

Midge Owners and Builders Club

Autumn 2015

Secretary: Jim Hewlett

The Old Manse, Tarbrax, West Calder

West Lothian EH55 8XD

01501 785206

Email: jim@jimhewlett.com

Editor (for this issue) John Bircumshaw

 Find us on Facebook

Dear Members,

We have been enjoying an Indian summer over the last few days - ideal weather to find a little used route through the Welsh mountains and to admire the view, but I have also been busy preparing this edition of our Club Newsletter which will be my last as Editor. You may have already noticed the change in Secretary from the address panel above, and I'm most grateful to Jim for volunteering to take over the running of our Club, and for this final opportunity to thank you all for your support over the last ten years. It's been a great experience, and I hope that the enthusiasm within the club will continue to grow. Ten years is a long time to be the secretary and the changes I've seen are quite amazing. At one time, anyone could find an old Triumph Herald/Spitfire or Ford Escort and after a few woodworking and mechanical challenges could produce a Midge and drive it legally on the public highway with a minimum of fuss. That was until the EU intervened, and it's now all but impossible to build a Midge from scratch that will be road legal, so the advice has to be to find one that is already built and legally registered and then carry out any restoration/rebuilding work that is necessary.

During my time as secretary the number of members has stayed broadly the same, at around 100, but the major difference is that the internet has meant that we can now attract members worldwide and communicate with them at the click of a mouse. Ten years ago about half our members relied on snail mail to keep in touch, whereas today there are very few members who do not have on line access.

Our page on Facebook is widely appreciated and is a good mixture of technical advice and entertainment, with pictures of members' cars and the sharing of knowledge to solve Midge problems that seem to occur quite regularly.

Last but not least, our Club Website is a great way in which to attract the non-member and it has been gradually refined and improved by Neil Russell who has a long history of conscientious and unassuming service to the Club. I should like to thank Neil for all that he has done during my tenure as Secretary, and like me, he feels that it is now an appropriate time for him to step down as Webmaster. In the immortal words of the two Ronnies, it's goodbye from him and goodbye from me!

I am sure that the Club will continue to prosper under its new management. Please give your continued support to Jim Hewlett in his role as Secretary, and if you are familiar with Website design and maintenance, please think seriously about taking on this important aspect of the Club's activities.

John

CLUB VACANCY

Our Club is looking for a Webmaster to work with the Secretary and maintain and develop the Club Website www.mobc.co.uk If this is something you would like to consider, please get in touch with Jim Hewlett. The usual terms apply; expenses will be reimbursed, the salary will be zero, and the job satisfaction will be fantastic!

MIDGE CLUB CALENDAR FOR 2016

James Orr will be producing our 2016 Club Calendar, and it's an opportunity to showcase your Midge so don't miss it!

We are intending to produce a full colour 12 page A3 calendar with the top half image, and the lower half showing the month with space for each day and

this is an opportunity to have your Midge in a colour picture which will be available worldwide! These themes are given as suggestions, but imagination is the key!



- Midge building in Garage
- Winter/Summer Midge
- Country road/lane/Farmhouse
- Hill Climb/ Midge at Speed

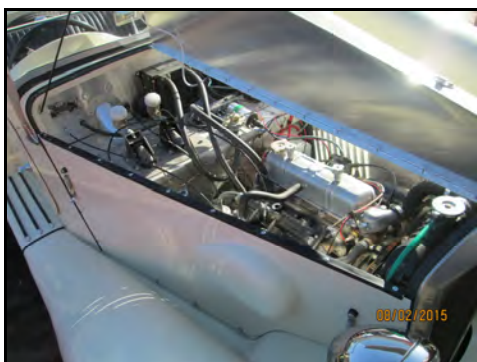
For our members who are not in the UK why not show your car in an environment typical of your Country? Our Midges are in the style of MGJ2 of 1930's so why not have the Driver/Passenger in 1930's clothing or related to Art Deco?

All images should be sent to James at james-m-orr@hotmail.com by October 16th.

We anticipate the calendars will be very popular, so if you would like to order one (or two!) then please contact James for details of prices now.

