

MIDGE MAGAZINE



Summer
2023



James's Midge

MOBC. the Midge Owners and Builders' Club



Hello All.

Well as I write, summer seems to have arrived even here in the normally chilly depths of South Lanarkshire. (Well it was here yesterday anyway)

I've been reading in the sun (often the same page repeatedly as I keep dozing off), managed a bit of gardening, fixed several pieces of machinery and sold a few Midge bits, including some splined wheel hubs of which more later.

Sadly my Midges, of which there are two, have moved scarcely a yard in the last year, and hadn't done much since the covid outbreak. However I hope to get the red one to a trusted mechanic for a pre MOT check in July. I could evade the MOT with a bit of paperwork but it's more for the actual safety check than the official certificate, in fact I am told that the MOT software won't actually issue a certificate for vehicles of that age, though I have yet to check that.

I shall have to decide what to do with them as, although I enjoy tinkering with them, they haven't been getting the exercise they should.

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**There is a small action request at the top of page six to determine my readership if you would take a moment. JH.**

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Incidentally the club funds are now (Late June) standing at £663.39 There are hexagonal MOBC badges (£7) available to members and non members can sometimes be allowed oval Midge badges (£5) at the secretary's discretion.

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'Today we have the naming of parts'

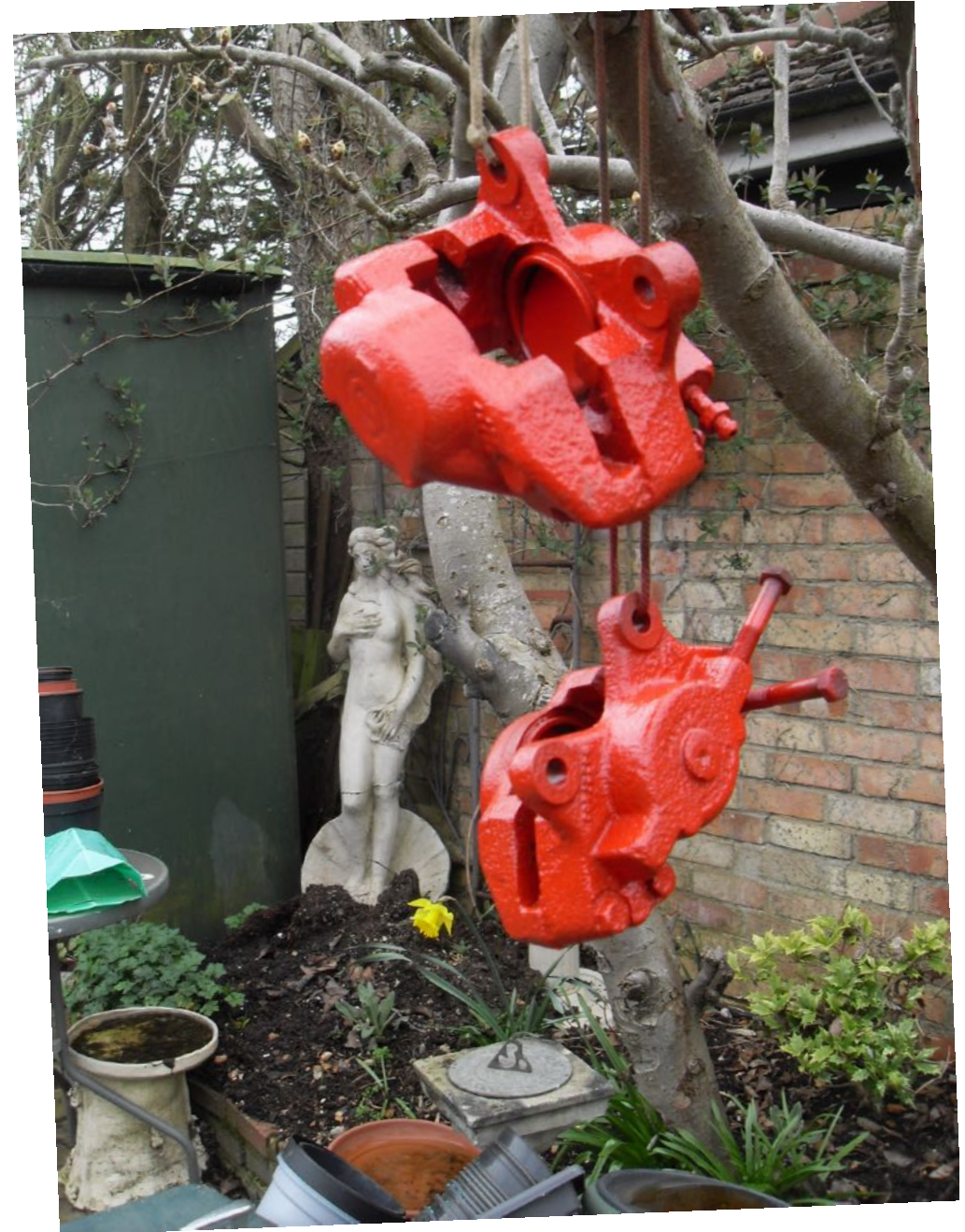
The wife remarked on the 'things' hanging in the apple tree. I said that it was an early crop of juicy red Callipers; she was not amused! Yes, I painted them red. A bit 'boyish' but I think a bit of colour adds to the aesthetics. Black might have been OK for Henry Ford but you can have too much of a good thing! The Americans get a bit carried away with it and some of their vehicles are a sight to behold, if you like that sort of thing. I suppose we are in the middle, between them and 'banger racing'?

