

MIDGE MAGAZINE



Summer
2017



MOBC. the Midge Owners and Builders' Club

Joep's Midge

How much is too much of a good thing?

So, some time ago I bought a Midge, now imaginatively called the Green one, and noticed immediately the attractive power it had on impressionable young ladies. (OK some were 40 ish, but from where I'm standing...)

I think Midges makes them think we look 'safe' but I've no idea why. So there I was, looking chilled - it was November - in a Motor-way service station car park suddenly and unexpectedly the centre of attention of several smiling females. Assuming this to be the major life change from the previous 50 years I asked any listening deities to multiply and continue the effect, with of course, my wife's consent.

I think my wife must have put an amendment in, or said deity decided to protect my marriage because now I'm surrounded by them. No, not females... Midges. And of course they all need looking after, expensive gifts, tyres rather than shoes (but it doesn't make them cheaper), housing and care and attention and of course the latest gadgets in the form of electronic ignition systems, shock absorbers and steering wheels. Not to mention all those little necessities a Midge needs like Master cylinders and fresh hydraulic oil and a special trip out for the anniversary MOT. Meanwhile they sit in their harem (garage) and chat while I get sent out for little delicacies like antifreeze and alloy for a new bonnet. It's raining so that means it has to be the boring modern car, Midges are allergic to rain, or so they tell me. Jim.

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



Welcome to Ian Whinham (Mk2)
and David. J. Radford (Mk1)

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Jim's Red Midge developments....

This Summer I hope to get the 'Red' Midge back on the road. My having been somewhat delayed by those trials and tribulations hereinafter referred to as life.

My original thought, in that optimistic selectively blind mode we use for project imagination, was to lift the body off the Ford based Midge and pop it onto the 'Blue' Triumph based chassis. What could go wrong with such a simple manoeuvre?

The first and easiest part was swapping the bodies over, then it got a bit more complicated. The cut-out bits of the floor and back panel intended to accommodate the Ford chassis suspension were not quite the same as those of the Triumph chassis, so some patching is going

on there to avoid weakness in the tub. Any watcher of Star-Trek will be aware of 'hull integrity' and we don't want any of that kind of problem.

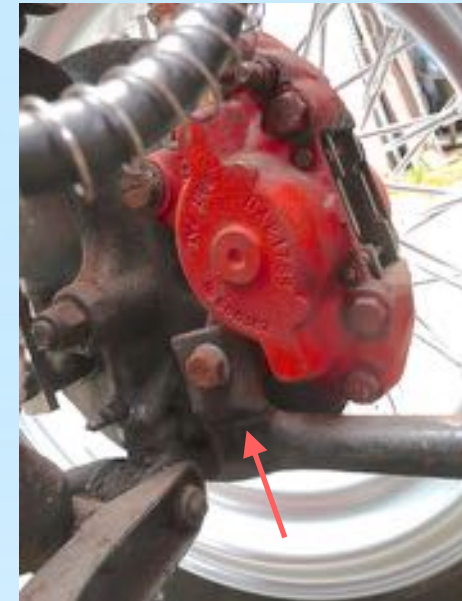
Having gotten over that, and the odd miss-match, like where the seat bolts hit the chassis there were a few modifications starting with the mudguards. You'll have heard me

banging on about track width and wheel

clearance before so I'll summarise with the fact that the support structure needed re-doing. I have developed an effective if not very sophisticated mounting system for fixed rear mudguards. I doubt I'm the first to think of it. It's based on three tubes of various lengths, a handful of washers and some sturdy bolts. Generally the bolt head is inside the mudguard with a washer, between the 'guard and the body is a steel tube and two washers, and on the inside of



the body another washer and a nut. Occasionally a domed nut as well, acting as a lock-nut. The result looks quite frail, and I wouldn't stand on it, but feels quite solid.



Both front and back mudguards have previous bolt holes that will have to be filled with careful welding, or dummy bolts.

