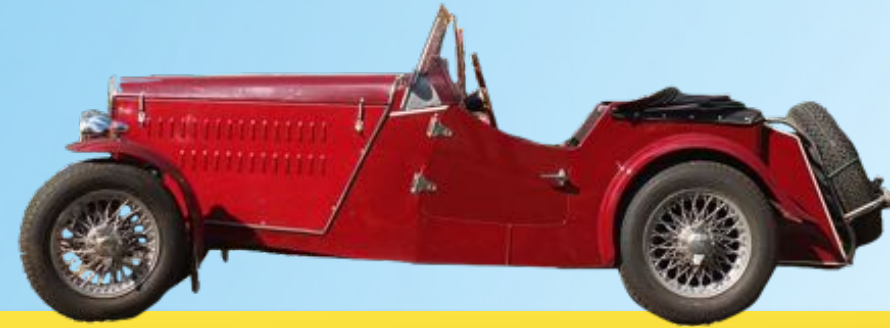


MIDGE MAGAZINE



Summer
2020



MOBC. the Midge Owners and Builders' Club

Daniel's Midge

Hello All.

Late June and still locked down.

Well, there's not been a lot of driving, but even the worst prevaricator will have at least looked at his Midge and thought of things to do. (assuming it is within reach of course). The weather here in Scotland has, until the time of writing at least, been spectacular, allowing Midges into the sunlight without much fear of rain. I hope many of the members will have had similar weather and I think most will have had the time. Suddenly I hear of Midges being volunteered for shopping duties.

Our thanks to those in the emergency and other vital services. Delivery Van Man and the Postie will be feeling unusually appreciated and quite a few of the poorly paid will be hoping for a bit more recognition of their social importance.

Some of us, myself included, are retired. That's when you go on being just as busy but for not much pay. For us it's been a different package, but family, charity, social and even religious time demands have been much reduced so the experience has parallels.

When the restrictions are finally lifted, and assuming there's some summer left perhaps we should invite the occupants of one bedroom urban flats for a bit of 30's style motoring. Assuming they (and we) haven't gone completely mad by then.

Incidentally, thinking of the good old days, driving to the pub, getting completely bloated in a haze of tobacco smoke and driving back to the air-field is still 'not on'. Ahh the good old days when the only problems were a war and malnutrition. JH.

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



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Welcome to Richard Wittorski,

Well, first off let's see how Mark Powell has been doing since last time. This from 22 March 2020

Well at least I am working on the Midge at home...

It is dashboard and steering column time. I have fitted a solid U/J to the bottom of the steering column, lined up the mounting point on the dash end and made up a bracket from dexion. 2 wood socket nuts were fitted for a couple of 8mm bolts.

I had marked up where the various gauges and switches were going to fit, so bit the bullet and glued the woodgrain laminate to the face. When the glue had set, I piloted from the back with a 3mm drill through the centres of each. The switch positions were counter drilled with a 35mm plug cutter to a depth of 12mm. The dash was then turned over and the gauge holes were drilled out using 52mm and 133mm hole cutters in the pillar drill. The various switch positions were opened up to accept the new switches. (when they arrive) And not forgetting the choke and heater controls.

I positioned the dash in place and marked up the 4 screw points to fit it to the tub. The fitting holes were countersunk about 8mm in to allow for brown plastic plugs to finish

I pulled the old wiring loom out of storage (as removed from the Midge before strip down), A bit of a cat's cradle!...I would love to start from scratch, but funds only go so far... As it is, I have removed all the sundry extras and will start over again.



then turned over and the gauge holes were drilled out



More progress from Mark. 27 March 2020

Making a start on the wiring and dashboard... Urgh!

I originally built the Midge in 1985/6, using the wiring from the '65 Herald donor. (Could have been a '64 build).

Anyway, it's the early pre-voltage regulator loom, so armed with the correct wiring diagram, i have started to trace the original wires, removing all the add-on wires that had accumulated over at least 30 years of my ownership.

Non standard alternator, gauges, lighting, wipers, electric washers, relays, towbar electrics, heavy duty flasher, hazard warning lights.... All cobbled in with piggy backs and the dreaded Scotchloks....

The dash itself is looking ok, new toggle switches and rubber sealing rings for the gauges. I've got a new ignition switch on the way, as I have lost the key and the chrome bezel won't screw on... So far, I am not having any problems with online orders, so let's hear it for Europa Car Parts, ANG classic car parts, Car Builder Solutions, James Paddocks... The list goes on.

It is a pain that I can't pop out to my local car spare shop, so thank heavens for the Internet.

Tomorrow is another day.