MIKE BAMBRIDGE'S MIDGE - PART 2

Here is the second part of Mike's account of the way in which he built his Midge. You will see that his car is 'more unique' than most of the other Midges in our Club. Whilst this may be grammatically incorrect, it seems the only way in which to describe such an amazing car!



Spick and span under the bonnet!

With all the running gear bolted back on, attention turned to the body. When I built my first Midge, I had made it 2" wider than normal as this gave me a

little extra elbow and footwell room, so I repeated this process, and also modified the side panels to remove the step behind the door aperture which I considered to be a little odd looking. Whilst this widened body suits my needs very well, it does result in extra work and expense. Namely, I was now unable to use the original windscreen, hood, sidescreens and dashtop! The screen was fabricated from 3/4" ally channel, the lower section bent to follow the shape of the scuttle using a home-made bending jig. The original dashtop was cut and widened to suit the body (isn't fibreglass great?) Whilst I rather like cycle wings, my wife prefers the full length swept type, and to be honest, I rather like them too. For Midge No.1 I was able to purchase a set from a Kit Car manufacturer who was selling up, but this time the only ones I could find were in excess of a budget busting £500.



The wings for Mike's car were specially fabricated. Note also the 'suicide' doors.

I elected to make some from scratch. Whilst planning this operation, I chanced upon a pair of fibreglass reproduction MG TD rear wings on an MG forum in Luxembourg. £50 changed hands, and I collected them from the seller at an MG Spares show in Stoneleigh. These were modified to accept different tail lights, and re-profiled to match the Midge body. A wooden former was made and this was used to mould the running boards. The front wings needed a bit more thought, but whilst trying to decide upon the best/easiest/cheapest method of manufacture, I found a pair of extremely rusty original MG TA wings on E-bay. I could not believe it when my bid won them. Not only were they fairly local, but I had bought them for £26. These were cut about and wooden strips, ally sheet and plaster of Paris gave me the required shape. These were then used as formers to produce a pair of fibreglass wings. The wings and running boards are

bolted through flanges in the mouldings direct to the body sides, but the front wings have a copper tube glassed to the underside to provide extra rigidity, and a protective route for the front side light cum indicator wiring. They are also supported by a curved bracket, courtesy of a wheelchair backrest bracket, which doubles up as a headlight mount.

I have always liked the so-called suicide doors, so this was a must. I used Mk1 Mini door catches, which are nice and neat, plus I had some in the garage from a Minivan that I had scrapped in the early 70's. The petrol tank cover is a little different to JC's original design, as I wanted a more angular look, and a stronger support for the spare wheel bracket. I therefore used the same construction method as the body tub, topped off with a couple of dummy straps made from stainless steel strip. With the body built it was time to spray. This time, instead of the red of the first Midge, my wife decided that Old English White would look rather smart, and I have to agree with her now that it's finished. I'm lucky in that we have a very long car port attached to the house, and this was turned into a makeshift spray booth with large sheets of polythene covering the walls and roof. When all the masking tape is removed you can really appreciate that real progress has been made.

hinges so that the angle could be adjusted. Carpeting was cut to fit the gearbox cover and floor with gaiters sewn up for the gear lever and handbrake. The wider body meant that I could not use the original hood, and the rear hinged doors meant that the sidescreens were also redundant. I made a set of sidescreens by copying the MG TA/TB/TC etc design, the frames being welded up from steel strip and the screens being made from sheets of 2mm Lexan, a virtually unbreakable plastic as used for visors and vandal-proof bus shelters, and this was covered with Everflex hooding material. The window apertures were trimmed with ally strip bolted through the Lexan and the frame. As I had no roof, and doubted my ability to sew up something that wouldn't spoil the whole car, I visited 4 local car trimmers and asked for quotes. Two never bothered to send me any quotes at all, one was so busy that he couldn't take on any work for 9 months, and the remaining trimmer wanted £1200 for a tonneau and hood. Considering that any Midge hood is a fairly simple affair, I thought this was rather steep so I decided to make the tonneau first as that seemed the simpler of the two, and bought a second hand 1950's semi-industrial sewing machine. It took me several days, but in the end I think it does look reasonably presentable.



