

MIDGE MAGAZINE



Autumn
2023



Peter's Midge

MOBC. the Midge Owners and Builders' Club



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Hello All.

Well summer fades to autumn, or at least I predict it will by the time this comes out. A fairly safe bet.

Sadly the magazine is slowly running out of contributors. To be fair, most people find writing articles difficult and would rather be boiled in sump oil. The readership of the magazine also seems to be falling off, although it's difficult to read the statistical algorithmic output, and even harder to understand. I've looked at the statistics and asked for responses but we are down to 16 responses out of 169 still MOBC registered. There weren't any from the 321 facebook membership but perhaps they didn't think I meant them. Obviously we the 'Old Guard' aren't getting any younger (although I'm still youthful on the inside) and there are few new Midges, but the cars are still running mostly and being bought and sold. I estimate about half are or have been registered on the club records. I think about half of the Facebook members (that have their own Midge) look further than the facebook page for hints, tips, histories and magazines. Obviously that's a bit of wild guesswork as there are fewer traces of their activities. The Facebook page itself is doing very well with lots of polite discussion and useful pictures which I occasionally mine for magazine articles. Reading other car club pages I'm pleased that MOBC hardly ever has to send out the hit-squad with their quick setting concrete boots. But tell interested folk about the site and the other facilities and when you sell a Midge, engrave the web address on the dashboard and make sure the new owner knows about the club.

I'd love to organise a club meet in the South or Midlands, but personally I'm too far away here in Scotland to do that. Suggestions along with some broad shoulders are welcome. Maybe the Czech (Prague I think) effort on page 8 will be suitable. JH

For Goodness Sake. Let's make a decision even if it's the wrong one! By Jim P.

So said the sales director of a small company when faced with the problem of fitting four shock absorber testing machines into a container that would only take three! (The fourth did fit but needed a company of specialist packers which took all the profit.)

The moral of the story, which a grounding in the design technology planning 'Loop' has not entirely eradicated, is that the use of the 'P' formulae is vital. There are various versions but 'Prior Preparation and Planning Prevents Poor Performance'. (There is another 'P' in there, but we may have a mixed audience?) Another one, which has splendid historical significance, is 'as my Flight Sergeant used to say,' "time spent in reconnaissance is seldom wasted". With the advancement of age, I have simply decided to do less but better! It works, but now is the time to make decisions!

Space is a bit of a problem but I find the Keter bin box has a wonderful ability to absorb kit car parts! So, squirrelled away are the front suspension and steering components from a Spitfire, wings, bonnet and scuttle from a Marlin as well as the doors. Also are the front and rear two feet of a Marlin Roadster chassis (Sorry, but it was a poor orphan and nobody wanted it!) and a pair of Marina rear springs. In the garage is a load of very nice hardwood ply and a length of 80 x 40mm box section as well as a Dolomite rear axle. I also have an MGB gearbox and a K series Rover engine from a Coupe which, in fact, was the starting point of the project. These are now redundant as the experience gained from my Cabrio V8 indicate that power and speed in a kit car are not necessary. I will be on the lookout for a 1500 Spitfire/ Midget engine as I understand they are 55Kgs lighter and only 10BHP or so less. So, lessons learnt? Never be afraid of changing a plan (learnt on a Harvard based Business Management course) and if you de-rust and paint parts they will sell on Ebay easily, especially if they are MG!

The 'Marge' Plan (front half Marlin, rear half Midge, geddit?)

Taking the front and rear Marlin sections I will rejoin them with 80 x 40mm box section instead of 50 x 100mm but adding a double diagonal cross brace forming an X which will also support the rear of the gearbox. The original sections are 60mm square so I will use the Marlin technique of an overlapping 'step' cut to join them. The 'tacked up' frame will be taken to my local steel fabricator and finish welded.

Whilst doing my teaching practice a very knowledgeable Head of Department pointed out that although his Sixth formers were thoroughly enjoying themselves 'designing' car bodies, you didn't do it by sanding down blocks of MDF with belt sanders. (sending me off sick with bronchial asthma in the process!) Of course, you decide wheel size, arches to suit, suspension travel etc. first, the bodywork comes later. With Marge much of this is decided by the parts used

Having had the opportunity to 'run a tape' around the chassis prior to demolition it became clear that there are two body lines. The chassis has 5 sections whilst the body work has only 4. I suspect something to do with picking up with the rear spring front mountings. (In fact the extra 'kink' can be seen in the photograph in front of the spring mount and below the door sill.) This will be removed for simplification and I will build a chassis with 4 sections following the wing line. One last imponderable is the rear springs.

