

# MIDGE MAGAZINE



Spring  
2022



MOBC. the Midge Owners and Builders' Club



Paul's MkII As seen on TV



## Hello All.

Well I'm hoping this magazine will be full of the approach of Spring and the optimism traditionally associated. At the moment, being the 30th of March, it's a bit variable. It is sunny just now but was snowing an hour ago. -4° Celsius predicted for tomorrow and a few nights below freezing after that. Up here at 1000 feet in rural Scotland a sunny calm day often presages a sharp frost, so the unused refreshing drink forgotten when you went for the sun screen can be frost-burst on the following morning. That is why whisky is so popular, it freezes at a much lower temperature. Well that's my excuse anyway, although I wouldn't dream of leaving an unfinished one on the patio, which actually I call the back yard, which is what it was called back on the farm. I'm not sure where the term yard comes from, but it sounds less pretentious. The sunlight in the yard has, now that it has warmed it up a bit, brought some odd bits of machinery out of the garage for repair and cleaning, activities not always appreciated in the kitchen. The garage workshop tends to be a bit dark and the biting variety of midges will be here soon, unless knocked back by a late frost so there's not much of a window for pootling. (Pootling is a sort of slightly zen and aimless tinkering with therapeutic advantages.) So I'll stop rambling and get back to it now.

JH.

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

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## Malcolm's Update on the his work on the Midge rear mudguards.

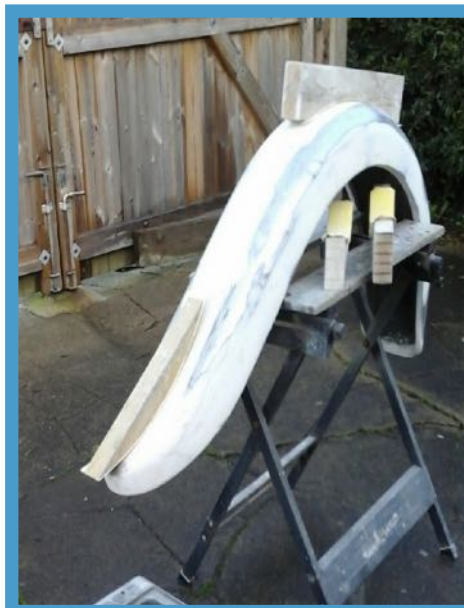
Wanting to make some new and more stylish wings for his already rather smart Midge 'Hoppy', Malcolm found two narrow ones from a 1953 Singer Roadster and decided to widen them in the process of making fibreglass versions with the aid of a home made mould.



As noted elsewhere, a second set of hands is very useful, and the assistant rarely gets a mention in the build manual.

On the left, Jan 'trial fitting' the two halves of the mudguards together.

Fortunately Jan has had practice keeping an entire household together so a mudguard is relatively easy.







Above, getting the exact shape and return edges. Which will give the finished wings a lot more strength.



I have never done any fibre-glass moulding before so it is a real learning curve.

My research so far is that some people make it sound unbelievably complicated and fraught with danger.

Others would have you believe that a young lad in nappies could do it with no trouble at all.

I am sure I am going to find it to be somewhere in between.

As always there is only one way to find out and that is sucking it and seeing!!

One thing that has shocked me is the price of the materials.



<http://midgebuilders.homestead.com/Malcolm-s-Page.html>



Filled and smoothed, this is the last stage before I take a mould.

Ray Jones conveniently photographed Malcolm's Midge back in 2015. Hoppy (I'm not entirely sure if that's Malcolm or the Midge) has a page on the MOBC website as below the photo.



## The central dashboard cluster.

I've always approved of the symmetrical dashboard. Very popular until quite recently, it was very convenient for the manufacturer as it could, with little modification, go from left to right hand drive or vice versa. That and a reversed steering rack and pedal box was largely sufficient if the design was thought out first.