We all know what aesthetics mean don't we? As an ex Design Technology teacher (not a real one, I didn't qualify till I was 50) it was my task to explain the key points of anthropometrics, ergonomics and aesthetics. (and, you thought teaching was easy? It's a bit like National Service, everyone should have a go!) I used the popular design problem of a chair. Anthropometrics is the size of a backside, ergonomics is about whether the chair will fit your backside and aesthetics is about what the finished product looks like. Maybe not quite in those robust terms but you get my drift? Design Technology is based around an aid called 'the Design Loop'. You start with Identify then Research, Develop, Prototype, Test and then Evaluate and if needs be, go round the loop again. (James Dyson worked his way through hundreds of different shaped cones before he got his vacuum cleaner working properly and then found he needed two!).

Now, the parts I have been busy wire brushing with my angle grinder, priming and then glossing, have steadily mounted until, stuck for space, I was forced to tidy up! Lo and behold, I find rear shock absorbers, horn buttons and battery isolator switches. I know I have the complete front Spitfire suspension from the abandoned three wheeler project. What else? Ah! A very nice Mountney steering wheel, a battery, a pair of headlamps and a pair of rear light clusters and that lovely little fuse box that came with the Cabrio (Oops, mentioned another kit car there, sorry!) Oh! And of course the Rover M16 engine out of No.1 son's Coupe, that MGB gearbox and the Dolomite axle squirreled away in various places (amazing what you can get in a Keter Bin Box!

JP

Jim Pailing muses a little on strange fruit



Jim P continues Thinks!!! There is another kit car, the aesthetics of which, I much admire. Rectangular Hollow Section extraordinaire! Very similar roots to the Midge but into which my backside will not fit. So, I have a cunning plan! I could build a Midge but use the front cowl, wings and bonnet off the 'other one' so it would look like 'the other one' but would have the ply body and copious interior of the Midge. Have always fancied the T&J Sportscar's chassis which I have seen on the web, supplied as a replacement for rotten Triumph Heralds and Spitfires. I've got some lengths of 80 x 40mm RHS in the garage, my MIG welder is 'on song'; I'll just dash out and knock one up! I think I will call it a Madge? But hang on! I need to construct some front turrets to take the Triumph front suspension?

A tad complicated? Brainwave! On Ebay are a pair of Spitfire turrets from a breaker in Sheffield. I can use them to get the dimensions easily. Only £23! Wow! They have arrived and look! There are a set of top wishbones which I was missing. Is this an omen, or what! Why not use the turrets complete and save measuring, fabricating and fffhaphing around welding them up? Come to think of it why not use the front part of the chassis, chopped off and welded to my RHS which would give me the original mounts for the turrets and build the rear part as a Midge. The 'other one' has seats between the chassis members and this is what restricts the 'posterior positioning'. With the Midge, of course, you sit on top of the chassis. Gosh, nearly there!

Mind you, the 'other one' has lovely doors! All folded up out of aluminium with nice clunky catches! Pity to waste those? Maybe use the chassis complete? 'Uno problemo!' The 'other one' has a slow dog leg in the chassis over the rear axle! This would, with the Midge design, move the seat 'back' forward too much. OK! Chop the chassis off just behind the doors and fabricate the square dog leg of the T&J chassis to take the Midge seat back? That's it! Front half the 'other one' and the rear half a Midge. "Job's a good 'un!" Half a Midge is better than no Midge I say?

