

MIDGE MAGAZINE



December
2015



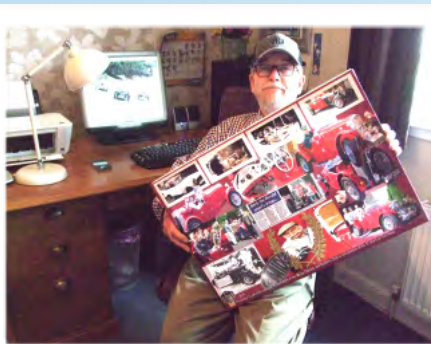
Terry Brown's Midge

IN AT THE DEEP END

Hello Midge enthusiasts, Here's my first attempt at compiling a Midge Magazine. I started as secretary after John Bircumshaw published the Summer 2015 issue and have since then been getting myself, and this issue, sorted out. The process was slightly complicated by collecting the money for the MOBC calendar, John B's presentation, setting up a new bank account, and taking over as web master.

They say that which doesn't kill you makes you stronger. I should by now be able to leap small buildings with a single bound. Perhaps it wasn't such a good idea offering to take payment by cash, cheque, Paypal, and BACS,

However it is all in now, James Orr's excellent Calendar printed and sent out, presentation made and Magazine compiled. If you haven't got your calendar then call me. The image at top right is James Orr holding the printed collage of images celebrating John's decade of secretarial activity. Below that you will see the presentation bowl made for John Bircumshaw's retirement. The gifts were paid for by donations made by Club Members, and the remaining cash will be converted into bullion and put in the bowl. The wood was of course ethically



sourced. I will put John's thank-you at the other end of the Magazine.

John has been 'active member 82' since the dawn of time, it is rumoured that his driving licence is in Cuneiform.

Our thanks for all his work. He and I ask that you send photographs, notes, written articles, reports, jokes and wise words for future magazines, thereby raising the club profile, and perhaps even a glass to the membership.

OUR FIRST CALENDAR!

With only 60 printed these will no doubt be valuable ephemera one day.



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

Tom Sherring, member no 168, died a short while ago.
Our condolences to his widow, Marcia.

Our New Secretary, Jim Hewlett. Guaranteed not very radioactive.



Who him? Well...

Once upon a time, far, far away and long ago I was born and raised in the Hampshire countryside. This gave me the enviable skills I have now, like farmyard impressions and the right to leave doors open. For the early part of my life I lived on the farm and was often found in or around large and dangerous pieces of old machinery. Despite a complete lack of mechanical aptitude, and entirely the wrong kind of mental wiring, I survived in this dangerous environment and discovered the joys of Morris 1000s, motorcycles and tractors.

Watched by the farm cat, who seemed to prefer garage work to mousing, I would torment various pieces of machinery with hacksaw and hammer. The cat would observe, often sitting on my shoulder, which made welding rather tricky.

Eventually the cat, referred to as Possum for reasons I shall not go into now, went away to develop an interest in female cats, and I left to study medical Radiography.

Forty years later I retired from Radiography and took up where I had left off, now out in the Scottish countryside, hitting bits of metal and occasionally, by

way of a change, making small bits of wood rounder and smaller. A predilection for heavy vehicles like Land Rovers and large vans gave way to Midges, being smaller, lighter and marginally faster.

Between Midge tasks the less successful bits of wood (or bespoke kindling as it is called) kept me warm in the garage stove on chilly days.

Time passed and I raised my fleet to two Midges. The Great Wizard, who I should have mentioned earlier, told me that my apprenticeship was complete and that it was time to take my place amongst the great and good. He shook my hand, gave me a small bundle of obscure papers, and said "You'll make an excellent Club Secretary. See ya." and pushed off to Wales in a small cloud of Triumph.

Wizards always retire to Wales, it is as far from London as you can get without getting cold, exiled or having to drive on the wrong side of the road. (I eventually got my revenge by giving him a small, round, and utterly incomprehensible piece of wood.)

I started growing a beard, as winter was fast approaching, expanded my fleet with a Tractor, oiled the cat and started looking blankly at the computer.

Apparently is what often happens if you don't say no quickly enough and make inadvisable decisions. The trick I now know is to feign deafness and hide under something.

Hopefully others will learn from my mistakes

Secretaryship, I discover, is rather like herding cats, although there is less sneezing, fewer bits of dead mouse and more typing.

