

MIDGE MAGAZINE

MOBC. the Midge Owners and Builders' Club



Summer
2024



Andrew's Midge



Hello All.

Well Summer is here in the UK, and hopefully the rest of the northern hemisphere, although there are signs that areas of Spain might be a bit more hot than ideal. I always thought it was better to holiday in times other than when it is nicest here, but I suppose many don't get the choice. I'll be heading off to Shetland for mine where the risk of sunstroke is lower, although there are Vikings.

Fewer murders than the TV programs suggest island life involves though.

Shetland is ideal for Midge driving as the narrow roads are excellent for touring in smaller relatively slower cars, and the hills ideal for swooping curves, spectacular scenery (unobstructed by trees, cities, articulated 16 wheel lorries) and high quality road surfaces owing to the lighter traffic. Occasionally sheep and tractors can slow you, even in a Midge, but why were you in such a hurry anyway?

If you visit remember there are 'passing places' marked by small white signs. Many of the roads are quite narrow and driving has a slightly different approach as most of the drivers away from the larger towns like Lerwick and Scalloway know each other. Larger being a relative term.

Neighbour recognition and acknowledging considerate drivers is indicated by raising the left index finger from the steering wheel. The Shetland salute. Narrow roads, sleeping sheep, and blind bends make taking a whole hand from the wheel inadvisable and often difficult to repeat.

Birds, dogs and cattle also sometimes seem to use particularly quiet roads as rest points. Traffic to and from the ferries are the only rush hours of note and the occasional ferry queue ideal for having a chat, text messages and a quick doze.

As you'll note, I like Shetland motoring, it's like going back a few decades. But be wary, going back to UK City driving may cause you to start wondering where all the fun went. Have a good summer and don't over-heat either yourself or your radiator.

JH

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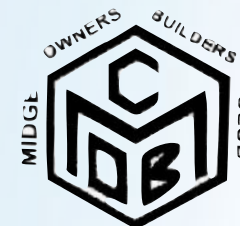
Page 11 late investigation into a lightning strike

Page 12, John Cowperthwaite. The saga continues.

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Jim, your humble scribe, owned a 1948 Duncan bodied TA14 Alvis for a few years. In the '30s and '40s there were cars that had a post war coach-built body on a pre war chassis, running gear and bulkhead. Mine was 'bodied' by Duncan in 1948 and rare even for an Alvis, about 30 were made with an aluminium / ash body. I believe it cost £2,000 new. About the price of a row of cottages at the time. Last I heard, it was being extensively reconditioned. Anyway:-

Hagerty has uncovered a "continuation" model Alvis Speed 20 & 25 resurrecting the type after nigh-on 90 years and published this article which I have lifted for your delight. Nic Berg's article reads..

"In an instant (as it seemed) the peaceful scene was changed, and with a blast of wind and a whirl of sound that made them jump for the nearest ditch. It was on them! The "Poop-poop" rang with a brazen shout in their ears, they had a moment's glimpse of an interior of glittering plate-glass and rich morocco, and the magnificent motor-car, immense, breath-snatching, passionate, with its pilot tense and hugging his wheel, possessed all earth and air for the fraction of a second, flung an enveloping cloud of dust that blinded and enwrapped them utterly, and then dwindled to a speck in the far distance, changed back into a droning bee once more."

Obviously we're supposed to feel sorry for poor Mole and Ratty in their first encounter with Mr. Toad on the road in Kenneth Grahame's *Wind in the Willows*, but reading this as a child it was Toad's thrill ride that enthralled me.

"The motor-car went Poop-poop-poop, as it raced along the road," he wrote and, right now I can't think of a better way to describe what's going on. I am every bit the amphibian automobilist behind the wheel of a no-less magnificent motorcar – an Alvis Vanden Plas Tourer continuation.

Only 25 of these £325,000 specials are to be built, with four other [Alvis](#) models also offered as continuation models, using a three-litre motor or the fabulous 4.3-litre inline six engine that's responsible for those splendid poop-poop-poop sounds. It's perhaps a little noisier than normal today as the car hasn't had an outing for a few months, but those part-throttle poops add to the charming steampunk experience.

To meet modern emissions requirements the engine has electronic ignition and fuel injection, with a trio of throttle bodies replacing the original carbs. A six-speed Tremec manual transmission is fitted and there are servo-operated Brembo disc brakes in lieu of the cable operated stoppers that would have originally been fitted. Rack-and-pinion replaces a steering box, but without any form of assistance.

All these modern touches serve to make this Alvis accessible – a reliable and, easy to drive alternative to the dozens of original cars that are also for sale in the company showroom in Kenilworth, near Coventry. Alvis has been based here since 1968 and, when owner Alan Stote acquired the business and trademark, he also got a warehouse of 400,000 parts, 50,000 engineering drawings, and the records of 22,000 cars. Offering service and sales, the facility is also where the continuation cars are hand built.