The front mudguards are mounted

on two 'legs' which are bolted on to the hub through the steering arm. Hopefully it will look a bit tidier with some heat-shrink tubing over it.

I should advise anyone trying this to check again that the bolts still engage properly with the steering arm as falling off would be problematic. The forward arm is made as a bridge so that vibrations are absorbed, and works rather well. The rearward arm is a tube for the same reason. My welding should be tidier by the time it's finished. With all these brackets make sure the bolt is still properly engaged with the brake mount and watch for metal fatigue where indicated at the joint between tube and bar.

While I'm at it...

Since the last set of wheels on this body were from a Hillman Minx (which match the stud pattern of Ford Escorts and Cortinas) and are now MWS 15" the sawn off Escort axle could no longer support the spare wheel, previously it was had been mounted so the inside of the wheel faced out which gave me



somewhere to put the square number-plate and to bring the mass closer to the body. That option is no longer available so I knocked out the splined wheel bolts and replaced them with threaded bar, using one of the redundant Ford hubs and a block of wood as a spacer. I could have left out the wood and mounted the spare the other way around, but discovered it actually moved the mass further back. It seems strong enough, but there will be a chain for added

security. Now all I need is a spare spinner, although I have made up an alternative method which includes an alternative number-plate mount.

Bolting the floor to the chassis was easier than I expected, once I had it up on ramps, although as noted the medial rearward seat bolt on each chair hit the chassis, so some head scratching will be needed there. The seats look reasonably authentic, but I do have a set of rally types which fit better and lower, 'Paddy Hopkirk' I think, but they do look a bit modern.

I've decided to go for the inertia reel seat-belts from the previous incarnation, I experienced no great problems mounting them and they are easier to use than static ones. The only tricky bit is mounting them at exactly the angle they were at in the donor Metro, about 13 degrees off the vertical,



otherwise they become truculent. Obviously inertia belts aren't very 1930s but I'm prepared to bend a rule there. The exhaust is a bit more of a problem as I'm not sure the MOT garage will approve of it, but it sounds good.

Now it's just the handbrake, transmission tunnel and carpet to make up, and a lot of disassembly, painting, filling, welding and trimming to do. A Spark-rite electronic ignition is waiting in the wings, and a mirror which is waiting for me to decide on whether to take a run at the folding windscreen.

The back end looks a little bland, so I think a bit of boat-like decking might perk it up a bit, and not particularly wanting to put in rear seats I might incorporate the available space into a sort of boot.

In the meantime the ford T&J chassis, 1300 crossflow engine, running gear and Minx wheels have gone to a good home. They might resurface as a Midge, stranger things have been known. The 'blue Midge' body, a couple of headlights and the Morris 10 radiator grille went in the same direction. Since the 13" wire wheels went to another member, it looks as though Tony's Midge will continue to exist as major parts of three other Midges. A sort of modular reincarnation.

JH

Baptiste summarises his early Midge experience.

Expedition for a Midge

A Classic car enthusiast from my early years, I always drove old cars. A few years ago I found a Herald 13/60 Convertible and fell in love with its simplicity and charm.

A few months ago I was looking for an older car, something from the 40's. Finally my curiosity went to the JC Midge... A 40's shape mechanically more adapted to our modern traffic condition.

With the support of the MOBC I found Peter's Midge, once the contact was established and the deal concluded, the expedition start.

Oh, I didn't mentioned that I am French, I live near Paris and Peter's Midge was at Norwich... 700 km from me.

So, as the car have just passed the MOT, I was confident to be able to drive her back to France without a trailer. I took a plane from Paris (wake up at 4:30am!) to Luton, then a bus followed by a train to Cambridge and a second train to Norwich.

Then I met wonderful people: Peter, his wife, and a friend of them who is fluent in French in case we face some difficulties to communicate.

After a full presentation of the Midge and its documentation (thanks Peter for all the documentation you

gave me) it was time to take the road and cross the channel. I should have take more time with them but the perspective of 600km plus the Tunnel crossing told me it was time to go.