Ahh! A murmuring from the back row? 'IVA ?' Ahh! Good point! There is some illogicality in the situation whereby one can use a 40 year old vehicle on the road without an MOT but a properly constructed modern equivalent has to jump through the hoops of the IVA test and at some considerable expense. I don't for a minute 'buy' the excuse that modern mechanics do not understand older vehicles. In fact, MOT testers are very experienced mechanics who could implement an Advanced MOT, such as performed in Australia and New Zealand, with ease. I suspect the whole process is Police driven and it would be interesting to obtain the information upon which these Draconian regulations are based and whether an Advanced MOT would identify these perceived problems? All sounds like the perverted logic of leaving potholes unrepaired to slow down traffic and reduce accidents?

Feel much better now, collapsible soap box returned to storage! You are quite right, Carruthers, I can't just fabricate new bits or cut bits off my chassis. I fact I have read that some poor guy had his Mini rubbished as he had cut a new hole to feed an electric cable through to his boot. He couldn't even weld it back up as that constituted a 'modification'! The answer will be, I think, to offset the axle, engine and gearbox to the nearside (with a wheel spacer on the offside to compensate) pare down the generous transmission tunnel, lose weight (who said that?) and move the seat back forward away from the diff nose.

e-mail received 28/03/2023 So! It seems that my best laid plans of Midge ownership have disappeared down my Stromberg and it's back to the drawing board? JP

What are LEZ and ULEZ?

Low emission and ultra low (exhaust fume) emission zones proposed for some areas, notably city centres. The objective is to reduce the amount of atmospheric pollution from burning fuel as an extension of smokeless zones. There is no information generally on proposed legislation on older

cars like Midges, but in London's ULEZ "most diesel cars registered before September 2015 and petrol cars registered prior to January 2006 are liable for the charge" which will be levied on incoming vehicles identified by registration plate.

Older cars tend to pollute more, so I don't see us escaping this one. Synthetic fuels may be an alternative to petrol, although judging by the effects of ethanol (E5 and E10) it may be easier to wait for an electric option. As yet ULEZ and most LEZ seem to be focused on city centres and it's not impossible that special events, vintage and specialist vehicles might be exempt. Lots of the Parliamentary cabinet and the rich and powerful use Range Rovers and Rolls Royce (is that the plural as well?) If you'll pardon my egregious cynicism.

What are synthetic fuels?

Electrofuels, also known as e-fuels. A class of synthetic fuels, they are a type of drop-in (or minimal adjustment), replacement fuel. They are manufactured using captured carbon dioxide or carbon monoxide, together with hydrogen obtained from sustainable electricity sources such as wind,

solar and nuclear power. (My thanks to Wikipedia). They are burned in the same way as petrol and diesel which to my mind seems to negate most of their advantages even if they are carbon neutral.

Low Emission Zones will eventually make Midges difficult to keep on the road. Glasgow has introduced one and Edinburgh has one that it intends to enforce in two years. Presumably Edinburgh has too many large diesel and petrol prestige cars to act sooner. They are my nearest cities. Winchester, my home town has always had a polluted atmosphere and is showing no sign of action, hadn't managed to do much in the way of EV charging when I was there last. If you drive through Winchester's 'one way' traffic system I'd advise keeping your fresh air intake closed.

Obviously I'm sitting on both sides of the fence on the matter. I drive an EV most of the time, but wouldn't like to see Midges and other 'historic' cars swept from the board. Some coal burning steam trains are still running, wood fires are not banned outright and tyres are still going to be micro-particle pollutants on ICE cars and EVs. The oil and gas industry favours steam cleaned 'natural gas' although I think they may be deliberately missing the point. Finally, although I'd bet it was far from final, there may be electric conversion kits for Midges and other older cars which being fairly simple, through the lack of complex electronics, power steering, and cabin heaters, are not difficult to convert. Expensive yes, but not difficult and scrapped or accident damaged EVs can provide the necessary bits.

I think the general conversion to EVs will mean petrol stations will start to disappear as the trade diminishes. Lawn mowers, chainsaws and lawn trimmers are already starting to change and the electric boat is emerging. As a result I don't think synthetic fuels will be of much use for long, but if it's of any consolation I doubt Midges will be forced off the road for another 20 years, there are lots of old car enthusiasts looking for alternative answers and most of us won't care then anyway.

