

MIDGE MAGAZINE



Spring
2019



Richard's Midge

MOBC. the Midge Owners and Builders' Club



Hello All.

Well. Here we are again, Spring has sprung, the grass is riz etc etc. Winter has been a mix of wind, rain and sunshine with the occasional bit of snow for those of us further north. Our continental members will have had similar no doubt, but different, and with the added bonus of watching the UK doing the impression of a cat in a doorway wanting that which is out to be in and that which is in to be out.

Now we are sprung of course the weather will be much the same but windier, and if you want my opinion (I have the advantage of the keyboard) or not, the politics will be much the same.

The club (well, your humble scribe really) found a small collection of 2 inch Herald type chromed gear-stick extensions. They were snapped up so quickly that I don't have any to advertise here or on the website, although at the time of writing I have one left over. They are not terribly well made, but were going at just one pound (1.12€ and falling). If there is a flood of requests I could try having some more made, probably in painted mild steel. Anyone with a screw cutting lathe would probably be able to knock a few out, so call if you have that facility. (I don't think I could buy a lathe out of club expenses, and they are rather bulky.)

Anyway, time I got this published, hope there aren't too many typos and in case you are wondering there aren't any deliberate April fool things. Well maybe one on page 7. JH.



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

Welcome to David Hicks and Tony Bayliss

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Geoff Smith leaps in at the deep end.

Having decided to buy myself a Midge, I found the club website where Ian was advertising his Midge, I bought Ian Farrington Smith's Midge sometime in the middle of 2018.



I went over to Leaming Spa to collect it on a trailer, having got it back home and into the garage I could not wait to get started.

One of the first things I noticed was how far away the gear lever was when I was sitting comfortably, I went onto Facebook and the club website to investigate what other members had done, this varied from buying another gear lever housing and cutting it up, to welding sections of angle iron together and drilling and tapping the sections together.

Keeping a close watch on ebay, a gear housing came up at £12, it was just the housing, no gear lever I quickly bought it and waited patiently for it to arrive.



NB As mentioned, there are 2" straight gearstick extensions which can effectively lengthen your arm. (Rather less than the options used here), but possibly useful if your arms are fairly long, or your legs more on the short side. I have one, possibly two, left. JH.

Geoff Smith tells how he got round to extending his gear lever housing. "As you can see in the photo, I cut the original housing in two. The second housing I cut 5 inches out of the middle, obviously they are not an exact match as the housing is slightly tapered. I then got a 8 mm length of flat bar and drilled 6 holes, then I clamped all the pieces together and drilled through the metal and marked the casing. Then I drilled the casing and tapped the holes, putting it all together with a little loctite to make sure...I've just been out to the garage and tried it in place... what a difference.

Next job is to cut the selector shaft in half and place a tube over it to extend it by 5 inches and then mig weld it. You can find these extensions on ebay and it's not a hard job to do for the benefits it gives."



I went for cutting the gear lever housing in two plus the gear selector rod, making sure I marked the shaft so that when I cut it I could realign it. The first thing I did was to strip my gear housing down and proceeded to cut it into two sections, I then got my second housing and very carefully cut out a section about 5 inches long at a point where it looked very close to the original cuts on mine. Clamping the three sections together you could see what a great advantage this would make. The next stage was to locate a 2" by 1/4" section of mild steel plate to make the bridging work, which I set up in the drilling machine and drilled 6 holes, so that gave me two bolts to each section. I clamped it all together again and drilled through the gear housing so I could tap a thread into the gear housing, a small drop of Loctite was added to the threads, this done I set about bolting it all together, a section of steel tube was found that would go over the selector, cut to length and mig welded making sure the shaft lined up or the gear lever could have been out of line. A quick grind a bit of filler, and a coat of paint and it looks as though it was made like that. I'm so happy with it I am going to build a new tunnel housing leaving it exposed. I have included some pictures to show how it went together.

My second job was to remove the dash board, a friend of mine obtained a sheet of engine turned stainless steel, I have since found out that Eurospares do the same thing but in aluminium, because the one I used was a devil of a job, as anybody that has tried drilling or cutting stainless steel will know, this took a whole day to cut and drill all the holes, but the finished job looks great. Just relocating the flying



screens, fill the unwanted holes and prep for painting.

