

MIDGE MAGAZINE



Spring
2024



Eddy Rakhorst's Midge

MOBC. the Midge Owners and Builders' Club



Hello All.

I'd better give the club official notification that toward the end of next year I'll be standing down from most of the MOBC posts that I have held since taking over from John Bircumshaw.

My first magazine was in December 2015 so if my last will be Autumn 2025, that'll be 10 years.

Posts available will be Club Secretary, Web-master, Magazine (compiler, editor, proof-reader), Membership secretary, Treasurer, Facebook moderator, (1 of 2), Archivist, and parking attendant. (a single volunteer don't have to do all of them.)

Ideally I'd like to keep things as they are, but I was thinking that if there was a shortage of volunteers we could reduce the work load, ignore MOBC membership (£10) and make Facebook the main contact point, which would make all memberships free *if you answer the questions*. (Have you got or, Have you owned a Midge, Or do you just like Midges?)

I can keep the website open and sell brass badges (hexagonal and oval) as long as stocks last, @ £12 for the pair inc p&p, being near enough cost price if the postage doesn't go up again.

The bank balance could be transferred to a new treasurer or I can use it up in badges, postage, Domain fees, and website costs over the next two years or I could send paid up members a fraction of the balance. I'd guess about £5 at most, or make a charitable donation to a worthy cause.

These ideas are in case some posts cannot be filled, which obviously would be better. The actual number of new members sending in the £10 for lifetime membership has been falling off but the facebook page is still doing well. So I was thinking of charging £10 or £12 for some badges instead. This is a nearly two year notification so much may change before then. Meanwhile I thought I'd cancel the admission fee and offer badges instead. Opinions and thoughts on that will be appreciated.

ps, I just sold the second to last oval badge.

JH

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'Be Prepared !' by Jim Pailing

(An extension to Jim P's de-rusting (next page) and a word about garage heating. Also a trip to Cyprus and some family history. Additional unsolicited comments by the editor but no responsibility is taken by either Jim)

This maxim was brought home to me when running up my Chinese diesel heater in the garage with the onset of cooler weather. It produced large volumes of white smoke and no heat; unburnt fuel I diagnosed. It is a friendly little thing, bright red, small suitcase sized and for £100, very good value. I cannot tell a lie, I had been using diesel mixed with used oil ! Taking it apart was a simple matter and the solution, off the web, was a replacement mesh gauze for the heater plug. This provides a wick for the injected fuel from its 'dosing' pump to burn, being fed, in turn by an air supply from a small venting hole in the casing. The air is drawn through by the vacuum created by the Venturi effect of the flame being fed by the air blower. (think single cylinder jet engine) With the mesh blocked with oil and carbon 'the wind don't blow' so a little maintenance is required!

The whole box of tricks is controlled by a processor that runs through a cycle. It starts with a 'puff' to clear fumes and then blows more air, puts power on the heater plug and then pumps fuel with a friendly tick, tick. When the temperature increases it takes off with a splendid roar ! It is a copy of the Swedish Eberspacher, originally designed to heat truck engines ready for instant starting. It needs a fairly heavy 12volt battery supply (plus battery charger) and an exhaust exit (I used a thin wall curtain pole with a hole through the corrugated roof). The silencer needs to be outside as it has a drain hole and weeps fumes ! You will need a Charlie Noble cap (what a pub quiz answer that is ?) I didn't initially but soon learnt my folly. Amazing how raindrops find their way down that little 'ole ?

They are best used with plenty of ventilation ! There is a guy on You tube that does a very good 'demo' of one; explaining the lack of smoke and fumes in his enclosed garage but, I suspect, is a tad lacking on the effects of Carbon Monoxide ? Perhaps worth reiterating; fumes is the unburnt residue from combustion which pongs and tells you it's nasty. Carbon monoxide is what is left when the flame has devoured all the oxygen leaving nitrogen and carbon monoxide, neither of which, to use an understatement, 'supports life'. More to the point, they don't smell and the first/last thing you know about it is you go to sleep, permanently !

