

MIDGE MAGAZINE



Spring 2016



Midge Owners and Builders' Club

Chris Bird's Midge BEA

SPRING APPROACHES...

So that was Winter, huh? Well actually I'm writing this in late March, so there may yet have to be some heavy editing.

Normally by now I can fill a page or two waxing poetic on hard frosts, the vast snow-fields, the approaching glaciers, trees exploding in the cold. (actually only one in recent memory, and it was looking a bit sick in the Autumn) Water butts splitting and drifts up to here. (Use your imagination.) Well... none of that. A bit of flooding or at least a puddle in the porch, and the cat looking a bit miffed about being asked to use an outside toilet when the wind blows where a cat doesn't like it.

On the up-side, the wind and rain have forced me inside, barely venturing out during the calmer bits to cut a couple of trees down, refill the log box and cautiously sneak into the garage to replace the odd thermostat, (The tractor boiled when I was shifting the logs), tinker with the chainsaw and sit in the Midge thinking of sunnier days to come. You'd be forgiven for assuming I've had lots of time to generate this, my second MOBC Magazine, and I'm glad to say that's reasonably true, but it's amazing how much time can be wasted looking at kittens on the internet and trying to find files that I know I put safely somewhere in 'documents' that turn up somewhere else. With a bit of luck there will be enough contributed articles to mean I can trim down this erudite, if educational verbiage. Remember members, the more articles you write the less there will be of my drivel. So sharpen that pencil and get scribing for the next.

Chris Bird's power loss gremlin reminded me of a fault I had on a Land Rover, but I'll tell you about that later.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Jim'.

MK2, Light at the end of the tunnel.

This will not be news for many, but for those who don't use Facebook, the internet, MOBC web pages or gossip. This from John Cowperthwaite. Dated January 31st 2016.

I just received confirmation from DVLA that the MK2 Midge is fully legal and the V5c identifying it as a Suzuki based Midge MK2 'Roadster' is in the post. I believe that the Midge MK2 is the ONLY special that can currently be built in the UK with a standard MOT test and without recourse to IVA testing and can be built by any competent amateur from plans/templates for just the cost of the donor car and the wood and aluminium used in it's construction. My car cost around £1500 to build as seen. The weather equipment is on it's way and will be available as a £20 set of patterns, the material cost is under £50 and can be sown on a domestic machine. The MK2 may not be as aesthetically pleasing as the MK1 but this is mainly due to the restrictions imposed on me by the regulations, which demanded that I designed a car around a totally unmodified chassis. What I set out to achieve and have achieved is the ability for anyone to remove the body from a car and build a 'Special' which is how I started in the 60's with those archaic donors the Austin Seven and the ubiquitous Ford 8. ...and it is 4WD!

More Mk2 news on page 10.



Clive Brown has recently joined the club and is looking for a Suzuki donor for a Mk2 Midge.

With reference to the number of Midgees in France, where the weather must be more suitable than ours. Gareth Bennett wrote..

Hi Jim,

Interesting to see another "Midge" in France, I holiday in France every year with "Mimi" my Midge, she attracts a lot of attention.

This year "Mimi" drove me to the south, to Pontonx sur l'Adour, near Dax, some friends of mine moved down from the Loire Atlantique, so I thought "Mimi" could stretch her legs a little more, and pay them a visit, Its never bothered me using motorways, the péage was a problem, I had no passenger to feed the toll booth, so had to keep climbing out, and the périphérique at Bordeaux..., at 4-30pm, Wow! but we survived, I was hot and bothered, "Mimi" kept her cool, burbled along, and took it all in her stride. Très Bon.

My friends were so glad to see her again, "Mimi" was their wedding car, and we had to drive around, showing her off to all the new friends they had made, with quite a few glasses of wine toasting our "grand route"

Just proves, the Midge can cope, so USE IT!



Gareth said he never takes photo's himself, the car has been going over to France for 15 yrs,... plenty of photos taken by others en route, even video'd on the péage. This photo was taken in the UK He continues....

Mimi has been in the club mag a few times, I've done many trips, even towing a mini caravan that I'd made myself, when I did the farthest north south east & west of mainland Britain, to celebrate my 60th birthday.

For those that don't know me, Mimi was built outside, I don't have a garage, and she hasn't got a hood, I wear a crash helmet, and use her in all weathers. GB.

The Mystery of the Phantom Misfire. Chris Bird.

I do like to have a book or two for Christmas and this year I found Guy Martin's latest offering in my stocking. In one chapter he writes about his Pike's Peak climb on his specially built motorbike. You may have seen the TV program and remember the problems of misfiring and cutting out that limited his revs to just 5,000. Well I know the feeling (in a VERY small way) and back in 1989 I wrote this rather melodramatic tale for the "Moss Media".

Clad in an overall, scarf and cloth cap, I climbed into my Triumph 13/60 based Midge. The hood was down, the side screens were safely stowed in the back and I was ready for another test drive. Nothing unusual you are thinking – but then I was 10.30pm on the 19th December 1988 and the temperature was only



8 degrees C. So why was I venturing forth on this dark Winter night? It was not just for the exhilaration of a brisk top-down drive on a cold dark night – no – mine was a more serious mission. I was going in search of the 'Phantom Misfire'.