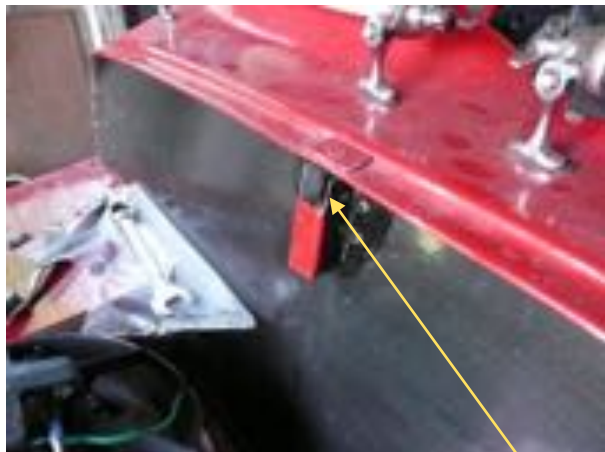
I have fitted new engine mountings and just working on the layout of the headlight mounting and which way to have the tubing to hold them + indicators etc in place, and have fitted a new hinge to the bonnet in stainless steel.

Then it is a strip down and spray, I am going for a cream body and British racing green wings and wing stays. I would hope to have it ready for the show at Stoneleigh fingers crossed. (6th May)

Geoff Smith
Member No 1809.

If you are thinking of a new Easter bonnet for spring...

Leather straps look good but chafe the paint, and single hinge bonnets are difficult to lock down securely, so how about a double hinge with a spine? The stainless steel piano hinge came in two 1500mm pieces, pre-drilled to save the fun of perforating stainless and a bit left over as I wanted some for the quarter-light wind deflectors. The double hinge made the bonnet halves slightly wider (not that I'd made them a bit narrow, oh no.) and it became much easier to lock down with a split pin at the front as shown.



Back end of the U section goes in here.



Front end with locking tang.

Front end tang goes in here, with a split pin to lock it.



Incidentally I have spare unpainted pre-made bonnet and engine bay side panels, un-drilled stainless piano hinge, dash-tops, front valances and radiator grilles. JH .

Well that's how I did it. Send alternative or better ideas if you can. Mudguard mounts, sidelight types and tail lights would also be of interest. Good ones can get perpetual acclaim on <http://www.jimhewlett.com/midge-central.html>

Half bonnet up

Half bonnet down

red bonnet, grey hinge, black U section spine.

— rivet.

Off-set the rivets to alternating holes so the heads don't meet and hold the hinge open.



Penny Jolly wrote:

Molly's rear mudguards have always let the car down being rusty with badly rippled paint so my really good idea in November was to remove, de rust, sand-down and respray. As I use her in all weather apart from rain (only tonneau cover) I planned to be back on the road for the Melton Mowbray Boxing Day meet (cars not hunting). However the tin worm had wreaked havoc and they were beyond repair.

With the advice of a club member I obtained a pair, possibly for trailers, these are 7ins wide and whilst their predecessors were 6ins they didn't cover the rear tyres completely so the replacements will be better. The fettling to fit is now underway and I will then set up a spray booth out of plastic sheet in the garage to turn them Brooklands green.

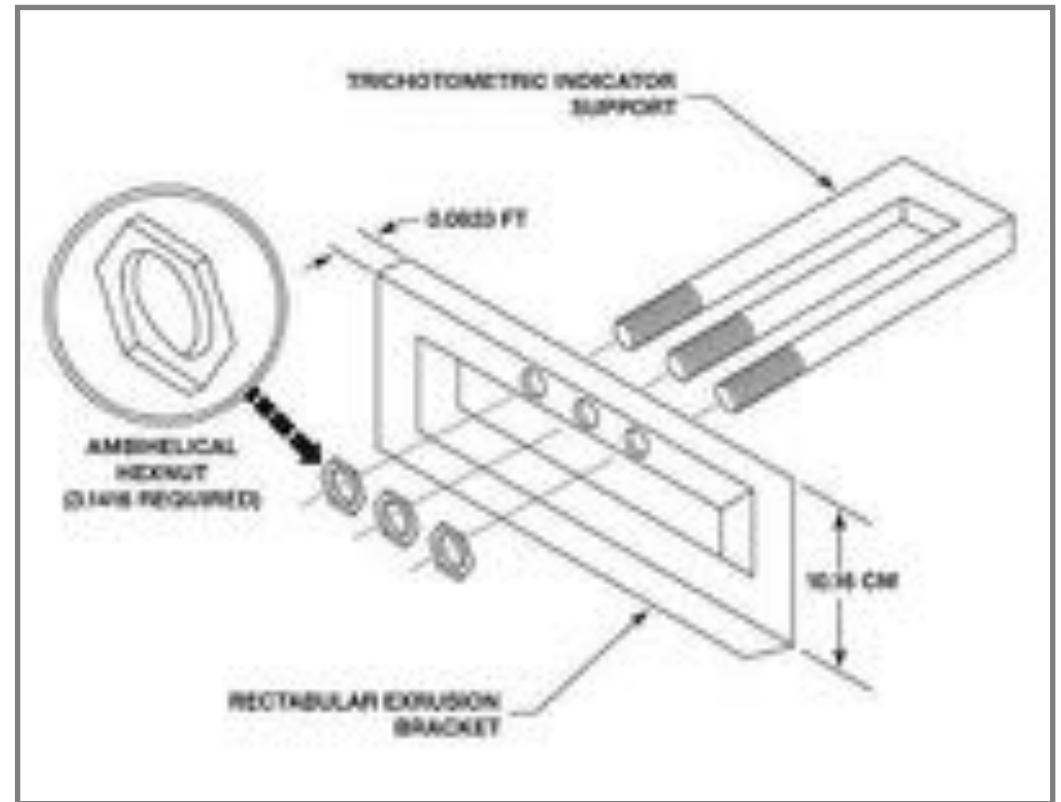
So Molly has been off the road for far too long but I have hope of being on the road again in Feb.