"I bought the company in '94 after selling my original business in 1988." says Stote. "My main interest wasn't restoring cars, it was the documentation. They documented every car they ever built. I'm not a mechanical engineer, my real passion is the industrial history."





You can read more about exactly how Alvis goes about keeping its history alive in [Ronan Glon's excellent story](#), but it's the sensations of the past in the present that is my focus today.

Just looking at the fabulous aluminium bodywork, draped over its ash frame, is like donning a pair of rose-tinted spectacles. Road works, speed cameras, these irritants of modern motoring matter not a jot as one is transported back to a time when every automobile journey was still an adventure.

The wide-opening suicide doors make it easy to step up and into a driving position that's somehow both high off the ground, yet relatively low in the car. Another contradiction: the Vanden Plas Tourer is undeniably large, yet the cabin is compact and quite where rear seat travellers are expected to put their legs is unclear as the whole space is taken up with a squishy leather bench. Being open-sided and with the canvas topped stowed away it's never claustrophobic, but it might be wise to warn your co-pilot that any knee fondling is purely down to the proximity of the gear lever.

The shifter itself is a delight, with a solid mechanical heft to it, combined with easy accuracy. Meanwhile the clutch is light and the brakes have both great feel and stopping power. The accelerator's a little stiff and has a long action, but suits the torque-rich nature of the engine.

The big six will rev to 4500 rpm, yet pulls strongly from little more than idle. It's almost diesel-like in its luggability so there's no real need to keep an eye on the rev counter. That's a good thing as it's positioned, in the lovely walnut dash, directly ahead of the passenger seat and impossible for the driver to see. The speedometer is also mostly obscured by the large, thin-rimmed, four-spoke steering wheel, but you'll be gauging your velocity directly by the rush of wind through your hair anyway.

Although unassisted, once rolling there's not too much effort needed. It doesn't self-centre, but it does track every imperfection in the road surface and there's an initial temptation to correct every little wiggle. Relax the hands, let the front wheels do their dance, and then it all starts to come together.

The chassis is essentially [the same as it was in 1937](#), albeit with modern dampers. There's flex and scuttle shake, but it absorbs the bumps of British country roads that look like they haven't been maintained since then.

It's quite an achievement to maintain so much of the character of a prewar car, while making it useable day-to-day.

Bravo! And poop-poop!

My thanks to Nic Berg and Hagerty. JH.

Below, yours truly with his 1948 TA14 Alvis. This was taken a few decades ago as the hair colour demonstrates. This front view shows both at their most photogenic, in my opinion. Other opinions are available but won't get printed.



A sad story from Terry Wetherfield.

My Midge.

It was originally built for my wife Rose when her Ford Fiesta had needed welding for the second time to get it through the MoT. "I'll get it done for you before next year's MoT " I said, basing this casual promise on the fact that I had built a Ginetta G26 in 9 months.

Of course I had forgotten that my Ginetta had started as a bare but painted body shell already fitted to the chassis. It just needed a few mechanical bits to be fitted and a bit of upholstery. As you know Midge isn't quite as easy as that: it was eventually registered 30 months later in 1992.

By that time Rose had got fed up with waiting and had bought a second hand Rover 316. She never has driven Midge because she was nervous of damaging it after my having spent so much time and dedication building it. In 1995 it featured in an extensive article in Which Kit magazine written by journalist Iain Ayre, who also owned a Midge. For many years, when the MOBC had a group of members who attended kit car shows and classic car shows all over the country, my Midge travelled to many of them. It even trailed a camping trailer abroad as far as Belgium, France, West and East Germany.

On a number of occasions the car was used by White Rose Vehicles as their show car. Nowadays, with the reduction in the number of dedicated kit car shows, Rose myself and Midge have been attending numerous local classic car shows . . . but not anymore!

On 4th December 2023 I was driving home along the A38, having just passed its MoT, when a van drove from a side turning and into Midge!

We exchanged names, contact numbers and insurer details (it is wise to have these prepared and handy for exchange, particularly as you may be in shock). There were no witnesses around and I had no camera or phone to record the accident site. The car was extensively damaged but was still drivable which was lucky because Britannia Rescue will only take the car home if it has broken down rather than crashed.

Next morning I notified my insurer, Markerstudy, who passed my case on to their claims agent at, Lemonaid Motor Legal and Mr T contacted me that day and asked me to email photos of the car on all four corners.

After sending the photos the next day, Mr T phoned to say that my case had been taken over by Mr D, the total loss negotiator.

A couple of days later I received a phone call from the 'other driver's' insurer to say that they accepted that their client was to blame and they offered to provide a courtesy car, arrange and pay to repair Midge and save me from making a claim on my insurer, if I left the matter in their hands.