MP





A bit more Mark
4 May 2020

Just about finished the gearbox and prop-shaft tunnels. Ply structure treated to 2 pack epoxy seal, all edges sealed with thin draft excluder tape. Handbrake lever fixed with 4 bolts into captive type wood nuts.



The dummy fuel tank has been cleaned and rubbed over with a fine paper and then cleaned again with an acid cleaner. Followed by a coat of Proxl Protech Etching primer.

Tomorrow I will fire up the compressor and hopefully lay on some Rover Nightwatch Blue cellulose.

I have painted the n/s/r wing in gloss black and finished with some clear lacquer. (I just wanted to see what it would look like). I'm not going for a 'concours' finish, just trying to keep a slightly 'used' appearance with old chip marks showing under the new paint. *That's a good line mark, I'll borrow it if that's OK. JH.*



I have two new shiny 7" headlights and Desmo bar mountings, the rear light units are being rebuilt, I have a pack of waterproof wiring connectors (fiddly things) and as soon as the rear wings are both 'in situ', I will sort out the rear wiring. MP

Next up, Keith Warren, whose 'Spinner Spanner' you saw last time is now performing

"Wings of a Midge".

It would have been good to have a wheeling machine to form the front wings for my Midge, but all Midge owners like to make do and find ways round problems.

I took to fabricating them from sections of 20 swg sheet along with part of a trailer mudguard for the front section.

The main requirement for this was the eating of cornflakes, their boxes being ideal for the templates. This was literally doubly useful because the template could be reversed for the other side wing.

When I constructed my Midge I did make changes, mainly making a frame of additional wood on the outside. This was done so I could have longer doors along with door seals. This gave me room to mount strong brackets behind the skin so the wings and running boards could be bolted on (photo). Also at the front I have 1"x1/8" angle running from the A post to the grille, this was useful to securely mount the wings. All the work was carried out on the car, bolting directly to the body gave me a sense of the strength and looks as I went along.

Have a look at the next page. Rolled wire edges! Impressive.



The first part, before cutting, was to mount brackets to the body. The one at the front used the front suspension turret and the rear one just below the A post, this gave me a guide then cutting a section of trailer mudguard started forming the wing as can be seen from the photo, just cutting and shaping by eye. The shape of the curves were helped using a bag of sand and a panel hammer to knock some curves into shape.

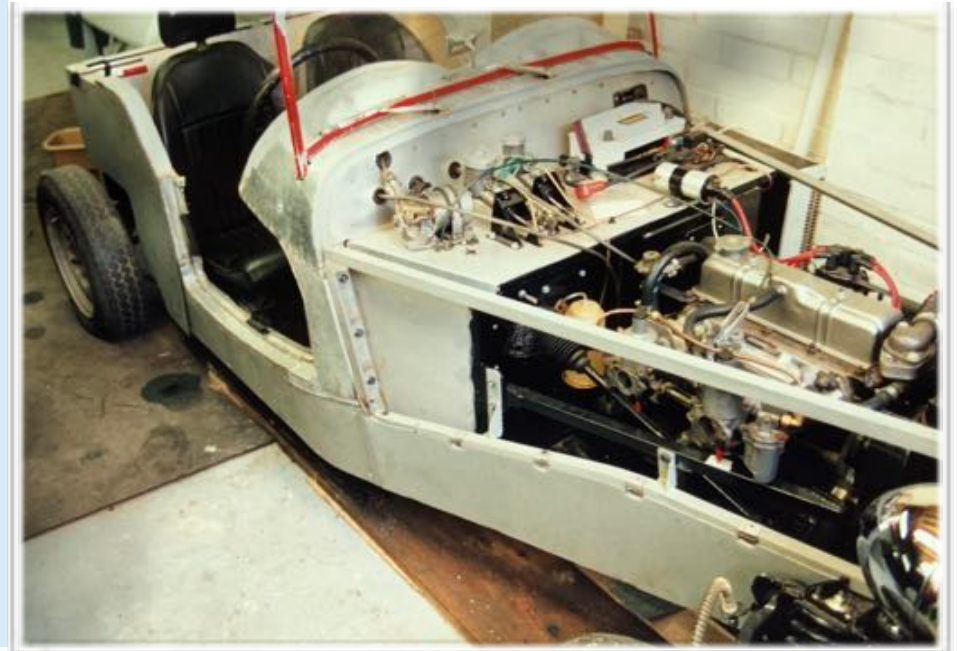
The larger curves were formed using a length of scaffold tube and clamps, and, on the edges, I added 1/8" welding wire. This was welded in position to finish off a lot of tack welds before final welding and grinding, I did use filler on the surface to finish off. I must admit they are not perfect to concours standards but twenty three years later still look good.