My apologies to any who has become confused, regretful or depressed since starting to read this, and remember that you can get rid of that feeling of confusion by either Midge driving or hitting a small piece of metal repeatedly.

Well, it works for me.

Jim



This and the logo above by
Owner Peter Winterton,



Artist Steven Massey for Chris Bird

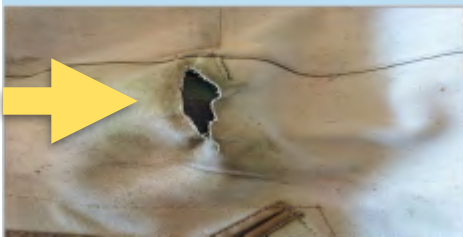




The thing about writing for a newsletter that has been going for ten years or so, is that some stories and tips are in danger of being a bit “old hat”.

I think I am safe with this one though, as I am pretty confident that nobody will have featured an old hat as the hero of the tale before!

When Bea was first built, I fitted the JC tan, double duck hood and side-screens, but twenty seven years on, with seven of those under a loose car cover, outside, it was in a terrible state. It was faded, filthy, mouldy, worn and indeed, worn through where it had rubbed on



the frame. And worse still it had been removed while damp and had shrunk a bit.

I had decided to bin it and phoned a local classic car hood maker, but got a serious shock when he quoted over £2,000 for a hood and screens. I did find cheaper ones, but I decided that a new one could wait until Winter and that I would try to renovate the old one for this season. I managed to stretch it to fit by damping

and steaming it, but some rips opened up and I could see that the proofing had disappeared so that it was just like an old rag. I sent for a hood repair kit, but a tiny tube of glue and some clear, sticky tape was no solution to my problem. The solution came, however, when my wife Liz was looking at it. She spotted that my old sun hat, hanging on the garage wall, was the same fabric and colour. And she had some fabric glue that was apparently waterproof - I was in business! I decided to patch it before scrubbing it, to make sure it didn't fall apart, and so the hat was cut up and glued – the crown making the outside patches and the brim providing thick, inside reinforcement.

I used Renovo hood cleaner and scrubbed the hood off the car, on a garden table. This was not a great idea as the woven surface now shows as faint stripes on the hood! Getting the wet hood back on the frame was a job I would rather forget – especially as some of the glued patches began to lift.

It turned out that I had forgotten to properly iron the patches (this makes them water resistant) but I re-stuck them when it was dry and had to resort to some patches from a new (and sadly lighter) hat for



areas where scrubbing had revealed more damage. To be on the safe side I went round each patch with the hood repair glue.

So now it was just a matter of proofing it with Renovo Ultra proofer, painted on with the hood in situ. And then doing it again, and again. In fact the main part took six coats, but is now good enough – I think.



You will have realised by now that this had become a bit of a personal challenge and that I would have been much wiser to just buy a new one now. But the old Midge builder's spirit of make-do and sort-it had re-awakened in me - and that is most definitely not “old hat”!

CB





MIDGENESS BY JOHN COWPERTHWAIT

Hi All, Just a word to let you know of the latest turn of events.

The Midge 2 failed again but this time just on emissions.

Roger (Mechanic friend) put in a new set of plugs and re-timed the ignition which was 'all over the place'

The car now runs as sweet as a nut and has now passed emissions no problem.

Unlike last time, the tester had no problem with my re-design of the seat belt mounting points or my modified handbrake linkage. Furthermore the handbrake which had failed the last test passed with no adjustment and still locks the back wheels as it always has.

The slight surface cracks in the walls of two tyres is superficial and not classed as a test failure this time and the horn worked fine, again with nothing being done to it. Makes you think doesn't it?

The car did need the discs skimming, a wheel bearing and several spring hanger bushes.

As you may recall the last contact I had with DVLA instructed me to have the car tested and insured and to forward this information to them along with the V627/1 application for a built up vehicle along with proof of my ID., i.e.. a driving Licence or passport, a utility bill in my name to verify my address and a £50 fee

together with payment for six months tax.

I also had to include photographs of the conversion and a covering explanatory letter describing what had been done. (This bit still applies)

Having gained a current MOT certificate I duly phoned Adrian Flux for insurance which was completed over the phone. They insured the car as a Suzuki based JC Midge.