I put a mention on MOBC facebook about the Pomeroy trophy meeting takes place on the 16 Feb at Silverstone, entry is free with free seating.

A mouthwatering selection of classic cars attend and are driven enthusiastically. I'll be there with a few like minded characters. PJ.

WIDGET CORNER.

Several members have asked for the schematics of the Omni-directional Lateral Midge Clamp. I couldn't find the right hand drive version but this might help, especially for our continental members. Either version will allow Left or Right hand drive, but if you are using this to drive your UK Midge on the continent, remember to fit it upside down. I have found it very useful for getting the choke and speedometer cables through the bulk-head. JH.



An invitation to Midge club members from Peter Barfield (Moss Club)

For any Midge owners wishing to go to the show with your car, you are invited to join us on the **Moss Owners Club Stand**. We will be having a BBQ on Sunday so feel free to join us for that as well. Many years ago we were one club so it would be nice to see some old faces. Please check out <https://www.nationalkitcarshow.co.uk/>

Please let me know if you are attending, if we get a good response it would be nice to ask for more space from the organiser! It runs from 0900 on the 5th to 1600 on the 6th of May.

Thanks, Pete

National Kit Car Show 2019 Stoneleigh Park Coventry
Moss Facebook page



Mark Powell started rebuilding his retrieved Midge with a strip down. This article was developing as it went on, so there are a few 'jumps'.

There was some serious rot in some of the plywood. So far I have investigated the near side where I have discovered that the ply flank by the door latching point has disintegrated completely. This side will need a complete new 'F' panel. The floor can be patched.

I also have found that a swing spring has been fitted during its absence! It left me with the original suggested spring with some leaves removed. Has anyone else got the swing spring set up, and how do they find the handling? (Bearing in mind the total lack of front roll bar) I still have the build manual, also the scaled down plans. In my previous ownership it had the original reduced rear spring from the day it was built until I sold it. The front springs were cut down to stop the front suspension 'topping out' and in that format it handled very well. I'm still in two minds about the vinyl body, but that's a way down the road at the moment.

At this point I decided I should build a complete new body. After all, this is often the way of getting around terminal bodywork on early MG's, Austin 7's and even MGB's (Heritage shells). In the mean-time I have been dismantling the Midge.

When I first built it in 1986, I used 3/4" shutter ply and when I modified the rear with extended 'flanks' in '98, I bought exterior ply from I know not where, maybe Wickes. Generally the original shutter ply has lasted considerably better than the newer ply, which I now note is only 5 ply compared to the 7 ply shutter stuff.

A lot of opinion says 'use Marine ply', however this seems to open a major 'can of worms', with only a BS1088 available as to quality which seems open to abuse. As I think most of you are aware, I originally built and put the Midge on the road in 1986. This was purely to the original patterns on a standard (excuse pun..) chassis. Later the original chassis became subject to the dreaded tin worm and a replacement was sourced. This turned out to have been lengthened by about 120mm. This was nicely done just behind the rear front wishbone and is still strong to this day, however, that strength has departed from the rear end by the diff mounts.

So it's replacement time again, as I think the repairs might be substantial. I am tempted to repeat my original ply choice of WBP type exterior grade ply for the body, but to completely seal the assembly with epoxy, paying particular attention to the edges. But do I go for soft or hardwood ply? I don't want it too heavy, so I am tempted by the soft variety. Continued on page 9.





