MIDGE

MAGAZINE

38 YEARS

Winter 2020



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MOBC. the Midge Owners and Builders' Club



Well, we may be a bit locked down at the time of writing, but lots of mental travelling as we get news from Germany and the USA. I've managed to visit James Orr who was having a wiring problem and hope to soon finish the job that was interrupted by a local lockdown. I found a home for a couple of cast alloy radiator surrounds but still have lots of spares (should anyone need an extra Christmas present) including mudguards, 15" wire wheels, splines, windscreens and Triumph workshop manuals. I didn't intend to become a Midge parts shop, but seem to have developed quite a lot by accident. They are usually going at cost price plus postage.

There are a few brass badges left and I have some resin ones which the original pattern maker Mike Ross made. Incidentally, I'll have to put the brass price up by a pound (to £13 the pair) as increasing postal charges over the last 5 years have eaten the small profit the club makes, however that probably won't happen until the last of the current batch are used up. I think I have 6 or 7 hexagonal and 3 or 4 oval, (one or two have slight casting flaws) after which we'll see what the demand is. I could do a run of T shirts, coffee mugs and the like if there's the interest. Although I'll not make any promises, if you want something, drop me a line and I'll wait until there's enough to trigger a casting / print run or whatever. Meanwhile, stay safe.

JH.

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

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Page 15 Naughty or nice?

Welcome to, Eric Wardlaw,

Michael Kanitz continues from the Autumn issue, stripping out the 'soft furnishings' and sorting out the wiring. He's also having a go at a roof mock-up.

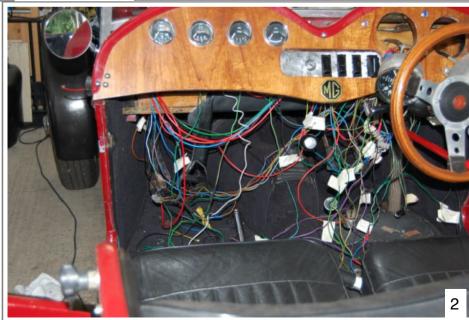












Midge Matters *

ISSUE 1 July 1996

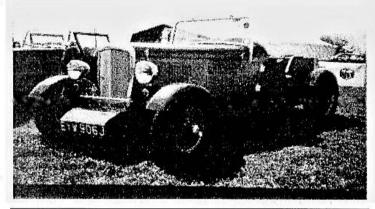
elcome to the first issue of an occasional newsletter for members of the Midge Owners and Builders Club.

Many of you may already know that Pete Lord who has been Club Secretary from day one has not been too well of late and had decided that this was to be his last year in the post, after which it was uncertain what was to happen to the Owners Club.

Having spoken to Pete at Stoneleigh and more recently Newark Kit Car show I offered to take over the role of Secretary as I feel strongly that the Club should not be allowed to disappear, indeed if it were not for the Club and people like Pete, Tony Regan and the other enthusiastic members that I have met whilst I have been building my own Midge I doubt whether I would have completed it, but when you go to the shows and see the club tent and cars outside you know that you are going to meet friendly people offering sound advice, a good cup of tea and a sense of 'belonging', which I think needs to be continued.

By now you are probably wondering who is doing all the talking so let me introduce myself:

My name is Dave Everall and I have been a club member since the club was founded although my Midge has only been on the road for just over 2 years and still isn't finished (are they ever?). The first thing that I would like to do before I go any further is to thank Pete on behalf of everyone in the Club for the fantastic job he has done as Secretary and Editor of the club magazine and although he is stepping down I know that he will continue to support the club as enthusiastically as ever. Thanks must also go to Pete's wife Freda for looking after us at the shows and for putting up with phone calls at all times of day and night. My address and phone number are at the end of this newsletter so please let Pete and Freda enjoy his 'retirement'.



THE EDITORS MIDGE PICTURED AT THIS YEARS STONELEIGH SHOW. (I'M STILL SAVING FOR THE HOOD!)

Hopefully now that he and Freda won't have to tow the club tent around the country we will see more of the Midge at future shows.

As far as the newsletter is concerned, this is my first attempt at doing anything like this and my intention is to produce one two or three times a year depending on how much material I get in from the members. As Pete said in the first issue of the club magazine back in 1991 the success of the club will depend on its members so if you have anything to do with the Midge I'll be only too happy to put it into print, whether its a photo, technical tip, story of your build or driving experiences put pen to paper and let me know. Also if you have any parts to want to buy or sell I can include adverts etc.. If you do send photo's don't forget to put down a brief description of the car eg; donor, colour and any interesting features.