Jim Orr's Midge will be looking for a new home soon

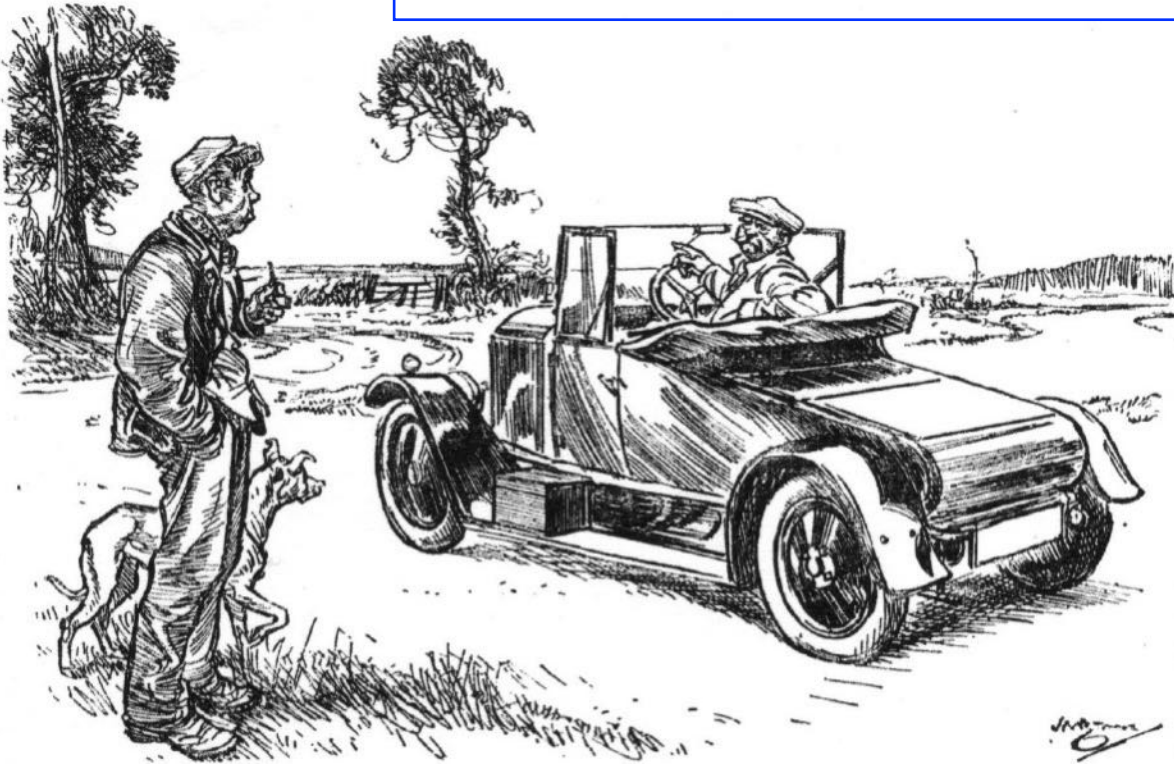


I've heard from MOBC Member 404 James Orr that he feels it's time for him to sell his Midge, as shown here. Those with an interest can contact James at james-m-orr@hotmail.com