The interior and side screens of Mike's Midge

Next came the interior. In keeping with the period look, the handbrake was fitted to the left hand side of the gearbox cover using fabricated brackets that allowed the lever to be almost upright when it is fully on. I moulded a fibreglass propshaft tunnel and gearbox cover, the interior panels were trimmed with vinyl, and the original single Herald seats were cut down to just their bases. A Herald rear seat was modified to provide a full width backrest and this was fixed to the front seats with



Here's a picture of the home made tonneau

I drove the car for a couple of weeks, weather permitting, but found that there was so much negative camber on the rear wheels that the tyres would occasionally rub on the inner wheel arches. To remedy this I bought another used leaf spring and experimented with the number of leaves, adding and removing until I achieved a more upright wheel and no more excessive camber. In the end I fitted 10 out of the original 11, far more than the build plans recommend. I suppose this is due to the fact that

when JC produced his first plans, most donor cars were a lot younger than they are now and consequently springs were much stiffer. As for the hood, well, I did chicken out. The tonneau experience convinced me that my sewing skills are not as good as I thought. However, there is a happy ending to this hood saga. I found a local manufacturer of boat covers who had made a few car hoods, and he gave me the unbelievable quote of £200 + materials. All in cost, £278. So there we have it folks, another Midge returns to the road, albeit in a slightly different form than first designed by Mr C, but it's all mine, and I love it.



Mike's Midge in its natural habitat

MOBC BADGES

Do you have a grille badge or perhaps a dashboard badge like the ones here?



If the answer is 'no' and you would be interested in purchasing a pair, please let Jim Hewlett know. The price for our previous order came out at about £15 including UK delivery.

THE RULES OF BUYING GOOD CLASSIC CARS HAVE ALWAYS REMAINED THE SAME: TRY TO FIND THE BEST ONE YOU CAN AFFORD, LOOK FOR ORIGINALITY, MATCHING NUMBERS AND CORRECT ENGINES.

But if you actually like classic cars, this is a load of rubbish. If you like cars, you should really be looking for cars with mismatched engines, dodgy body kits and just enough rust to make it look a bit ropey but still hold together when you go over a bump.

Because those cars are a bargain, and more importantly they have been driven in the past by people like you. Why does it have the wrong engine? Probably because the owner holed a piston or warped a head, and it was the quickest and cheapest way to get it back on the road. Why does it have a body kit? Because the owner loved driving it so much he wanted to emulate his racing heroes. Rust? If it is non- structural, it won't affect your driving.

Lower down the scale, there are often forum punch-ups over which model was fitted with which hubcap. Again, most of this is rubbish. A friend, once the director of a large Italian sports car company in the 1960s and 70s told me that almost every time he visited the factory the workforce were on strike. Cash flow was so bad that often parts suppliers refused to send bits until they had received payment. The mechanics would be sent down-town to the local motor factors to buy something-anything- that fitted, so that the car could be finished and sold.

Another problem with lovely cars is that they don't remain so lovely if you drive them. A few months ago Quentin Wilson sold his E-Type, because he'd over-restored it. When a car is too nice, with ten layers of immaculate paint glimmering in the sunlight, immaculate chrome and an engine you could eat your dinner off, it takes a brave person to go and rag it around a dirty B-road in the rain.

So why should enthusiasts go with the bitsa rather than the trailer queen? Because they are more fun. Another scratch won't matter. Another oil drip won't even be noticed. And if the worst comes to the worst and you warp the head, just go and get another one. You'll get to do a lot more driving, and you'll be buying a bargain while all the 'collectors' line up to buy a shiny thing with wheels as an investment. Then tell people your car is a load of rubbish. That way prices will stay low and we enthusiasts will be left alone to enjoy our cars in peace. Just don't smile too much, or you might give the game away!

TONY ARNOLD'S MIDGE



Tony's Midge - a credit to its builder

I didn't intend to buy a Midge 3 years ago I had just purchased a reconditioned herald engine however when I arrived to pick it up it was attached to a midge chassis, when talking to the seller he had the body tub so a deal was struck and I became the proud owner of one of these little cars.

