rebound. The recent rebuild exacerbated the problem by moving the seating position back by 5 inches plus the Ash frame is probably a bit heavier than the plywood, also I might have put on the odd pound!

The aforementioned adjustable rear shock absorbers were 30 years old and needed replacement which got me thinking; after a lot of procrastination and beard scratching I figured that there was just room for a pair of coil over ones. A quick bit of searching on a well known search engine turned up a couple of possible suppliers. Emails to both companies confirmed that they were both willing and able to help. I randomly chose Suspension Supplies Limited based on not much more than the detail in the reply.

The next problem was the spring rate and I made a suggestion to the manufacturer of 40 lbs per spring which they seemed to think was a reasonable starting point as these were to assist the transverse leaf not replace it as of course it forms the upper link. This was much less than their normal spring rates so they had to have them specially wound. After confirming the order they arrived in less than two weeks. When I received them I was pleasantly surprised to see that they based on Spax like the ones they were to replace, even better they were in matching blue rather than their normal yellow. This wasn't a cheap solution but as the previous ones needed renewing and I'm hoping that they will be a permanent solution to several issues which have dogged me for years after initially baulking slightly at the quote I bit the bullet.

Additional benefits were also, adjustable spring platforms and adjustable rebound. I am still experimenting with the rebound settings have started on the lowest I am now up to 5 of I think 20. Initial impressions are of a much more 'planted' feeling, I am getting close to the ideal ride height, much reduced bottoming out and elimination of scraping the tyres on the mudguards.



The Wrong way Round Chris Bird 27/08/21

There is a story down here in Dorset about the White Horse on the hillside. The mounted rider is King George III mounted on his charger and the story goes that he was so upset that he was depicted facing away from his beloved Weymouth, that he refused to visit - resulting in the artist who created it committing suicide. This is a myth as the King never saw the horse, but I do feel for the artist, as getting things the wrong way round can be very frustrating .

A couple of years ago, I replaced one of the drive shaft UJ's on Bea. Now this is not a job I enjoy (I have done it a few times over the past 34 years) so a few weeks ago I was pretty fed up to hear the tell-tail knocking when coasting in gear. I jacked up the back of the car and checked both UJ's with a big screwdriver as a lever. I was even more fed up to find it was the one I had replaced only about 1000 miles ago with a pattern part from Ebay. I ordered new ones for all the joints from James Paddock, and this time I ordered the expensive ones - about £5 a pop more for each, but worth it I hope. They were with me within 24 hours (and that was economy delivery) and came with a long grease nipple instead of the difficult to reach short one.

The old garage where Bea is stored is quite narrow, so I had a big tidy up and shifted a lot of stuff so that I could put the car right over to one side. With the car on axle stands, I removed the wheel and suspension links - and was just about to disconnect the hydraulics when I realised that I was doing the wrong side. Oh bother - I said.

Some time later, after another shifting operation, I had the right drive shaft off and fitted the new universal joint (with some difficulty as usual). I screwed in the long grease nipple and found that it fouled the drive shaft yoke. It had not occurred to me that it was the wrong way round and that the nipple should face the flange yoke. So I took it apart and pinged one of the circlips into infinity. Oh joy.

With it back together, I refitted the shaft and tried to turn the wheel. It wouldn't go right round. Exasperation! I was about to take it off again, when I thought I would jack it up so that the axle was in the normal position. It turned and only appeared to catch when the axle is at full deflection. As I do not often leave the ground by going fast over hump backed bridges, I reckon this will do - and it certainly drives just fine (and silently).



I have looked in my manual, but it only refers to the grease nipple for the prop shaft where it says the nipple must face the shaft yoke. Whether this will work with the long nipple will have to wait for another day.

So we all know about “measure twice and cut once”, but taking time to make sure it is the right way round is worth remembering if replacing UJ's - or cutting turf on a hillside....

I (JH) found a you-tube 'lesson' in UJ changing which is reasonably clear if anyone should want a little visual re-assurance. It is for prop shafts rather than drive shafts <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-a9fINLhMP4> JH



Linden writes in with some progress on his Suzuki rebuild. He's getting some practice in on it while looking for a donor for a Mk2

According to the last entry I made on the group it was the 24th of May..... So, has some more progress has been made?

Well yes....

But it hasn't been all plain sailing by any means to get to this point. Let's go back a few months shall we..... (cue 70's style screen wobble wobble).

The chassis was up on axle stands while I noted all the mounting points for the fuel and brake lines and the meticulously removed them one by one, for some strange reason they all still ended up in the same pot! Having duly noted the mounting point I had a good look at the fittings – which I intended to reuse if possible. Most seem corroded, but not unduly so. It was then that I decided to have a dabble at 'electrolysis' again. A small container was acquired and pushed into service, along with some soda crystals and other bits and pieces lying around the workshop.

The results of my initial efforts weren't particularly good, but trial and error finally got things sorted pretty much and I had what I wanted. I treated the parts with some rust killer and left it at that.

The chassis was stripped back bare and then taken, as previously mentioned to Holsworthy where it was blasted, etch primed and then powder coated – Red 😊 cos I like red.....