Peter's wife was very attentive to me and she prepare a picnic for my trip (Thanks Suzanne for this attention).

Hit the road! First contact with the Midge and the English roads (last time I drove in England was in 1993 and it's always a bit of stress to focus on the right side of the road which is the left side...confusing no?)

The Midge was an attraction during short Tunnel Crossing (photo).

Back to France, for sure the Midge have done a good job en the English roads and now I'm on the way back home. Now night-time and the motorway is empty, which is a good news so that the trucks didn't overtake me all the time.

I finally arrived at Paris at 0:30 without any problem, only one fear when I realise that the tank was empty on the M1. Strangely there is no gas station on the highway while in France there is one every 40km.

Now another expedition...start with the French administration... meanwhile I'm working on the Midge to give her a bit of youth. New windscreen, replacement of the hard top by a soft top, some cosmetic work also.

To be continued...Baptiste.



So what has James Orr been up to?

It looks as though James has been getting into the spirit of summer, though he doesn't say whether this below is floral



decoration, bouquet delivery or he has simply turned the back of his Midge into a planter. Of course the Midge has long been known as a way of attracting interesting people. I remember driving back from Somerset with the green Midge and being instantly surrounded by young(ish) ladies who wanted to sit in the passenger seat. Of course I had my beard then, and that might have influenced things... James went one better and, with the aid of a beard of course, enticed the First Minister of Scotland into a photo opportunity, thereby getting the club a little publicity.



Just to annoy the rest of us, he tells me when he's not mingling with the great and good or driving Midges, or both, he flies small aircraft. Incidentally, James did the last MOBC calendar. Because of our work pressure, we've not been able to do one since, but if you want one for 2019 I'll need photos and brief stories sent in. Then if I've got a bit of material to start working on I might be able to persuade James to do another. But send to me first and we'll see how it goes. J.H. pp J.O.



I accidentally left a page blank when making the magazine, so I was faced with the prospect of moving all the pages around, or thinking of a neat filler. Then I thought of this.

Members may or not know that John Cowperthwaite has another business called Lightning Cars. The web pages for the latest product is now ready for viewing. You may want to have a look, as it is a neat way of developing the affection and admiration of your grand-children. Basically a child sized Midge called an **EKO** it has a small (electric starting) petrol engine and is designed for non road use.

There are also small cars driven by cordless drills called The Lightning. There's pictures of a part built and finished Lightning below.

These cars are not Midges, but the kind of thing an indulgent grandfather might give if the child had access to a reasonably large garden, farm or paddock. Just about small enough to make in the living room, though your spouse might recommend the shed, this 'toy' could keep you occupied when the weather is too wet for Midges and your fingers are getting bored. (That's when you think of putting up some shelves in the living room while your family are watching some interminable rubbish on television.) Lightning cars is part of the jcsportscars.co web site and the direct link is at lightning-cars-home-page.html Tell your friends, if they manage it you could point out the advantages of a Mk2 Midge.



Going safely around the bend?

Ray Jones has pointed out a possible problem in most Mk1 Midgets. His steering column developed cracks at the upper and lower ends of the 'slotted' part of the upper steering tube where the clamp allows for length adjustment (and a degree of collapsibility) He says

"Heads up chaps, if your Midge uses Herald steering gear components, be warned! Thought Ethel was wandering slightly and looked under the bonnet expecting a loose coupling bolt somewhere. Instead I found the slotted section of tubular steering column cracked through at both lower sides of the slot....flexing at each turn of the wheel and ready to tear, only 7-8mm of good metal left. Scared me silly! All welded up and reassembled now thanks to a local friend & restorer. Celebrating my near-disaster with a run out to the shore in evening sunshine....phew!"

I checked with Ray about the column's history. Hard use recently but no unusual trauma. As he points out, the square cut of the tube leaves a weak point in each corner.

"Far as I can tell the shaft went from sound to failed in less than 3k miles. I understand old Lotus designs used Triumph parts and the problem is well known..." RJ.