The original Marina's are long and would intrude into the seating area. MG Midget's are 8" shorter and depending on the wheelbase (fixed by the wings) will give me an extra 4" in the cockpit. Will have to do a 'mock up'! So, the wings, cowl, bonnet, scuttle and doors will be Marlin and the rest Midge. An early Marlin did have a 'Midge' type rear box body in fact and personally I am not too keen on the original 'bump' shaped rear end. JP



Jim P continues 'To Battle'

Having hauled the Marlin front remains up onto my bench and attacked it with a 4" angle grinder, much to my surprise, I find that Mr Moorhouse did not use 'step' joints between the two different box sections but butt joints with small plates to blend the two together. I am sure he knew what he was doing, he did after all build nuclear submarines! Having removed the remains of the main chassis I have worked out a scheme to connect my 80 x 40mm, keeping the end of the bonnet side panel mounting plate with its first hole as a reference for future use. By lengthening the joint, I aim for a join superior to the original thereby making up for the reduction to 80 x 40 from 100 x 50 box section at that point. If you haven't come across the 1.5mm cutting discs, get some. They are splendidly fast and accurate!

Using quality cardboard glued up into a replica box section, it was an easy task to trim the ends to shape to fit the front section using a guideline marked on the bench. I can then cut the model into its four surfaces using them as templates to cut out the actual box section steel. I have managed to double the length of overlap and reduce the width of the front 60mm section to 45mm and increase the main 40mm member to 45mm also so that it will blend in neatly. The idea is to enable the stress to follow a 'load path' within the steel chassis without sudden changes in direction. I hope Mr Moorhouse will approve?

The Future!

With my new front chassis members the location of the second chassis bend can be found. This is actually decided by the front wings and is not quite true to the original chassis. Not to worry, it is only about 3" difference and we can locate the change, with the door pillar standing on top, in one go. I could use a drawing but using the actual components to ascertain dimensions is quicker and more accurate and, as

in this case, apparent 'errors' can be rectified. By hanging the front wings on to their front fixing holes, all should be revealed. JP

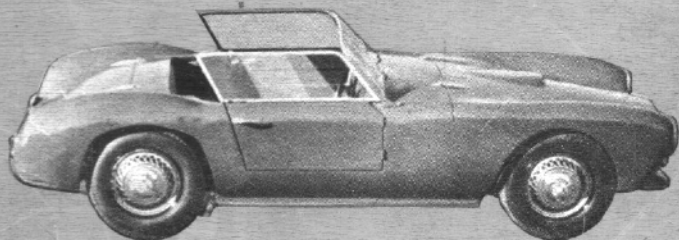
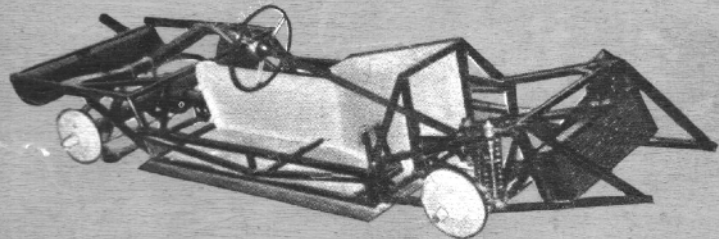
Incidentally, if like me you were wondering what a Ketter bin was, that's it above.



The Hagerty article I reprinted last time seemed to go down well, so here are a couple of links to others [The Manx](#) by Anthony Ingram and [Build your next car](#) by Bill Cowland.



FORD SPECIAL BUILDERS MANUAL



HOW TO BUILD FORD BASED SPECIALS -
DETAILS OF MODIFICATIONS AND TUNING -
WORKSHOP DATA - COMPONENTS AVAILABLE.

BY G. B. Wake

I doubt I'll be building another Ford 10 'special' as the supply of Ford chassis donors seems to have dried up. However there may be owners of Ford specials who would like to rebuild or modify and this book might be useful. As the Ford 8, 10, Anglia and Popular potential donors disappeared various kits with new chassis were developed including Neville Trickett's Opus 'Hot Rod Ford'. I built one on the farm with nothing to start with except the tubular chassis from a scrap yard and an Anglia rear axle. I now know it was intended to have a raised rear suspension and lowered front. The original had a very silly 'tub' even if it had Stirling Moss in it. Mine was made entirely from bits found on the farm and actually drove, indicators and all. Sadly it was doomed by my moving to Scotland and somewhere it hit the Ugly Tree. I had by then learned lots of ways not to do it.