There were other advantages to this style in that it became much easier to fit and service the instrumentation, put out the occasional fire and modify the wiring. This will be confirmed by anyone working upside down in the dark.

It also becomes relatively simple to build in a glove box, either as a door or hinged out from underneath. (Midges being generally short on storage.)

Fitting a radio does become more of a challenge, but anyone trying to listen to a car radio in a Midge has probably noticed the problem with that already, unless the leather flying helmet has the built in head-phones.

Radio and other in-car entertainment might be useful when parked, but perversely that is prevented when you have to do mid journey maintenance, explain the car to passing strangers, provide photo opportunities and fend off sticky fingered children. JH.





Jim Pailing has been mulling over the problems that a Midge builder can encounter and can offer a few words from his experience with kit cars, that will translate into Midge quite easily.

## What ! Another Kit Car at Your Age ?

'Age related' is a description that not only refers to the condition of the components of a kit car, it probably refers to a large proportion of their owners too? I came across an enquiry from a gentleman in a club forum and put finger to keyboard in reply as he was concerned by his ability to take on a project that needed a new home in Devon. I had coincidentally bought a kit car, similar to a Midge, also from Devon.

It was a while before the irony of a conversation with the owner sank in. It was over a pile of tyres, whilst flicking through the inevitable and copious build folder that he said, 'I'll be older than you, I'm 'x' and retired'. I replied, 'I'm retired too and I'm 'y''. (to save blushes  $y-x=10$ ) So, what is the secret of continuing safely as a boring old p'art in the kit car scenario, apart from lots of red wine?

First, choose wisely. I had previously had a similar model kit car; welded up the chassis, sourced a missing rear axle, fitted engine and gearbox and it was only when I put the steering wheel on that I realised my delicate posterior was unlikely to fit Doh! Pity as I always thought it the prettiest kit car! Much later I went for another vintage type, not a Midge but a V8 powered model based on a pre-war sports racer and was very disappointed. Undoubtedly my own fault as it was bought unseen and had been cobbled together by a 'young man'. Total lack of side impact protection and the steering column hung on a frame a manic Meccano enthusiast would produce, were but two of the issues. The fitting of very nice but front wheel drive alloys was another as they rubbed the body! However the main problem was the lack of an IVA certificate! Double doh! So, when I was informed that a larger version existed and one had come up for sale fully registered, 'the sun shone, the birds sang and my cup verily overflowed!' 'Brutus Maximus' was relegated to the 'back burner!'

Secondly, pace yourself. In my youth I would have dashed off, trailer in tow but now I have seen the error of my ways! Much better to book a hotel, take 2/3 days and see the local sights. (Reminds me of the 'old bull/young bull' joke?) This suits the wife and the bonus is she drives. In fact, thinking about it I am not too keen on driving! (Have I missed something here?) Take your time in gathering up the bits. Somewhat inconsequential parts have a nasty habit of being as rare as the proverbial rocking horse faeces and expensive to boot. A clutch release bearing carrier cost me dear! Load all the 'tut' in the boot but book a car transporter on line three days before. (quotes are not binding and it takes a while for the cheapest to come through) The engine was 16 miles away in Torquay (nice lunch, appalling weather) so that went by pallet. Then off to look at the tramway in Seaton (nice weather but closed) and away home! 'Job's a good 'un!

Third. When the bits come home to roost, hang it all together, wash it off and take a picture. This will give you 'the light at the end of the tunnel' picture when the going gets tough! Put it up as your phone/laptop wallpaper? Pick the low fruit first, something easily manageable and preferably large. I went for the 'holey' floor, reinforcing with ply to take the seat frames; replaced the carpets and bolted seats in. Voila! I could sit in it with my MkVIII goggles lowered, twiddle the wheel and go 'Poop, poop!' (I'm sure that should be toot toot. JH)

Fourth. Buy a decent 2 ton trolley jack and **four** axle stands. Assuming you have a decent socket set (chrome vanadium) get a good length Swivel Tee handle to get leverage also and a can of Plus Gas. Keep a list of specifications of the various components as you dismantle as identifying replacements/rebuild kits will be a possible problem. Put this in your new build folder. Don't lash out on new tyres, you may not finish? Take wheels to local second hand tyre man and get a complete replacement outfit. Tyres suspect after 10 years so 20??? If inside damp or musty put a dehumidifier in for a few hours. I suggest there will be two problem areas, corrosion and mechanics.