I've not come across this failure before, I think it may be a bit late for a product recall. Bear in mind these parts are 40 to 60 years old. If anybody comes across this or other problems let the club know. The only other one I can think of is trunnion failure.

I did have a front wheel fall off my Spitfire once, and overtake me on a bend but that might have been from absent-mindedly fitting Morris 1000 wheel nuts or using the correct ones and not tightening them properly. Since I never saw them again I can't be sure. JH

All I can suggest is that Midge owners check that the bolts of the clamp are tightened to the right torque. Unfortunately there seems to be a difference of opinion on some values.

Most sources suggest - 6 to 8 lb/ft for the two 1/4 unf clamp bolts

The workshop manual says tighten the 1/4 unf socket (allen bolt) setscrew as far as you can by hand, ie with an allen key, others say 12lb/ft. This is the important one as it determines how much force is needed to telescope the column, always assuming it isn't rusted solid.

The locking nut gets anything from 8 to 20. I'd say 12 and some loc-tite as it is only stopping the setscrew from loosening.

The column will be unable to telescope if adjusted to its lowest position. A seatbelt will hopefully stop your chest from hitting the wheel, but not the steering wheel from hitting your chest, which is why a double elbow is useful in folding the column in the hopefully unlikely event, the other safety factor is the relatively low top speed.

Other mechanical news.

His Midge having moved to France, Peter Stainton has kindly offered the club his louvre lever for making lovely louvres. When I heard the offer I promptly bought a third Midge without louvres so that I could write a review on it for the club's benefit. I felt it a bit unfair but the treasurer refused point blank to have the club pay for the car, so I raided the piggy-bank. (I have explained this to my wife.)

Louvres are the slots in the engine side panels as I'm sure you all know, but apart from any spelling challenges it's worth remembering they open toward the back of the car to aid engine ventilation and are usually tilted to prevent rain from running inside. I discovered this a while ago using my old wooden louvre making device. After making an off-side panel with superb rain gathering capability. I had to stare at it for



some time as it just looked wrong, but I couldn't see why.

Graham Fackman will be needing the louvre lever soon, but I get to try it first as he has other projects to deal with first. After that we, i.e. the club, be sending it on to whoever needs it next. It is usually used on a work-mate, and you'll need alloy cutting discs rather than steel cutting discs on your angle grinder, otherwise it clogs the disc and smears the metal. 1mm thick is the narrowest I have found. Jig-saws are not very accurate, but a good sharp alloy cutting blade might do. I found the narrow disc relatively easy to control once it was properly in. You might want to cut from the inside aspect so any early 'skip and jump' inaccuracies are concealed. Wobbly lines will be pointed out by observers unless you carry a hammer at all times.

There will be some alloy that needs smoothing off on the cut edges. I use a new Stanley blade held between 2 fingers and 2 thumbs like a spoke shave, but I like living dangerously so I suggest you approach it with caution, and at least wrap the ends with masking tape. Don't try grinding the rough bits off with the cutting wheel, it is never accurate enough and you'll get scratches. (I know, I tried.)

The wooden louvre maker mentioned previously is simply two composite bits of

wood. One with a louvre shaped dent and the other with a louvre shaped lump. Being made of wood it is seriously battered looking, but it is small and light. Perhaps someone knows how to cast a hard alloy replica.

There may be other tools that the club could collect, so suggestions are invited. I thought a Gunson G4008 Trakrite Wheel Alignment Gauge might be useful and am keeping an eye open for one. They are available at about £45 but I'm hoping to get lucky.



Thread gauges are another possibility and easily posted, although you may want your own.

I was lucky enough to inherit a 'Clarke' sheet metal folder recently from a retiring engineer. It will only take sheet a couple of feet wide, but might prove useful. I could lend it on the same basis, but since they are

on eBay for £50 it might be easier to just buy one.



Chris Bird writes....

Are you sitting comfortably?