As the manufacturer of the wings, Burlington, had gone out of business 30 years ago I thought it highly unlikely that the insurers would be able to get anyone to restore Midge to its original appearance for the sort of money they would be willing to pay. If it then came down to agreeing a write-off price I considered that I would do better with my own insurance negotiator who had nothing to lose.

I politely turned down the offer of the other insurer.



Terry continues....

During the next week a my insurer's professional photographer came to take pictures of the damage to Midge and its otherwise good condition. Midge had been cleaned up inside and out except in the damaged areas and 2 days later the company's valuation engineer phoned me. He explained that he had little experience of valuing cars like Midge and would welcome some guidance.

I pointed out that the car was in excellent condition and freshly MoT'd prior to the crash. It had served as White Rose Vehicle's show car at various kit car trade shows and I emphasised that at two classic car shows I had turned down an offer of £7000. I also directed him to two adverts of Midges priced in excess of £6800 on the web.

Two days later I received an email from my insurer saying that they would be declaring the car a total write off in category N and their valuation engineer had valued the car at £8500 and they would be seeking to claim this price from the 'other driver's' insurance company.

Note that there are four categories of write off: A, B, S and N. A car in cat A is totally scrap and must be crushed; in cat B the body should be crushed but there may be some parts which can be recovered for further use; cat S signifies a car with significant structural damage which will need to be repaired professionally (such as a distorted chassis) and then there is cat N which has no structural damage but which is, nevertheless, considered uneconomic to repair. I guess my Midge with its damaged front suspension and smashed guards was a borderline N.

I did consider the possibility of trying to do a deal with the insurer and restoring Midge myself, but my health is not very good these days for doing extensive work on cars and I know that Midge would never look the same again. And that would not be good enough for me!

My insurer said they would, with my agreement, consign my car to COPART, a damaged-vehicle auction company and pursue the 'other driver's' insurer for the remainder of the £8500.

A week later, on a dark and drizzly night, Midge made her last trip down our road on the back of a car transporter on route to COPART at Bristol.

At any time COPART have thousands of vehicles on their books and it was a month before Midge was auctioned off. She was listed on their website just three days before the auction and on the day of the on line auction I was suddenly otherwise occupied so I didn't see what she sold for, but a week or so later I received my £8500 from the insurance company, to the penny.

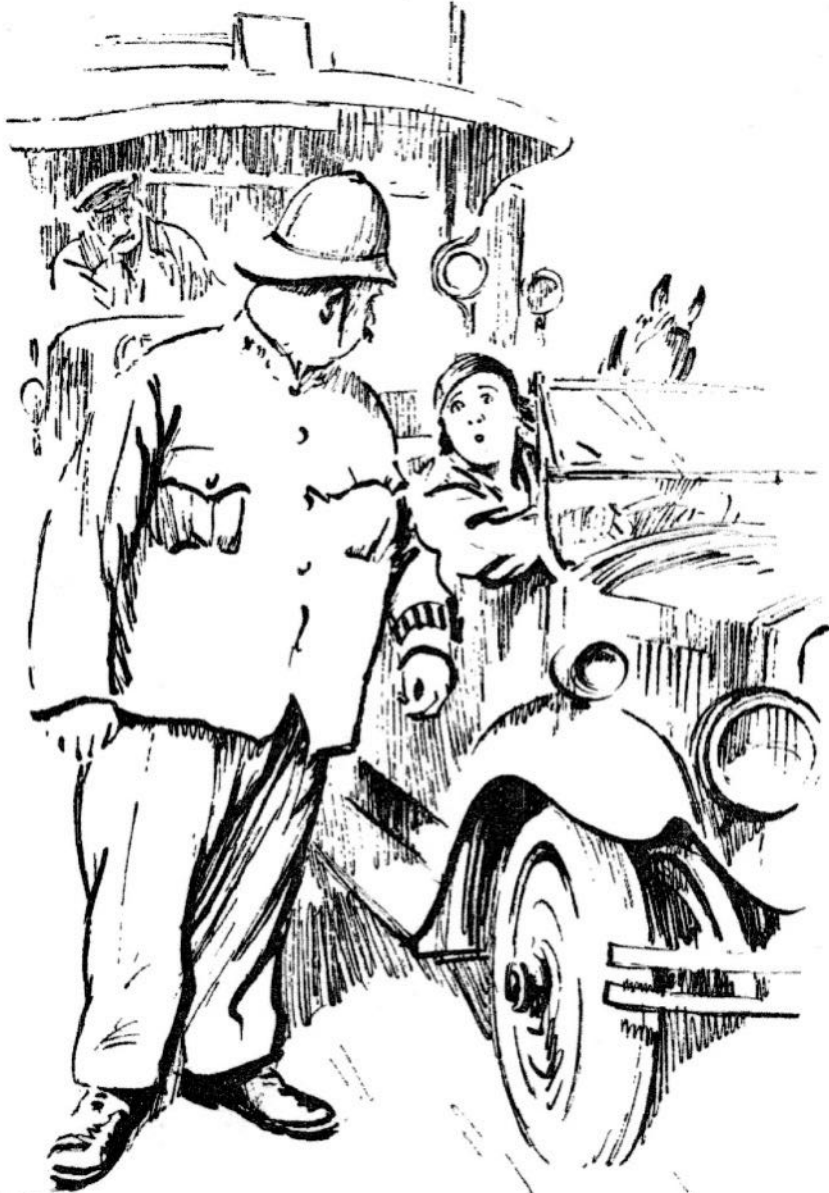
So, from this you can take these bullet points: 1) Always have with you a card with the details of yourself and your car insurance company 2) Always have a camera or phone for recording the site of an accident 3) Always try to get your insurance company to agree the value of your Midge before taking out the insurance, while it is still looking its best. Otherwise you might not be as fortunate as I in getting a generous valuation engineer.