Under the shadow of Box Hill in the heart of Surrey lies the small village of Mickelham, where a series of sweeping, fast bends on the A24 dual carriageway had claimed many a life. And it was here that for the previous two months my Midge had been beset by the Phantom. Symptoms ranged from sporadic misfire to complete engine failure - always in the same place and always at the same speed. Was it the ghost of some pre-war MG or Wolseley driver taking exception to JC's copy (homage!)? Was it a mystery force field emanating from the heart of Box Hill to shut down the ignition? It was time for the test!

.....Chris Continues....

As I started the engine, I reflected on the precautions I had taken. Being a practical sort, not given to believing in ghosts, I had checked almost everything in the car that might have been the problem. My first diagnosis of fuel starvation led to the rebuild of the fuel pump with new valves and diaphragm checking the fuel line and fitting a small filter in the tank outlet. When this had failed, I had stripped the Stromberg carb and replaced the diaphragm. This had been followed by a distributor overhaul with new points and condenser, followed by an alternative coil. The plugs were checked, cleaned and re-gapped and the colour suggested that the mixture was spot on. So after all this I was confident that any misfire on this test would definitely be down to purely supernatural causes..... Turning out of my drive, I headed out through Surrey suburbia – jolting and jarring over the many pot holes and man hole covers (no change there!!) Curious faces turned as I passed and others peer in amusement from the warm interiors of their luxury saloons. After a mile, I am out on the open road – a long straight, three lane stretch with a down gradient. The exhaust howls as I go up through the gears to about 60mph (in a Midge you can get your kicks within the speed limit!).

The wind whipped around me, sucking the air from my lungs and tugging at my cap and scarf. Within a minute though, I had to slow for a traffic island, my crossed fingers and thumping pulse preventing me from doing a smooth double de-clutch into second (worn synchromesh).

The test was about to begin! I turned onto the dual carriageway and the Midge leaped away, passing four humble hatchbacks before the first bend. This is a sharp left-hander but the Midge sailed round at 60 – fast enough to feel some G's but not fast enough for the swing axles to get excited. The next two right-handers were taken in fine style and I even overtook a couple of large

German saloons before accelerating up to 70 as I took the sweeping curve through Mickelham. The feeling was fantastic. The sharp exhaust note cut through the still night air and the car felt perfectly balanced as I entered the last, crucial bend. Would I make it – or would the Phantom get me? I pulled out to overtake a Marina and was just thinking that I had escaped the Phantom's clutches when..... I heard a familiar, blood chilling sound. A loud, exasperated cackle from the exhaust heralded a severe misfire and then, quite suddenly, the engine was dead. The car slowed as if a giant hand had grasped it and within seconds I was down to 50mph. A moment later the engine spluttered back to life – and then died again. The Marina pulled level on the inside, its puzzled driver shaking his head. What could I do? There is no hiding in a Midge, so I could only make a big show of heaving on the choke and banging the dashboard, to cover my embarrassment. The Phantom had struck again. Luckily, my misery was short lived. Within a quarter of a mile, as I cleared the last bend, the engine surged back into life and I was off again. I turned at the next roundabout and headed for home. With the traffic keeping my speed down to 60, I had an uneventful trip home and was only suffering from mild hypothermia and acute disappointment as I turned

into my drive.

So from this evidence have you solved the mystery? A misfire and cutting out at 70mph on my favourite bit of road. Never any problems in lower gears or at lower speeds. I was going rapidly round the bend – but my Midge just wouldn't!

Well to begin with I thought I had solved it by

fitting a new fuel pump, but two weeks later it was back. And it was only then that I found the real culprit, a coil of swarf in the petrol tank outlet had collected enough paint flakes and dirt to form a valve. At low speed the flow was insufficient to make the bits clump together, but at high speed they formed a plug. The new pump had helped a bit, but the extra suction soon formed a bigger plug!



.....Chris Concludes....

But why always on the same road you might be asking. Well the answer to that is simple - during the troubles, it was my test track and the only place I tried to reach that speed!"

Ah – that was a quarter of a century ago and the A24 is now a veritable galley of road markings and calm and quiet place to drive. And what of Guy Martin's little problem? Well in the full glare of publicity and cameras, they tried everything (re-mapping the ECU etc.) and failed. He still won his class, but effectively had a rev limiter. When they got home they found that a faulty compression fitting in the fuel line was acting as a restrictor valve. If he had only asked....

I can highly recommend Guy's book "When you Dead, you Dead" – which incidentally, is a favourite quote from his Latvian grandfather. I think he had a point.....

After the excitement, some members may need to go and get a cup of tea. The rest of us will wait here until you get back. Did anybody else have the Dick Barton tune going on in their head? No? Just me then.

I'm beginning to think Midge plans have built in gremlins, but it's probably just life. J.