Talking of technical tips I am putting together a list of articles that have appeared in previous issues of the magazine so that newer members in particular will be able to obtain reprints if required.

TECH. TALK

Calling all Triumph based owners, can

anyone let me know their front suspension set-up. I'm currently running the bog standard Triumph front shocks and springs but it gives a very hard ride. I've been told that Triumph Toledo or Dolomite rear springs fitted at the front give a better ride and I would be grateful for any opinions.

STOP PRESS

I've just heard that the Sandown Show is going to allow Club Stands after all. If anyone is interested in going Bob Garrett a club member and South East co-ordinator of the Scamp Owners Club can give you further details. Bob is on 01444 870634.

NEXT ISSUE

- DIARY OF MY OWN BUILD
- FORTHCOMING EVENTS
 ANYTHING FISE VOI
- ANYTHING ELSE YOU SEND ME!!

DAVE EVERALL 57 WIMBERRY DRIVE WATERHAYES NEWCASTLE-U-LYME ST5 7SG





I should really have waited until the Summer of 2021 which would have been 25 years, but I'm not patient enough and would probably have forgotten anyway.

Keith Warren was kind enough to send me the last (or rather the first) element missing from the club magazine archive.

Midge Matters were the first series of 19 regular MOBC publications followed by a series of 13 called the MOBC Newsletter. After that we went digital under John and I've accidentally changed the title to MOBC Magazine when I took over in 2015 (but could revert if there was a national outcry).

I acquired several other archive grade articles from Keith including a lengthy piece by Roy Richards, and advertising material from J.C. Sportscars and T&J Sportscars.

Unfortunately very few Midge related documents, price lists or instruction manuals included a date, it was occasionally only the issue number that dates some of the magazines. There are also articles by 'Pen Roberts' and Nick Evans, also undated and I assume printed in other car magazines. I notice that 'Pen' told his readers that the ride height on a Midge could be adjusted by raising and lowering the cycle wings. I'm not sure how he came to that conclusion, but it does work on old Qualcast lawnmowers.

Since writing that Peter Vivian has sent me the last missing (I think) newsletter unless there were more than 19 'Midge Matters' or 13 paper 'MOBC Newsletters'.

I can supply digital copies of issue 1 of MM and individual scanned pages or articles from the others. Electronic, (2005 to present) versions can also be emailed. Usually as a direct link if you cannot get the internet to behave.

JH

OUR MIDGE STORY SO FAR. Neil and June Walker

We purchased our Midge in April 2018 (now called Ruby) she came with an M.O.T (how this was achieved is a mystery) The first order of business was a full check over in the garage at home. After inspection all the brake components were deemed unserviceable. Recondition parts were fitted, discs, pads, callipers, rear, cylinders & shoes. The engine is serviced and we are ready for our first outing...

Out we go up in to the forest of Bowland all is well, stopped at Slaidburn for an ice-cream then homeward, but Ruby developed a misfire. Made it home on 3cyl, change the distributor cap and leads. All is now well again.

A few more trips here and there... no problems. Then out we went to Lancaster. On the outskirts of Lower Bentham Ruby stopped...

On checking, no petrol. The fuel gauge is reading $\frac{1}{2}$. Called our son to bring fuel much to his amusement.

Back home, I knew the rear boot / petrol tank cover was in need of repair so I set to and removed the complete section. This was rebuilt and the fuel gauge problem sorted. Found a dogs breakfast of wiring so the rear end was all rewired.

More uneventful trips to Blackpool and the Fylde coast but Ruby was losing a little water. Found the radiator at fault. Had it rebuilt, problem solved.

The first Winter Projects. June, my wife recovered and rebuilt the seats in Italian leather (sounds good, this was all recycled from our old suite).

I worked on, recovering the dash and making a glove box.

Matching gauges were found at auto-jumbles and fitted.

More wiring to sort. LED warning lights also fitted









Neil and June continue ...Summer 2019.

No dramas, had a good summer out and about in the Ribble Valley and Yorkshire Dales, but then Ruby had other plans. Further water loss turned out to be a core plug. Duly replaced.