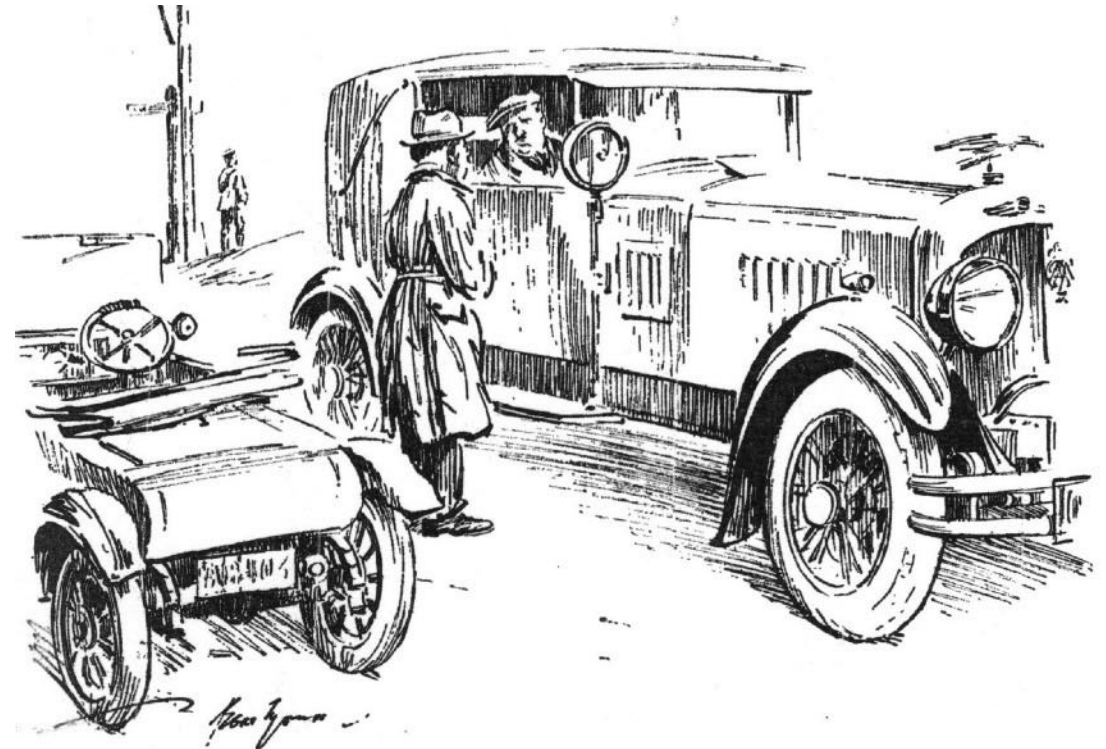
The V5 has 1st registration date as 08.04.1988 James has owned it since May 2001 - 22 years. Having worked on it a bit I'd say it was sound, but judge for yourself as it'll be sold as seen. Twenty new or refurbished bits (including a gearbox) remembered so far. Always garaged. Nice roof and a vinyl skin. There are a few bits to tidy and an MOT to be updated. At the time of publication the price is yet to be determined, but you can email an indication of interest.

One of the problems of sending out a free magazine in electronic form is the lack of feedback, so I usually get Fiona to read it, thereby getting free proof-reading. Other than that I don't generally know if anybody reads it, and so periodically (another rather weak pun, sorry) I ask that anybody who does read it to click this jim@jimhewlett.com which should open an email. If you add a subject line of 'Magazine' and add 'I read it' and then send then I'll have an idea if more than Fiona and I are reading it.

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



MOTORIST (*who is lost*). "Is this the road to St. Ives?"
YOKEL. "Dunno."
MOTORIST. "Is that the road to Willingham?"
YOKEL. "Dunno."
MOTORIST. "Well, can you tell me which is the road to Cottenham?"
YOKEL. "Dunno."
MOTORIST (*exasperated*). "Well, you don't seem to know much."
YOKEL. "Maybe not; but I ain't lost."



OWNER OF ANCIENT CAR. "Could you oblige me with a match?"
OWNER OF LUXURY CAR. "Yes, but I shouldn't set fire to it here."





Monty is nearly finished I think. Unless he's thinking of adding a set of bi-plane wings.

Robert tells me he has added a stainless grille mesh (carefully cut and fitted with original smaller hole black mesh behind). New are some ridiculously expensive stone-guards. Monty's new engine is in, behind the new grille and the radiator re-cored and altered, bottom outlet moved to offside and a drain tap fitted,

The rev counter converted to electronic. Also the new mascot is fitted, so the top left picture is later than the bottom right. At the time of writing Robert was looking for a 'JC' hexagonal alloy thing for the top of the grille.

If anyone knows how to analyse, copy, and 3d print that might be of interest and if there was enough demand the club could get a casting run made. Ideas on a postcard as they say, or an email. JH



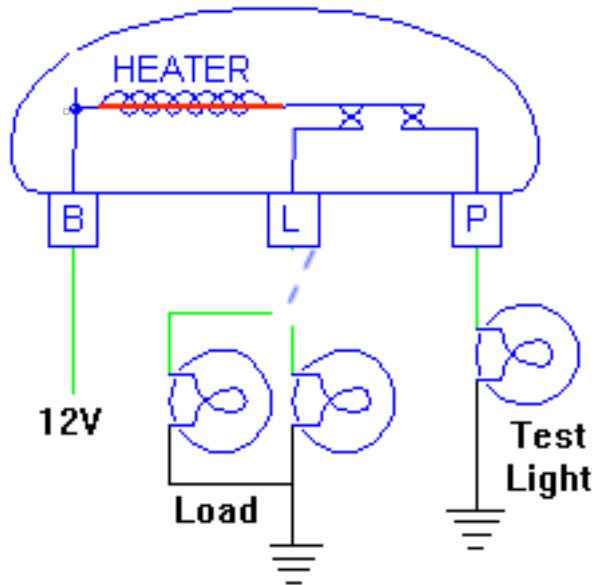


The Flasher unit. The bi-metallic strip you didn't know about but hear on every junction. it's a way of using current induced heat to open or close a circuit.

