

chassis, and instead uses a completely unchanged



## Midge Owners and Builders Club Christmas 2013

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### Dear Members,

Another year has almost gone and this issue of our magazine provides me with the opportunity to keep you up to date with the situation in our Club, the country and the world generally, but at the risk of seeming rather parochial I'll keep to our Club and let others pontificate about national and international issues!

There is no doubt that we have had a good year, with more members joining our ranks. Of course we have lost a few friends as well who are no longer Midge Owners, but if they're reading this on the Club Website then we wish all current and past members every happiness and good health in 2014. Our funds are quite healthy, mainly because our communications are largely email and internet based, and we have sufficient funds in our account to pay our way, so there will be no subscriptions due for the foreseeable future.

I should like to summarise what has been achieved over the last year, and as always I am grateful for those of you who have taken the trouble to write in with articles, diagrams, photographs and anecdotes for our magazine which continues to be well received and always contains something of interest.

Earlier this year we tried to market the plans for the Midge MK1 more positively with John Cowperthwaite (JC) taking the lead on this initiative, and I'm delighted to say that we gained a few more members in this way, one of whom is a knight of the realm (Thank you, Sir Roger) and others came from abroad. However, the EU legislation finally got the better of the MK1 Midge, and whilst there are many cars left in various stages of completion and rebuilding, perhaps we should all congratulate JC for his work on developing the MK2 Midge which overcomes the difficulties of registering a vehicle with a modified

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that the first set of plans for the MK2 Midge have recently been purchased by Ben Oldcorn from Devon who we heartily welcome as the first member of the Club who will build the Midge MK2.



**Neil Russell has continued as our Club Webmaster** and we offer a sincere thanks to him from all of us. Without the Website there would be less communication between members, and certainly we should not be able to attract members from abroad. Neil continues to do a great job, and at the time of writing we have achieved nearly 23,000 hits of which 4000 occurred over the last year, and that is a wonderful response to Neil's hard work.

Another initiative to bring in new members has been to set up a **Group on Facebook**. I'm most grateful to Jim Dolphin for having the idea in the first place and then seeing it through. It is a forum for contacting members and getting answers to problems which others have previously solved, and has been very useful during the time our Club Website was having a number of glitches. We have about 30 members in our Facebook Group so if you're a member of the Club then why not join up?

# John

## MINOR REPAIRS TO MIDGES SHOULD BE PUT OFF FOR A WHILE



### Chris Cogan was the builder of this delightful Midge- It definitely doesn't need any repair!

Taken from an American publication to show how Classic Car Owners over the pond can get carried away!

I advise a lot of newcomers to the hobby, and a fair amount of veterans as well, regarding the purchase of classic cars. For the newcomers, the advice is all-encompassing. For the veterans, my advice is usually solicited when they are considering the purchase of a car that is out of their "comfort zone."

But newcomers and veterans alike all seem to make one mistake. It must be human nature. I've made the mistake dozens of times myself. In fact, it's taken me decades, and ownership of hundreds of cars, to consciously avoid making the mistake. I call it the automotive version of "I love you, you're perfect, now change." Here's how it works. You spend months deciding what will be your first classic car, or what classic car you will add to your collection. You agonize over the details such as hardtop or convertible, colour combination, engine and transmission, original or restored desirable options, driver quality or show quality, and a host of other decisions. You spend several more months scouring newspapers, online classifieds, online auction sites, and visiting classic car dealerships in search of the perfect car.

Sometimes you get lucky and just stumble across the perfect car at a local car show. Then you call me to inspect the car before you buy it. The car passes with flying colours, and you spend an hour telling me how lucky you were to find exactly the car that you were looking for. I congratulate you on your new acquisition, and we part ways. A week or

two later you call me to prepare an appraisal for your insurance company. We talk a little about the car, and you mention that you're going to have it painted. I ask why, and you tell me that although the paint is stunning, the two little chips on the bonnet would likely drive you crazy. You also mention that you're having the interior re-upholstered because the scuff on the outer cushion of the driver's seat-back detracts from the rest of the beautiful interior.

While it's in the upholstery shop, a new soft top is being installed because of the little crease in the otherwise perfect top, at the "pinch-point" where the convertible top frame hinges. You're also considering adding rear wheel disc brakes, even though the car has front discs, and as long as the mechanic is going to have it anyway, he'll replace the rear-main engine seal because the car drips about one or two drops of oil a week on your garage floor.

Having experienced this many, many times, I'm surprised that I'm still incredulous as I make the observation that you knew about all of these minor imperfections when you purchased the car. In fact, you didn't want a flawless car because you and your family (including your 160 pound St. Bernard) intended to use it regularly, and you "didn't want to worry about it." The car was absolutely beautiful. You had searched diligently for just such a car, and although it was not perfect, it was perfect for you.