Hot off the ferry, here follows an article on Joep Bustin's heavily modified Midge. Most Midges are different, This shows not only how far you can go, but also how tolerant and understanding the continental authorities (in this case Dutch) can be. By the way, 193kph = 119.9mph but I think it might be theoretical.



Joep's Triumph Midge : Unbelievable but true!

This story is explained by Joep. Written by William Hill, interpreted by Jim. Randomised by computer.

A Pre-war MG? William starts:-

Joep Bustin is one of the most active members of our classic car club 'The Berghoes in Posterholt.' Joep grew up in the automotive world and has previously taken over the family car

company. Bustin Auto has gained strong popularity among the public through the provision of new cars and used cars, but even more so by the care with which vintage cars restored and maintained.

Joep likes tinkering with cars in his spare time - "if there was nothing on TV " - helped by his extensive knowledge of material and market. From time to time he searches the Internet for new challenges, for it really is a different world.

So, near the end of 2012, he found an ad on Marketplace for a vehicle in the form of a pre-war MG, but it was called a Triumph Midge! The type showed as unknown to Google ... Maybe a clerical error for Midget?

Google dug deeper: such a car was indeed built (designed) in England by John Cowperthwaite - as a kit car in the early eighties.

Plan and pattern

Originally the Midge was not a kit car, but was based on a plan or pattern. You will notice that for kits you buy moulds costing £500! This method allows you to work with aluminium and plywood, with the building plan consisting of 28 panels. The basis is a chassis of a Triumph Herald or Spitfire. Mr Cowperthwaite was inspired in its design by pre-war MG's.



So I loaded the ugly duckling (the translation came out as wallflower, lit; an unregarded young lady) and drove carefully to RDW Venlo (*Dutch DVLA*). Yes, the facial expression of the officer spoke volumes. Joep chuckles, and continues: My specific question was, however, how do I get a Dutch registration for it?

We looked at the chassis, engine, gearbox, rear axle: "Yes, originally a Herald". We worked through the European Register "It is known here, not stolen." Yes, it is a recognized kit car, "Papers match." Certainly, the papers are associated with this chassis."

When we went to tally everything that was wrong was that really worrying! The engine was not running, the gearbox was broken, it had no lights, it was designated as a sedan on the badge, the brakes did not work, and it had no wipers and washers.

I had one question for the RDW, "What must I do to get a license plate here?" the official stated quite simply that the car had to meet the requirements of APK (MOT).....1969!

Joep: "Well, I'm going to buy it!" The seller and I agreed a reasonable price I and drove home with the Midge.

How do I get a Dutch license plate?

Here William lets Joe speak for himself, adding 'Make your belt but stuck!' (trans 'Brace yourself! or tighten your seat-belts') "You will understand that I was curious and I contacted owner Albert K in Maasbracht. He had bought the car on a whim in England and transported it to the Netherlands, but did not know how to get a Dutch license.

My visit revealed a totally neglected Midge with an ugly back, but indeed with potential. There were English papers included, along with an import declaration. Not illogically I met with the seller, first go to the Midge to RDW for a review – if there was some chance of success, the sale would be completed.



And then...

Joep sighs: "I have, in the following months (there was not anything on TV), improved the engine, replaced the gearbox, revised the brakes, mounted headlights of a truck, as well as the lights of a motorcycle, the horn a Suzuki Alto, the reflectors of a trailer, the interior of a Mitsubishi Colt and Torpedo mirrors of an Opel Manta. The windshield was removed, because then you do not need wipers and washers. There are no belts, no CO measurement, no ABS, ASP, eOBD etc".

He made another appointment with the RDW. Again meeting the officer who saw the funny side and was glad that for once he had a real job.

The tenor of the conversation was, it meets the MOT requirements of 1969.

But another problem manifested itself: it is a convertible, and the license plate, he is described as a sedan. The man did not hesitate: "We are in the car as a sedan, three seconds later we assess the conversion to convertible. You have passed, Mr Bustin. In approximately 10 days you will receive the registration certificate."

Meanwhile.

My next question to the officer : "I want to adjust the body to "boat tail" and I want to build a six-cylinder engine. Is it allowed?"
His dry response: "Behind the rear axle you can change without additional technical inspection. Engine Modification may subsequently, but not today . Ensure that it is technically well executed."

So, later...

Meanwhile, it is the spring of 2013 and I have convinced myself that it's not a replica, but a design that fits the time.

If Standard of Coventry - this was the factory of Triumph – was correct, the car had participated in the Grand Prix, they built this car and had finished second behind Bugatti.

Joep (with a grin): "So I went to work. I removed the superstructure from the bulkhead and placed the driver's seat on the bare chassis to determine the seating position. There I sat with many wine glasses, I also had to determine the location of the gas tank. I sawed the chassis behind the rear axle, and built a cage around the driver and passenger. This required more wine and photographs.