Pure Nitrogen now being used in the good old US of A for execution purposes, just saying, ed.

Talking about fumes I have found that with age my asthma is catching up with me ! Whilst on a two month winter break in Cyprus we visited the Historic and Classic Motor Museum in Limassol. (*photos below*) Well worth the trip in itself ! When engrossed in a separate area devoted to plant such as Barford and Perkins road rollers and Ferguson tractors (family connection, more later) my wife entered, dragging me out due to me having a coughing fit. Short story long, we deduced that I had a reduced tolerance to hydrocarbons and the exhibits having a generous coating of oil had 'set me off'. What has this to do with my Chinese heater, you may ask ? Well, it has the added benefit, apart from keeping me 'toasty', of devouring the oil impregnated air in the garage and burning it up the chimney ! It is no coincidence that my asthma has reappeared since its demise!

Just remember to position yourself between the fresh air coming in and the stale going out. And get a carbon monoxide detector available on ebay and Amazon. Mount it at nostril height. ed.

Winter is a bugger, if you excuse my French. Cold is OK, rain is OK, wind is OK but the three together, forget it ! Two out of three ain't bad, to paraphrase, but any more and it's indoors to planning mode.

Family connection ? My father's brother, William Pailing, was a draughtsman who, family folklore has it, should have gone to grammar school having passed his 11plus but the family couldn't afford the uniform! I take the story with a pinch of salt, my family being somewhat immutable on occasion. (Perversely, I went to grammar school and it was obvious at the time even, that I should have gone to the local 'Tech' !) I digress ! He worked for Aveling and Porter of Rochester who were designing a lightweight diesel engine for Garretts (lorries) of Leiston. (Another 'must see' museum) However, Aveling and Porter (steam) and Barford and Perkins (motor rollers) closed in 1932. Also there were Frank Perkins ('son of founder') who was, in fact a 'money man' and Charles Chapman who was the engineer; both left and started Perkins Diesels. I am not saying that either of them 'trouserred' the original plans but the design brief, a lightweight diesel engine for road vehicles, was the same ! Uncle Bill followed to the newly formed company at Rochester soon after and my aunt, Ruby, was the first secretary working on her own dining room table.

Perkins later sold out to Massey Ferguson, as it had become, Chapman and uncle Bill being a bit miffed as they didn't receive the expected 'dab in the hand'. Ferguson were, starting with the P4, very large users of Perkins engines of course. All this in a corner of Cyprus !

Talking of Cyprus, this motor cycle hire shop sign has one of the truest proverbs I have ever seen. (*It's on the next page. ed.*)



Carrying on from the Winter 20203 magazine I asked Jim P for a few more details about the de-rusting process. He wrote:-

One indoor job is battery charger de-rusting; great fun ! Take a large plastic container, bolt a load of steel strips around the outside and connect with substantial wire, as seen above. Fill with water and add half a cup of washing soda. Put the rusty item in, connect the steel strips to the positive and the negative to the item and stand back. After about four hours you get a large mass of evil looking bubbles and an item that is now covered in black wet soot. The process simply tries to 'plate' the item with iron converting the FeO rust into FeO₂ which is water soluble. Don't use stainless and only a cheap, non-automatic, charger. The smart ones don't work for this. The process is 'line of sight' so for the wire wheels I added an extra plate in the bottom which, of course, gets covered in debris and stops working ultimately till you clean it.

Jim P's travels took him to Cyprus

The Cypriot chimney shown here is popular on marine craft and avoids the effect of nearby up or down-draught, (or downdraft if you hail from the US). However I suspect from the soot that some of the fuel is unburned and the rain may be getting in because of poor welding. Possibly an object lesson in not using DIY in areas of Health and safety, even if five food cans would be a lot cheaper than a proper stainless steel job. If you insist on making one, the upright pipe should be inserted into the horizontal one to prevent rain ingress and better in this low pressure case than a lifting cap.