>> Mark continues... I located, bid for, and won a pre-prepared Herald / Midge chassis on ebay. This is the standard length and in very good condition.

So, what I have now is an extended body (the rear flanks were rebuilt 120mm longer, which gave me wider doors, a bonus! This body is subject to severe plywood rot and de-lamination in places, so must be replaced.

My intention is to build a new ply body to JC's 2 + 2 design, but to incorporate longer doors. The whole body to then fit to the standard length chassis, with the only modification to



the current running gear being a shortened prop shaft.

Skinning the new tub, vinyl or aluminium? I was very attached to my old vinyl body, so have decided to repeat the exercise, but in blue. All the rest of the original car will be repaired or restored and refitted.

Notes from late December...The new year awaits! I have finally stripped the old chassis down. The front suspension towers will need replacing, as they have corroded where they butt up to the chassis, which had also suffered. Typically, I scrapped a pair recently...Oops.

The replacement chassis has been sitting in the garage for a week or two while I am stripping down the suspension parts. I had to salvage a handbrake cable guide from the old chassis, as I noticed it is missing from the replacement. (Can't believe I didn't spot it earlier..)

I have now got to separate the steel structure (on the rear of the old chassis) which mounts the LPG tank and spare wheel. (and towbar if I want it). This is all welded in place, so it may be easier to start again.

So far, I need a replacement o/s/f vertical link and stub axle, F & R trunnions, R/ wheel cylinders, 1 x U/J, a standard rear spring, Front top ball joints. Poly bush kit, Front and rear suspension bolt kit, I'm sure there will be more. The garage looks like an old scrap yard at the moment, tidy up tomorrow. I was hoping to let in new metal to the rusty front suspension towers, but on closer inspection they are toast... So add a pair to the needed list. I sorted out a decent set of wishbone and trailing arm brackets from my hoard, the rest will go for scrap. One of the driveshafts bearings felt a bit notchy, so back to the spares pile for a replacement assembly... (I never throw anything away!) I now have a collection of metal parts to take for blasting..

To be continued.....

MOT Exemption and what constitutes substantial modification.

It looks as though the DVLA aren't marking MOT exempt 40 year old cars as such on the data-base, but are simply advised police forces to assume 40+ year old cars didn't need one. The likelihood of the average policeman remembering that is not high, so it would be advisable to carry a copy of the exemption explanation. Especially when they like to stop interesting vehicles for a chat anyway. This website might be of interest <http://www.fbhvc.co.uk/> There's a pdf document on https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/737342/v112-declaration-of-exemption-from-mot.pdf It is for declaring exemption at a post office so you'll want one for that, but a copy would probably satisfy any officials who might have forgotten.

It will be unlikely that most Midge owners, will have proof of exactly when the 'substantial change' was made, The construction date on the V5c doesn't change at conversion so remember to ask, when buying, 'Was it was before Spring 1989'. That date rolls forward, so on June 1st 2019 it will refer back to June 1st 1989.

Exemption can be claimed at the post office when you next apply for a 'tax-disc'. Although since they are free for most of us, you could declare 'SORN' and then apply at any time, but remember not to drive to the post office in a SORNed Midge. If your insurance hasn't expired you can drive back, but as you can't claim MOT exemption until you get there, how do you explain to the nice policeman how you got there?

If my understanding is correct it could be difficult to apply for exemption if the MOT is expired but the tax disc is still 'good'. It might be best to SORN for a while, unless the post office lets you tax it before the old tax is expired. Complicated. A preliminary visit to the post office might be useful, but be nice and pick a quiet day.

It might be worth remembering that if original parts are not reasonably available then newer parts can be fitted. Perversely, those parts that constitute the bulk of the MOT test, ie the chassis, running gear, axles, brakes, gearbox and engine can be changed at any time without being 'substantial'. The same goes, if my understanding is correct, for re-re-bodying. 'Reasonably' similar engine sizes are also acceptable, although the insurers might balk at a de-tuned V8.

It may sound insane, and I'd not recommend noising it abroad, but it rather sounds that you can legally take your legitimate, but worn out Midge into the garage, jack up the number plates and IVA plate and slide a completely rebuilt Midge underneath, and still be mot exempt. However, these are my thoughts, what you do is your responsibility. JH.

UK 2019/20 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.



The MG J2 Midget



Type: In line, water cooled.

No. of cylinders: 4

Bore/Stroke: 57mm x 83mm.

Capacity: 847cc

Valve Operation: Overhead
Camshaft, driven through
vertical dynamo.

Carburation: Twin semi
downdraught SU.