I made a construction of tube and overlaid it with aluminium (*kitchen*) foil. Pushed the car out and, watching for any change in the weather, re-covered it and looked again. Still not good. More wine. Again. Eventually I was able to determine the shape and skinned it with aluminium plate.



Meanwhile I found a six-cylinder engine from a GT6 on E-bay.



108 hp instead of the original four cylinder 55) by 'tapping the head' (*arranging a good deal*) and placed it in the Midge. Adjusting engine 40 cm backwards. Motor completely dismantled and fitted with new seals, freeze (*core?*) plugs and gaskets. Dashboard design and make. In the style of the 30s: "Campina Milk truck float cloud plate" and many gauges"

Driving test in 2014 : one big thrill

Joep with glinsterogen (*glistening eyes*) "There I was, with goose bumps on my back and knispervliegen (*insects {lit Autumn leaves}*) between the teeth! During a test drive on the A73 - I had been well above the speed limit - I drove in to the Roertunnel. Suddenly a terrible noise from the gearbox, in the middle of the tunnel. The hairs stood upright on my body. What is that! Something broken....

I painstakingly emerged from the Roertunnel. I saw the headlines in mind already, —“Disturbed crazy maniac stranded with oldtimer car in Roertunnel. Tunnel 3 hours clogged”.— You’ll understand that the return home was more difficult. As it was, just the third gearbox was destroyed, but I’m going to keep trying.”

Hill Climbs

Joep sighs: “With Google, I found a racing history and managed to figure out the Midge: Peter Hill participated in 2000/2001 with this in Midge Hill Climbs in England (hence the number 56 on the grille). The Midge was issued a racing license. During one of the competitions he hit something with a rear wheel. As a result of the differential distorted the suspension with the result that the transmission through the solid shaft again came under pressure . The gearbox incident was caused by that.”

Number one!

Joep looks back and smiles: "I reduced it further and refined details ...

Prior to August 2015 it had to be MOT tested. I had beforehand been at RDW for the engine change. If you come with half a car you'll have the officer scratching his head, which is generally unhelpful. So it's worth making an effort!

In July 2015 I visited the "Dutch National Triumph Days" in Doorn. This is where about 400 Triumphs come together. I had applied In advance and jokingly attached a photo of my project. My assumption was that I would not be welcome because I had killed a Triumph Herald. I promptly got a message back that I was certainly welcome and I definitely had to compete in the competition d 'elegance. I was afraid I would be pelted with rotten eggs and tomatoes, signed up, but in the "modified" class. We'll see.

Upon arrival, I immediately got a lot of attention and questions. All the "Triumph Specialists" rushed towards it. “

Someone asks me: "What is this car?" I say: "In origin, it is a Midge, but it is an ugly thing.”

"Oh ...," said the questioner. "In the Netherlands is only one other known Midge. And I have it...." I didn't know he was a judge!

All day I've been through a lot of attention and talk my mouth dry. Interviews, photos. Engine hood open and shut. Explain. Compliments. Critical moments.

At about 16 o'clock was the announcement of the cup division "Concours d 'elegance' in Class Modified:

*No. 3 : a gorgeous black TR3 supercharged .

*No. 2: A Triumph Sammio Spyder

*No. 1: Triumph Midge Special!.....Hey, that's me. Cup, kisses, congratulations, fun!

Isn't it a beautiful Day?

Two weeks later I sign up for my appointment at RDW Venlo for engine modification, "So, hey! Which has become beautiful! "

But there is still one problem: The body has already changed in 2013. The engine has been changed now. And you may change only one third of a car you want to keep the original identity. If not, then you have built a new vehicle that must meet the requirements of 2015 !!

Gulp!

And now?

Joep enthusiastically: "Fortunately, I had done my homework and I was able to demonstrate that the engine was in 1969 and that in the Wikipedia description of the Midge mentioned the six-cylinder engine of the Vitesse / GT6."

Conclusion: "Mr. Bustin, within 10 days you can receive your custom badge by mail."

Last entry, Joep. A midge is a mosquito: they keep you awake all night, tearing past your head, they always drink your blood, and find a way in, and you're there for days of fun!

This started as William's script from Joep's words, translated by Google, and then edited and interpreted by Jim. So it may look a bit unusual, but then so is the car.



Event Note:

DONINGTON HISTORIC FESTIVAL

Date: 30 April 2016 to 02 May 2016

Event advert

Whether you're a long-time enthusiast or have never seen a historic racing car in action before, you'll find plenty to entertain you at the Donington Historic Festival. After just four years the event is already firmly established as a major fixture on the international historic racing calendar, attracting many thousands of spectators, hundreds of world-class historic racing cars and huge numbers of classic car club displays.

Car Type: All classics Number of Cars Attending:

Location: Donington

Area: Derbyshire Region: East Midlands

<http://www.doningtonhistoric.com/the-event/>

Cast MOBC Car Badges.

I don't know how long it will be before we need to organise a production run of the hexagonal 'MOBC' and oval 'Midge' car badges, however I have now sold the last new ones and the 3 older ones given or sold back to the club. I don't doubt more will be required.