Winter 2019 Since her arrival Ruby has leaked oil so now it's time to sort this, also the clutch is complaining.

Engine and gearbox out and fit all new seals and gaskets. Found the water pump unserviceable so replaced it. New clutch fitted and the gearbox stripped and resealed. Ruby's exhaust has always had some very badly made manifold spacers. A local laser cutting company made me new ones for just £20. (What a great price and company to deal with.) All back together for the spring of 2020. June converted an MG badge to a JC. Also fitted a remote servo this winter.

2020

Well that's bu99ered that. COVID. In lock down. We managed a few runs out without stopping any place at the end of July and August.

N&JW.











James Orr Writes... I had been looking for someone who knew about the type of electrics in the Midge, for 10 months.

Result? No success whatsoever. The skills of the car "mechanics of old" clearly no longer exists or are few and far between – even more so in the remote rural region of Dumfries and Galloway.

Even the tractors and other farm machinery are now mainly computerised. I saw a TV programme recently and the computer on board a massive vehicle even informed the driver that a problem was going to occur! Driver then called up a company who sent a fitter, with a new part, getting the vehicle back to work in a very short time. Just what today's farmers need.

Oh the times they are a-changing, as the song goes $\ensuremath{\mathfrak{G}}$

Eventually I emailed our secretary Jim Hewlett, and had a bit of a moan about my situation. I believe I may have mentioned the word "nightmare" several times!

Back came a prompt offer - "I could come down and see what the problems are"

Jim lives in Tarbrax about 50 miles from me near Lockerbie, and was with me in just over 1 hour.

I didn't hear Jim when he arrived - in a large van style vehicle, a 7 seat taxi basically, but all electric. I had thought Jim would have arrived in his Midge (he

has 2, or 3 of our favourite wee cars plus a Mazda MX5 (for when he is in a real hurry to get somewhere!)

Up came the rear door to reveal boxes and boxes of tools and flashy red, grease stained overalls!

>>1 see it as 'garage chic'. JH<<

Talk about Action Man! A real professional had arrived!

I had the Midge stripped to give Jim as much space as possible. All of us "Midgers" know the bruising, grazes, and loss of blood involved in





looking after our prized possessions!

It was a real privilege to watch Jim working as he steadily weaved his way through the wiring, which to my untrained eye looked like some person way back in the early 1960's had rushed the job so that they could get out on the road as soon as possible!

When Jim spotted something not right he just sorted it there and then - job done!

Jim's Jobs. Tidying wires, (The headlights came on when the brake pedal was depressed and the ignition wouldn't go off) improving all connectors, replacing choke cable, new battery isolator, repairing front side light, repairing fog lamp, new pipe for radiator liquid capture, replace the Vacuum advance. Replace battery. Tweak the tuning and reset the timing

We are indeed very fortunate to have Jim as our Club secretary as I'm sure all members will agree. In our magazine, which Jim produces, he is always willing to help, as our members are too

What a enjoyable experience it was to be in Jim's company – such a change from the loneliness of the Midge builder in a cold winter garage.

26/10/20 J.O.

Now, James has been far too kind. Here's the other side of the story.

Super Midge Repair Man to the rescue.

Tongue in cheek and spanner in hand.

I was awakened from my cave of tranquility by a faint and distant wailing, and immediately recognised the noises of a distressed Midge owner with gremlin issues.

We basic-grade heroes are always ready. (9 to 5 weekdays and two hours for lunchtime. VAT negotiable).

Pausing only to gird the proverbials, summon up the EV and grab a tool box, I launched into the unknown. Well, the M74 really. The distress signal was from James, a few leagues (3.45234 to the mile) Southerly. Fortunately, the local lockdown at the time was 'light to draconian' or 'tier two' as we call it here.

I headed for Dumfries and Galloway and of course avoided touching anyone unnecessarily en route.

My EV is based on a Nissan van body and a Leaf 'skateboard' so it hasn't a huge range but enough for the 50 miles and back even with a bit of a head-wind, wipers, and lights. I took a quick top up at the service station 'Annandale Water' that James had kindly provided at J16, a few yards from his house, which saved me from using the bucket of electrons I keep in the back by way of a reserve. Having discerned the minor faults, I paused (in the manner so loved by service stations and garages around the world) and uncovered a few innocuous looking but significantly expensive additional faults which I knew would involve a return visit which would inevitably cost James dearly in coffee.