Cutting of the sheet, I used a good pair of snips along with a nibbler and 4" grinder with cutting disc. The wings are well mounted so no flexing at all, at the front the bracket mounts the side lamp and mirror so no mounting bolts show.

Changes as I went along... it was a case of standing back and looking, the mounting around the headlamp flowing in to the front valance worked out well and gave extra strength.

What made me want the long wings? When I was about four years old my Father bought me a Dinky toy of a MG TD (next page) this inspired me to make the Midge a bit like but not a copy of it.
KW

That works rather well, I bet your dad didn't think the toy would have that much effect. jh.





Jim Pailing (Member 1710) reminisces.



Back in my 'second commandment busting' days, (*That's not worshipping graven images to you heathens, ED.*) I thought the sun shone from my Morgan three wheeler's exhaust pipe ! It was an 'F Super Sports' Black, with a vintage chrome radiator, which would burn the unwary and a sleek pointed tail and was referred to by a local as 'that pointed arsed bug'! I was mortified... my pride and joy! However in retrospect it was the most diabolical contraption devised by man! The front suspension was the 'unique' Morgan sliding pillar contraption which had a tendency to allow the front wheels to oscillate from side to side which alarmed the passers-by.

The engine was the simple Ford 10 side valve which produced 27 horse power which, with hindsight, was more than ample, driving a gearbox behind the seats upon which the rear forks were suspended arbitrarily. The massive bronze bushes were worn which allowed the forks to sway from side to side causing my chum, Roger at the time at Dartmouth, to proclaim mine was the only vehicle that one had to work out 'course and drift' when turning corners! The gearbox was a straight cut 'crash box' which needed a skill, I fear, I did not master and a design weakness allowed the main driving skew gear to shed its bolts, sometimes punching them through the side of the gearbox. A skew gear is the sort of thing you would expect to find on a canal lock gate! It also had the ability to produce smoke from its brakes, clutch as well as the exhaust all at the same time ! The brake smoke was due to the Girling front brakes which utilised the not so cunning principle of a wedge tensioned by wire forcing two rollers apart to operate the brake shoes. It worked, but with a different force on each side, one had the situation that stopping was a bit of a directional lottery! The decision was made that it would have to go after the experience of being overtaken by five very large wheels attached to an even larger lorry. My father had to test drive it around the local Ledbury roads as I was away at sea.

I do hope he enjoyed it.



Thinking about it, another Morgan came along later but that was a four wheeled Four/Four which came, as what is now known, as a basket case in several baskets. After getting it to the running stage around a friend's yard without wings, that too went as it was reminiscent of driving a buckboard (artistic licence here!). I felt a little guilty as it went to the States! Even later, I had the opportunity of driving a Morgan +8 from Plymouth to Leeds. I was 'tasked' with retrieving the managing director's pride and joy to put some funds in the kitty of a company called, would you believe, Kity ? The chosen route excluded virtually every motorway whilst I revelled in every 'A' road I could find. Great fun; point and squirt! You only had to think of an opportunity to overtake and you were there ! However, as seems the case with Morgan's, there is always a sting in the tail. This particular one had a difficulty in holding a straight line due to the use of a steering box that was non-adjustable when worn. 'Progress in a straight line' as the best motoring journalist would say, was actually a series of curves. British engineering at its best! However, whilst at Plymouth, I took the opportunity of looking at a kit car called Marlin; sounds like a film title? Designed by a guy called Peter Moorhouse and based, very cleverly, on a pre war Alfa Romeo 8C. Scaled down, so the modern road wheels would be proportionate to the large spindly originals. It was one of the best bits of steel fabrication I had seen, even short lengths of angle being neatly incorporated to form a housing for spring hangers. Later, I acquired one. Again a basket case collected from Hayling Island just up the coast from Portsmouth. It had suffered corrosion to the chassis so it was over-plated and the bits were re assembled. It was based on the running gear of the Morris Marina, which with prior knowledge was the best thing you could have done with one! I fitted a Triumph Spitfire engine and progress was steady till it came to fit the steering wheel whereupon the scaled down nature indicated that it would be very unlikely that I, or anyone else of similar proportions, would fit in it! It also went. In fact to a Frenchman who turned up at 'Jim Pailing's Motor Emporium',

(a Harlow lockup garage), with a very neat lightweight car transporter trailer, informing me that he was going to put a twin cam Alfa Romeo engine in it and register it, as an actual Alfa Romeo. 'Les Francais sont tres mal ?' J P.