There was a lot of fabrication required and as an inspiration I used the 1935 Aston Martin Ulster, I have always wanted a boat tailed roadster so after reuniting the body shell to the refurbished chassis I wondered how to construct the boat tail.



The boat tail of Tony's Midge. Any similarity to a Morris Minor bonnet is just coincidental!

As I intended to encase the fuel tank in steel and extend the chassis for safety in another twist of fate I was at the Stoneleigh Kit car show and was talking to the owner of a nice boat tailed Bentley replica, when asked how he had constructed the boat tail on his car he told me the secret was to use a Morris minor bonnet, suddenly it all slotted into place, I modified the rear tub to get the right angle to attach the bonnet then built up the sides in

steel (as they are a nice aerofoil shape they work well) then I cut the opening in the bonnet and created the boot, it is still work in progress but should be a rather unique car when finished.

There have been a lot of hurdles to overcome with angles and attachments but it will be rewarding in the end.

If anyone wished to do the same and wishes any help I am more than willing to share the pitfalls of doing this.



CLASSIC CARS AND THE MOT TEST - THIS CHECKLIST MAY HELP MIDGE OWNERS



Depending on your viewpoint, the MOT test is either a welcome yearly check of your car's roadworthiness and street-legality or an annual pain and a drain on your finances. Lucky owners of cars manufactured before 1960 don't have to endure the 12-monthly check over - their cars are exempt from compulsory MOT testing.

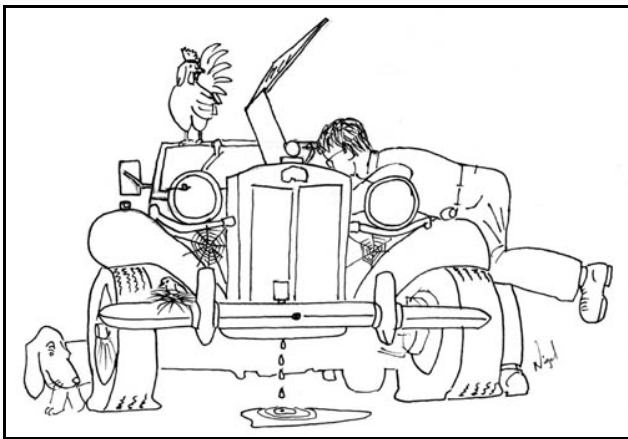
This is an overview of the MOT test as it applies to classic cars, including the important exemptions. General points to bear in mind are that you can get an MOT up to a month (minus a day) before your current MOT runs out, and still keep the same

renewal date. You can only legally drive your vehicle on the road if the MOT has run out only if you are driving it to or from somewhere to be repaired, or to a pre-arranged MOT test. The maximum charge for an MOT, stipulated by law, is £54.85, although many testing stations charge less.

The best long-term plan of action is to find an MOT tester you can trust who is happy to discuss the requirements of the test and explain any failure points he discovers - and stick with him. In this way, the tester will get to know you and the car, and you'll be better informed about your car's state of health.

Seat belts

Most pre-1965 cars are not required by law to have seatbelts, but for most post-'65 cars and all older cars that have had seatbelts retro-fitted, the belts must be in good condition with no frays, correctly functioning buckles and solid corrosion-free mounting points. If they are fitted with a retraction mechanism, it must work properly. Since 1965, when cars were first required to have seatbelt mounting-points fitted by law, various other regulations have come in concerning the amount of belts fitted and their type. The seats themselves must also be firmly secured.



Emissions

The emissions test for classics is much more tolerant than for modern cars. Basically, if there's no visible smoke on tick over (with the choke off) and the exhaust doesn't kick out excessive carbon monoxide, you should be OK. And if you your car is smoking out the MOT testing garage, it's time to take remedial action anyway. Exhausts and manifolds should be hole and leak-free.

Corrosion

All structural areas of the car must be in sound condition, and any mounting points for suspension, steering or seat belts must be solid for 30cm around that area. Cars with separate chassis should have the body properly attached to the chassis. In

addition, there shouldn't be any sharp or jagged edges on the bodywork that could cause serious damage to a pedestrian in a crash.

Brakes

Foot and handbrakes need to work properly with no pulling to either side and no binding. There should be no leaks in the brake lines, master cylinder or slave cylinders. All brake components should be securely fitted.