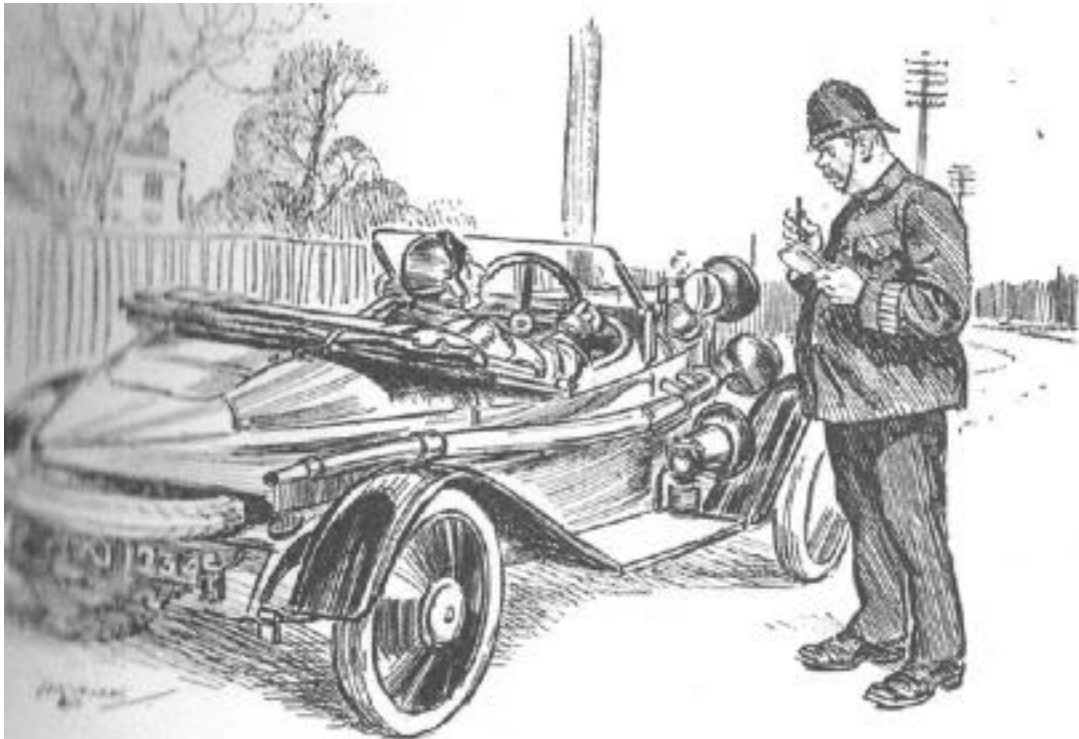
The book is available to full members for the price of the postage.