PS For 22 years I had also owned a 1998 Ford Ultima Scorpio 2.3 Estate of which there are literally only a handful in the country. At 25 years old this is now eligible for classic car shows, but I considered that I would probably always want to take Midge instead to shows, so I sold the Scorpio a month before Midge got crashed.

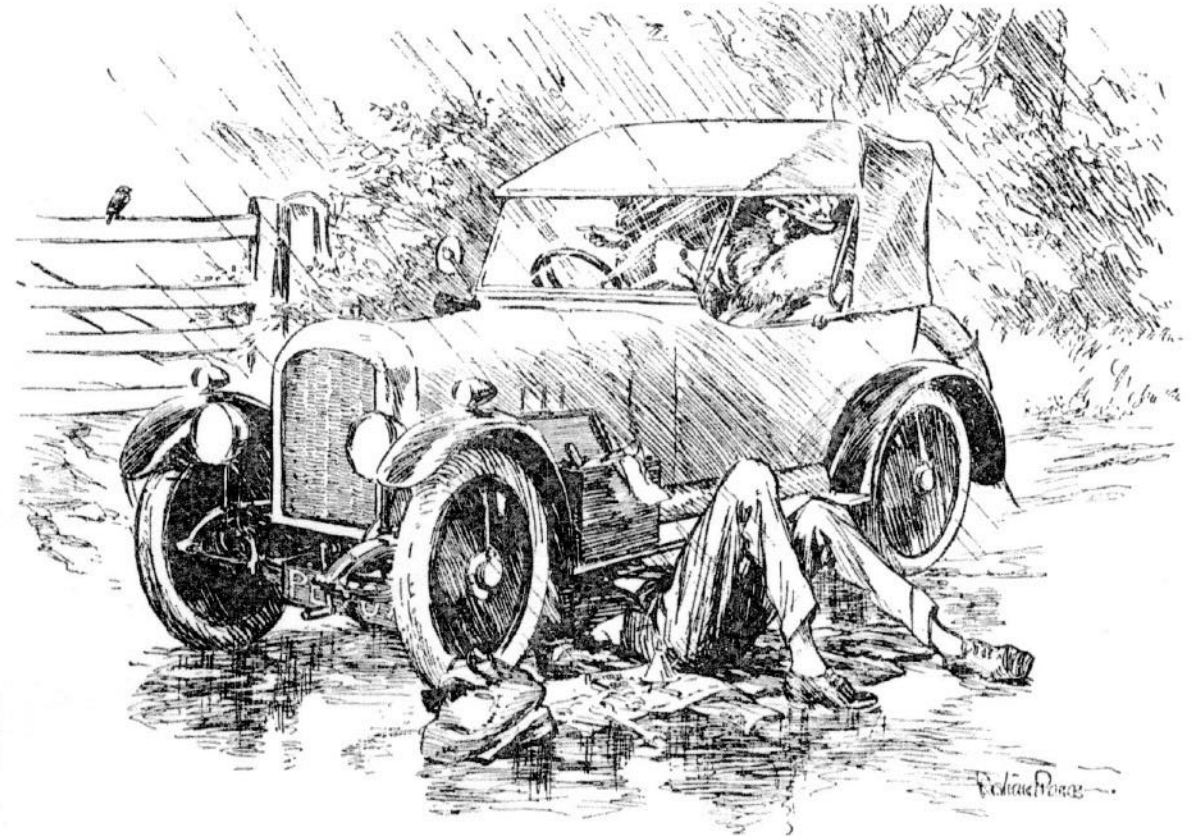
Now how's that for a bit of masterful mistiming? TW.



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



"Wot yer stopping for, Miss?"
"Well, I noticed you bent your knees an' straightened 'em again. What signal was *that*?"