Compression ratio: 6.2:1.

Power output: 36 bhp at 5500
rpm.

Clutch: Single dry plate.

Transmission: Manual 'crash'
4 forward speeds and reverse.

Frame: Twin side members,
tubular cross members.

Wheelbase: 7' 2" Track: 3' 6"
front and rear.

Suspension: Front: half elliptic
springs, beam axle. Rear: half
elliptic springs, live axle.

Length: 10' 4" Width: 4' 3"

Height: 4' 5"

Brakes: 8" drums cable operated

Tyre size: 277" x 4"

Wheels: Centre lock, detachable
wire wheels.

Maximum Speed: 80 mph

Fuel consumption: approx 35
mpg

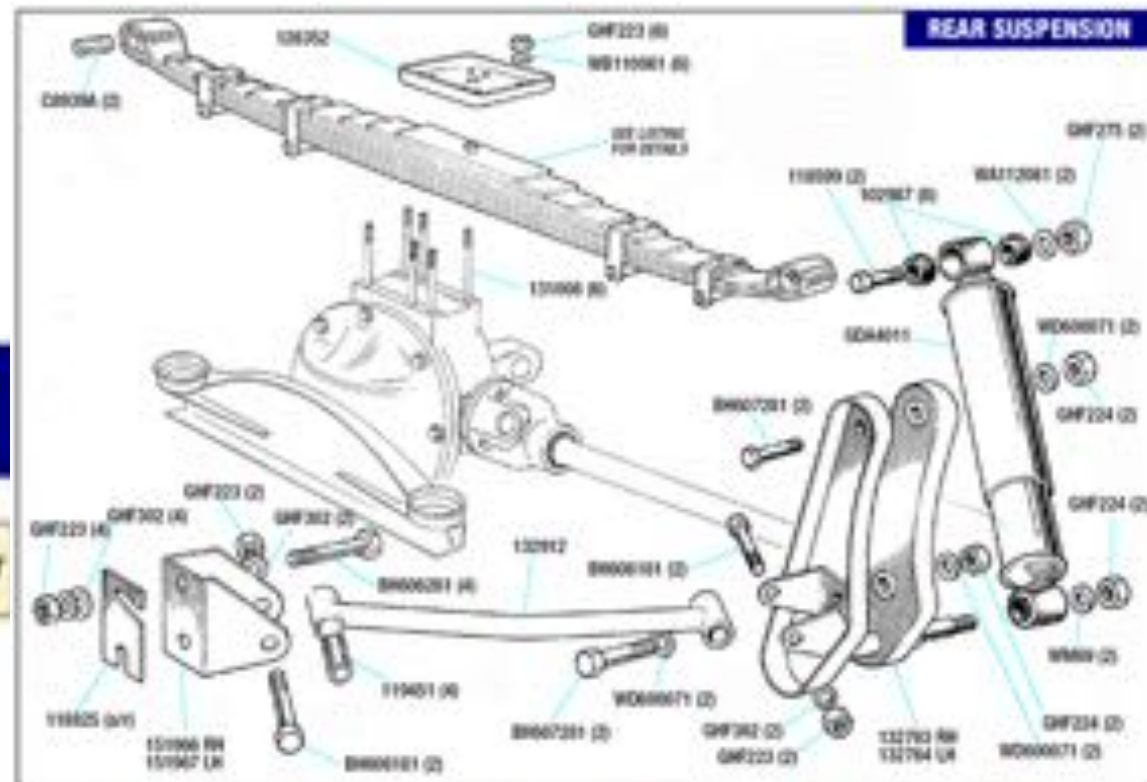
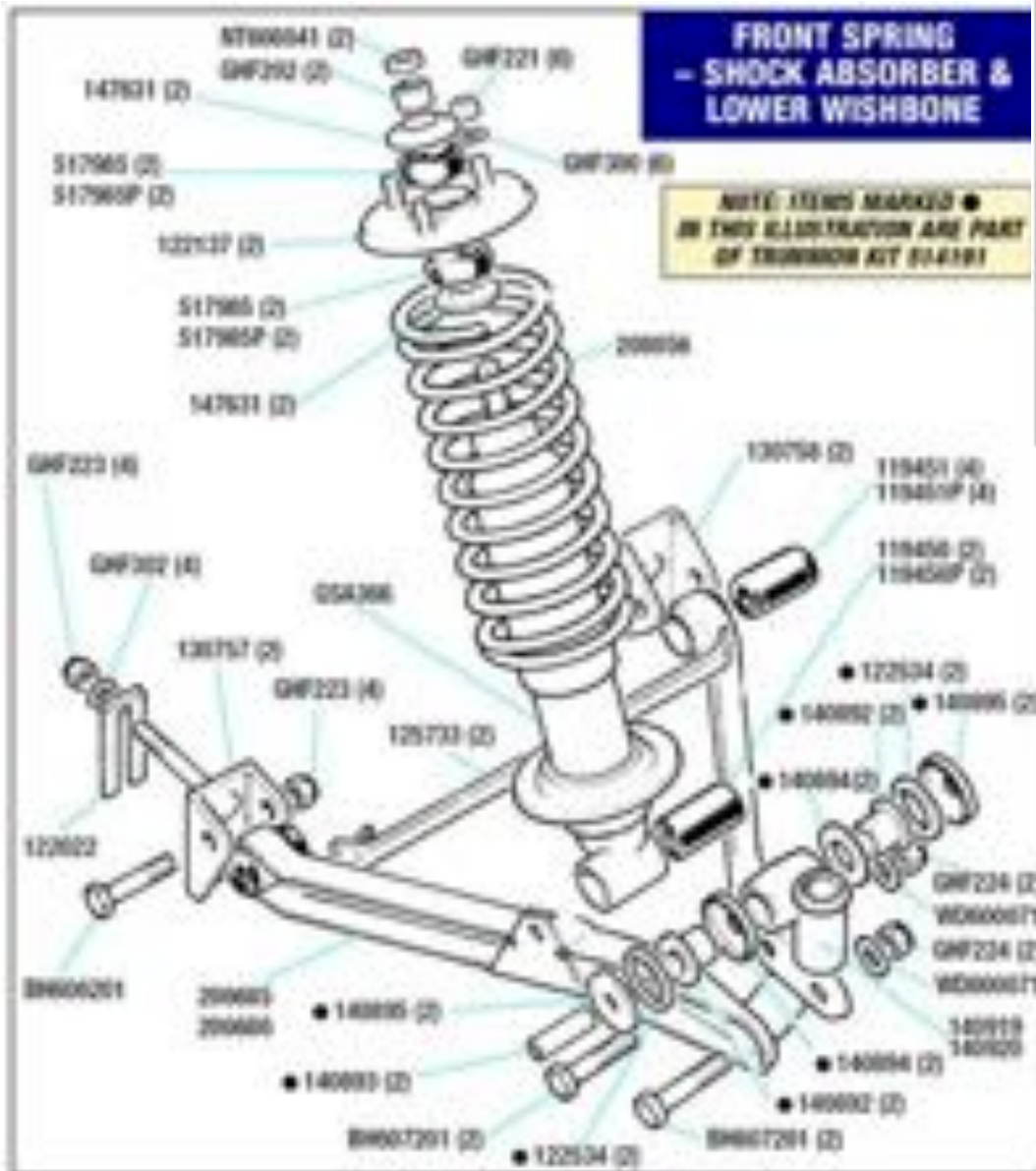
Acceleration: 0-50 mph; 15
secs.