This exhibit (above) on Cyprus has an interesting steering system and it cleans the tar from the wheels as it goes. Brakes (perhaps inboard) are an optional extra. Probably not ideal for Midgets as the tread depth is below UK regulation standard and I suspect the vehicle would under-steer above 50mph.



I'd been looking to see who, by locale was reading my offerings.

My website statistics suggest there's some internet attention focused on the MOBC website and magazine from Langley in the US where the CIA live. If it is, well, Hi CIA.

I learned that the actual HQ is called the George Bush Centre for Intelligence. I nearly fell off my gate when I found that. What's next, the Titanic Insurance company?

However, I'm getting off topic.

Peter had kindly returned to me some of the earlier magazines after they had returned from a waiting room to him. I don't usually print them for our records as they are always available on-line and the price of ink is prohibitive considering that I have electronic copies.

It's very nice to know that there are others outside the club who have an interest, so I'll add below the address of the magazine archive that could be accessed by anyone reading this with access to a mobile phone, tablet or computer. You could also forward it as a picture.

For the index page which includes the magazine archive link (8 down on the left)

<https://midgebuilders.homestead.com/index.html>

or slightly less reliable

<https://www.mobc.co.uk/>

and the magazine archive is

<https://midgebuilders.homestead.com/MOBC-Magazines.html>

or 8 down on the left hand side.

If using a phone or tablet you will probably have to type in the whole address or you just get the first page. They aren't good with multiple page PDFs. It is in large print because none of our eyes are getting younger

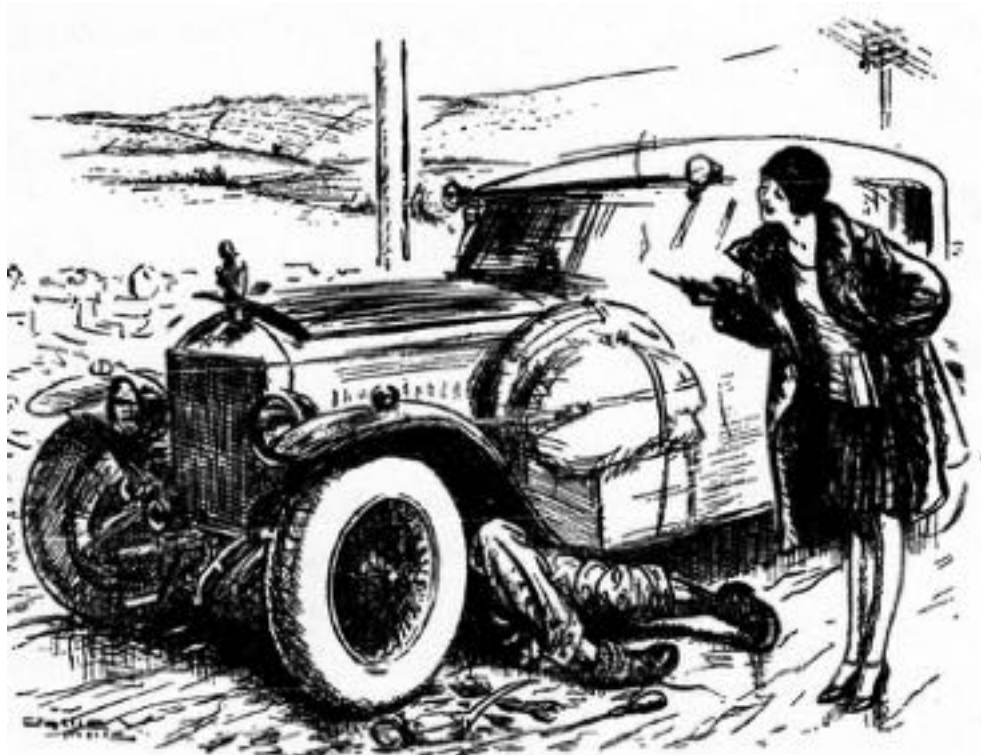
The QR code is a trial run to see if you can photo it and transfer the code to your computer or just read the magazines on your phone. It may not work, but if it does the code should take you to the magazine index and by expanding the screen you should be able to select the magazine you want....good luck.