So far so good. My next job was to touch base with DVLA again to make sure that I had got the details of what they needed correct.

For future reference in case you need it I phoned 0300 7906802 followed by option 1 then option 5 then option 4.

This connected me with the "department that gives out instructions" namely The Swansea Vehicle Advisory Department.

I spoke to a chap called Nathan on Team 27 (!) who promptly told me that I did not need to fill in form V627/1 for a built up vehicle as mine was simply a re-body of an existing car where just the body had been replaced with a new one.

I explained to him the details of what I had previously been told to do.

He said, "No you don't need to fill in that form, your vehicle is already registered and is not built up from vehicle parts, just a replacement body".

"Yes" I said "but I believe this regulation was initiated by the police because kit built and re-bodied cars no longer

resembled the donor car description on the V5 and made them difficult to identify. and improperly registered cars like say a kit car still registered as a Triumph Herald would be in contravention of the law".

That is true but (because the chassis is unaltered) all you need to do is fill in section 7 on the V5c (Log Book), and change just the things that are relevant. e.g.; The colour, the body type, and the number of seats.

Include photos of the car and a covering letter to change the make from Suzuki to JC Midge, send it back to us ASAP. You aren't required to fill in anything else and we do not require any personal identity details as the car is already registered and it is registered in your name.'

There is no fee and no mention of an 8 point check being required that being intended for built up vehicles which apparently mine isn't now classed as.

He told me to sign and date section 8 on the V5c and return it to the 'Changes to Vehicles department' DVLA Swansea SA99 1BA.

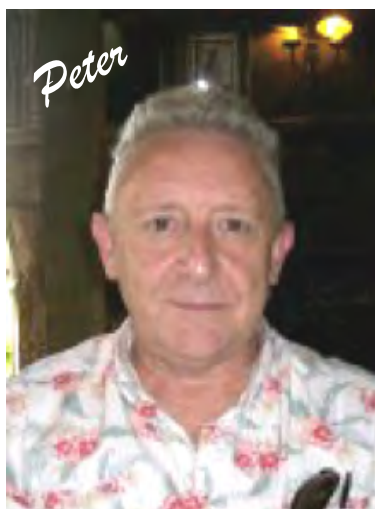
When I remarked that this was totally different to the previous instructions I had received he said, 'Well the regulations change all the time!' (you ain't kiddin' they do!)

So er..... 'can I tax it now then?' 'Yes no problem' (!) So we now have the first road legal Suzuki based Midge MK2 Taxed.....*Continued Page 5*

.....tested and insured in my name but not for me to drive because I don't have a licence due to eyesight problems. So others can drive it but not me! How bizarre! We went swanning about in it yesterday with my son driving. No hood no side-screens. Very cold. 70 in 4th gear with 5th gear still to go. Very smooth drive. Corners well. Exhaust a bit too quiet!. Good acceleration, very nippy. not a bit like it's jeep donor to drive. I shall wait for the return of the modified V5c with baited breath. Thought

A Report from Peter Donbavand.

I have owned my Midge now since Feb 2013 - I have done quite a bit since taking ownership - I fitted a new Honda Civic alloy rad and 12" electric fan which required the bonnet to be 4" longer and 4" higher, hence I had to make a new bonnet and sides - I also fitted an oil cooler which then led to me fabricating a front apron - whilst in the fabrication mood I made a new dashboard, fitting all new gauges, including an electronic speedo, switches (retains the original dizzy driven rev counter) - I then got the jigsaw and re-profiled the body sides before lining the rear boot area in aluminium and fitting all edges with ali profile strip - also lined the driver and passenger footwells in chequered ali - the Midge came with a Ford type 9 gearbox conversion from Canleys but the prop-shaft was a real bodge so I had a custom prop made and balanced by NorthWest Propshafts - I then fabbed a prop-shaft tunnel in ali and decided to leave the gearbox exposed - next I fitted new seats and three point harnesses - at the rear I fitted a new ali petrol tank and facet fuel pump - the six gallon tank was bigger than the old (shall we describe it as vintage auto jumble) tank and again I had to fabricate a complete back end including spare wheel carrier - I sourced off EBAY a near new set of Weller wheels which were the right PCD - these were powder coated and new tyres fitted - the car came with adjustable Konis all round and I fitted uprated front springs from Rimmer Brothers (with Wellers and wider tyres the Midge goes round roundabouts like it is on rails even with the dreaded rear positive camber)- new brake and clutch master cylinders were fitted along with