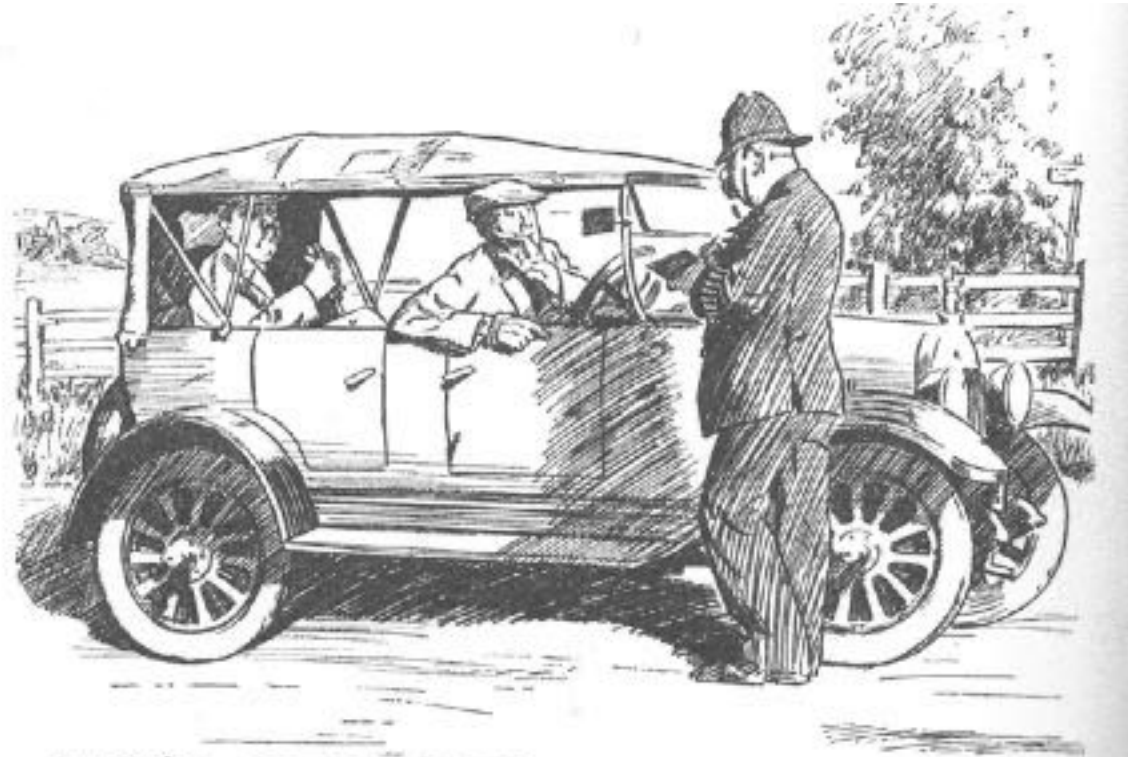


Petteri Palmu's Midge. Reportedly the only one in Finland. Distinctive enough to warrant its own page.

John Eden found a few cartoons in the Punch Magazine compilation books, so here are two more.



POLICEMAN (*producing note-book*). "Name, please."
MOTORIST. "Aloysius—Alastair—Cyprian—"
POLICEMAN (*putting book away*). "Well, don't let me catch you again."



P.C. "You were doing forty miles an hour, Sir."
MOTORIST (*whispering*). "Make it seventy; I'm trying to sell him the thing."





Back in July [Paul Giuffrida](#) posted:-

Just finished replacing top ball joints and a trunnion to trunnionless changeover on Mille. Purchased from Canley classics. Nearside went a dream offside a complete pig! All finished now glad to say, just a paint job. The parts 2x vertical links and 2x lower ball joints £435.00 including delivery. Not cheap but provides peace of mind and mine were due for a change anyway. Fairly easy to install.

From James Archer jreaarcher@gmail.com

Hi Jim, I'm having a clear out and thought some of the following might be useful to someone.

Unfortunately I can't afford to donate, but I am not after profiteering either, It was going to be a classic trials special, but kids came along!

The parts I have available are:

Ford engine chassis with front wishbones & shocks & 2 wheels fitted. Also have brackets and trailing arms for axle. New windscreen & rubber gasket. Dash top in fibreglass (painted blue). Alloy radiator surround. Engine turned dash with spitfire clocks. (Needs finishing).

Wire wheel effect wheel trims x4 13inch I think? 2 alloy door skins.

I am up in the Lake District at LA22 9HH, so collection of parts could be part of a nice day out! Please feel free to share my email or give me a shout on 07939 016126.

Kind regards

James

News from the Czech republic

Hello,

I would like to inform you that we are preparing the exposition of Cars and other things designed by John Cowperthwaite to be exhibited in the new classic cars museum in Czech republic! The opening is on 24th November 2023, so quite soon. I will keep you informed as you are all more than welcome to visit the museum and of course I am happy to prepare a short article for your magazine 🤝 (I'll hold you to that George.)

I would also like to ask you to help me to find a Moss mamba for the exhibition. We Are happy to consider a purchase if someone has a Mamba for sale. Or if you know someone who would consider to borrow his Mamba for the exhibition (just for the Winter time for example), It would be also highly appreciated!

Thanks in advance!

Best Regard
George Hladík
+420 773 681 763

I checked with JC and he is involved with the museum project. More information when I get it.
Email or call me if you have a spare Mamba. JH

Lloyd Sandells demonstrating in Gloucester the answer that the eponymous Dr Foster had been looking for.

Although on consideration maybe it was waders he wanted.



UK 2023/24 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.

And Robert informs me that Monty has a new registration and an extremely rare MG Midge bonnet mascot. Originals are rather expensive but they and replicas can be found if you google

mg midge bonnet mascot

I would advise checking the rules for pedestrian safety issues, although nobody is going to challenge vintage Rolls Royce and Bentley owners.