John Eden found a few cartoons in the Punch Magazine compilation books, here are some more.



COLD COMFORT.

NERVOUS PASSENGER (as car approaches very steep descent): Are you sure this hill is safe? You told me last week it was very dangerous.
MOTORIST: Oh, it's all right now. I insured the car yesterday.



HELPMET (to Husband). "Well, and how's my little busy bee?"



"We'll have to let this thing pass. I can't hear a word you're saying."



Adrian Flux, who insure a few of our Midges sent me an email. Words by [Jasmine](#) and some by JH

New guidelines from the [Institution of Structural Engineers](#) have been released, recommending significantly expanding the sizes of standard parking spaces. While larger parking spaces could offer all drivers the space modern cars now require, the changes would lead to some loss in the number of parking spaces across UK cities.

Parking: the need for transformation

According to the new guidance, car park spaces should increase at least 5% in length and 8% in width. This means an average parking space will go from an average 2.4 by 4.8 metres to roughly 2.6 by 5.0 metres.

The standard for current parking spaces had been based on vehicle sizes from the 1970s, when the last publication of the Institution of Structural Engineers' guidance was released.

[FleetNews](#) found that the current [Range Rover](#) occupies a substantial 86% of the typical parking space, leaving just 21cm of clearance for drivers to exit. In contrast, the 1970s model of the same car only claimed 69%!

The proposed increase in parking space dimensions can be justified by the growth in sales of larger vehicles in the UK. In 2020, [SUVs exceeded 21%](#) of total car sales in the UK, totalling over 340,000 SUV sales through the year and marking a 7% increase in 5 years from 2015.

The popularity of SUVs and other large cars can be attributed to the shift in drivers' lifestyle choices and a growing awareness around accessibility, which has brought about subsequent changes to vehicles' practicality, comfort, safety features and advanced technology (e.g. assisted parking).

Rolling out larger car parking spaces is just one way car park operators can accommodate growing cars and their owners.

The potential impact of wider car parking spaces

For existing car parks to adopt larger parking spaces, the current spaces will need to be expanded, in-turn reducing the overall number of parking spaces in existing car parks. An estimated 25,000 car parking spaces could be lost across 10 major UK cities.

Some of the cities with the largest potential losses of car parking spaces include London (12,281 spaces), Glasgow (2,046 spaces) and Leeds (1,603 spaces).

The loss of car parking spaces across these cities will affect the availability of parking both day-to-day and on key dates and events, putting more onus on drivers to plan their trips further ahead.

On the other hand, larger spaces will enhance the overall parking experience for many car owners. The existing dimensions of parking spaces can present practical difficulties for many drivers and their passengers, restricting the ease with which people can exit their vehicles. The proposed space modifications would alleviate this difficulty.

Increasing the size of car parking spaces may benefit a range of people, such as owners of [four-wheel drives](#), people with [disabilities](#) or parents of young children.

Editor's note. An interesting idea as cars, especially SUVs are certainly getting bigger, but I can't help thinking the increase in car size is unnecessary and that parking charges should be increased for larger cars and decreased for smaller ones. Granted that would be impractical. However, since the odds are the councils would simply increase charges on some cars and then spend far more than the increased revenue on repainting the lines, I decided against promoting the idea. I think larger car owners already pay more for what used to be called Road Fund License and various other expenses, so it would be adding salt to the wound and probably redundant with ULEZ expansion. As an EV driver I'm hoping to downsize a bit. Batteries are getting smaller and lighter and the car size logically should follow, but the world is generally against logic so we'll probably follow the current trajectory until there's a paradigm shift, like not commuting, working from home, having a robot do it or flying. There is also my un-patented 8 day week (4 on 4 off) which solves most of it except the actual 'going to work' bit.

Many of us have retired, so that's another variable. JH

Car Parking Spaces Lost

How many parking spots will be lost in top UK cities as the size of car parking spaces increases?



Two 'interested' responses to an advert, and do they know each other?