Well the chances are that if you are sitting on an original Triumph seat in your Midge, the answer will be no! That was certainly the case with my Triumph Herald seats which are now forty seven years old. They had been re-covered with leather, back in 2005 and the upholsterer had boosted the crumbling foam pad with some extra foam underneath, but for whatever reason he had used elastic webbing instead of a rubber diaphragm.

After twelve years, this had lost its stretch.



Last year I got round the problem by packing foam under the seat, between the runners and this was OK - but then I spotted 'improved' rubber diaphragms on ebay from Classic Bits. At £23.90 including postage I thought it was worth a try - though it was not a job I was looking

forward to as I had forgotten how I had fixed the seats in.

Luckily I had used captive bolts so it was an easy job to remove the nuts and then the seats. Laying the diaphragm on the seat bottom did not look good though. The hooks needed to go through holes in the frame - but there were not enough



holes and they seemed to be in the wrong place. Also, which way round?

Well, to cut a reasonably long story short, they did fit and work a treat. The method I used for the first one is as follows. I removed the webbing and hooks (if you have a perished rubber diaphragm - remove that and its hooks). At the back, I needed to remove a couple of the upholstery clips to fold back the material and expose the holes. As the holes are a bit small, I opened them out to 4.5mm with a drill.

The two hook sides go fore and aft and I used a long, flat bladed screwdriver with a notch filed in the end to push the

hooks into position. Then I did the same with the front and rear side hooks before centre punching and drilling the extra hole in the middle.



You will see from the photo that I left the extra foam in place - so if your original foam is knackered, It might well be worth adding some before fitting the rubber.



I was so pleased that I ordered another one and did the second seat. This time I cranked the tool slightly by heating with a blow-lamp and bending in the vice. So the upshot is that both Liz and I will be sitting a lot more comfortably for about £50 and a couple of hours work.

CB.



I guess I'll have to admit to buying another unfinished Midge. I couldn't let this one go as it has Midge on the V5c, and I thought there was a danger, since it hadn't sold on eBay, that it might have been handed on until somebody broke it, or lost the paperwork. I have no intention of selling it on just yet, my main hobby is fixing things, and this one has a few bits that need fixing, not least the gold paint and the chairs. I'll try to resist putting wire wheels on it as the originals are in reasonable condition, also the mudguards are quite well done and, to cap it off, a new set of wires is now well over £1000 excluding tyres.

Working out someone else's wiring is one of my specialities now, it's amazing how many different ways there are of doing it, some less effective than others.



Dynamo to alternator conversion is easy enough, though it's nice to keep the original equipment where possible, so I only do that when the old stuff wears out. You can buy alternators that look like dynamos, but they aren't cheap, and I've no objection to halogen lamps. (Haven't tried LED yet.)

I'm happy to report that the previous builder is still well, he just thought he was too old, the project had stalled and was unlikely to start again. He had passed it on to a friend to sell so I'll be able to send a message back when it is on the road. I don't have any indication he was ever in the club, it just goes to show the benefits of club membership and the support that goes with it, keeping you talking and reading Midge stuff with other similarly afflicted individuals. JH.

These are pictures that for one reason or another found while searching for information from the dim and distant. Well, actually from John B's archive that he handed on to me when I took on secretaryship. So I thought we'd have a small memorabilia page as I couldn't find a nice cartoon or historical image that would expand to a whole page.



There are quite a few Mk2 Midgets being built out there. John is getting requests for Roof plans, and has heard about prospective and passed MOT tests so more must be nearly roadworthy. Most of the contents of this magazine are about the Mk 1, which still make up the bulk of the membership, but 10% are Mk2 builders, and the number is growing. We should have more about them but I know little about the practical side, and can't really build a Mk2 just so I can develop such knowledge. I'm having enough trouble getting away from the keyboard and working on my Mk1s .

I'll have to prompt you to write something up, especially as Mk2 types should be more computer literate than us old recycled typewriter operators. A couple of photos and a hundred words would be twice the size of this bit.