Number built: Mid 1932 to early
1934; 2083

Cost new in 1932: £199 10s.

Borrowed from various sources including the MG Owners Club,
wikipedia and

Sooner or later Herald suspension systems need refurbishing. I don't know about you but I find the complexity a little daunting, so I thought I'd dig out an exploded diagram so that I could decide how to approach the task. The larger images are on the Rimmer website, but of course there are other suppliers



James Paddock, for instance, does a bolt kit for front and rear suspension, Duraflex do a number of grades of bush sets and there are complete (I think) front bush and bolt kits on ebay Just the stuff for a spring clean.

An invitation from Becky Cox RebeccaCox@disability-challengers.org

->Sunday 12th May

Dear MK1 and MK2 Midge Owners' and Builders' Club,

I am getting in touch about an event that I feel may interest you and your club. If it's not too much trouble I was hoping you could share the details attached with your group and wider networks to spread the word about this fun day out.

The Challengers Motoring Event 2019 welcomes all vintage, classic or specialist cars to join us on a bespoke route through the beautiful Surrey countryside. For the end point of the drive, we are returning to a private museum housing a stunning collection of over 50 vehicles and endless motoring memorabilia including; a Lagonda V12 Le Mans and a Mercedes 300 SL.

If you don't have a car to join us on the drive, not to worry – tickets for the private museum, which is not normally open to the public, are also available for car enthusiasts!

The event supports Challengers, a local charity that is passionate about breaking down the barriers to play for over 1,400 disabled children and young people across the South East. Our schemes allow disabled children and young people the opportunity to play with their friends, have fun and most importantly challenge their impairments. As we are a charity, any support you can provide in promoting our event is invaluable – thank you!