a Filter King petrol filter- I sourced a pair of new brass headlamps and also fitted new lighting units all round - last major job I did was to completely rewire the car front to back including using the Car Builder Solutions wiring module (this is a godsend making a rewire about as simple as it can get), new battery and alloy carrier. Jobs this winter will include: making and fitting of doors, fabricating a roll over bar, fitting of a new rear spring which is sitting under the work bench along with a 1" lowering block from Jigsaw Racing (current spring sags on driver's side and the car has way too much positive camber), weld a tapped bung in the sump to take the oil temp sender unit, and consider what to do about the paintwork (paint or leathercloth?)

The 13/60 engine is now running on a Stromberg carb

BRILLIANCE UNDER THE BONNET!



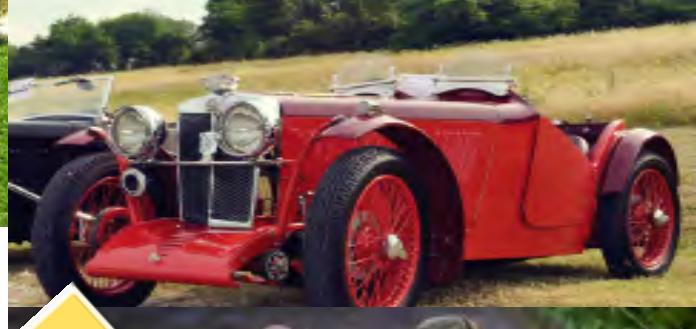
- I sourced a Dolomite inlet or was it a Toledo? anyway it had the right stud arrangement to fit the SU 1.75" Hif44 carb even though the manifold was designed for 1.5" SU - I subsequently enlarged the inlet port to 1.75" and had both faces machined ready for fitment (I'm looking for a reconditioned HIF44 now but these are close to £200. Just for added amusement the gearbox is now leaking oil from the output shaft and 5th gear is rattling like nuts in a bean can - and the clutch release bearing has decided to join in the racket for good measure!!!!!!