Darling Wife. "Quick Archie, the sweetest little robin redbreast!"





A few photos of Robert's Monty being out in the sun at last and sporting the new transmission tunnel. Terry's Midge looking equally smart. Hopefully there will be many more sunny days for enjoying Midges in. Never mind the polishing, it'll only bounce the sun off the bonnet and dazzle you.





Body Cappings & New Side Screens by Neil Walker

Body Cappings.

To me the finish at the top of Ruby's body tub has always been unsatisfactory so I decided to make some cappings. I had 2 mm steel cut to 48 mm strips then bent into 24 mm 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 be fit-checked on the car and then had fillets cut and welded into place to keep the required shape. (Welding not good, out of practice, but the grinder sorted it.) Holes then 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 mounts before having them re-trimmed. 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 7mm round bar which I heated with a blow torch for the bends at the corners then welded the new frame to the old mounts before having them re-trimmed. NW.



UK 2023/24 Events

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

<http://www.classicshowsuk.co.uk/classic-car-shows-events-search/major-classic-car-show-events.asp>

or <https://www.vintagecarsofeurope.com/events>



John Hines has sold the Midge bits previously advertised here and on the sales and wants page of the website. He now has Spitfire mkIV suspension and diff and a modified chassis. There are some areas that will need attention:

- offside rear towing loop is damaged
- offside rear, small hole at base of shock absorber mounting
- offside front, small hole in chassis rail at base of suspension turret
- handbrake yokes are damaged
- main rails have been hammered to fit engine or gearbox mods
- front suspension turrets look like they have been adapted a number of times – I have an unmodified pair



Happy to pass this on to a Midge builder / restorer for £40, with the unmodified turrets

My phone number is 07791205106

4 Peaceful Valley, Hurworth Place, Darlington DL2 2DB

Best wishes

John Hiles

My phone number is 07791205106

4 Peaceful Valley, Hurworth Place, Darlington DL2 2DB

More photos on the website <https://midgebuilders.homestead.com/Sales-and-wants.html>

"So there I was, minding my own business, when a mosquito hit my windscreen..."
...Car Insurance man looks up at me disbelievingly....

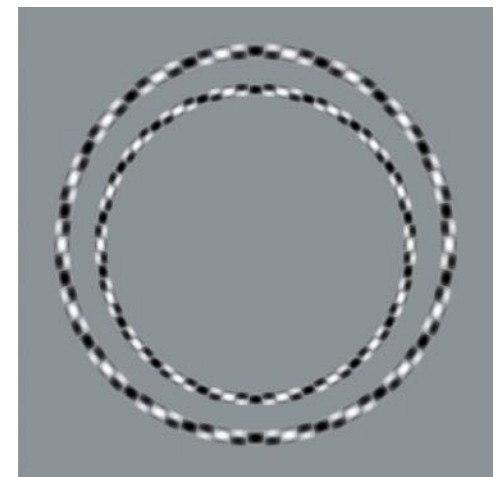
Pinched from the internet where it was posted by a C Biggins.

I know I shouldn't really, but it made me laugh.

Then I thought 'I hope the driver got out in time'.

Since the pilot seemed to have found a road that was wide enough, I assume he was avoiding the car when he literally ditched.

I can imagine the driver had difficulty believing what he saw, and that can delay reactions, so don't paint these two entirely irrelevant circles on the side of your car.



I try to add interesting if irrelevant elements to the magazine, usually with an historical twist. So staying with the historical for a moment, here's an old tractor, a Fordson Super Major. (Sadly no longer DVLA registered.)

Additionally Pilot George Aird (descending) who survived with broken legs having parachuted into a greenhouse of tomatoes. I'm sure you'll be glad to hear he was woken by the sprinkler system.

The Photographer was Jim Meads and the Aircraft an English Electric Lightning XG332 Image taken 19th of September in 1962 at 20:16:41

Cause:- Mechanical failure. There was a fire in the aircraft's reheat zone. Un-burnt fuel in the rear fuselage had been ignited by a small crack in the jet pipe and had weakened the tailplane actuator anchorage. This weakened the tailplane control system which failed with the aircraft at 100 feet on final approach toward Hatfield.

The tractor driver was 15-year-old Mick Sutterby who was trimming round the 'overshoot' of the runway with a 'side-mower'.

The article that supplied the information is attributable to Sylvia Wrigley's 'Fear of landing' magazine.



The English Electric Lightning is a British fighter aircraft that served as an interceptor during the 1960s, the 1970s and into the late 1980s. It was capable of a top speed of above Mach 2 and could climb at more than Mach 1. The Lightning was designed, developed, and manufactured by English Electric.