Prices will probably have risen above the previous '£10 a set plus postage', but hopefully not too much. If you e-mail me then I'll start building a list. (there are two members wanting some already) I would imagine there would be a minimum order.

Tee shirts, pens, badges, mugs, caps and the like might also be sourced, depending on demand. I have found a boiler suit supplier, but while the prices are good, and the service excellent, it is quite easy to order the wrong size. I'll put the details on the sales and wants page when I'm sure I've achieved the right size.



Dave Harvey writes,

I've been travelling around Europe in my Midge towing a teardrop caravan, will be off again in March heading for Slovakia and Yugoslavia from there I am not sure of my direction yet maybe back to GB and a tour of Scotland. Photo of car and teardrop in Germany last year. Since I reconstructed the Midge in between 2009 & 2011 -18 months- my Midge has covered 14,568 miles around Europe and still going strong. all the best, Dave.

Gremlin Basket (Known otherwise as Problem Corner) case study.

Referring back to Chris Bird's fuel problem I had a similar effect from an odd direction. The symptoms were that my Land Rover, a Light-Weight, would loose power and eventually stall on fast runs, especially bumpy ones, but start again quite happily after a few seconds. Eventually I found the cause.

The introduction of ethanol (5%) causes some plastics to dissolve, and there had been a plastic filter on the end of the petrol pipe in the tank under the driver's seat. When this dissolved it turned into a cloud of particles floating in the fuel, it was sucked up and reached the in-line filter before the carburettor. Gradually they blocked the filter, but since the flow was upward, and the particles were slightly heavier than petrol, they fell back when the engine wasn't running, and if the road was very smooth the bits didn't lift off the bottom of the filter.

Remember, if your fuel system seems to be getting a bit erratic, then the Ethanol mix (5% in the UK) may be the cause. I think it made the float in my Midge's factory refurbished Solex B30pse1 carburettor swell up and jam on the side of the chamber. Fortunately I still had the old copper one. I haven't found out for sure whether it attacks SU Fuel pump diaphragms yet, but I fear the worst. J.

This is definitely turning into a continental Magazine, as well as the new members from France and Holland. I'm wondering which language to publish in. The Teardrop caravan certainly suits the Midge. I was slightly baffled for a bit when I found I had two articles about Euro-trotting maroon Midges pulling Teardrop caravans. If anyone is interested in making one I'll start looking for the plans. I don't know if Gareth Bennet and Dave Harley have met up out there yet, but I think if they could arrange to park nose to nose we could have a nice new banner strip for the magazine.

Lesley Dyball (previously Oldfield) is looking for anyone who knows Ian Gillanders, an MOBC member then from the Croydon area. He knew Pete Oldfield, a Midge builder who has now passed away. The Midge is now being completed by a prospective new member.

Financial report. Short version..... In the black.

Previously.

When I took over there was £500 in the bank.

The Present.

I can report that the bank balance is **£612.96**.

There are no outstanding debts or credits.

Expenses

The only expense I'm claiming will be a couple of ink cartridges.

The Past.

The calendars cost £240.90 plus £72 .95 postage and we made a slight profit of £2.10. as intended. We sold all 55 and could have used another 10.

The Future.

I have sold the last brass MOBC badge, so the question of a fresh run will be answered by how many requests I get. As yet there is a call for two oval and one hex. The Mk2 Midge may well trigger a surge in interest as new members join us.

I would like to organise a sew on badge for boiler suits if there is a demand for them, I would do the boiler suit itself but the likelihood of fitting everybody to their satisfaction and getting the quality right as well..... I think that might be a bib too far.

MOBC Tee shirts are possible, and have been done before, but most of us aren't really that shape. I'll wait and see what the demand is.

The Bank.

I have moved the account to the Co-operative bank, being a bit more ethical than the rest.

Welcome to

Yvonnick Bourigault,
Clive Brown,
John Cox,
Joep Bustin,
Robert Duff,

Darryl Hudson,
Arthur Waldie
Grant Prentice

The 2016 **membership list** is at <http://midgebuilders.homestead.com/Membership-password.html> You'll need the password to get into it. The password ~~will~~ ~~be was~~ is going to have been... in the email advising of this magazine.

The second Didcot Railway Centre Transport Rally takes place on Sunday 5 June. Featuring: a Wide Selection of buses, coaches & commercial vehicles

If you happen to be in France around the 1st of May, this below might be of interest
<http://www.classic-days.fr/PAGES/accueil-en.php>



Caveat Viator

≈M.O.B.C.≈

IT IS HEREBY CERTIFIED THAT
Mr. John Cowperthwaite.

IS GRANTED ACCEPTANCE AS
HONORARY MEMBER NUMBER 0
INTO THE ANCIENT AND EXCLUSIVE
≈ MIDGE OWNERS AND BUILDERS' CLUB ≈
ESTABLISHED 1984.