In this case the left or right decision is made by the position of the indicator stalk shown as a dotted line from L and there should be an ignition switch between 12V and B. The original diagram was unfortunately drawn incorrectly.

Before indicator circuits turn (pun intended) entirely electronic, I thought I'd look at this mysterious, effective, and rather primitive mechanism used for indicating intended directional changes. It's an odd bit of kit that works mainly by using the heat from an in line resistor wire to bend a bi-metallic strip (the red line) and open (break) a circuit. The heater causes the two different metals to expand a little and because they are riveted together, they bend. That lifts the contacts and the indicators and heater turn off until the metal strip cools down and closes the contacts again. When you 'indicate' the lights go on immediately as the rest position of the strip is 'on'. The duration of the 'off' part of the cycle is down to how quickly the bi-metallic strip cools and the duration of the 'on' part is down to current flow. That is why when one of the bulbs blows, the flash rate increases. Fewer bulbs draw less current, so the strip heats less and cools faster. If you see a car indicating (flashing) at twice the normal speed then the bulb you cannot see has blown

TURN SIGNAL FLASHER UNIT TEST



In operation the relay 'clicks'; To prevent arcing in the indicator unit, the bimetallic strip clicks back with the aid of a spring and that results in the click of it working. Cars in the US of A have a particularly daft idea built in where the white front parking lights and rear red brake lights are turned off or on intermittently, so you have to watch them for a little longer to make sure it isn't just a defective bulb or the driver turning them on. That slows your reaction time by two seconds which is time that could be used avoiding a collision.

Sadly some modern cars in the UK and Europe now use at least the front driving lights to replicate this idiocy so that the front headlight cluster looks 'more modern', so you have to observe both front lights for two seconds to be sure of the driver's intentions. When function and fashion collide (literally in this case) the more artistically pleasing usually wins until common sense or legislation stamps it into the mud.

This is a simplified diagram, many have an electro-magnetic relay to protect the points from arcing as the contact breaks.

LED bulbs don't draw much current so an alternative electronic mechanism is used and with a bit of luck legislators will let the next generation of hazard indicators flash faster, or have a double flash so that we can tell when a vehicle is pulling into the traffic as opposed to displaying a static hazard warning.



Seek and ye shall find,
or more likely, you will fall over it in the dark.

A phone call that my wife picked up was from a Mr O'Dowd who was selling some Midge parts from an unfinished project. I think he had googled MOBC or Midge and found my number.

Unfortunately his phone number was lost in the process and although we searched the club records there was no sign of him on either John Bircumshaw's computer, or on mine. The paper records also drew a blank and the factory records were long lost to fire.

There were a few clues from some of our more experienced members as to where he might be, but nothing came of a quite extensive search.

I had almost given up hope of finding him when he emailed me, presumably using the same source. He'd started building a good while back but had stopped for one reason or another and the near complete set of bits languished for a couple of decades.

Once back in contact with Finn I had made a notice to advertise his Midge parts on the MOBC facebook page and roughed out an article for the magazine and MOBC website, the residue you'll see on the left.

I was about to promote the advert further afield, when somebody bought the parts via facebook for a price that Finn found acceptable. It was on the website as well, but the magazine wasn't ready. A few members will have been denied the opportunity. My apologies for that as I try to publish them all at the same time. This was harder than usual as I was rather busy, (New house roof, visiting relatives and a late dose of covid), and have been since the last magazine. I think the MOBC facebook page is the medium that gets the most attention and it may be that relatively few look at the website. Sadly, although I was told, I didn't note the name of the buyer and now the information is buried deep in the email pile never to be seen again. I am hoping we will hear of the parts again as a new/old Midge. This reminded me to ask anyone who has adverts on the web page, facebook or any other to tell me when they are no longer required to drop me a line 01501 785 206 or email jim@jimhewlett.com

UK 2023/24 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.