Since my job of inspecting and appraising the car was completed weeks ago, there's no point making you feel bad by telling you that if you wanted a perfect car, you should have bought a perfect car. It would have cost you less money than you will have invested in this car by the time you complete all the work, not to mention the time and headaches that go along with a "sympathetic restoration." But all is not lost. Decades of dealing with this "I love you, you're perfect, now change" syndrome have taught me that there is another approach, other than making you feel bad, that might still salvage the situation: An intervention. I secretly contact all of your family and friends, and we lure you to a safe setting, where one at a time, and in a non-threatening way, we help you to realize the folly on which you're about to embark.

Of course I'm only kidding. But in a way, I do stage my own intervention. When I feel that it's appropriate, I'll ask you to consider living with the car just the way it is for one year. If after one year you still feel that you need to do all of that work, well, then go right ahead. Most people agree to this because it gives them an excuse, and a finite period of time to delay an expensive but inevitable (in their mind) undertaking. It would not be an

exaggeration to state that 99% of the people to whom I offer this advice call me one year later to thank me. They no longer even notice the things that they thought would drive them crazy. I prefer to think of it as "I love you, you're almost perfect and I'll take you as you are."

In spite of what has been written above, one of the questions that I am asked frequently concerns re-locating the Midge handbrake. Roger England has tackled this job, and shares his method of doing so:-

## RELOCATING THE TRIUMPH MIDGE HANDBRAKE

One of the few things that annoyed me with the Midge was the position of the handbrake - awkwardly located on the passenger floor. (The other main irritant is the gear lever shape and position but that's another project!)

I pondered on where I could move the handbrake. The location in the original Triumph cars was on the transmission tunnel - hardly suitable in the Midge as it didn't have one of any substance. I did consider a position to the right of the driver's seat but as space was a little limited for the seat squab, this was a non-starter. At the back of my mind in any change was the desire to make the car as "period" as possible. To this end I even considered an outside handbrake but couldn't see how this could be achieved if the driver's door was still to be opened and the handbrake be within easy reach. The only possible solution I could see was to locate the handbrake below the dash on the driver's side with it being as close to the offside of the car as possible. It was obvious that I would need to make a linkage that would connect the handbrake lever to the handbrake yoke and cable assembly to the rear of the car. One immediate problem was that the cable fouling the exhaust pipe on the nearside when I moved the cable across to the left. This was solved by reconnecting the pivot point of the cable yoke assembly to the strap bolted to the chassis rails. There was an existing hole in the strap some 6 or 7 cm to the offside and when this is used the "Y" cable to the rear drums does not foul the exhaust.

I now had a cable running to the offside of the right hand chassis rail and a handbrake lever nominally 30 cm away but offset by 30 cm or so. A transfer shaft would therefore be needed to connect the lever to the rear cable.

Firstly then - the "new" handbrake lever mechanism. This is an MG Midget item (pre 1500cc) which is chrome and quite "period". I believe that the Austin

Healey 3000 uses the same mechanism but this would certainly cost more, purely because it's a Healey. My Midget one cost £12.50 from a well-known on-line auction site. The handbrake that arrived comprised three pieces.



**MG Midget Handbrake assembly**

In its original application a fixing plate, that would have been attached to the transmission tunnel in the Midget, was discarded. The other two pieces were the handbrake lever, and the plate on which the lever pivots and on the top of which are the serrations for the ratchet. Having decided exactly where the handbrake would be fitted I cut a hole in the plywood floor adjacent to the wooden rail that runs under the floor to the outer edge of the body. Now with a reasonable view of the fixing options I decided that I would need a steel fixing plate that would attach the handbrake lever to the wooden rail and be braced against the steel chassis rail. In addition, further bracing would be achieved by the plate that would be needed to cover the hole as this could be attached to the lever fixing bracket.



### **Handbrake with crank arm welded**

I made up another crank arm which I had welded to the bottom of the handbrake - inboard of the lever.

### **Complete assembly on bench**

The majority of the work required was in producing a transverse shaft to take the action of the handbrake from the outside of the car to the middle. This comprises a 5/8" steel shaft mounted in two brackets, each with a piece of tube welded to them, into which the shaft fits and rotates. A crank arm was made to connect to the handbrake cable coming from the yoke, and another crank arm to the outer end of the shaft. This latter crank arm had to be removable as the shaft couldn't be

removed otherwise (or fitted for that matter!) This proved to be the most difficult part of the exercise as the shaft had to align correctly, both horizontally and vertically if the shaft was to be free moving. That isn't easy to achieve when the car is on axle stands and every action is a slightly contorted one. However, with a bit effort and thought the shaft was fitted. A good dollop of grease in both shaft mounts, and copper grease on all fixing bolts finished the installation.