THE ABOVE MEMBER IS EXCUSED LOGIC, WASHING
UP, AND TIME-KEEPING. HE OR SHE IS ALSO
ALLOWED AND ENTITLED TO A MINIMUM OF
TWENTY (20) SUNNY DAYS PER SUMMER AND TEN
(10) SUNNY DAYS PER WINTER WITHOUT FEAR OF
PRECIPITATION OR HINDERANCE BY FOG OR LOW
CLOUD.

≈ ≈ ≈
— KEEP CALM AND KEEP MOVING —



SIGNED J Hewlett FEBRUARY 2016

These certificates -left- are available,
-Name and number suitably adjusted-
Free by email for printing at home, or
printed and posted as a PDF (without
frame) for **£2**.

Ray Jones writes:-

A 'Tail' of Two Clusters Rear Lights on a Budget

Since buying & collecting my midge I have been pleased with the overall 'period' look her builder had achieved – outline, stance, accessory and trim choices all helped toward JC's intended 'tribute to the 30's midget' effect. However one aspect lessened the impression somewhat – a combination of extended, slightly square boot construction, coupled with the use of 'candy-bar' style, trailer-type rear light fittings. Onlookers would often comment that the lights themselves were too 'modern', and of plainly recognisable origin. (NB, I have since seen photos of them fitted below bumper level on the Panther Kallista – OK for that application, but not best suited to the midge).



'Ethel's' original rearward appearance

I resolved to do something in the way of modification to these lamps, and stayed on the lookout for potential replacements. The price had to be right – there were so many other parts of the car in need of detail finishing, so competition for funds was keen! The Management (aka my GLW, Good Lady Wife) would surely review the accounts from time to time, so I decided the DIY and make-do-and-mend schools of construction were the best way forward. The 'boxy' rear aspect of the car made lights with a round or curved outline desirable, but what option was best?

True period reproduction lamps are available, but costs are significant. Browsing the internet I came across the so-called 'hamburger' type of fitting favoured by some HGV trailer builders. They seemed a suitable low cost choice so, one Ebay session later, a pair of lamps turned up at the Jones household. Sadly the body and lenses were formed from brittle, already cracked plastics, internals were fashioned from foil-thin metals, wiring was absent – altogether just too flimsy,

so into the recycling bin they went. It was clear that good, robust lamps of this type would not be cheap.

Back to the drawing board then....and after further searching, I came across some sets of Land Rover Defender lamps which might serve.



Part of a full Land Rover lamp kit

These are commonly supplied at very keen prices and their shape equates to the standard circular, individual lights fitted in years past to Austin, Morris and Triumph cars. The usual 'online auction' site once more obliged and I bought a full set of eight new lamps, wired and complete with bulbs, for £22 delivered! Worries about quality were unfounded – they were obviously built down to a price, but were tough enough for the job. Now then – how to mount them to the car without exposing rear gaiters and wiring to spoil the effect?

I took the lenses off my midge's Lucas fittings and found that the internals could be easily removed by drilling out a couple of rivets, then taking out the mounting fasteners, lamp holders and metal compartment dividers. After cutting the individual lamp feed wires this left an empty back-shell with plenty of strength, complete with wiring stubs and threaded mounting posts to which a new 'homebrew' front plate might be screwed. To arrive at the required design I traced the outline of the old lens, then extended the shape downward to leave room for a circular reflector.



Lucas light fitting internal arrangement

The new lights were of the type whose base fastens to panel-work using three self-tapping screws around a central 37mm mounting hole. The wiring gaiters extended back quite some way, too far for the car's back-shells to accommodate – this was solved by cutting away their tapered ends (since they would be enclosed anyway) and using 18mm thickness soft timber to fashion the new mounting plates. This thickness worked well to mimic the previous depth of the Lucas lenses. I mocked-up cardboard versions of the plates, then discovered that the plastic lugs for lens screws and compartment divider projected forward from the back-shells. Just as well the plates were of a fair depth – 10mm depth blind holes would be needed at four positions in the rear face to allow them to sit flush against the housing.



Mounting plate test fit on the vehicle

Out came the Black & Decker workmate, and I was able to cut out, drill & shape the new mounts from a piece of scrap timber before trial fitting the lights, then sanding, priming and painting with two coats of ultramarine polyurethane finish to match the vehicle rear wings. Once dry I placed the lamps in their final positions, installed securing screws, then fitted bulbs and lenses. A pair of 60mm diameter self-adhesive reflectors were easily fixed below the main fittings. Behind the mounting plates, lamp wiring was gathered through cable ties to sections of 5A terminal strip for common (negative) return, stop, tail and flasher lines.



Painted, assembled & ready for wiring

Because the metalwork had been removed from the backshells, earthing had to be re-established by making a short heavy gauge wire tail with a large eyelet to trap beneath one of the mounting screws. To create an eyelet big enough I simply formed an open loop from the bared twisted copper conductor, then flowed plenty of solder around it to gain rigidity and a good electrical path. All that was left to do was to mount the completed 'lighting boards' onto the car, temporarily supporting their weight while original wiring stubs were stripped back and mated-up to the appropriate terminals. I found that common coarse-pitched woodworking 'goldscrews' successfully cut a new thread into the backshells plastic lens securing pillars, and

tightened-up nicely to make a fairly strong finished assembly.