Wikipedia says Engine type: Rolls-Royce Avon First flight: 4 August 1954 Length: 17 m Wingspan: 11 m Designer: W. E. W. Petter Retired: 1988

John Cowperthwaite continues his auto-biography and motoring developments.

Around the time that Jim Hewlett took over as secretary of the MOBC from John Bircumshaw I was told that there were less than 150 Midge owners in the club.

(that was 2015. Currently 341 on facebook and 170 in the original membership list some of whom may have fallen by the wayside. remember to tell me if you fall off your perch JH)

Because of the advent of IVA it was increasing unlikely that any more Midges could be built. So the membership of the club could only decline. I was asked if I could think of any way to circumnavigate the IVA regulations. The IVA regulations had become so complicated that it was almost necessary to have a degree in aeronautical engineering to get a car through the test. After thinking about this for some time I remembered seeing vehicles on the road mainly used for advertising purposes where the body of a truck had been removed and replaced with something more unusual such as a miniaturised bungalow advertising double glazing and also another example being a huge cola bottle on wheels and it occurred to me that there might be a distinction between a re-bodied vehicle and a kit built vehicle. I contacted DVLA and found out that you could in fact change the body of a vehicle and retain its original registration if it had a separate chassis and only the body was changed and the chassis remained unaltered.

Around this time I visited a friend's workshop and outside in the back yard on a top of a pile of builders rubble was a small chassis. I asked about it and it turned out to be a chassis from a Suzuki SJ13 Jeep. All the axles and steering mechanism had been thrown away and only the bare chassis remained. It looked to be about the same size as a Triumph Herald/Spitfire chassis. I thought that there was a possibility that the Suzuki SJ series might provide a suitable donor for the envisaged MK2 Midge. Later the same day I found advertised on Ebay a Suzuki SJ413 rolling chassis complete with engine and gearbox being sold for £100 with no bids and only an hour to go. I bid on it, won it and had it delivered on a trailer to the house where we were living that had a double garage.

I then had to consider how on earth I was going to build a Midge style body on to it without making any modifications at all to the chassis. Whereas the Mk1 Midge was an authentically classic design in the style of the MG J2 and or Wolseley Hornet of the same era, I could see that I would be unable to achieve the same purity of design with the Suzuki. Whereas the Mk1 Midge had its radiator over the centre line of the axle with the small apron in front of the radiator in the style of those vintage sports cars it was impossible to achieve the same look with the Suzuki because the engine could not be moved back without compromising the leg room. So I knew from the start that it wasn't going to be such a classic design as the Mk1. I bought sheets of plywood and aluminium and made a start on constructing a prototype body more or less out of my head, refining the design as work progressed. Alongside the Mk2 prototype was a Mk1 Midge that I'd purchased some years before from MOBC member Peter Hodson. I had replaced its aero screens with a full windscreen and hood and side-screens purchased from other

Midge owners. It was also fitted with Triumph TR3 wire wheels and it was looking pretty good. After running the car for a few months, the clutch started to give problems and the clutch slave cylinder need replacing. Unfortunately this was located on the very back of the engine and very close to the plywood bulkhead and it was impossible to even get a spanner in there to remove it. There were only two solutions to this. One was to remove the bonnet, the radiator cowl, radiator and engine side panels and remove the engine to enable access. The easier option or so I thought was to cut part of the plywood bulkhead away from the inside of the car to gain access to the slave cylinder through the hole that was cut. I discovered that there was no room to get a jigsaw into position without removing the gearbox cover but this had been fibreglassed into one piece with the prop-shaft tunnel and that was secured with flanges to the floor all the way down its length and it was impossible to get to the nuts bolts and screws holding it down without removing the seats. So firstly the seats had to be removed and they had been in for a long time so that was no easy task followed by the plywood prop-shaft tunnel and the gearbox cover which was also a difficult task with all the nuts and bolts and screws holding it down. It had become a bit of a nightmare project that I didn't anticipate. And then I discovered that it still wasn't possible to get a jigsaw into the right place to make access to the clutch slave cylinder.* This is when the work on the Midge Mk1 got abandoned in favour of the Midge Mk2.



**Incidentally I use an Oscillating Multi Tool for the awkward slave cylinder access kind of job. ED*

JC continues. Around this time one afternoon, out of the blue, I received a phone call from a man with an east European accent who claimed that he had a historic interest in my designs and was in the area and would like to come to see me. He said that he already had a collection of my cars in the Czech Republic and would like to meet me.

I declined his offer as I thought it sounded like I was being stalked!

The next day however he rang back and said that he was staying close by with his wife and had come over to collect a car from the UK with a trailer and he was only a short distance away from where I lived. My wife answered the phone and we discussed it and decided that he sounded innocent enough and so we agreed to let him call in. He said that his Czech christian name was probably unpronounceable for us and introduce himself as George and his wife as Jitka and they were a lovely youngish couple probably in their thirties.