Andrew Bryant's rather smart variation on a Boat tail (personally I think they should be called a beetle back, but I'm not going to fuss).

A really nicely done bit of bodywork with appropriate wings and lights and an inspiration for the rest of us.



For no good reason than to irritate and confuse, I've been doing some research.

According to the interweb The UK government receives tax revenue from drivers of petrol and diesel cars via two key methods: the first being fuel duty at 52.95 pence per litre at the time of writing plus 20%VAT (which means, if I understand it correctly we pay a tax on the tax in that there's VAT on the fuel duty).

I think that brings **£28** billion a year into (UK) government coffers, and second there's Vehicle Excise Duty (road tax), which nets roughly **£7** billion so that's **£35** billion, although I'd bet there are various stealth taxes. The Public sector spending on roads in the United Kingdom was over **£11.13** billion in 2022/23. So you can see why the government is panicking somewhat as EVs replace fossil fuels, there is of course 5% VAT on electricity which you can avoid/evade/dodge by using solar panels, but they cost money (and are taxed as well).

There have been media reports of recent heavy rain concealing potholes. This leads to more damage to cars, because drivers (thousands according to the AA) think it's just a puddle. This suggests the roads are in poor condition so the amount spent on road repairs become more interesting, although most of us would say it wasn't exactly news.

I wouldn't suggest writing to your MP as I don't think that would do much, but it's well worth emailing, or better still, writing to the roads department and the general local council to identify the specific potholes you consider dangerous. I don't imagine it will have any effect in itself, but as long as you get an acknowledgement of your complaint and importantly a reference number then you can claim damages a few weeks later if they haven't fixed it, should you be unable to dodge it next time on account of the suddenly observed oncoming traffic. Your local community newsletter might unearth others with similar damage. The WhatThreeWords app can be useful, but remember to get a reference number and a dated response because it's surprising how the records get forgotten and conversations denied.

I have no problem in paying a tax to maintain the roads, I do drive on them even if I spend more on petrol for the lawn mower than driving and I don't commute. The Midge is exempt, and my EV is a bit heavier than an equivalent petrol car. I'm not complaining and indeed I feel that it's a bit unfair on the other drivers that I don't pay vehicle road tax (yet).

However after all that, anything from those two sources that's not spent on the roads is just a tax and shouldn't be levied solely on drivers. Personally I'd put it on the council or income tax. Before the adoption of Electric Vehicles I thought road tax and insurance should be part of the price of petrol, I guess that wouldn't work now although I still think it's wrong to be compelled to buy insurance from profit making companies and think it should be nationalised. Other opinions are available. JH

Somebody said that taxes were simply legalised robbery which I think has an element of truth.

Wire wheel tightening John Cowperthwaite pointed out to me that the spinners and therefore the splines seem to be backward on some of our facebook pictures.

The actual mechanical reason as to why they should tighten as the wheel turns forward or when braking is beyond my understanding, but there's certainly a correct way of doing it.

The splined hubs should have stamped into the metal Left or LH on one pair and Right or RH on the other. The right side is the UK driver's side. If my understanding is correct then once that bit is sorted, the rest follows because as Peter indicates, the spinners usually have instruction engraved and you cannot put the wrong spinner on as they are threaded differently.

A simple check would be that as the spinner rotates (car moving forward) then the blade at the top of the spinner should look like a shark's fin as the wheel turns. ie the sloping edge leads, and that sloping side is the one you hit to tighten it.

I think the idea is that the action of knocking the wheel ON requires less force than knocking OFF the self tightened spinner. So you hit the flat side to loosen it.

As Derek pointed out Knock-on wheels are tightened by forward travel so they don't undo. Charles says it has something to do with inertia.

A web page called Blockley Tyre says:- With the wheel not on the hub, count how many revolutions the knock on will rotate on the hub before bottoming, so when you then fit the wheel you can make sure the knock on is not bottoming before it is tightening onto the taper of the wheel. So recount the number of revolutions before tapping the spinner tight. Other advisors suggest it's best to tighten with the wheel in the air rather than on the ground and some say you should tighten to the maximum force you can apply.

Below is George's Midge and the picture that started the discussion. The consensus is now that the hubs, and consequently the spinners, are on the wrong side. No doubt this is now corrected. My thanks to George because he has highlighted a problem that many Midge owners were unaware of, and I imagine there will be some quiet swapping going on since it emerged on facebook. Thanks also to John C who spotted it, I certainly didn't.