Installed, connected and working

So that was it - job done! One midge, now projecting a slightly improved 'old-car' illusion, and with existing light

fittings adapted rather than replaced. If it ever becomes necessary the original rectangular trailer lights could be completely rebuilt and put back into commission. And the best bit for this (ahem) cost-conscious owner? Total cost under £20 since only half the lighting set was needed – there are still two indicators and two sidelights tucked away in the garage! (Of course a few £'s went west when the first 'hamburger' type light fittings were discarded – but surely no other midgebuilders would make such a basic mistake...would they?) Anyway, hope the story was of some interest and provided an idea or two along the way. Happy Midgeing everyone, and long may ownership & upkeep of our cars remain do-able on limited funds! Ray

Well done Ray. Of course nobody else would be caught out by the cheap 'hamburger' lights described..... except, you guessed it. Free to a good home. Jim.

In the meantime, John Cowperthwaite has been busy in his shed, and has news about the MK2.

Midge MK2 now fitted with side screens. Now for the hood!! The idea is that the weather equipment will be a £20 set of plans that allow the hood and side screens to be made on a domestic sewing machine from PU backed nylon/canvas look material. This is relatively lightweight and completely waterproof and is available in many colours. Any machine that can sew denim can cope with it. The material is called Torino, it is 59" wide and costs around £7 per metre from local stockists. The frames are constructed from aluminium flat bar pop riveted at the joints, so no welding. Similar material is listed on eBay item number:252199725952 So it should be possible to make your own weather gear for under £50!! Watch this space!

Regards JC



Don't forget we have Bryan Coventry who makes a mean tonneau cover, and might be persuaded to follow John's plans. You'll need to buy a plan set from John, but it'll save you getting into trouble with the other half when you mangle the sewing machine. Bryan is on the membership list number 69. JH.

Make Your Own Dashboard Labels

M. J. Josling

I expect some of you will remember the word stamp machines on railway platforms and funfairs where, for a few pennies, you could stamp out your name, address, rude word, etc, onto a strip of aluminium about ¼” wide.

Well, when I first got the Midge I thought this would be an ideal way of identifying the confusing array of switches and knobs I was confronted with, but the only machine I could find was in the East Anglian Railway Museum and this was not in working condition.

More pressing jobs took priority until recently, when recovering from a bout of flu, I gave it some more thought. What I wanted was something that would look right on the dashboard of a 1930s car or in the cockpit of an early mark of Spitfire (Supermarine not Triumph). A hint of the military perhaps; white letters on a black background and screwed in place with slotted round head screws?

Well this is what I came up with:-

The following Materials are required:

- Black Tie-wraps ¼” wide
- 4mm White self adhesive letters
(www.craftcreations.com – stock code no. XL809U)
- 10/12BA slotted round head screws (brass or stainless) for metal dashboard or small round head woodscrews for wooden dashboard
(www.polished-stainless.com)
- Polyurethane gloss varnish

And the following tools:

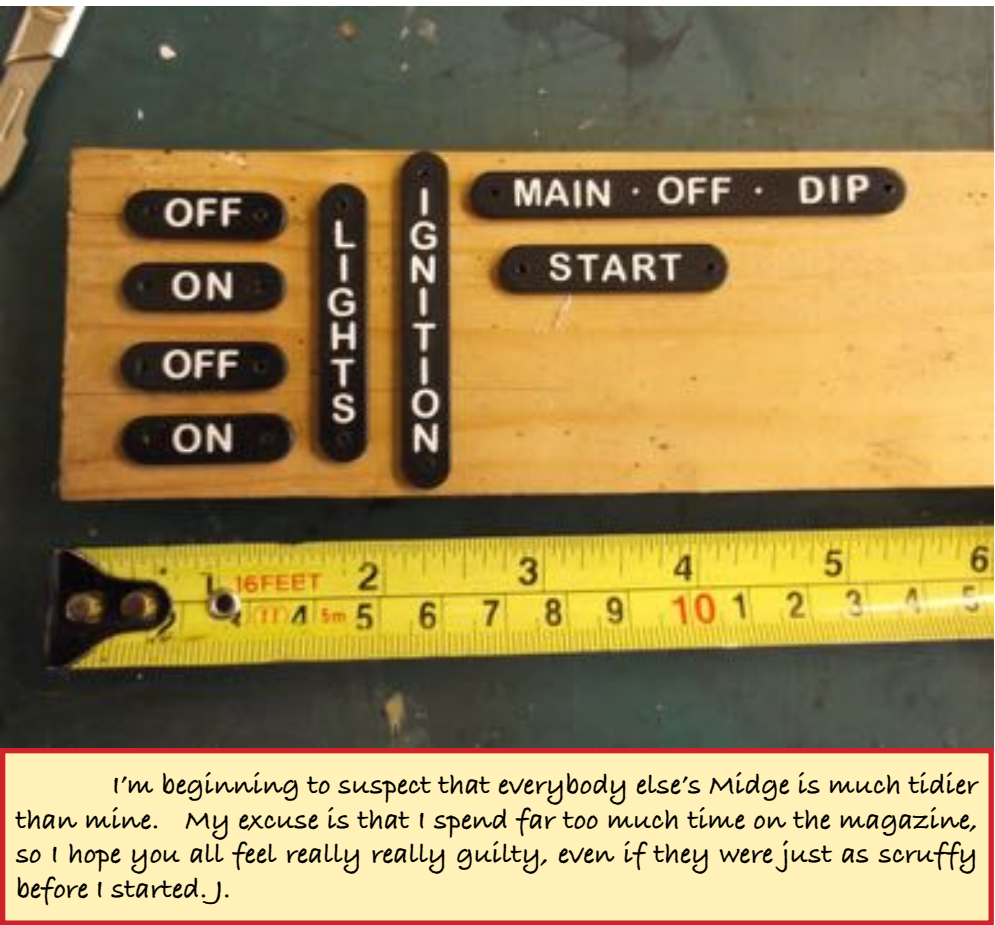
- Wire cutters
- Flat file
- Drills
- Med/fine emery cloth
- Fine wire wool
- Craft/Pen knife
- Small flat brush