Has anyone any experience of LED headlights yet? Obviously not very 1930s but worth considering if you want to take the load off elderly dynamos and regulator boxes. Answers, articles and questions to jim@jimhewlett.com



UK 2017 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.

Useful links

http://www.carandclassic.co.uk/car_events.php

<http://www.classicshowsuk.co.uk/>

and

<http://www.kentkitcarclub.com/2014events.php>

Don't forget I can update the magazine, so if you have a correction, suggestion, addition or whatever, I can put it in. It does mean a bit of work, so I'll not be adjusting individual apostrophes, but if it's important.....

Peter Stainton was kind enough to give the club a Louvre making device. Having sold his Midge he will of course be thinking about building another. If that happens I'll lend it



back to him.

I thought it best to try it out, and the following covers that enterprise. The plan is that members can borrow it - if they want to make louvres, there isn't much point in using it as a paperweight - and I'd suggest each member using it would pay for it to be sent on to the next by courier. If it wasn't in demand for a while then I'd get it sent back to me.

The device could be made by anyone with a reasonable work-shop, welding kit, and access to angle iron. I have the plans and the instructions. I'm not entirely sure who made this one, possibly Bill Durham, or maybe Peter using Bill's instructions. I'll let you know if I find out. But if

you want a copy of the plans email me at jim@jimhewlett.com



So, to work;

I cut a 11.25 inch slot into the piece of alloy using an extra narrow (1mm I think) alloy cutting disc in the grinder.

Steel cutting disks can't cut alloy well. You could use a hacksaw, but it would be a slow process, and I wouldn't recommend a jigsaw.

Next I mounted the device on a work-mate and loosened the 10mm nuts that clamp it down on the metal. They aren't very clear on the photo, there are four, one at each end of the angle sections. I'll see if I can find some knurled thumb-nuts, they don't have to be very tight.

Once you've positioned the metal in the clamp and checked the position so that the bit of metal being depressed doesn't hit the edge of the slot (hence the thin metal ruler on the next photo) then the bolts can be tightened, the pressing arm swings over, (make sure the slot is centralised and long enough).



The louvre lever trial continues.

Once you've positioned the metal in the clamp and checked the position so that the bit of metal being depressed doesn't hit the edge of the slot (hence the thin metal ruler) then the bolts can be tightened, the pressing arm swings over, (make sure the slot is centralised and long enough).

Then it was time to press it down, I used a lump hammer and a piece of wood to avoid chipping the paint, but



if I was going for mass production I'd add a long lever for a more controlled action. However that would mean the force would be to one side and possibly tilt the work-mate.

The precision belting seemed to have the right effect, and the result is below.



I might add a few points.

The structure determines the minimum gap between louvres, I think it was about 2 inches, as you wouldn't want to squash the previous. Also next time I'd use the plastic covered side and masking tape on the outside aspect to minimise scratches. Most importantly check and double check that the angled cuts mean the rain will be directed out. The top should be further back on the car than the bottom, and the press applied to the inside aspect of the panel. A while ago, on the red Midge I managed to make an engine side panel with the louvres tilted the wrong way, so the rain would have run in rather than out. Useful in desert climes perhaps, but not in Scotland. JH

We take up the story from page 12 the Spring issue...

The next day dawned and an early start gave me a chance to review my purchase.

The car was fitted with a very nice period Wolseley radiator surround complete with filler cap. The filler cap didn't actually connect to the radiator but it looked authentic!

The grille itself, in fact the whole car was just about identical to the original prototype, in as much as that also had an original Wolseley grille fitted and had red painted steel mudguards and 'roller coaster' dash top.

The car had original Herald/Spitfire steel wheels to which I quickly added some aftermarket chrome plastic spoked wheel-trims as a temporary measure.

As mentioned the car had Aero screens fitted, which were a little bit the worse for wear as they had started to delaminate at the edges.

Anyway the car was promptly insured taxed and tested with no advisories and after a rather cursory glance around the engine bay to check that everything was intact, we took to the open road.