They were driving an old range rover with a trailer on the back carrying a vintage Mk1 Mini that he'd purchased somewhere in the UK to take back to the Czech Republic.

They'd slept all night in their car in the grounds of a local fishing lake which was only a few hundred yards from where we lived. I had no idea at the time that that was where they had spent the night. We invited them in and found them to be very sociable. We got the guitars out and played songs for them. We invited them to stay and put them up for the night in a spare bedroom and he explained that he already had a Mk1 Midge in pieces and somebody else in the family had got a Moss Roadster and also some of the children's cars that I had designed. Apparently they were making a collection.

His main aim in coming to see me was to take some extensive notes about the advent of Moss, the original designs and also of the Midge and all the different models that I'd designed over the years, preferably in date order. The information he already had currently was from magazines. He was extremely interested to see what the developments were in our double garage so I showed him the prototype Mk2 and also the Mk1 which he was particularly interested in even with no interior, and asked me if I might be interested in selling it as it was. As I was now very involved with the Mk2 and it would be a long time before I could get round to refurbishing the Mk1 it seemed that it might be a good idea, especially as by this time I had to give up driving due to my eye condition. We agreed on a price and arranged for him to collect it at a later date. Some months later he returned with a trailer to take the car away and asked me to sign the bonnet with my name with a black marker pen and he would be adding it to his collection, none of which had been restored as he liked to keep them with their unique patina and display them just as they are.

Some time later he got back in touch with me to say that he was attending an exhibition and wanted to display some of my designs and he also wanted to build a Midge body during the 3 or 4 days of the exhibition and asked me if I'd go over there that he'd put us up somewhere while I helped him to construct a Midge body to show the simplicity of its design. As I recall it was either autumn or winter and because of my eyesight problems

I didn't think I could reasonably contribute to the work in hand and we eventually reluctantly declined the offer.

A few years passed but we stayed in touch. The Mk2 Midge prototype was finished, we designed and made the hood and side-screens for it and several dozen sets of plans had been sold and all the extra parts and components that we could supply but it never achieved the success of the Mk1 or the interest and I put this down to the fact that it wasn't a classic design. The Mk1 Midge was very classic in every aspect and was a very simple build.

The Mk2 was a bit snub nosed due to the fact that the chassis could not be altered. I think it was a great achievement to convert an SJ413 Suzuki Jeep into a pre war style sports car and people admired it wherever we went. I remember once when we were out in Matlock Derbyshire we returned to the car to find a couple admiring it and the man turned to his wife and said, in a strong Derbyshire accent, "I bet that's worth more than our 'ouse!" Which was the general impression it created wherever we went. It was very exciting to drive and we went to see John Bircumshaw in Wales. We have some photographs of it parked alongside his Mk1 Midge. By this time I wasn't really selling plans or parts any more because my eyesight had deteriorated to the degree that I felt it was too difficult to run the business so the project sort of wound itself up and I decided to sell it.



George and John

George's main aim in coming to see me was to take some extensive notes about the advent of Moss, the original designs and also of the Midge and all the different models that I'd designed over the years, preferably in date order. The information he already had currently was from magazines. He was extremely interested to see what the developments were in our double garage so I showed the prototype Mk2 and also the Mk1 which he was particularly interested in even with no interior, and asked me if I might be interested in selling it as it was. As I was now very involved with the Mk2 and it would be a long time before I could get round to refurbishing the Mk1.

It seemed that it might be a good idea, especially as by this time I had to give up driving due to my eye condition. We agreed on a price and arranged for him to collect it at a later date. Some months later he returned with a trailer to take the car away and asked me to sign the bonnet with my name with a black marker pen and he would be adding it to his collection, none of which had been restored as he liked to keep them with their unique patina and display them just as they are. Some time later he got back in touch with me to say that he was attending an exhibition and wanted to display some of my designs and he also wanted to build a Midge body during the 3 or 4 days of the exhibition and asked me if I'd go over there that he'd put us up somewhere while I helped him to construct a Midge body to show the simplicity of its design. As I recall it was either autumn or winter and because of my eyesight problems I didn't think I could reasonably contribute to the work in hand and we eventually reluctantly declined the offer.