John Eden's Midge insurance company - Hagerty - sends regular newsletters on the subject of generally interesting cars. Here's something I copied, but then they had copied from Hagerty US. Originally written by Brendan McAleer

1932-1934 MG J2 Midget

The plucky little J2 Midget set the template for sporting MGs. Plenty of swift and nimble machines had previously issued forth from England's Morris Garages, but the J2's recipe would carry the company for the next 20 years. At its 1932 launch, the car was agile, affordable, and fun. It still is.

Our featured example is a 1933 model belonging to Dr. Robert Follows of West Vancouver. Many machines of greater historical significance have passed through Dr. Follows's hands, but only this J2 reminds him of his youth as a medical student, when he and his roommates cluttered up a side street with all manner of work-in-progress English sports cars.



Naturally, Dr. Follows's car has been restored to a greater standard than a university student could afford. It's a lovely thing, period-correct red lacquer shining in the spring sun and not too glossy. The 847cc four-cylinder bursts into song without stumble, and off down the road this tiny car scoots.



Sold mostly as an open roadster with cut-down doors,

the J-Type is infused with MG's racing heritage. Its overhead-cam engine is fairly advanced for the era, with twin SU carburetors and a crossflow head. Power is slight by modern standards, just 36bhp at 5500rpm. But then, the J2 only weighs around 500kg. Some magazine tests quoted a top speed of just above 80 mph - others were closer to 60 - though the standard cable-actuated drum brakes undoubtedly made excursions to either figure only for the very brave.

Like many sports cars of the era, the J2 was all about preserved momentum - using everything the chassis had, skittering through corners at the limit of those narrow tyres. The model was a club-racing favourite in period, its unsynchronised "crash" four-speed gearbox requiring expert handling in order to wring every last horsepower from the engine.

Driving a J2 on today's streets is like flying a Sopwith Camel around people snoozing in passenger jets. As with air travel, modern machines are more competent, but they're also sensory-muffling cocoons. The J2 is bugs-in-the-teeth, front-line *motoring*.

MG built J2s only for three model years, from 1932 to 1934. Happily, however, the company preserved the car's gleeful driving experience in later models, and into the modern era.

B McA.

The previous article, Page 10, copied with permission, is part of [Hagerty insurance's](https://www.hagerty.co.uk/) output. The name is a link to their website <https://www.hagerty.co.uk/> They obviously insure the older kind of car and have various connections and references including such as <https://mowoguniversity.com/index.html> and The "A-Series Society" which is, I think, Canadian. (The A series was developed from the original engine in the J2 and of course went into the the Morris Minor and the Mini) I've put in various links which you may find interesting.

John Eden first informed me of Hagarty's newsletter. They produce some interesting articles, usually with a slight North American twist, as I think it's a US company originally. If you sign up they will send their newsletter to your email address, obviously in the hope that you'll be impressed enough to consider using them as insurers, but don't seem to flood your in-box with advertising.

Although our interest in Midge is only partly connected to the MGJ2 and thus the MG marque, I'll mention the latest iteration of MG soon coming very quietly out of China, the [MG Cyberster](#) seen below. If any of our members decides to jump from 1935 styling to summer 2026 and has the odd £50k spare they might be interested, but I should warn any of an easily shocked disposition that it's a bit different to the Midge. I wonder if MG would have ever made something like this had they continued, but I'm sure MGJ2 drivers would have been surprised at its appearance, speed (0-60mph in under 3.0 seconds) and price. If it's any consolation, an MG J2 in reasonable condition would fetch more and go up in value thereafter.



Occasionally I get to play fairy godmother, although I grant you I don't look like one.

I had a call from Aileen:-

Hope you don't mind me contacting you. This may be a really long shot. My Dad built this car from plans from John Cowperthwaite around 1986. Dad will be 90 years old next year and my daughter is getting married next year. We would dearly love to locate the vehicle and speak to the current owners to hire/ borrow for my daughters wedding since her grandad built the car before she was born. Have written to DVLA who understandably won't provide me with owners contact details but also won't send my contact details to the current owner either. My Dad sold the car in late 1989 to a buyer in Fife possibly Kirkcaldy. Could you post on your site to find out if the current owners would agree to a photoshoot with my Dad and daughter on her special wedding day? It would mean the world to all of us if we could see the car again. It's taxed until October 2022 but is MOT exempt. Kind Regards Aileen West

and then later, after a little research....