Jim Continues

Corrosion; if you have corrosion problems you have three friends! A 4" angle grinder with wire cup brush (not much gets left behind), battery charger/ electrolysis bucket (interesting) and a compressor/grit blaster (wicked!) I am concentrating on corrosion as it was just beginning to get a hold and the Cabrio frame is a little on the thin side and 'tempus fugit' and all that! This was the only disappointment as the Roadster had nice chunky RHS. (Did you know that Mitchell's Spitfire owed its wing spar strength to the use of different sizes of rectangular hollow section in different lengths slid inside each other? Guess who perfected the manufacture of RHS; the Germans! Talk about being 'hoist with one's own petard'?)

Mechanics; If engine seized remove and keep eyes open for a good replacement. Time is on our side now or rebuild but beware of high costs of pistons etc. I, of course, sold my engine crane the month before but found a £30 Chinese chain hoist and three long lengths of timber from Mr Wickes easier! I assumed rubber brake seals would degrade but in fact were in surprisingly good condition but after 20 years should be done? Rear brake cylinders probably cheaper and easier to replace. Could not find anyone who could talk sense about front callipers as identification difficult so bought a seal set and rebuilt. Much easier than I thought and they are designed to seal between the new 'O' rings and new pistons so virtually fool proof? Brake master cylinder, not an easy rebuild but can be done if bore is good; vital that seals face the right way. Found conflicting advice on the net but on the whole, YouTube videos very helpful. The last job will be electrics which will be interesting. Will put a length of solder in series with the positive terminal just in case!

Age related? Oh! Nearly forgot. I think there are two graphs in life? The first is 'knowledge over time' which is a gradual incline upwards and the other is 'ability over time' which is, unfortunately, a more or less straight line but descending ever more rapidly towards the end! When one is towards the right hand end of these graphs one needs to be aware and take precautions. The ones I have found, sometimes through bitter experience include:-

Leaving a job half way done is very dangerous; finish or at least stop at a point where there are no 'loose ends' and importantly, do not work on different parts at the same time, particularly if they are symmetrical unless there are no 'loose ends'.

Dexterity is reduced so don't attempt to undo/assemble small parts in tight spaces without precautions unless there is no other way. This avoids the 'ping' factor?

Use boxes to put bits in to avoid loss; my preference is for marge tubs and keep tools in view.

Beware excessive confidence. Judgement decreases and it is easy to convince yourself that a course of action is correct; is it? If in doubt ask advice or sleep on it.

Have a Health and Safety audit before you start work. Is the car safe on those axle stands. Am I too near the stopping area of other vehicles? Is a hose handy!

Hope I am not teaching too many grandmothers here and if you have further suggestions, feel free. Enjoy! JP



*Eyes Left. I have long considered that a second pair of hands can be a considerable bonus, and if they don't require a ruinous quantity of beer then it can be affordable too.*

*Reasonably well grown children can help, but they have a short attention span and if you have raised more than one then you probably won't be able to afford a project like this until you are too old to drive.*