Steering

There should be no excessive play at the steering wheel or at the road wheels. Generally speaking, steering boxes are allowed a little more play at the steering wheel than steering racks - and some boxes can be adjusted. All elements of the steering system should be fastened to the car securely. The tester will go through the whole steering system, including all the joints, looking for any slack that will induce a fail. Excessive play in any of the wheel bearings will also cause the car to fail its test.

Suspension

The 'bounce test' is a good way to see if your suspension is working properly. Bounce each corner of the car in turn; if the body carries on bouncing, the shock absorbers/dampers are worn and will cause an MOT fail - there should be no leaks and no play in suspension linkages.

Wheels and tyres

Wheels should be in good condition with no serious cracks or corrosion; tyres should have at least the minimum legal depth of tread - 1.6mm in a continuous band around the central three quarters of the tyre.

Instruments and lights

Headlights must work correctly, with the correct aim on full and dip beam. Rear lights, indicators, brake lights, hazard flashers and number plate lights must all be working correctly, as should any visual or audible readouts on the dashboard. Windscreen wipers should work correctly with no splits in the blades and windscreen washers should work and be correctly aimed.

Miscellaneous

Any cracks in the windscreen in the driver's field of vision will cause a fail, as will a non-functioning horn. The bonnet catch and that on the boot lid or hatch should open and lock. All doors must work from both inside and out. The registration plate must be appropriate for the year of the vehicle - only cars registered before 1973 can use the old black and white plates. The VIN/chassis plate must be fitted, easily read and tie-in with your previous MOT (usually a computerised check these days). The speedometer must work.

Good luck at your next MOT with the Midge!

And from Richard Hazelgrove.....

I entered the Midge in the Historic Grande Prix at Bressuire in France recently. It was a fantastic event. 10,000 people attended over the two days and a great spirit of camaraderie. My dynamo blew up on Saturday, but by the time I arrived on Sunday morning some other competitors had sourced a replacement and fitted it! There were 12 cars in my class and my best result was 4th.



Well done Richard, your Midge looks the part!

THE MIDGE MK2

Here's a (lack of) progress report on the Midge MK2 from our mentor John Cowperthwaite. If you thought that making your own Midge road legal was difficult, then read on....



Progress can be likened to wading through treacle. The current regulations state that the car has to be finished, roadworthy with an MOT. The MOT certificate and a current certificate of insurance plus all the relevant paperwork and a minimum 6 months road tax plus a fifty pound fee have to be submitted to DVLA who at their discretion may or may not require that it is submitted for an 8 point check at a VOSA test station.

The car is totally finished to the best of my ability, and having understood from DVLA that the car had to be tested on its chassis number and that its original registration number must not be recorded

on the MOT certificate, I spent weeks trying to find a testing station that would co-operate. Most said it could not be done. DVLA said it should not be a problem and the selected MOT station could phone them for confirmation at the time of the test.

Eventually a mechanic friend who does not test but has his own repair garage offered to take the car away and deliver it to his 'Classic car friendly' MOT tester 15 miles away.

This he duly did but he did not fetch it back for two weeks! The fail list was comprehensive but all simple faults and only one was relative to the build. The others were things like spring hanger bushes, insecure front to rear loom under the car where my other friendly garage had forgotten to re-secure it after replacing the front to back brake line, which shared the same clips. Also two of the flexi hoses they had replaced were deemed to be wrongly positioned, two tyres had faults although they appear perfect, and the horn decided to be intermittent on the test!

The only design fault was they want me to slightly re-route the handbrake linkage as they say it could foul the chassis. I don't think that it could but you can't argue with these guys.

So the car was collected and I was told, 'these are only small things leave it with me'. Knowing that I had no pit or ramp, and knowing the state of my eyesight he was being kind so I agreed.

This was on the 28th of May, I expected the car to be returned any day, and not wishing to pressure him I just left it with him. After a month had passed I called in, sort of casually to see what progress had been made. The car was still over his pit and had not moved. Nor had any work been done on it. My options were to either risk falling out with him and persuade him to move a yard full of cars in order to get it out and then have to ask him to bring it back to my house (Remember he has motor trade insurance, the car has no MOT and I can't drive anymore) so having accepted his apology that the delay was due to pressure of work and his promise to make a start on it after work that very day, I left it with him.