Thank you for putting me in touch with Jeremy. He was amazing. He was really kind to invite myself and family to his property and he unveiled the car to Dad.

We took my Dad up to see the car on Sunday. It was Dads 90th Birthday. We kept it as a surprise and he had no idea where he was going. I'll attach some of the hundreds of photos and a video we all took. Happy for you to use in your magazine as promised last year. Thanks so much for your help. If you need any further info feel free to ask. We had an amazing afternoon and made more memories with Dad. Kind regards Aileen West.

I must admit it took very little work finding it, but it does show the advantage of joining the MOBC (not just the facebook page) because then I have a record of the registration of your Midge and can more likely track it down when you want to find it (and in a few cases buy it back.) More on page13



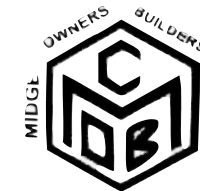


There's not much missing and there's always a lick of paint or a spot of polish needed, no matter how young or old.

The Midge is doing quite well too, considering, as shown on the right when younger.

I'm told by my editor in chief that this isn't really what is meant by a 'topless' picture, but I think it'll do and shouldn't offend.





Tailpipe

It's surprising how often I write an article, in this case the indicator one on page 8, and the question comes up on facebook. I hope Massimo finds it useful. Incidentally LED bulbs draw very little current, so you have to get an electronic flasher unit to suit them. Google 'indicator relays for LED bulbs'.

I hope to retire as secretary in 2025 and will be looking for replacements. I think 10 years is long enough. There are several hats including Treasurer, Magazine editor, Magazine publisher, Facebook moderator (there are two). Membership Secretary, Record keeper, Web Master, Holder of the Badges, Postmaster and Archivist.

I think that's all of them. It may be that we can reduce the loading slightly by eliminating a few hats. It might suit to make membership free (currently £10 as a one-off admission fee), thereby eliminating some of the work. The facebook aspect seems to get most of the traffic and as long as there's a moderator or two it is fairly effective. At the moment I am hosting the website on my own web-space so our expenses are pretty light. Some printer ink, a ream or two of paper and periodically a casting run for the brass badges. There's enough money in the pot for a couple of refurbished laptops if that was necessary.

The older members are less technical but most can manage basic social media, or at least a phone, so communication can continue. I have noticed a drop in numbers reading the web pages. Static material is becoming less fashionable and is being replaced by zoom meetings and (gods help us), tweets but the world turns on and most of us are older even if Midge driving and climbing around in foot wells keeps us flexible (I considered immortality but it seems there are usually downsides).

There are still younger members joining and a fair bit of activity, so don't assume it's all doom etc. There may be a resurgence as petrol becomes a minority sport. Horses, for instance, seem to be more popular than I ever remember, there are entire armies of steam engine enthusiasts and leisure time is much more relevant than it was, especially as jobs are mechanised, computerised and robotised. Pensions are starting later as and because we live longer, and some kind of universal income will have to be introduced before the food riots start. Sorry that sounds a bit gloomy, but it is inevitable and I don't think most people really like going to work for 40 years. Jobs can be interesting. A few of us actually enjoy them, but commuting, bosses, the motley of work colleagues and time away from family tend to mixed blessings.

So now that I've got you looking forward to a long and featureless retirement you'll be looking for something to give your life purpose.

Well there are some very attractive hats available and even the parking attendant gets a HiVis jacket, clipboard and pencil, so why not start thinking about retraining as a membership secretary or something.

Seriously though folks, no need to panic just yet, I hope to keep on until late 2025 and will be accepting CVs, applications and resumes, bribes, suggestions and ideas sometime before then. You don't even have to live in Scotland, although I confess I don't understand why you wouldn't want to.

Writing the magazine is the only significant consumer of time and effort, and beyond a computer of some kind, the jobs don't require much equipment. alpha-numeric are quite well developed, so it's just a matter of getting them into some sort of order until AI takes over. Believe it or not I have had some offers from automatic magazine writers. I've no idea whether they are human or electronic, but I guess if we can't tell then it doesn't matter. But **IF I START WRITING IN DALEK THEN YOU'LL KNOW I'VE GONE OVER TO THE DARK SIDE**. Meanwhile if more members write articles, opinion pieces, plagiarise, take photos and such, then that will take some of the pressure off the regular contributors and might delaythings.

JH