*I think that translates as
Are the French rather
naughty? JH.*



12/06/2020

In the UK the covid19 lockdown seems to be getting lifted slowly, although Westminster and the media have a habit of assuming UK means England. I'm not going to get political but remember the travel and distancing rules are not the same in Scotland and Wales and at the time of writing (12th June) the borders are closed to recreational driving. The tourism industry is suffering as a result, as is the rest of the world. With a bit of luck we'll soon have an idea of whether there will be a second 'spike' in hospital admissions, and will be able to adjust our lives accordingly. The slow appearance of symptoms and the fact that many don't actually get symptoms means that the spike, if it occurs, may be up to a month after the regulations in England are relaxed. Vaccines may be some time coming so it's really just a matter of slowing down the spread so that the hospitals are not overwhelmed.

A small upside is that many Midges are getting the opportunity for refurbishment and repair as husbands are banished from the house to the garage, shed and garden. Sadly nobody in the governments has worked out that the place you are least likely to get virus contaminated is in a moving open topped Midge. (Just don't breathe in while passing that sneezing cyclist in the supermarket car park).

The MOT extension in England was originally designed to run for a year until March 29th 2021. It may be shortened. Those who need MOTs might consider booking tests as and when they can as there may be a sudden rush. Even extended MOTs give limited protection, in the end it is the driver's responsibility.



UK 2020/21 Events

The Car and Classic site does event prediction so much better than I can, there seems little point in copying their web page, especially as they can update as the months go by. If you go to

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

You can get the information direct, that's where I get it. If something you know about isn't on it, tell me and I'll add it to our pages.

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

A few Midgets out and about.

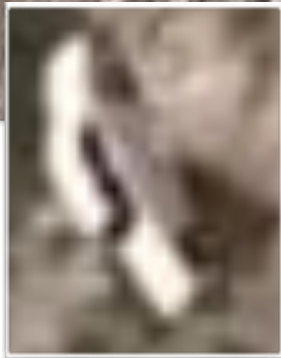


Some more images gathered over a few years. Reminding us of when you could go for a run in the sun.

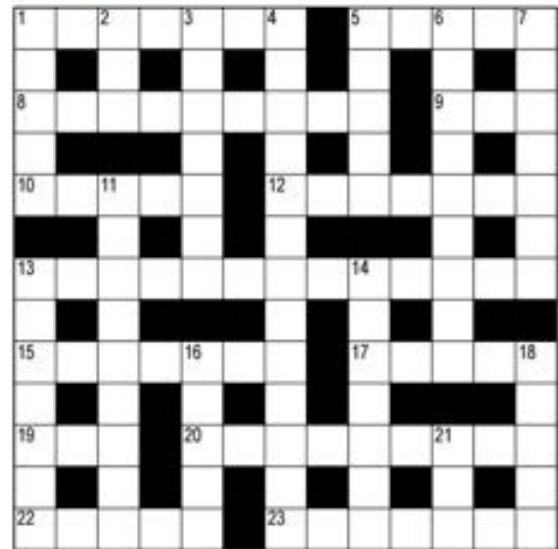




Early sat-nav and mobile phone problems that never went away.



Turn around when possible.



This should keep you busy if you are still locked down and/or it's raining. All you have to do is fill in the words and then fill in the clues. Or vice versa. Remember all the answers have to be Midge related and ideally all the 5 letter ones have to be MIDGE. Answers before the next magazine in neat handwriting and correct spelling. Words of all languages are allowed, we are an international club, but mixing languages may incur a small penalty involving a dictionary and a pointed stick.

A prize? Maybe a full page photo of you and your car in the next magazine, and lots of kudos of course. If this works I'll use it in the next mag, so keep the clues concise.

From Geoff Smith

Hi Jim. Please find attached pictures of wheels etc. I was asking for £320.00 before but willing to take £300.00 or make an offer. They are 13", clean, and ready for a paint. The tyres are a mixture of makes and may be usable, splines and knock on spinners are in good condition, needing a polish for a few scratches. They would be collection from Birmingham, safe distancing in place Phone number 07976316671 or 0121 453 8641 and will get back in touch.



Geoff Smith adds:-

Many moons ago we had a picture on Facebook showing a Midge and a JBA Falcon. I commented that I worked on the TV programme called Chancer, which was based on a company building sport cars. Peter Vivian suggested I tell of some of my exploits in making the film series.

Having gone to Central TV studios to meet the people that were to make this film, we were told that they had got together 6-8 JBA Falcons, one being a super looking red one that was to be the main car in the show. We were then given a script of what other vehicles they would need during the filming.