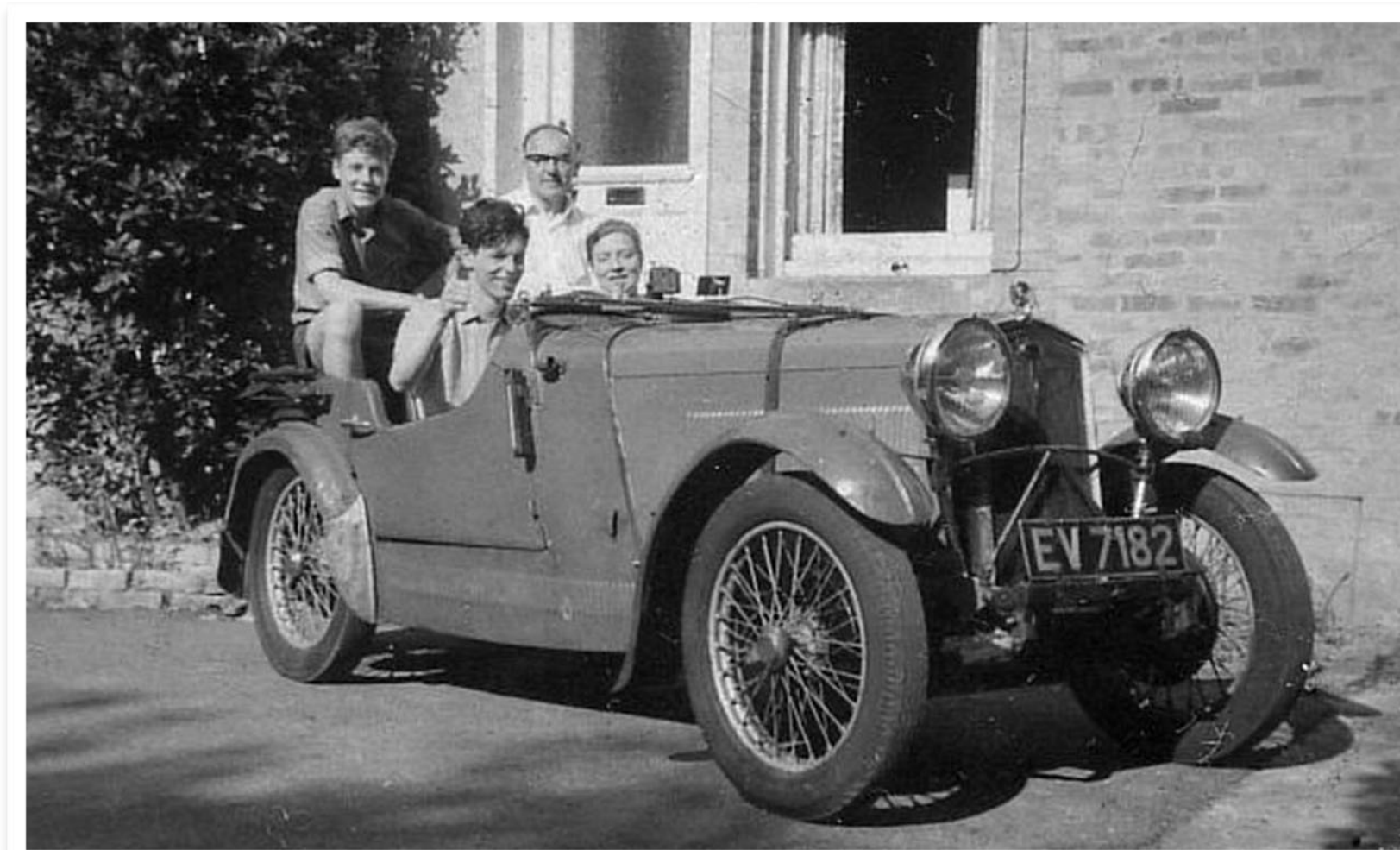
*'The wife', 'her indoors' or the 'better half' is a safer bet, but I'd avoid giving the impression it is part of the contract and say thank-you regularly. Otherwise the cups of tea may dry up and your pillow migrated to the garage.*

*My only health and safety addendum is that you should assume that everything from helpers, buildings to visitors and the project itself are all trying to kill or injure you. JH*