This might be just paranoia

One of the potential scams that might cause you to get less than expected when selling a reasonably expensive item. Unlikely to be used for something less than a few hundred pounds dollars or euros, I noticed that this may have happened at least once to me.

I was selling a small caravan. I forget how it was advertised but two possible buyers emerged. The first was apparently fairly distant and seemed happy with the price, the second wanted to pay less but appeared to be relatively close. I stopped advertising and waited for the first to arrive with cash as arranged. A series of delays ensued, the first seemed to be having difficulty getting here. I told the second he could come and look at it but that I had a better if unfulfilled offer. Just before the second prospective arrived, the first cancelled the as yet verbal agreement. I would have thought nothing of it but two things emerged. One was that the buyer that actually arrived let slip that he was 'in the trade' although he rapidly backed up and said he was interested in the caravan for himself and the second point was that he seemed to know something of the absent prospect. I sold at a lower price than I'd hoped for, although it wasn't entirely unreasonable, but the cash in hand suggested he was a little more prepared than I would have expected considering that he was 'just popping over' as he was 'in the neighbourhood' at exactly the time that the other pulled out.

Obviously there are plenty of ways of being less than honest, including simply scanning the adverts, going there and stealing the item. "Oh I thought you were out and thought I'd have a look," or the test drive that never comes back. In practice these hardly ever happen and most of us are reasonably trusting. Life is too short to give everyone a full security check but I'd recommend caution, a helpful neighbour and proof of identity. It is reasonably easy to require a £50 bank transfer deposit if you are going to hold the item for them, especially if it's for more than a day or so, or you don't know them. I once sold a very rickety horse-box to a tree surgeon, for a very small sum, so I wasn't worried that he didn't have the money on him. He never came back in spite of a return visit planned with his son to look at a car of rather greater value. I guess he must have forgotten, what with the stress of being picked up by the police for a less than road-worthy trailer. One of the wheels fell off but I had told him about the weakness and it's potential for trouble, so I didn't fret too much when he failed to return.

I would recommend checking the wheels and a few other elements on any equipment that has been standing for a while, a seized bearing or cross threaded nut can be problematic, and now that many Midgees don't need MOTs safety is our responsibility. It always was, but worth remembering.

With reference to the long gone horse-box, they do say you cannot cheat an honest man. I would say that was a simple lie put about by thieves, crooks, and ne'er-do-wells. A prepared honest man with corroborative paperwork might be harder to cheat and as the horse-box lifter found out, karma can be quite agile. Not that I'd drop a curse, or a less than helpful wish on any with badly bolted morals. Me? No, I don't even believe in such things* and there's probably a perfectly good reason why the caravan dealer failed to return for the documentation and the spare wheel.

*I think Aunt Mary does though. I'll tell you about her sometime.



JH

UK 2024/25 Events

The Car and Classic site seems to be blank at the moment so try

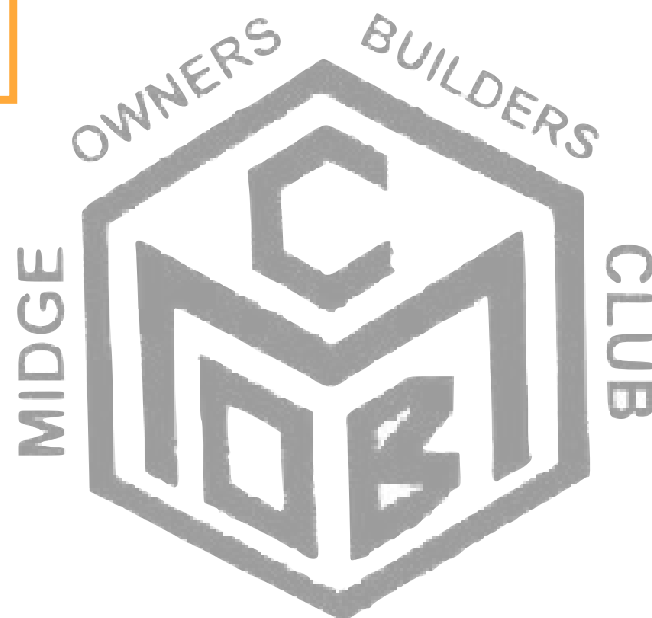
<http://www.classicshowsuk.co.uk> but the site seems a little cob-webby.

or <https://www.vintagecarsofeurope.com/events> International obviously and some rather expensive

I still have plenty of hexagonal badges in the style of the log seen bottom left. However, I am running low on the oval ones.