My first day of filming was in an underground car park in the middle of Birmingham. Off I go in the red JBA to the location, I was introduced to Clive Owen who was just a young man at the time. (Look how he has got on since then. The Director came over and said he wanted Clive to come roaring into the car park and screech to a halt in one of the parking spaces, only to find out that Clive was not an experienced driver and had not done much driving. We went to one side and did a bit of practicing. It all went ok in the end.

We did most of the filming at the old Triumph motorcycle factory in Meriden near Coventry, there we set up the showroom and the production workshop of the cars. Some days we would have to get all the JBA's to location, that was a nightmare as we would set off from Birmingham in convoy, I would try and bring up the rear with tools and fuel, and you can bet one or two would run out of fuel and then there was a mad panic to get them refuelled and to location on time.

On a lighter note, they came up to me and said they needed a white saloon car on location in two days' time and they would be putting a cricket bat through the windscreen, so could I make sure that I had plenty of spare screens in case they did not get the shot in one go. At the time my wife was driving a white Ford Escort, a quick phone call to a local Ford spares department and off we go with three spare windscreens. The day comes for the scene with the Escort, one of my team (Tony) and myself standing by with spare screens and vacuum cleaner at the ready. They get all set up and ready, in my mind when I have seen windscreens hit with hammers and all sorts they do not always break, but it was my lucky day, a young lady walks up with bat in hand and smack goes the windscreen in one shoot, big clean up new screen fitted and car returned to my wife.

I could go on for hours, sorry it's not Midge related but a bit of motoring history. GS



Chris Herd has a MkII for sale.

Project started in 2016 using a 1993 Suzuki SJ chassis
After 4 years I've still not completed it so may be time to let someone else have a go.

Car starts & drives - JUST!!!
Brakes not too good so can't drive far. Just need bleeding better I think. Just driven in & out of garage so far.

I've got to the finishing part of the project which my skills set don't quite come up to spec !!! No patience, tools or skills.
I have a pictorial build diary for anyone interested.
Just email me on:- herd.chris@aol.com

I'm not good enough to be a perfectionist. If you are, maybe you should look elsewhere. I know you might make significant changes yourself but I hope you know what I mean.

I have the original chassis plate & logbook in my name.

Would £2000.00 be of interest to anybody?
(Much more spent than that !!)

Because this is a 'Re-body' (no chassis chop) the V5 designation can stay as it is.

ps. I hear that Shipley are able to move cars again. JH



Tail-pipe. Just when you thought it was safe to go outside, the world is changing again, and the current unexpected, (yet entirely predicted), pandemic will have 'knock on' effects. There will be ripples for a while, although separating out Brexit, climate change, and austerity measures may be tricky, if academic. Specifically for the motorist's attention, the change in air quality and its inevitable reversal after lock-down may produce political and public reactions. Air pollution has been less noticeable out here in the back of beyond, but I see urban hospital admissions for 'ordinary' breathing difficulties are much diminished. Personally I think Diesel and aircraft are likely the important parts of the puzzle. Relatives of asthmatics in built up areas will be understandably more vocal as the symptoms return and I think there will be an increasing number of zero emission town centres.

Looking into the future a few years, petrol stations will start closing as demand goes over the tipping point currently estimated as 2026. That is when new electric cars are predicted to become cheaper to buy than petrol cars as well as cheaper to run and with similar range. We Midge drivers may end up having specialised deliveries of fuel to chemists for club members, just like 100 years ago (approximately) when MG got going, but that's just me speculating. It's not all gloom though, Midges will be running for a good while yet and 'classic cars' will be as popular as ever. In fact, judging by the heritage railway enthusiasts, traction engines and re-enactment societies, they may be even more so. Since new petrol cars will not be sold after 2030, any remaining internal combustion transport, including Midges, which can be maintained at home, will probably rise in value, interest, and prestige.

Years ago the supermarkets and big corporations effectively squeezed out the smaller family business filling stations, and now few remain. I predict supermarkets will re-use the petrol station space as demand falls, probably for EV charging. Petrol will become harder to buy in the UK by 2050 (so I don't think we'll need to rush). We may have to adjust our supply routes. It is possible that, since otherwise they will be required by the environmental authorities to remove them and clean up, garages may keep newer underground tanks operational. As lock-down ends, will it be a whole new world out there, or business as usual? A mix I'd guess.

It seems long ago, but I included an article on electric conversion a while back, one car was a Herald and another a MGJ type. At the moment it is far too expensive to consider having a Midge converted unless you are an electrical engineer with contacts (sorry) in the right places and many will consider it anathema anyway, but second hand batteries and conversion kits are on the market already. One universal truth will likely prevail, Midge owners and other DIY mavericks can adapt, adjust and invent.

Keep calm and drive to the shops carefully in these interesting times. JH. June 2020