For more information or to book tickets please follow the link below.

<https://disability-challengers.org/challengers-motoring-event-2019/>

Thank you and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Best wishes, Becky

Becky Cox | Fundraising Research Officer | 01483 230 060
Challengers, Stoke Park, Guildford, GU1 1TU
Registered charity no. 1095134

Find us on Facebook facebook.com/disabilitychallengers
Tweet us at Twitter@D_Challengers
Follow us on Instagram @challengers1979
Look us up Online disability-challengers.org



Gearbox extension....extended by Ray Jones. "This is how my Midge's gear change was done, makes a huge difference over stick extensions. It can be achieved without a second housing...my builder used a u-section piece of channel bar, drilled and bolted. Original extension and channel bar before cut & lengthening"

Alloy is lighter but harder to weld, and the use of angle rather than box means you can taper the shape to suit the casing. I found old bed irons to be about the right weight for this kind of job. JH



And here on the left a self explanatory method sent in a few years back by Roger England. It needs two units and alloy welding, but if you have the skill and the material it looks very nice. Pity to cover it up really.

There you are... three ways of extending your gearbox. Any more and you'd be half way down the drive. JH

Additional rant / whinge / editorial question time.
Should the MOBC facebook page be free?

Before starting I would like to highlight that this is not directed at any particular individuals, it is something that has developed over several years since the rise of the facebook element. I put it on the facebook page first, It's quick but it is only part of the membership, so here's the magazine bit.

Facebook has the advantage of letting people have a look at what we do and even buy a Midge before getting more heavily involved. (That involvement being £10 and registering on the membership list.) It does not really require ownership of a Midge, since there's no annual fee there are many members who are active contributors and readers although they have long since sold their Midges. They are still on the books, having sold because of extreme seniority, change of circumstances etc. Their continuation is guaranteed.

By the way, one of the complications is that, there being no annual fee I do get the occasional hint that a member has shuffled off this proverbial without mentioning it, and I only get the nudge when the emails start bouncing.

Getting members to notify me of change of address and email is one of the joys of secretaryship. If a member is thinking I mean them, I don't, I have done it myself, and I'm very nearly perfect. But you might want to check your details.

However, getting back to the subject, there is a growing amount of activity on facebook and it isn't matched by MOBC membership or the £10 joining fee. In practical terms this means I don't always have the details I need to facilitate advertising and notification. More to the point perhaps, the members who have paid are effectively subsidising those who haven't.

The club doesn't need any more money, (although I suppose my computer will wear out eventually) and I have enough webspace room to maintain MOBC.co.uk without charge. Midge buying and selling can be arranged between members of the MOBC or by Facebook members or by members of the general public through ebay etc, and that is all fine, you don't have to be a member to own or sell a Midge. I have even put adverts on the website and magazine for non members as obviously members would be interested.

As the website pages, and therefore the magazines, are open to anyone who knows the address, there is no real incentive to join. Only the membership details and access to bronze badges are restricted.

I noted recently that one (non MOBC) facebook member was interested in buying a Midge and another was thinking of selling one. I'm quite happy to assist them, they may be of interest to members and may join later, but while I'm not likely to run out of time to deal with such items, and expenditure is minimal, it does add up, and insofar as it costs anything, MOBC members have paid for it.

So I'd like a bit of club feedback. There are a number of options that spring to mind (if we do anything):-

- * We could have a charge for 'facebook only' membership, which might even be illegal, I haven't looked into it.

- * We could have a 6 month grace period while facebook members decide whether they want to join the MOBC.

- * A nominal annual fee and/or MOBC members only on facebook (I'd really rather not, there would be a lot of hurt feelings and a lot more work for yours truly, and we don't need the money).

No doubt there are other options, that's why I'm looking for feedback. >>

>> The club expenditure is fortuitously low, (medium sized webspace usually costs £100 pa.) New memberships cover all our expenses and I can claim back small costs like domain name rental. But new memberships are the only income, the badges are sold at cost or as close as I can calculate, and there's no advertising costs to buyer or seller.

So, three things

1. Suggestions as to fees and charges (remember small amounts of cash really aren't worth the effort, you have no idea how complicated it gets with half a dozen different ways of paying, unannounced changes of address, PayPal charges etc)
2. Make sure your details are up to date.
3. Think about joining. It's only £10. I'm fairly sure many don't even know there is more to the club than facebook. (it's at <http://mobc.co.uk/>)
4. I'm really really really not getting at you in particular, it's just a changing world needs adjustments occasionally.