Then:

1. Cut the Tie-wraps into the required lengths
2. Radius ends with file and finish with emery
3. Drill clearance holes for screws
4. Remove any burrs and lightly abrade face of labels with wire wool
5. Tease letters into place on the end of knife blade and press down firmly when positioned
6. Give labels 3 coats of varnish
7. Leave for a few days to harden then T-Cut
8. Locate on dashboard and pilot/tap drill for screws
9. Screw labels in place

You can now drive with confidence knowing full well that you are flipping the correct switches and twiddling the right knobs as the situation dictates!

M.J.J



I just found this space hanging around not doing anything, Just think, you could have advertised your redundant bits here. Unfortunately I've filled it up with this observation.

So, as the sump oil of winter dribbles onto the garage floor of life, the MOBC finds itself comfortable in terms of funds, and the membership numbers are increasing. Since there's no annual fee there isn't a marker for lapsed membership, and I don't know who has 'gone silent' so I hope all members are well.

Of the 102 members on the books 20 did not respond to the email requesting confirmation of details, however I know some of the 20 are fully active, so I've not deleted anyone yet.

On the same matter, several addresses 'bounced' my e-mails, so it might be worth checking that both my addresses are in your address book, they are;

jim@jimhewlett.com and
jimhewlett@phonecoop.coop

(Sometimes my computer decides to send through one address and sometimes another.)

Unfortunately I can't ask 'people who are not here to put their hands up' so if you didn't get notification of this, or the 'contact details' confirmation one, hopefully you will still somehow find this, read it, and respond.

There is an increasing number of Midges, (and their owners,) on the continent and some, as demonstrated, visiting regularly. One of the more perverse peculiarities of the British approach to Europe is to take absolutely no notice of the huge 'experiments' being tried across the channel, like housing policy, health-care and education, on populations almost identical to ours, and then complain about having to grow straight cucumbers. It may come as a surprise that the French and Dutch, versions of the DVLA for example, are much more sympathetic toward Midges and their owners than ours. Incidentally, and our own Czech member may confirm, some of them used to drive on the other side of the road, so a Midge fits right in.

I think the Germans and the Russians may have had something to do with that, but no names, no pack-drill.

Re: The continent, here, as a small treat, is a glimpse of myself and Fiona in a pre-war Czech car being shown around Prague in 2007. Note the right hand steering wheel.



I asked the MOBC hon treasurer if a 3 week pan European fact finding mission could be paid for from club funds. The answer was no, but in various languages.

On another matter, for reasons probably related to DVLA, I note Midges are drifting across the channel in small swarms, so when emailing continental members I try to include a 'Google translate' version, which I imagine promotes considerable hilarity amongst those that actually speak the language. I usually test the system by reverse translating it. i.e. back into English, it can be a bit odd. There was a story that if you translated 'Out of sight, out of mind' into Russian:-

С глаз долой, из сердца вон,
- and back again, it came out as 'invisible idiot'. I checked, and it's not true, but then Google might have been aware of that one and fixed it.

Anyway, that's why you'll find some emails have Dutch, French, Czech, and German foot notes. (I tried American and Australian but the software couldn't handle it)

Happy motoring.

Jim

Right you lot, that's quite enough time on the computer. On with the boiler suit and off to the garage....

Why not get your Midge in pride of place on the top of the front page? If you send me a picture, reasonably high resolution, ideally by email, side-on or 3/4 front. Similar to Terry's one on the previous Magazine page 1.

If possible take it with a plain background and on a light coloured road as it makes it easier to subtract the shadow underneath. Flash can help with that. I'll see what I can do, no promises.

This one of BEA with her new roof is a good example, but where possible sky or a blank wall is the best background.

J.