John and Carol Pickering have been in contact with me (Jim) with a view to rebuilding John Pickering's old (1932) Wolseley Hornet Special. He's hoping to use the concepts behind the Midge plans. I've put him in contact with JC. Clearly the Midge patterns won't fit the car directly but since he does design work on CAD this is not a serious problem. He thinks the build manual could be useful in deciding if the techniques developed for Midge body will work on a MGJ2 period frame and if so it 'would help to avoid the kind of errors everyone makes' when they tackle something entirely new for the first time. John Cowperthwaite has said he thinks can find or print off the plans and a build manual and enquiries have been made as to the cost. Seen here about 1960. I think, if JP get's things running again then the DVLA might be persuaded to re-register the car and we might be able to accept it into the club as an honorary Wolseley Midge Special.



1955 AND IN A SECRET UNDERGROUND LOCATION  
SOMEWHERE NEAR ABINGDON-LEN LORD



AND LIEUTENANT COLONEL -  
JOHN THORNLEY WERE TRYING  
TO COME UP WITH A NAME FOR  
THEIR SLEEK NEW  
SPORTS-  
CAR...

MUCH MUCH  
LATER ...



AND SO BEGAN FIFTY GLORIOUS YEARS  
OF INSPIRED DECISIONS BY THE BRITISH  
CAR INDUSTRY... R.I.P.

VIV '07

Thanks Peter, for the artistic contributions. My skills in that domain rarely rise above research and art interpretation or plagiarism as it is commonly known.

If we have any other budding, or established artists, their efforts could decorate the summer and later magazines. Ideally 1935 MG and Midge related, but considerable artistic drift is allowable in terms of time, make, etc if the subject is appropriate.

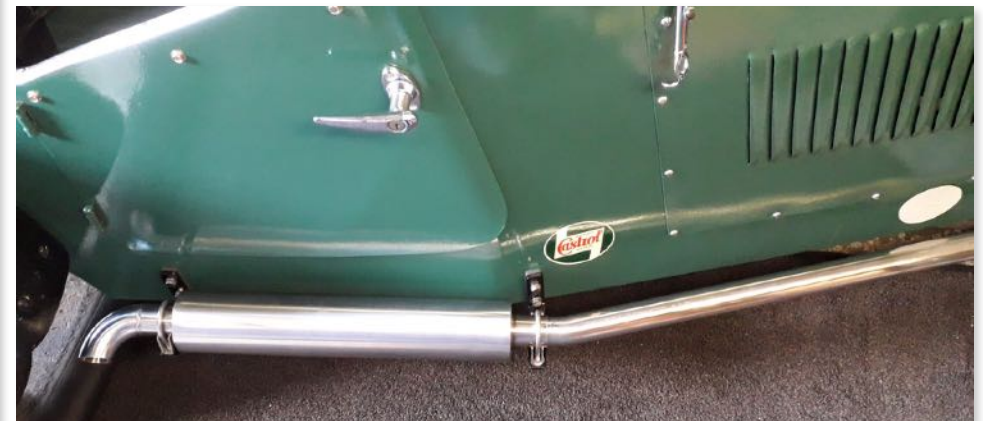
In the meantime here's a nice thought for summer that I pinched from the internet so if you're looking at your oil paints and a blank canvas....







Robert (Shallcross) has been wrestling with ideas for Monty's exhaust pipe, he saw the examples above and started looking for suitable components for a similar arrangement. (Right) The initial results are below.





Peter Moss Barfield and Moss Owners' Club have notified me of the year's National Kit Car show 2022.

1 MAY AT 09:00 – 2 MAY AT 16:00  
· Members of Moss Owners' Club STONELEIGH has always, and will continue, to be considered as the WORLD'S NUMBER ONE SHOW. It is the annual mecca for every kit car enthusiast, both here in the U.K. and overseas.