### Adjustable Link Arm

I made the link arm between the handbrake lever and the cross shaft from 8mm studding. This enables me to get as much adjustment as I need, both now and in the future.

As an afterthought I cut a piece of black vinyl to act as a draught reducer and placed this between the floor plate and the ply floor. This won't stop all the draughts, but will cut it down a fair bit.



So there it is - a fair amount of work, but I no longer have to reach forward into the bowels of the passenger area to apply and release the handbrake. My back is eternally grateful.

Many thanks. Roger, we're grateful to you for sharing this project with us.

### NEW MEMBERS

I'm delighted to say that over the last year we have welcomed nineteen new members into the Club, five of who have joined in the last three months:

- **Kevin Brown of Sutton Coldfield**

Kevin writes as follows:-

I worked in a local garage for 14 years, starting as the tea boy (I make a good cuppa, ..... keeps the wheels of industry lubricated !!!), and finished there as an MOT inspector. Moved on to try my hand on markets selling records, which worked out great for a while but hit a bad time and so that failed, was then a mobile mechanic. I've taught myself welding, and paint spraying, I'm currently rebuilding a mk3 Capri, a 1979 1300, which I think could be quite rare, because most surviving 1300s were ripped apart to rebuild bigger ones, or had 3 litre engines fitted to them. Anyway, the other stars in my heaven are a 1972 pre facelift Capri 1600, and a 1964 Ford Consul Classic Capri, (yes there was an earlier Capri than the one launched in 1969). I was also into motorcycles, and rode them regularly until I was in my 30s, although I had a full bike licence, I rode mid-range bikes because I have short legs, tried a Suzuki 750 water cooled once, great bike but at junctions I found that I had to hold the bike up by tip toe on one leg, and with the thought of "how would I pick this up if it went over", decided on a less flamboyant approach to biking. I've got a few newish bikes, and quite like the new AJSs. I also want to do some hang gliding but this will be a self-teaching experience that I'll take up when and where I feel confident of success. I'm looking for a Midge to rebuild, I've worked on many Heralds and Spitfires, quite like them, and I'm after a Midge that is already with registration and paperwork, needing TLC, GTX, STP and an MOT.

Many thanks for sharing your interests with us Kevin.

- **John Henley Smith from Sussex**

is a retired Police Officer and time served automotive engineer.

He continues: - I used to build Formula Fords for a living and my interests include classic cars and motorcycles, (I have another Triumph, a 1954 Tiger 110 motorcycle) and am a member of the T.S.S.C, the Triumph Owners Motorcycle Club and the Vincent H.R.D Owners club and live in Scarborough Monday to Friday most months, and sunny Sussex with my wife Mary at the weekends.

We live at a charity for the retraining and re-homing of retired racehorses where Mary is the trainer and general Manager. The Horses generally arrive straight from the training yards after being deemed uncompetitive for various reasons, are assessed, retrained as riding horses and hopefully live out the rest of their lives with new caring keepers. This situation gives me a generous double plus garage for the fleet to reside in, plus 110 acres of Sussex countryside to enjoy.

It is my private test track for the Midge to enjoy prior to the task ahead of me... REGISTRATION! The donor Herald was built c. 1963, but I have zero documentation and a non-standard chassis with no numbers, difficult! I also have the remains of a triumph spitfire mark 3 which is terminally rotten but has a V5 etc. and has been a good source of parts for the Midge which now drives well after a full engine and gearbox overhaul and will be treated to wiring and instrumentation over the Christmas break.

I have recently fitted a set of K.O hub adapters and 15" wire wheels which purport to have their origins from a Triumph TR4/5, and I have acquired a new old stock complete set of wet weather gear, (hood, sidescreens and windscreen) so the car will hit the road looking good and keeping dry. I also have a new old stock fuel tank and sender unit, unfortunately they were left outside and uncovered for many years, the tank is mint outside due to a good paint job, but the inside is quite rusty but saveable due to its robust construction and heavy gauge metal. I am looking forward to driving this great little car legally on the road next year.

- **Dave Brearly from Stafford** is looking for a Midge.
- **Brian White from Dalton in Furness** has purchased the Midge shown below and was also able to buy a Corgi motor scooter which was lying in the same garage. He's delighted with both purchases!



- **Michael Josling of Norwich** has purchased a really stylish Midge and is now looking to fit larger wire wheels



#### MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

I have included an update form and a current Members' List with this magazine. Please complete and return the form by mid-January. If I don't hear from you then I'll assume you no longer wish to be a member of the best Midge Club in the world!

I wish everyone a very Happy Christmas and a good year in 2014, and thank all those members who have sent in articles, pictures etc for the Magazine.

My best regards,  
John.