As I already mentioned Peter (The previous owner) worked for a specialist exhaust manufacturer and had succeeded in making the most beautiful sounding side

exiting exhaust which just stopped short of setting the rear tyre on fire!

It was of course, on the drivers side of the car, just below the door and the sound at full chat could best be likened to a Supermarine Spitfire's supercharged Merlin!

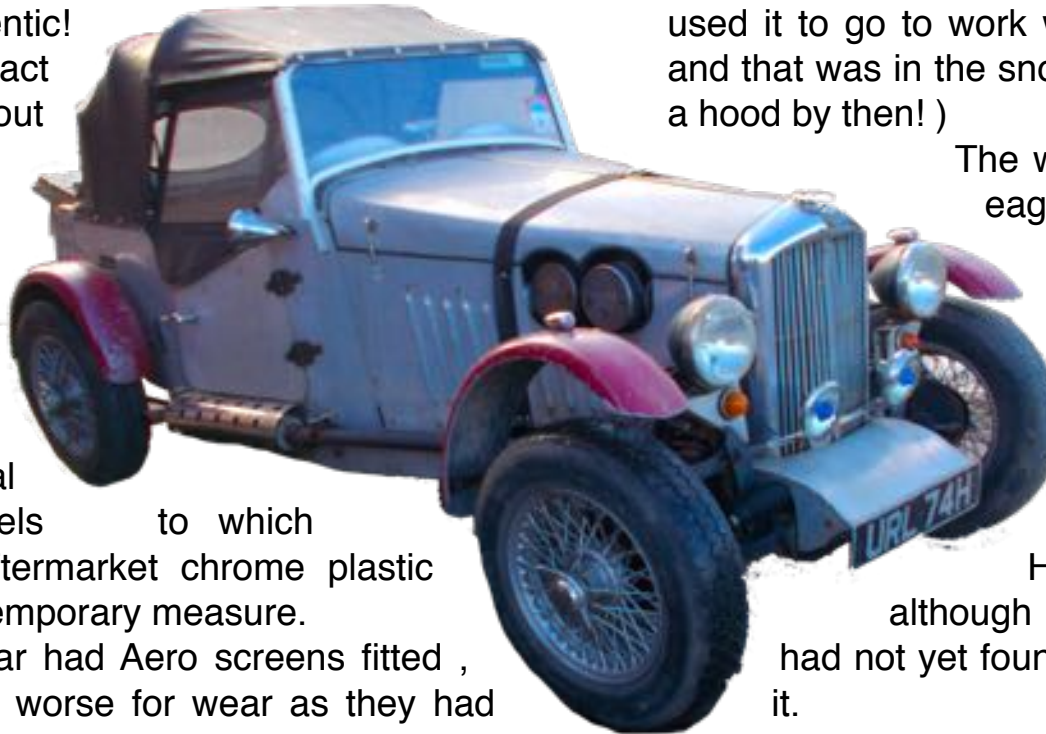
Peter was a time served mechanic and it showed. I drove that car for around three years and never had to fix anything! It just worked and was ultra reliable. My son later used it to go to work when his own car was out of action, and that was in the snow and he grew to love it! (It did have a hood by then!)

The weather soon became a problem but, eager to share my new acquisition with at least one other local Midge owner, I poured over the members list and found a Midge owner just about ten miles away. I made contact and found that his Midge was not yet road legal but I made arrangements to pay him a visit.

He had bought the car part built and although he had owned it for some months he had not yet found the time to do any serious work on it.

Regrettably, during the interim, IVA had reared it's ugly head and his Midge was built on a very substantial but very illegal aftermarket chassis which had no registered chassis number or vin plate as it was constructed before such requirements existed.

I visited him a few times as he became more despondent about ever finishing the car or making it road legal.



They do say that it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good! And he finally decided to attempt to finish the car for competition use to trailer to various events in order to compete.

The first criteria for this course of action was that he would need a pair of aero screens rather than the full screen which had never been fitted! A cash free exchange was duly accomplished and I was half way to achieving weather protection, but the next part of the story beggars belief!