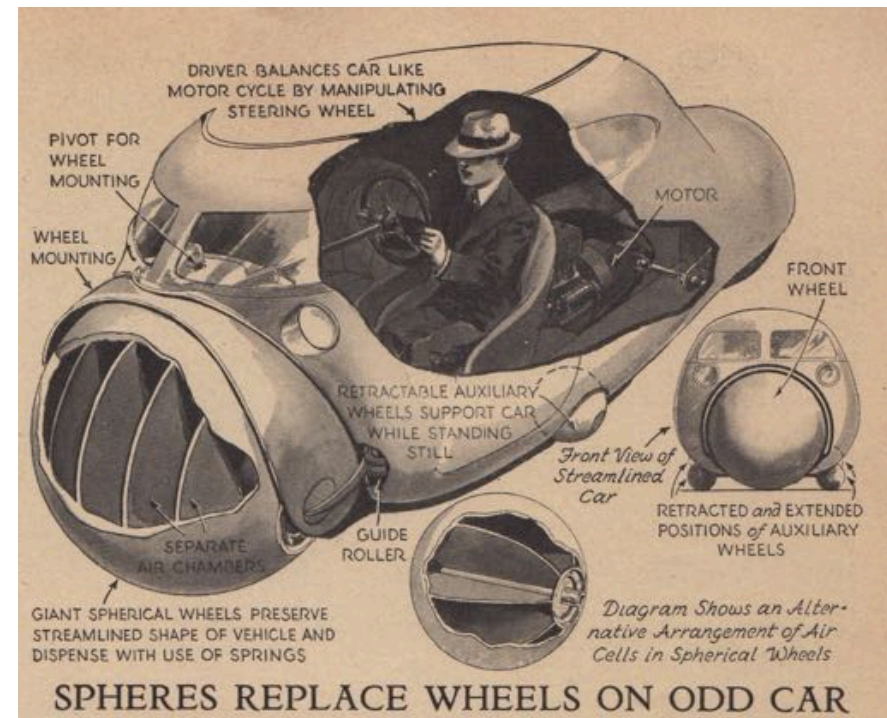
Ok that's 5 things, amazing how many free bonuses there are isn't it?

I'm not really worrying about anything, but perhaps we should get a bit of consistency into membership benefits. If any kind of additional charge is levied then will mean more work. It will be quite a while before we have an embarrassingly large bank account and some kind of charitable donation could be considered, and as an alternative there are tools that could be bought for the club or software packages for the magazine construction, there are even firms that can convert magazine material into professional looking magazines which could be posted out,

though I don't know what that would cost, and obviously postage would be a large part of it.

Incidentally, depending on the device used, the magazine is not always easy to read, there are a number of magazine publishing options, but before I look into them could I ask for readers to respond to the magazine notification email showing what they read their magazines on? I'll put a couple of questions on the email so that people can 'reply to sender' (not reply to all) and indicate desk-top, laptop, tablet and phone.

Sorry about the lengthy text, by way of compensation here's what, in 1935, Popular Science thought might develop in the future. (Possibly tongue in cheek), it certainly wouldn't work.



HALLS GREEN 1st JUNE 2019

Fairclough Hall Farm, Halls Green, Weston, Herts. SG4 7DP



10TH LETCHWORTH GC CLASSIC & VINTAGE CAR CLUB TRANSPORT PICNIC

11-5pm Entry: £5 cars • £2 motorbikes • £2 pedestrians
LOCAL BAND, REFRESHMENTS, STALLS & MORE!

For more details please contact: picnic@lqccvcc.co.uk
01462 674347 or visit www.lqccvcc.co.uk

THE ORGANISERS RESERVE THE RIGHT TO REFUSE ADMISSION



A last minute addition to the magazine which might be of interest from Bill Graham

Hi Jim,

a while back I was chatting to one of the officers at the VOSA weigh-bridge on the M62 and told him I had a Midge but it was registered as a Ford Escort, he asked when it was done but not being the initial builder I told him back in mid 1980. He told me there would be no problem, just send my docs telling them when it was and as it was pre 1998 they would just change it to a JC Midge.

And they did.

The Midge has been on the road prior to this for 12 months so now I feel a bit more at ease when I pass a police car, I have seen a couple of police looking a bit confused in the past.

I have just reshaped the rear to a more square with a frame for spare tyre and am now in the process of a rewire as it is a bit untidy . WG

I hope we can expand on this a bit soon, and get a few lines from Bill about his refurbishment. JH