If my plan goes ahead then the membership joining fee (£10) will be replaced with a brass hexagonal for £10 including postage.

If there is a significant demand I can order up some oval badges from the brass foundry, so while they won't be available immediately if you want some then drop me a line. I'll not act until I have requests for at least ten and I'll note them and re-advertise their availability when I've got some stock. That way if it takes too long or you change your mind you won't get billed for something you no longer want.



I've had a message from John Hiles. It reads:-

Hi Jim

I hope you can point me in the right direction.

I have recently acquired the remains of a Midge Mk1, which looks like it started life as a Spitfire MkIV. The guy I got it from had bought it for the Ford Pinto engine that had been put in it. I have all of the mechanics to put a Spitfire engine and gearbox back in here, but I'm not sure it will be worth it in the end - there are no documents and the Pinto mods further alter the chassis. Can I advertise it either whole or in parts though your site, please?

I cannot say how the car has been stored, apart from the last 3 months, when it has been under a tarp. I think the chassis is sound, but I will double check this tomorrow and get back to you. The differential is the later round flanged type and it has the rear swing spring.

I am looking to get back what I paid for it. £300. If there is no interest, I will sell the Midge specific parts separately. For my sins, I am 50% through a Herald rebuild and need a better rear tub than the one I've got.

Many thanks

John

johnhiles512@btinternet.com

near to Darlington postcode is DL2 2DB.

My number is 07791205106.

I checked the chassis out during a session of under car limbo. I didn't find any problems in the usual spots around the rear suspension. The main rails and Midge extensions felt solid too. The whole thing rolls and steers for easy loading.

Thanks John

(I've always found

<https://www.shiplly.com/> helpful.)

JH





Several bold moves by Eddy here. Tall and narrow wheels, double hinge bonnet and very neat mudguards. I don't think there are two identical Midges anywhere.



Note the period fire extinguisher and bespoke Radiator grille. I think Giovanni Michelotti, the designer of the Herald, might have thought this a better style and probably easier to make.





George H's Midge emerges, probably blinking a bit, into the spring sunlight



Clazzer noticed a Midge. Vernon C bought it



Occasionally I wish I was better at panel bashing and fibreglass. Some of our Midges put professional body designers in the shade.





BodyCappings & New Side Screens.

Neil Walker wrote in with some recent photos of his work:-

The finish at the top of Ruby's body tub have always not been to my satisfaction so I decided to make some cappings. I had 2mm steel cut to 48mm strips then bent to 24mm angle, I then made ply templates for the shape of the cappings. The metal was then fitted by removing the inner flange of metal at the required bend points shaped to fit checked on the car then fillets were cut and welded in to place to keep the required shape (welding not good (out of practice, grinder sorted it.) Holes are drilled for the final mounting on the inner flange . High density pipe insulation is cut in half shaped and glued to the metal this is then shaped with a sander to the final design. Some leather that was left over from the seat re-trim was

stitched and glued over the insulation, final fitting was with screws and cups with a large eyelet used for the side screen holes.