The other notable point is one I've been avoiding for a while. Some splined hubs make it very difficult to get a wheel brace or ring spanner on the nuts that hold the hub, or wheel, on. I see Rimmers are doing a full kit (including wheels) for £1,770 inc vat but I don't know about their nuts. wheelpartsdirect might be an answer but I don't know the angle of the cone. JH





From Alan, For sale.

Early JC Midge based on a 1966 1147cc Triumph Herald donor car and believed to be built in the mid 1980s . I have owned the car for 5 years but only driven it about 500 miles due to the onset of a back problem and COVID. It has had a new steering rack, track rod ends, n/s front disc calliper and a set of pads, new rear brake shoes and linings and a new battery.

I have had it resprayed in British Racing Green and it is fitted with an anti-roll bar. It has also been re-upholstered in black.

Also with the car there is a spare gearbox and a spare cylinder head which has been modified to run on unleaded fuel. The car is not concours but is a very tidy example which only needs some TLC. **£3750 o.n.o.**



Contact Alan Houghton in Rainhill in Merseyside on 07803 974174. email benhavis@googlemail.com

£3,750 o.n.o.

With spare unleaded cylinder head and gearbox

Also for sale Danbury, Essex
cadex6@hotmail.co.uk

I had a go at advertising my Midge but I believe it'd be best if I asked for assistance.

So Jim's putting this on the website, Facebook and the magazine.

I had some supposedly skilled mechanic 'tune' her (GYN963J). She was working when he started but she does not now! It's a great car with a full hood but she needs to go with someone mechanically competent. I'm a polisher and a driver. I can't seem to retrieve messages sent on Facebook so I'll ask for emails if that's ok?

While we are here...

Are there any suitable retired/enthusiastic mechanics in my area? My other Midge, The silver one, needs a little fettling

Thanks

Robert In Danbury, Essex

cadex6@hotmail.co.uk 07704007770
(Use texts and emails, if you can, my voice is damaged).



Tailpipe

Considering the future and looking for opinions. Some thoughts.

Most of my MOBC secretarial time and effort goes into the magazine. The membership and web pages are relatively undemanding tasks, so I'd prefer to off-load the magazine if somebody else would take it on, or I could reduce the frequency or size. I think I've managed so far without drifting too far from the appropriate club content.

We could simplify things by not asking for the joining fee (£10) and merging or devolving the club into the Facebook page where most of the activity is found. I suspect there's not much incentive to join as the advantages are just access to badges, membership certificate, and magazine notification, and I've noted a reduced number of applications to the club 'proper'.

Facebook is considered by the youth of today (anyone less than 65) to be a bit out of date, but it seems to work quite well for those of us no longer teenage and relatively free of advertising, algorithms and angst. At present it seems to work as a communication platform, doesn't have much 'negative' content and has many active contributors.

As secretary I'm quite involved with the club workings, so I see trends and patterns that might not be obvious to others, and I get the impression that the various 'types' (Facebook members, MOBC members, Web page watchers, and Magazine readers) are not exactly the same bunch, and may be unaware of the complexity and wonders of this multi layered organisation. I think most of the details are on the web pages <http://midgebuilders.homestead.com/index.html> so I'll not repeat them here, but if someone doesn't know about a channel then won't find out about it. The sales and wants pages seem effective and there's some traffic through 'Hints and Tips'. By the way, if any one wants to add to them I can incorporate it quite easily

The address of the website should be <http://mobic.co.uk/> and it does work, but tends to revert to **midgebuilders** once you go to a next page on the site. It should be marked as secure (https) but I've never made that stick. Ah the mysteries of the web....

Another thought. Apart from anything else the data protection act means I should be deleting from my records any contact details of any I've not heard from in 5 years. That would mean not sending magazine reminders and removing those names and details from the member's register webpage. I simply re-instate those who come back after wandering in the desert, and if you've been on my records then I should be able to give you your original membership number.

Also, if I delete the joining fee I could change it to the opportunity of buying a hexagonal grille badge at maybe £10. That would amalgamate the club 'proper and the Facebook community. The resulting funds would allow the running of another brass casting run when the time comes. A process which could continue ad infinitum. I'll not be doing anything dramatic immediately, so send opinions, options, offers and otters to jim@jimhewlett.com

Keep busy, they bury you if you stop moving.

JH