PD

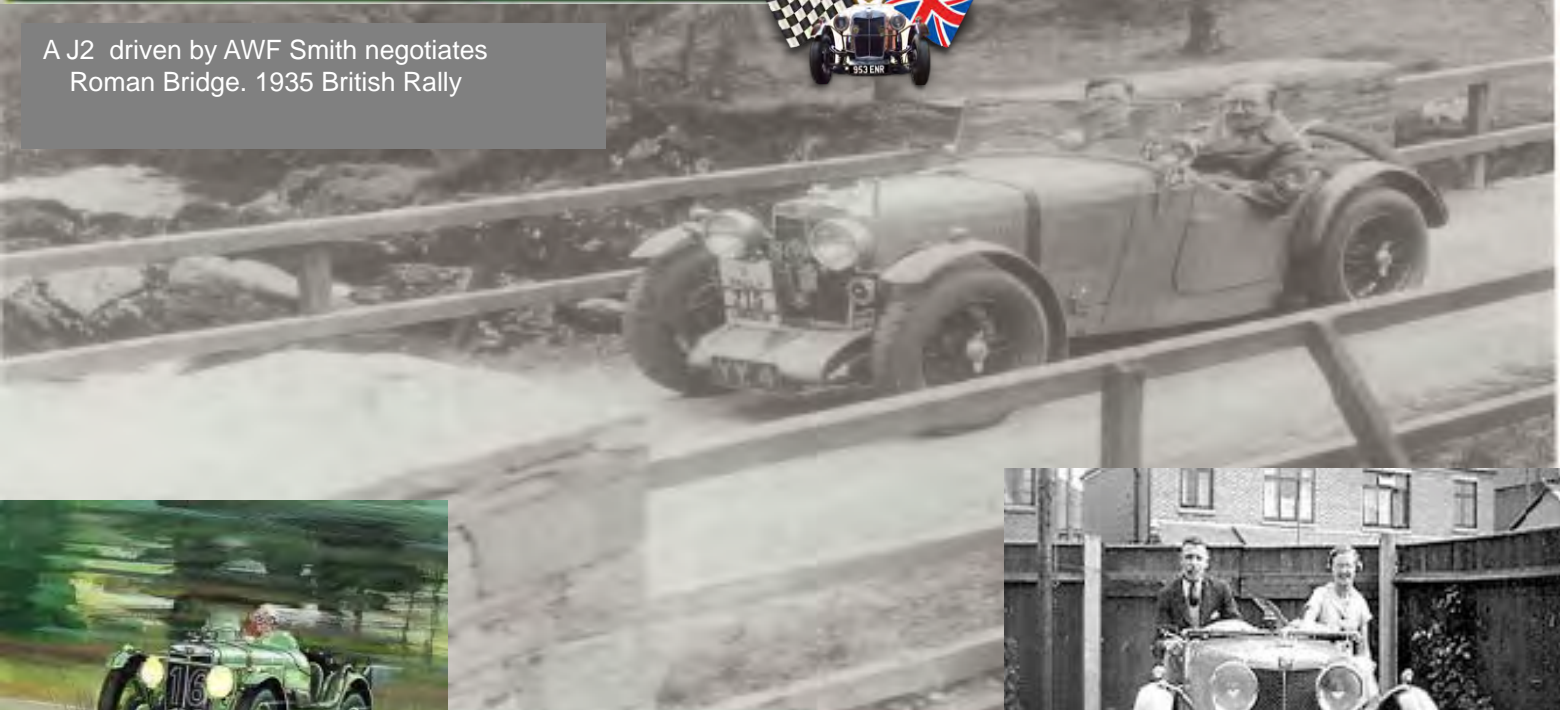
MG J2 MEMORIES



Would Your
Midge do this?



A J2 driven by AWF Smith negotiates
Roman Bridge. 1935 British Rally



MG J2



Some more background story,
lifted from an email from John

Hi James,

(JC IS WRITING TO
JAMES ORR HERE)

Yes I did design the
Locust.

It is a plans and patterns
build just like the Midge.

Having completed the
Midge design I was looking
for something else that
could be constructed in the
same way.

I chanced to be at a hill
climb at Harewood where
there were several
Caterhams competing.

I immediately saw the
potential as the cars are flat
sided and the only
compound curves are in the
GRP bits.

We designed a ladder
chassis to take Ford escort
running gear and cloned a
Caterham kindly lent to me
for the occasion! The
cockpit was made 2 inches
longer to improve leg room,
otherwise the car is a 'dead
ringer' with the exception of
the front suspension. Theirs
was rose jointed aircraft
steel tube and ours was
Ford Cortina wishbones!.

Of course they had a
spaceframe where we had
plywood! but at the time a
Caterham cost £15000 and
you could build a Locust for
£1500. A tenth of the price
got you a charismatic fast
road car that actually
performed very well
especially with the 2 litre
Pinto engine.

One of the first to be
completed was a 'Lotus'
badged BRG and yellow
nosed car built by John
Tyson who cheekily parked
it on the Caterham owners
club stand at a famous kit
car show where it remained
for two hours before anyone
sussed the deception!

The Locust Enthusiasts
Club is still active and you
can google it for more info.

You asked me about
other designs.

Well of course the
original Moss was the 2
seat roadster.

The Malvern (Named
after the birthplace of
Morgan) was the 2+2
version with a different rear
styling.

Again you can check out
the Moss Owners Club on

Google as they are also still
active.

I also designed the RLT
husky jeep which was again
made on a custom chassis
and was a plans and
patterns build constructed
from sections of 1 inch and
3/4 inch thick exterior grade
MDF! The painted finish
achieved on this material
was fantastic but sadly the
manufacturers claims to the
material being impervious
to the ingress of water were
not based on fact and many
Husky's have since
dissolved as a result.

A few were made from
exterior or Marine ply and
can still be found although
they are now very rare.

The point about MDF is it
was so smooth that there is
no grain to lose, unlike
plywood so it could be
painted without needing to
be skinned in aluminium.
The bodies were extremely
strong and rugged. The
curve rear corners and front
wing tops were rolled
sections of aluminium that
were pop-riveted straight to
the wood!

Lesser designs were my
venture into children's ride-
on cars under the banner of
Real Life Toys which
produced the Mayfair, The
kid's Jeep and later the
Toylander a Land Rover
series 2 replica. (All 'plans
and patterns' builds and
powered by wheelchair
motors). You will find them
all on Google and many on
Youtube. JC





Ongoing Midge work.