Side Screens

The original screens made it difficult to see out of the side (too small) so I remade the frame larger using the original lower part and mounting. I used 7 mm round bar which I heated with a blow torch for the bends at the corners then welded the new frame to the old





Nice work Neil. I was expecting that the insulation tubes would be too thick, but it seems to have worked out nicely, and fits in well with the rest of a very tidy interior. I may copy your style as the cappings are difficult to make tidy. I'd not thought of sanding the foam, it has produced a softer edge and, I imagine, a better draught excluder. Glad to hear Ruby is out and about all year round, and I can see that you have good weather protection, which I think we may need for another month or so. JH

For Sale. Odette's Midge. CHP 889K If you want to get hold of it I'd suggest immediate action. It'll save me some compiling as the magazine is nearly ready. Anything this good is as rare as hen's teeth, and as you can see very carefully put together. It is in Bedfordshire nr Bedford. At that time Odette wasn't sure of the registration but that's sorted now and there are number-plates. I think Odette may have lost some responses from last time when it was on the April 2023 MOBC facebook, (just search Odette) so if you did and got no response then contact me (jim@jimhewlett.com or text 07766011877). Obviously she's very attached to the machine but will have to sell soon. We thought £2.5k to £3k was a reasonable suggestion although it looks worth more to me but I promised Fiona I wouldn't buy any more. The wire wheels would be worth most of that. If you really want a Midge, make a serious offer or I'll reconsider and start looking for garage space or a dog house

It's now properly registered as a JC Midge with the original construction date march 1972. Tax and MOT free. It is described on the DVLA as red and on a Spitfire chassis but there is some suggestion it's a T&J chassis which would make it bullet proof. Loads of spares, all the bells and whistles. It has an 1100 Burton Ford engine, (I'd guess 11/47 originally) and was constructed by an engineer.

I suggest a deposit if you want it held.

The gear selector stick might have been found

Good home required, warm garage etc. MOBC members who want to drive it themselves will be prioritised by the seller. Now you know as much as I do. JH





Tailpipe

Well the deadline approaches, so I'd better get this publication to the press. There's some sunshine now and then and just when you think it's safe to go outside, a swift frost. However Midges are emerging from garages and parts catalogues are being printed.

There are adverts on the web pages(<https://midgebuilders.homestead.com/Sales-and-wants.html>) for which I haven't heard cancellations so there should be some projects there for those that like to create as well as on the previous page.

I've been threatening to sell a Midge or two for some time, but haven't had the time to get them checked over. The last time I took a car for an MOT the garage mentioned that they can't do MOTs on cars of Midge Vintage so it'll just be the opinion of a friendly mechanic you need. It has no legal standing, but Midge owners know that an MOT was only good until you leave the station, and if a wheel falls off 100 yards (or metres) down the road it has always been the responsibility of the driver or the owner to check road-worthiness. I think it might be at least partly the responsibility of the car manufacturer during the warranty period, but I haven't tested that, so don't take it as gospel. Expert opinion is always useful so if you know, feel free to advise and I'll update accordingly.

It is a peculiarity of the law that loopholes are useful for those that dodge responsibility, but an unprotected individual is expected to bridge the gap between theory and reality with expensive legal advice. You can steal millions and kill thousands and they will usually give you a knighthood. Steal an apple or get on the wrong side of a policeman and it's off to Botany Bay or your feet off the ground. Well, perhaps I exaggerate slightly. Things have improved in the last two hundred years, but mainly by delaying court cases for a few years because of the shortage of prison cells. I still think it's worth having a mechanic (not a fitter) giving the underside of your Midge a good look now and then, even if it's not called an MOT. I sold a Mk1 Ford Escort with a nice fresh MOT a few decades back and the track-rod arm fell off a few miles down the road. Fortunately at very low speed, and yes it was a pothole.

So as they say, let's be careful out there and only drive where you can see, potholes are very popular in areas where councils and road departments are under financial pressure. This is from New Civil Engineer magazine Feb 2024:- Figures from the government, analysed by the RAC, showed that 1,230km of A roads were strengthened, resurfaced or preserved in 2022/23, a 37% decrease (737km) from 1,967km in 2017/2018. In fact, but only 4% (1,149km) of A roads were resurfaced or given life-extending preservation in 2022/23. So now you know.

I was looking for a mobile phone app that would locate, notify and ask for a repair of road damage. (While keeping eyes on the road of course.) So I googled 'a phone app for reporting potholes' and found 'Stan the app' <https://www.stantheapp.com/> I haven't tried it yet though. Have a good Spring.

JH