He eventually brought the car back and I was pleased to see it arrive until he told me that he could not find the time to work on it. When I looked at the fail certificate I was dismayed to find that it had after all been tested on its registration number I had the option to get the work done and somehow return it for a retest to the MOT station that had failed it so I contacted DVLA to ask what the position was now that the registration number appeared on the MOT documentation.

'Oh that doesn't matter anymore; it won't be a problem'. So now I have gone full circle and back to my friendly garage across the road who worked on the car previously. No problem says Roger, viewing the fail sheet; these are only bits and pieces and some are our fault! I can fix it all for you now it can have a normal MOT test.... but I can't fit it in for at least 3 weeks (!)

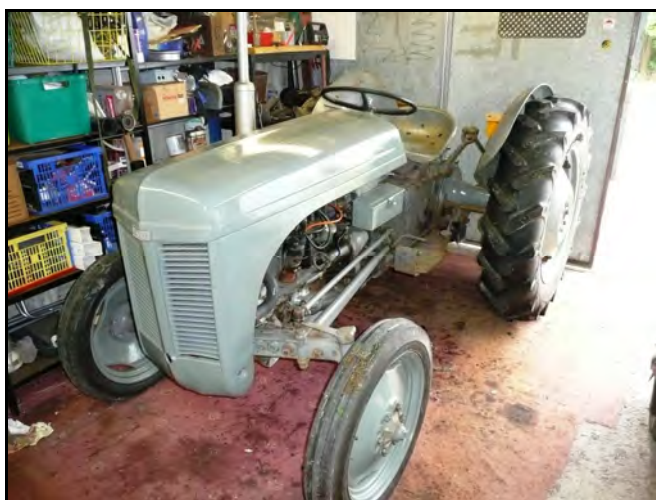
In the meantime I still can't sell any plans until the outcome is clear. So the hold button is pressed ad infinitum!



**The Midge MK2.
All set to hit the
road once the
bureaucracy is
sorted.**

Not only does our Secretary, Jim Hewlett own two Midges, but he's also a tractor enthusiast and has a Fergie which he has restored. In this article, he gives us an insight into his 'other' hobby.

So what do Midge owners do when not Midgeing? Midges are known for their relative simplicity, basic wiring and open air nature. They don't go very fast, but attract attention and admiration from passers-by. Most have a maximum of two seats and require a driver who knows a spanner from a screwdriver.



So what could be more natural than to expand my fleet with a 1957 TE Ferguson Tractor Type D TVO? Only one seat, top speed of 12 mph and a wiring system that makes most lawn-mowers look complicated. No lighting, no indicators, rod brakes

on the rear wheels only and GPM rather than MPG. Most regulations are inapplicable, MOT, Tax and emission controls absent; most of the safety devices hadn't been invented. Insurance for road use is required. As robotic cars become a reality inventors might want to consider the Fergie as a prototype. Once running in a field you can hop off and chuck bales off the trailer for cattle feed, before hopping back on before you hit the opposite hedge. You will need a piece of string if you want it to keep doing circles. I remember my father doing that and have no intention of repeating it. Elf and Safety would have kittens.

Like Midges they are not very expensive, a few thousand will get you a nice model and there are quite a few types to choose from, generally grey. The one I bought cost me a grand, I've spent another £1225 getting it right, the four tyres being a significant part. You can get all the bits new or second hand and a club to help you get it registered or re-registered with DVLA if you want. In fact, just like the MOBC!

NEW MEMBER

Welcome to **Jeff Brockhurst from Seasalter**, near Whitstable in Kent. Jeff has become the proud keeper of the Midge formerly owned by Stephen Rollo. We hope that you will enjoy being a member of the Club.



And so my final Newsletter comes to an end. Thanks again to everyone for being a part of this great Club. During the summer I've been pleased to welcome a number of members to my home in North Wales. If you're coming my way, then please call in to say hello and discuss the latest Midge gossip.

John