Stoneleigh is the only Show where many new projects are launched each year and any manufacturer who has serious intentions within the industry will always exhibit. There are some excellent facilities available and a good atmosphere can be created within the Royal Showground. We are offering Clubs a display area where they can group their members in one area and put on a Club recruitment presentation.

[http://  
www.nationalkitcarshow.co.uk/](http://www.nationalkitcarshow.co.uk/)

A Mk 2 Midge on Ben Fogle's 'New Life in the Wild'. (15th February Channel 5) spotted by David, Grant and Paul. A brief appearance, but much admired and it seems to have found an excellent forestry habitat. The 4 wheel drive and towing capability will prove useful. Not knowing how to ask permissions, and to avoid privacy and copyright worries I've blurred faces and number-plates.



#### UK 2021/22 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](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.

At the time of writing it's all a bit quiet. JH



Ian Redshaw decided that mudguards are the way to go. He said:- These are the originals which apart from my thinking they should be a snadger's shorter, (*technical pre-decimalisation term*) look about right on diameter. I could go closer to the tyre as they'll all be mounted to move with the wheel, but I like the extra size when spaced off a little. I wanted a rib down the middle of them to take away the 'trailer' mudguard look and in my search for a tool to make or buy to perform such ribbery, spoke to a vintage motorcycle mudguard maker who makes such things. He's in Warwickshire, I met him at a classic bike show in Stafford last year. Ian reported that the maker can make them to whatever diameter, length and width, with a rolled edge to all edges, including front and back edges, about £70 each.



Last minute post-script, hot off the press.:- Picked my



26 March. Well chuffed with their work. Originally I planned to make a tool to rib the guards I'd got, but then met this bloke at a classic bike show. He's rolled the leading and trailing edges too so they look well posh. Blimmin' thick steel too. The bloke is Simon Stephens and he runs Renovation Spares based in Redditch. I paid £70 for each one, more than happy with that as it meant I didn't have to make a ribbing tool and then rib my guards, plus it supports British industry, albeit in a very small way, it all helps! And I got to pick them up and have a demo of the work involved, from sheet steel to the finished items. About 70 passes



through the old hand made machines for each one. They ain't going to get rich but they are a very happy couple of blokes! IR





John Eden Writes:- It is a truth universally acknowledged that an elderly motoring enthusiast will visit classic car shows and exhibitions and regale his companions - at least, those who haven't sloped off - with cries of ' *I had one of those once: bought it for fifty quid* ' and ' *See that ? Twenty thousand quid ! Sold mine in 1961 for eighty quid.* ' And so on. Reader, I am one of those elderly enthusiasts, and the last time I went to the big Classic Car Show at Birmingham's NEC, I clocked up close on a quarter million pounds-worth of old types I'd owned in the past and sold for peanuts. When your grandchildren ask your Advice About Life, tell them to rent the biggest barn they can afford, fill it with cheap but interesting cars and then hang on for a few decades and a fine pension.

Forgive the preamble. To the point: a treasure amongst my once-owned pre-war beauties was a 1939 MG TB two-seater sports. The TB's production run was curtailed by World War II, and just short of 400 models were made. My TB cost £80 and I sold and shipped it to a chap in New York who used to sign his letters; ' *Yours in MG* ' ! He paid shipping costs and about £100 for the car. At that NEC show there was a TB priced at £29000, and I've just browsed the internet and

discovered a TB - Tickford, admittedly - for ( wait for it ) £81624. Oh my: the world has gone mad - but even in my post-student, family man, baby-friendly motoring days, prices were climbing and my occasional hopeful forays into *Exchange and Mart* and *Motor Sport* showed that I was too late and too hard-up to get back to T-type days.