All over the world, (well these pictures come from opposite sides of the planet,) Midge work continues.

Graeme Crimp is doing a spot of bodywork to accommodate the changes made under the bonnet. The car was quite different in 1990. I do envy his weather, Australia must be ideal for midge driving. >>



<< Back here in Blighty Ray Jones has been making a very tidy looking hood. I think he may be looking for advice on side screens on 'suicide' doors, anyone tried that?

The Facebook thing.

The 'social' side of the internet including Facebook can be a drain on your time, but if you restrict yourself to the MOBC page you can often find useful ideas and pictures, and it can be a way of gathering advice, sympathy and moral support, or help when looking for an elusive component. Access is by invitation, (Email me or James Dolphin for that) which cuts out a lot of postings of babies, kittens, and 'what I had for lunch' Quite often members will point out Midges for sale on eBay and the like, and add useful opinions on the offer, and of course you may hear of Midges for sale there before they get shown anywhere else.



Find Us On
facebook 

Just room to fit in a Christmas Greetings and Happy new year notice. so there you are, officially cheered. Now put that sherry bottle down, and remember Midge seats are generally quite narrow...are you sure you want that extra slice?

And so the first Magazine by your new and (moderately) humble Secretary draws to a close. Depending on when I get this out I hope you have / will have had / are having a Merry Christmas and that you find / found / something shiny under the tree to bolt onto your Midge as soon as the weather clears up. You can tell me about it for the next issue. My thanks to James Orr who did most of the work for this and all of the Calendar. To John B who carried the flag before and John C who started the whole thing in the first place.

Neil Russell has been running the Web Site for a considerable period and deserves our thanks as well, being the point of contact for anyone who has found a car first and searched on-line for others similarly afflicted. As with the magazine, I don't think I have any particularly better ideas than my predecessors, no doubt there will be changes, however they are more to do with having a new set of software tools. My computer is a Mac for instance, and it doesn't take kindly to MS Publisher or MS Word, although it can read them. I did try to reactivate my old Windows machine, but it seems to require upgrading with money that is earmarked for engine parts. So Mac it is. I can handle MS Office stuff though, as well as 'OpenOffice' and 'LibreOffice' (which are free) so keep writing.

The Facebook pages seem to be very popular, and I hope to integrate that more with the web-site without spending too much time out of the garage looking at photographs of cats, dogs, babies, food and birthday parties.

Most of our members have web access (and my apologies to those who don't, I'll try not to be too tekky for too long) I'm assuming most look at the magazine on the screen rather than printing it, as that would use quite a lot of ink.

I'm getting to grips with the web pages and I hope to bring them in line with the rest of the organisation. The 'host' is not excessively expensive, but I'm more used to my own, and since I can save the club a few hundred pounds by hosting it in my own space, I think it'll be worthwhile. It would also make it easier to update pages and I can move the domain name (mobc.co.uk) for the duration of my tenure. The current set-up is paid for until

I've started making parallel pages at <http://midgebuilders.homestead.com/> and have included links to the mobs site. If you like it or hate it do tell me, in fact you can tell me anything that'll pass the censor at jim@jimhewlett.com It is only when we get feedback can we know who likes what.

Most of the magazine work, I hope, will be editing rather than writing, so send your stuff too. I should be able to transcribe typewritten prose, articles in other languages, even handwritten notes, if not too long. Of course if there are any technical types out there who would like to take on the web-mastery, or even wants to add an article just drop me a line, and if anybody has interesting stories, useful sidelines, or knows of good suppliers, or just wants to get their mug on a page. Here's an opportunity. If you are reading this, then I have to say you've missed this particular boat, but there will be another in the spring.

As previously noted the membership has sadly reduced by one as Tom Sherring passed on a short while ago. While I was writing this his friend Ian rang me to ask what his Midge might be worth, as his widow had been offered £200 by a dealer. It has 15" wire wheels, a V5 and a Vitesse engine, but has been standing in a dry garage for the better part of 20 years.

I visited Marcia, his widow, on my recent UK round trip and had a look at the Midge with his friend Ian. It is going to need a lot of re-working because, although I think the basic machine is sound, a lot of bits have been taken off and adjusted but not re-fitted. He was working on a re-wiring plan and rebuilding the mudguard support system, the chairs and a hard top roof. Any one who would like more information should call me as I have taken a few new photos. I haven't seen the SORN document but there's a lot of other paperwork, V5, photographs as it was, plans and pattern. It is in Ringwood. I'm on 01501 785 206 if you want a chat.