I designed the Midge in 1985, which was also the final year of trading for Moss Sports cars, following the disastrous fire that destroyed the GRP moulds and patterns for all four models.

Now in 1985 the Midge was already so successful that as a separate company, JC SportsCars had accumulated a substantial amount of money in a very short time.

Following the Moss fire my first instinct was to rescue Moss by using the JC SportsCars money to have the Moulds remade. This was possible because some completed bodies were safely stored elsewhere ready for sale and it was feasible to remake the moulds from them, although at considerable expense. Bearing in mind that at the time of the fire we had 42 kits on order with deposits paid, this seemed to be the only option,

What I didn't take into account was the cost of supplying other components, weather gear chassis etc to existing companies, paying rent and rates on a 4,500 sq. foot unit and employing staff from a company that had no current income.

The idea failed and Moss Sports cars had to be put into receivership despite my best efforts.

Somehow the remade bodies and moulds mostly survived and were eventually sold on to a gentleman who was a

recent Midge customer, and had received a large insurance payment following an accident the details of which I never knew, and was so enthralled at the idea of becoming a kit car manufacturer that he bought what was left of the Moss empire and renamed it Hampshire Classics.

The company did not survive under it's new ownership and the moulds and rights were later acquired by the Moss Owners club.

Back to my story.

I had acquired and fitted the full screen but had no weather equipment. I went to see The Sheffield Trimming Company who had made the original hoods only to be told that all the patterns had been thrown away just two months earlier!.

I acquired an old Spitfire hood with the idea of altering it but that was just stupid. I had always designed the hoods for my cars but never actually made one. As you can see from the weather gear on the MK2 Midge I now have those skills and can pass them on to anyone who wants to make their own MK2 weather gear from patterns and instructions.

This is only now possible because of modern lightweight PU backed materials that can be sewn on a domestic machine.



Mk2 with hood

But I digress.

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But I digress... again!

I was browsing the Kit Car listings on eBay and by chance came across an advert for a part built Midge. Well actually it was a part started Midge, in the form of a nicely prepared Spitfire rolling chassis, with engine and box, some aluminium panels, a cast aluminium radiator grille, a GRP dash-top and a hood and side-screens all for (I think) £450.

My first instinct was to email the seller on eBay messaging with a plea along the lines of; My name is John Cowperthwaite, I designed this car back in 1985. I am retired now and trying to restore one on a shoestring budget. If you would sell me the hood and side-screens for £100 I am quite sure that you would still get £450 for the rest of it no problem. .. Well it was worth a try!

The message that came back was amazing!

Hi John, Thanks for your message. This is Jim here (No relation, JH) who bought Moss from you after the fire. I had already started to build a Midge and bought the parts from you back in 1985. Then I embarked on the Moss/ Hampshire classics adventure. After that I never got around to finishing it

and we have moved house many times and taken it along in the vain hope that I would get around to it someday. That is not ever going to happen so I decided to sell it on. It would be my pleasure to sell you the hood and side-screens for £100. They are still brand new in the bag!

And so they were. They had some minor evidence of mould spots inside the roof, but were just as I had sold them to him 25 years earlier!

How amazing was that!

The next problem was HOW TO MAKE A FRAME FROM THE INSIDE OF THE HOOD! with no frame pattern or dimensions.

To be Continued....

And so gentle reader, (that's a bit of plagiarism of Jane Austen that is) you will have to wait until autumn to find out what happened next. Had I been there I could have shown John the hood frame pages on the website, but I'd have needed a time machine to do that.

Right, that's the magazine 'put to bed'. I'm going to have a stiff drink and get on with the Midges pining in the garage. Actually I think the other way round would be a better idea, otherwise... well it wouldn't be good.

There's an MOT due and possibly a spot of chassis welding. All good fun, and I can try out my new metal bender and welder. Who knows? Maybe a bit of driving in the sun.

Drive safely.