But then...revelation: at a kit car show, sometime in the 1980s, I discovered the Midge. Right shape, right personality and very much the right price. I bought a Herald for £350 ( have you seen Herald prices now?), bought plans and various parts, and settled down to a couple of years' on-and-off work. The plans took me so far, but there was plenty of scope for improvisation - I've never seen two identical Midges - and initiative. For example - how to form the 70mm radius curves on the bonnet edges without professional machinery ? Easy: the lamp post outside my house was exactly the right diameter. I used to have a photograph of an aluminium sheet clamped to the post under a batten, ready for folding. Neighbours and passing motorists were bemused. The finished car looked splendid, and that wasn't just my opinion: when it was parked on the drive, passers-by would make approving noises. Elderly chaps - the same age as I am now - would get a little misty-eyed and say things like ' *They don't build them like this any more* ' ! And I'd nod sympathetically, ignoring the coil springs and wishbones.

Time went by and I had great fun in the Midge, but an affordable barn-find 1936 Triumph Gloria came on the market. I'd had two of those in the past and longed for another, so, sadly, the Midge had to go. But down thirty years or so, and down a succession of old but needy cars, I often wondered where my Midge was, or if it even still existed. Ownership requests to DVLA were returned with apologies and I thought the trail was cold - but then, as what I thought would be a long shot, I contacted the MOBC and lo: blessed Jim Hewlett came up with a contact number in Glasgow that he thought might work. *Continued on the next page.*





So - a little over three years ago I picked up the phone and took a deep breath. I still remember the conversation: ' Hello, I'm sorry to bother you, but I believe you may have a Midge kit car, UNX 659G '-  
' I do ' . - ' I built it years ago. Would you be willing to sell it to me ?' - ' Aye, I might ' -  
Deep breath - ' How much would you want for it ?' - ' About six...( My mind races. He wants six thousand. Far too much, but I badly want that car back and maybe he'll haggle. I'll do it. ) ...*hundred pounds* ! Did he say six hundred !? Mind your voice doesn't shake, Eden. ' That sounds fine. I'll post a cheque, or I'll bring cash and drive it home ' - ' You'll not drive it ! ' He said.

And he was right. We did the deal and I arranged a trailer from Glasgow to deepest Shropshire. Vision blurred a little when the trailer came up my lane - grit in the eye of course - and I saw my long-lost Midge. Driving it would certainly have been out of the question: no seats, no brakes and minimal electrics. There were other changes, too: amongst them were wire wheels replaced by discs, wooden dashboard with glove box replaced by an aluminium job, the aluminium radiator grille surround painted silver: to save polishing, I guess.

Three years later, the Midge is back on the road, with a few refinements I'd intended to add in the original build. A hood is next. I have to say that working underneath isn't what it was: the car seems to have become lower down the years. It surely is that, I think. I mean - what else would explain the squeeze ? The original photos I took when building the Midge are long gone, but I've added new ones to this piece. General views, but with some ideas that new builders might consider - for example, the bonnet latches, which are effective and unobtrusive, and the locking glove box - there's plenty of space behind the left-hand side of the dash. To illustrate, my glove box will accommodate a 70cl gin bottle and a couple of glasses. ( *I should make clear that the gin bottle example is simply along the lines of homely measurements such as area expressed in football pitches and height in London buses or Nelson's Column . No Midge owner would carry gin, Certainly not.*) And the gear lever extension is basic but effective: 15mm chrome plated copper plumbing pipe -, with a dowel core for rigidity - bolted at both ends, resulting in effortless changes and no damaged knuckles.. But see the photos for yourself. And happy building, if you're beginning and happy driving, if you're there.

I took the car for its first trip this year a few days ago, before arranging it photogenically somewhere. Carburation needed sorting, but all was well after tweaking. I started up the next day - and all wheels apart from the N/S rear were locked solid. Any ideas ? I undid the bleed screws and the pipe union at the master cylinder, thinking maybe a pressure build-up had occurred, but to no avail. The brake pedal is solid as well. Any ideas ? And by the way - I always intended to make a hood. I guess I could make one by trial and error, but does there exist a set of plans available to buy?