From there on in, the mechanical rebuild began. I was hoping that all the hard work I'd been putting in over the last 8 months or so would pay off when things were put back together (in the right order of course!). First order of business seem to me, to be getting it back on four wheels as a rolling chassis..... So on it all went, without too much trouble and a lot less lying on the floor than previously! One or two items proved to be a little bothersome, the after-market fuel tank guard for instance; despite my efforts to reduce its overall weight by cutting some slots in it, I still had to use two trolley jacks to mount it (and the new fuel tank) back into place. If Detritus had this been a pick-up with a sealed cab, I may well have considered re-positioning the fuel tank in the load bed, at the expense of some space. It's a tin top so that's not going to happen and, as I'm also fitting an LPG tank I'm ending up with not a lot of load capacity anyway. The axle & suspension went together reasonably easy and with a bit of advice from Jake I got it all bolted back in the correct mounting points. The shocks proved a bit of a problem as I had to compress the carriage springs a small amount to get them on the 'pins', with no bodywork or engine in the chassis the suspension wasn't compressed at all, eventually they went on after I made use of a couple of 5 tonne ratchet straps.

Next came the prop shafts and the transfer box, no problems really other than a split rubber mount for the tranny box, a few quid later and a slight delay of a couple of days and it dropped through the letter box and was soon pressed into service.

Now came the bit I was looking forward to – would the engine and gearbox fit in the chassis?

Of course they would! Why would Suzuki do anything so mad as change something that had proved to be so reliable in the past? Why indeed?

Fortunately Jake had an engine crane available at short notice and once I'd married the gearbox (with clutch plate etc) to the block it was time to hoist it in to place and start tightening bolts & nuts – or so I thought.....

continued on p15



Linden continues

Unfortunately, we quickly ran into a rather large snag..... The engine to chassis mounts on an 410 are completely different to those 413. A quick scooby around the net and I located some just up the road in Somerset at my old friends 'Retrowerx'. I had no real option but to part with some more dosh and buy them – not massively steep at £40 the pair though.



I cleaned up the mounts when they arrived and combined them with the new rubbers I'd previously ordered and using brand new bolts mounted them up on the block. Now the moment of truth, I swung the engine and gearbox over the chassis and gently lowered it down ensuring the propshaft from the transfer box lined up and slid onto the splines on the gearbox output shaft. Looking good but very shortly it became all too obvious that it wasn't going to be my day (or week).

If you compare the 410-engine block with the 413 block they really do look very similar and pretty much are, which means, and was later proved, the chassis on a 413 is narrower at the front – why do I know this? Because I've had to make up mounting plates to take up the difference that's why!

I'm not going to lie, I really did enjoy solving this problem – it made me think hard how I was going to achieve what I wanted and then allowed me to get on and use a bit of my fabrication skills. Okay, the near side one isn't that pretty, but it is adjustable – so is the off side one for that matter, which will if

necessary allow me to adjust the height of the engine by a small amount should I need to. Measurements taken after fitting with the laser showed as was within 1mm side to side and spot on down the centre line, given the engine and box sit on rubber mounts I'll take that as sorted then.



Linden's project will continue in the next magazine. Currently it is intended to develop into a rebuilt Suzuki, although the engineering is the same so far as a Mk2....We shall see...



If you have a story to tell or an unusual feature (on your Midge) remember to send a photo to jim@jimhewlett.com. Dashboards, workshops, garages, rallies and vaguely connected projects. Also 'Sales and wants', requests for advice, homespun philosophy, jokes, cartoons, memories..., will all be

I have a couple of 'stick on' JC badges as above right. Essentially circular 2" diameter acrylic on a silver background. I don't know if they are weatherproof. Perhaps would be suitable for a dashboard or on a suitable indoor surface. They will be awarded to the sender of the first and second Midge images suitable for the top of page 1, ie side on to $\frac{3}{4}$ side on, with an easily subtracted light underside and background.

Remind me if I forget.

Tailpipe.

Well, as the warm golden glow of summer (here in the UK and Europe at least) drains slowly into the crisp leaves of autumn (or fall if you insist) leaving a fading tan and slight hang-over, we hope that the various disasters, epidemics and wars will just go away. That way we'll have time and opportunity to celebrate the various holidays centred on the new year and the 'interesting' weather that book-ends them.

Those of us in the UK should remember to stock up with everything needed, bearing in mind the predicted shortages, transport problems and strikes we have grown to know and expect at this time. Christmas may or may not have been cancelled, Turkeys definitely seem to be off the menu but the deity of your choice may offer some consolation....

Sigh...

Nope, can't do it! I cannot abide gloom. Go for a drive in your Midge or go and fix that bit that's been stopping you. Failing that, go for a walk, sit in the garden (take a coat), give your significant other a hug and count your blessings. (It's important not to try to count all of them, one or two will do). Make a donation to a charity, help a neighbour (with suitable prevention measures) rescue a kitten, pat a dog, smile at a child. (with parental consent of course). Tell a politician what you think, (might need an overnight bag for that one) smile at a policeman (both of those worry them). Admire a sunset, listen to the wildlife in the garden, or go somewhere safe and listen to some there. Just stand and smile, it's surprisingly effective and is sometimes catching. Forgive somebody who offers long winded and patronising advice. Talk to someone you haven't heard from for a while.

So yes, it's been an odd few years but hopefully some bits are getting better.