A few years passed but we stayed in touch. The Mk2 Midge prototype was finished, we designed and made the hood and side-screens for it and several dozen sets of plans had been sold and all the extra parts and components that we could supply but it never achieved the success or the interest of the Mk1 and I put this down to the fact that it wasn't a classic design. The Mk1 Midge was very classic in every aspect and was a very simple build. The Mk2 was a bit snub nosed due to the fact that the chassis could not be altered. I think it was a great achievement to convert an SJ413 Suzuki Jeep into a pre war style sports car and people admired it wherever we went. I remember once when we were out in Matlock Derbyshire we returned to the car to find a couple admiring it and the man turned to his wife and said , in a strong Derbyshire accent, I bet that's worth more than our 'ouse! Which was the general impression it created wherever we went. It was very exciting to drive and we went to see John Bircumshaw in Wales. We have some photographs of it parked alongside his Mk1 Midge. By this time I wasn't really selling plans or parts any more because my eyesight had deteriorated to the degree that I felt it was too difficult to run the business so the project sort of wound itself up and I decided to sell it. I got in touch again with George in the Czech Republic and asked him if he would like to buy it to add to his collection. We agreed a price and so he sent his cousin over with a trailer to collect it and pay us in cash.

This all happened about 3 or 4 years ago and then last year I had a telephone call from him saying that he had enlarged the collection of my cars and rented a section of a new motor museum that was going to be opened

featuring veteran, vintage and classic cars and motorbikes in Czechia and his section would be named in my honour. He was actually opening a section of the museum with a sign at the entrance featuring a photograph of me. He invited me and Rose and my sons over there at their expense at a lovely hotel in the mountains for a full week. we were surprised to discover that the museum was to be opened by the President of the Czech Republic himself. There was tight security when he arrived and we had a very interesting conversation about the cars displayed in my section of the museum. The display contained the Mk1 and Mk2 Midge ,Moss Malvern, Moss Roadster, Moss Monaco, RLT Husky Jeep, a JC Locust and several models of the kiddie cars. And in fact I designed 7 full size road going sports cars under the JC and Moss banners and 8 children's cars mostly powered by wheelchair motors or cordless drills and one powered by a 50cc petrol engine which looked like a Van Wall or Ferrari from the early fifties.



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So it was all very interesting and I was greatly honoured by the fact that George had named his section of the museum in my name and it will stay within the walls of the greater museum for at least 6 months and then it will be moved on and displayed somewhere else.

I will keep you posted on any further developments.

John Cowperthwaite
(designer)

PSGeorge has now acquired a Moss Mamba to complete the collection.



Tailpipe

I was quite surprised to hear that new UK cars will be getting speed limiters from July 2024 (so you might need to slow down now assuming somebody is reading this to you as you drive). This would have been possible soon after the adoption of computer controlled engines, even when the 'computer' was just cruise control. I assume it'll be an 'over the air update' and then built in.

The surprise was that they had actually enacted the law before the next UK parliament since there has been little parliamentary work done for some time with the forthcoming election, Brexit, Russia, Covid and various scandals taking up much of the time.

I'm told it will be 70 mph in the UK which seems logical if there are no other factors, like emergency service vehicles. Apparently there are suggestions that the maximum motorway speed should also be raised from 70mph, but I've heard that every 10 years or so since 1965. Since most cars are now made outside the UK I imagine there would be some homologation to the metric settings, the US being an inevitable exception, seat-belt defeat devices apparently still being in popular use. I imagine the sale of software defeat packages will be monitored with the same enthusiasm as their gun sales.

The regulations appear to be in compliance with the EU which will no doubt trigger much gnashing of teeth and rending of garments, however, objectors will inevitably have to explain why they need to exceed the national limit, so many will be constructing their objection fairly soon. I have no doubt there will be objections but it'll be interesting to see what emerges. It'll be obvious what the real arguments are but it'll be difficult getting past the public safety factor. I imagine the owners of Bugatti Veyrons will be a bit miffed, top speed being the primary selling point. I suspect Jeremy Clarkson will be in demand for comments.

It is several years since I last drove outside the UK, so I've not studied recent continental speed limits, If I understand the various postings on the internet most of the continent is already restricted to 120 or 130 kph, but not 'electronically regulated' which might refer to speed cameras or perhaps on-board software. I think Germany is the outlier with some unlimited 'white' Autobahn and some red 'recommended' sections of 110 km/h (80mph).

With the increasing computerisation of cars they can tell some insurers that their owner has been exceeding the limit, although that seems to be to enable increased premiums. It's probably more efficient than telling the government. A little later the car itself will decide what speed, route and lane selection anyway. Midge drivers don't often get the means, motive and/or opportunity, given the limitations of the 1960s handling, to exceed 70 mph, so this article will be of limited relevance to us when Midging.

I don't remember needing to get out of the way of a falling building or tree and only once had to accelerate out of the path of a potential accident when near the 70 limit. Many of my cars would have had difficulty exceed 70 anyway. I consider other drivers reaching speeds well above 70 mph, are more dangerous and frankly, although it might sound as though I've had a rather boring existence, I tend to only break the speed limit if I don't notice a new limit sign, like the 20 ones that pop up like mushrooms overnight, and my conventional cars usually remind me within a few yards.

Please don't send me images of your Midge doing more than 70, no matter how proud you might be, for obvious reasons.

JH