*There are some hood hints and tips on the website, but no complete plans. JH*

John Eden





Ian Redshaw's modified Midge rear end is usually called a 'boat tail' but also known as a 'beetle back' on page 11 has caused quite a lot of envy and conversation. I preferred 'beetle back' but the expression seems to be out of date.

I'd accept 'boat tail' but BMW have produced a 'Rolls Royce Boat Tail' (\$28m) of quite outstanding tastelessness, combining brutalism and frippery so I'm going to suggest 'Bugatti style' until everyone has forgotten the Rolls.

I'm sure Ian would offer advice, and I believe the style can accommodate a spare wheel. Ken (details below) has what you need for such a project.



If you have a story to tell or an unusual feature (on your Midge) remember to send a photo to [jim@jimhewlett.com](mailto:jim@jimhewlett.com). Dashboards, workshops, garages, rallies and vaguely connected projects. Also 'Sales and wants', requests for advice, homespun philosophy, jokes, cartoons, memories..., will all be considered.

Ken Nichols has a couple of Morris Minor bonnets that would enable such a project. Only £30 for both. Collection only PL157NN [kennichols59@gmail.com](mailto:kennichols59@gmail.com)





## Tailpipe.

Well, it's an ill wind that blows nobody some good as they say. A few months ago somehow I wrenched my left shoulder and getting into or out of a boiler suit became really difficult. 'Rotator cuff injury' I'm told by the physiotherapist and with a few exercises it seems to be getting better. The relative lack of mobility means no heavy car work for a bit, and you know the kind of contortion needed to adjust anything in the foot-well or around the brakes. The recent stormy, wet and generally cold weather combined with the 'indoor work with no heavy lifting' meant reviving my old hobby of clock and watch repair, so I dug out a few tools and bought a couple of pocket watches from ebay by way of practice and re-acquaintance. The tools and techniques have all changed a fair bit since the late '70s and there's the internet for instruction and education, especially you-tube, and several watch repairers have helped me get back into the swing of it. So why mention it? Well I've always held that a chap should have indoor and outdoor hobbies, especially after retiring, a thought reinforced by several friends who love golf and fishing (I'm a farmer's son so those hobbies are too expensive and rather pointless to my mind) and I wondered what they do in bad weather. The younger ones take no notice but that made me reflect on the fact that at 69¾ I will have to 'pull my horns in a bit' sooner or later and working under a car in the cold feel like another 10 colder. Obviously my current flexibility issues restrict car repair and maintenance, and I guess would have taken out fishing and golf anyway, even with the better weather. So what to do with my time? The conservatory provides plenty of light and warmth even on dull

days and stops me from cluttering up the kitchen, so horology seemed like a good move. The activity requires a small amount of space for things like a work-desk and somewhere to park the ultrasonic cleaner (which should prove useful later for carburettors) and I can watch you-tube videos, read and access tea or coffee fairly easily. Just a matter of shifting a couple of cats who always find the warmest patch.

While on the subject of coffee, after years of 'instant', I've taken to the more complicated form with grinders and espresso machines, although I confess it is still usually Fiona who does the work. This I see as entirely her own fault as she tends to think of making a cup just a little before I do. Just now a blizzard has interrupted any gardening and has driven her indoors, so there's a good chance it'll happen again.

However this rambling, while filling a page, has to be about something, and 'What to do?' when weather, covid, age, (well, a slight lack of youth perhaps), etc restrict activities is worth examination. I now have horology, baristarology (well it should be a word) and magazine editorship, but how about you? Obviously you could start by writing an article for the next magazine, and I know there are authors, model train enthusiasts, pilots and brewers out there, so an article on 'What I did on my Holidays', Hobbies, and 'Unusual things about me' (apply caution there) might prove useful, even if a little unrelated to Midgery.

It's an annoying habit, I know, but my prediction was entirely right. Some espresso coffee is on its way, so I'll stop there. I wonder if there will be biscuits.