Meanwhile..

There's a show to see if you are free on the May holiday.

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

if you email me details of other shows and meetings I'll put them on the website at...

<http://www.mobc.co.uk/page5.htm>



An advertisement for our French and francophile members. There's a Classic Heritage meet on the 4th & 5th June 2016 in Albi which is in southern France.



and here's a link <http://www.classicheritage.fr/fr/accueil.php>

Also a welcome to M. Yvonnick Bourigault who is the latest recruit to the club. I imagine the weather in France is more conducive to Midge driving than Scotland. He's not far from Angers, the only bit of France I know. (mind that was 40 years ago) **LAST MINUTE ADDENDUM...HE IS LOOKING FOR A SET OF 5 WHEEL CENTRES FOR HIS BOLT-ON WIRE WHEELS.**



The only problem is that I shall have to see if Peter Winterton who made this rather nice Logo for the club can do us another several for the other nations with Midges, I think there are at least five. Bear with us if you are outside the UK.



In December as your Hon Sec I took Fiona, my long suffering, for a wee trip around Scotland, Wales and England (in that order) in Wales we presented John Bircumshaw with a small 'retirement package' from the post of MOBC secretary. He sent me this by way of a thank-you to the membership. I have used a photo of him and his wife Barbara because my stomach was obscuring the print. All those Premier Inn Full English Breakfasts.

John writes.....

And it's goodbye from me...

Christmas came early to North Wales this year. On Saturday 5th December Santa Claus and his helper (aka Jim and Fiona Hewlett) called with an amazing array of gifts from members of the MOBC.

Firstly I received an incredible collage of my life with the Midge which had been prepared by James Orr with the help of his undoubted computer skills. It was a complete surprise and the finished article is one which I shall always treasure. I'm amazed that it was possible to put so many happy memories onto one piece of canvas. The second surprise was a wooden bowl, hand turned by Jim (this man has many talents) and inscribed with the Club logo and filled with money, both chocolate coins and alloy ones. I've started to enjoy the chocolate coins but the real ones are being saved for a rainy day, and we've had many of those just lately!

This is therefore my opportunity to say thank you to James and Jim for their kind thoughts, their imagination and their skills, and also to thank members for remembering me in this way. I have enjoyed the support and friendship of many members world-wide over the last ten years and I'm sure this will continue for Jim as our new club secretary.

Finally a word of appreciation to our mentor John Cowperthwaite, without whom there would be no Midge cars and no Midge Owners and Builders Club. May the MOBC go from strength to strength in the future, and thanks to you all for being such a wonderful and diverse group of enthusiasts.

John Bircumshaw



Small Ads

Sadly it looks as though Tom Sperring's Midge PPF 530E was never put onto SORN in 1989, so it appears that while it is on DVLA records it is no longer registered. It has been kept dry in a garage, and rolls, but has been standing for a long time, half buried in sawdust.

It has a Vitesse Chassis gearbox and engine, Twin Strombergs, Overdrive, 15" Wire wheels, Midge Windscreen, dash-top, radiator grille, a home made hard roof and an SU fuel pump. There are various lights and instruments, seats and other useful bits. It is a pity to break it up, but I can't see DVLA letting it back on the road.

I'll put the new and old photos on the website at <http://midgebuilders.homestead.com/Sales-and-wants.html> His widow was offered £200 but a friend of theirs contacted the club to see if we could be a bit more helpful.

To avoid stress and bother, could you enquire through me jim@jimhewlett.com, and I'll co-ordinate things.

I have one hexagonal 'MOBC' Badge available. There is another with matching 'Midge' oval but they are spoken for (subject to payment) There is also one Calendar remaining.

Remember, if you want to buy or sell a Midge bit, or even a whole one, you can always get it onto the website, or if at the right time, the Magazine. I can vouch for the MOBC and Midge Badges, but with everything else you must trust your own judgement.

*Have a Happy Midge Owners
and Builders Christmas.*

You could use this space to start writing your own article, brief note, life history, humorous anecdote, question about life etc. Why not start now? It's that or help with the decorations.