Midges, as we know, are not entirely insensitive to opportunity, so we were not particularly surprised to discover minor snags, previously hidden, emerging in the 'While you are about it' style.

I don't think it is exclusively a Midge habit, but it is certainly common amongst older cars and can lead, in extreme cases, to complete rebuilds, new batteries, bad language and divorce. In James' case we got off lightly with a vacuum advance, a battery, and a few heat shrink tubes. Mind, the car had just had a new gearbox so perhaps that had helped.

A 'snag', incidentally, is something that goes wrong after the tradesman has put his tools away and is thinking about a cup of tea. They are generally easy to fix unless said tradesperson has already been paid at which point the snag becomes completely invisible to him. Suffice to say in this case that is important to fit brake and rear side light bulbs the right way up, double earth, insulate to excess... and don't pay anything until absolutely necessary. For covid correctness please note that the picture the door (on page 6) is closed to avoid solar flare and was re-opened shortly after.

You will notice James has an extremely tidy garage. Worrying.

Speaking as one with feet of clay, I wouldn't like anybody to think I knew what I was doing. Just luck, a bit of caution and a spot of persistence really, and fortunately nobody can see the state of my Midge's wiring.

The definitive case of do as I say not as I do.

JH

A short while ago Tom Bartlett hailed us from the US of A.

Now as you know everything there is bigger. I'll let him tell you how he expanded the Midge concept.

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Building a Midge in the Colonies

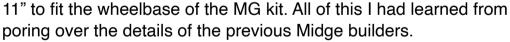
I hesitated to send this article to your esteemed editor, as the build I am covering is not really a Midge. But since the project encompasses the spirit of "build your own sports car", I thought I might offer it. As a long-time LBC (little British car) enthusiast, I had always admired the look of the British trials cars of the 50s. So when I stumbled upon the MOBC website, I devoured the stories and the pictures. I downloaded all the back issues of the magazine and studied the construction techniques and technical details. Shortly afterward, I stumbled upon an unbuilt fiberglass (GRP) MG-TD kit that had languished outside for years. Being fiberglass, the body, although sun-bleached, was sound.



Although the kit was designed to be placed on a rear-engined VW beetle chassis, I wanted to build a steel-framed front-engined Midge look-a-like.

Once the kit was purchased and back at my shop, I began to search for a suitable Triumph Spitfire chassis to modify. I found the remains of one not too far away in a neighbor's pasture, missing the engine, transmission, interior, floor, but able to roll about once I fitted some temporary wheels.

I removed the remainder of the body and started the process of extending the frame





The frame is extended by cutting the frame rails (at the only straight portion) and inserting thick-wall square tubing to achieve the correct length. The middle right picture shows the frame extension: This was probably the most tedious part of the job, insuring that the rails were square and level, both before and after welding. Just lots of measuring, adjusting, tack-welding, sighting, and double-checking. Once the frame was extended, I attacked the bare metal with a rust-prevention treatment, primer, and black chassis paint. I started adding the outriggers to support the body.









Tom Continues:-

After reassembling the suspension components, I gingerly sat the body on the extended frame and rolled it outside.

This was the first project I had ever attempted wherein I was able to roll it about in less than three months! As many others have learned, the 3.75"

lug pattern of the Spitfire donor severely limits the wheel choices. So I located wheel adapters that convert the 4-lug pattern from 3.75" to 100mm. This popular lug pattern allows hundreds of available replacements in all sizes. The steel 15" wheels chosen came from a 1999 Honda Civic.

I loved the look of the old Morgan windscreens with the rounded top corners, so I fabricated a frame using the attachment method that I had previously used to build my replica of a Lotus 7. Simple but very strong.

Since the kit came with a thick GRP dash (which really stiffens the scuttle), I temporarily installed it to allow for mocking up a Spitfire steering wheel and dash instruments (from an MGB). The original kit



came with a "faux" gas tank cover that was lengthened and modified to conceal the VW engine, it looked...awkward. So I copied the dimensions of my TD tank to fabricate a cover of aluminum. Inside the cover I will hide a polyethylene petrol tank (no leaks!).





Then, to cover the ends of the frame at the front I fabricated an aluminum box and tried my hand at making my own louvers:All of this is bringing me up to date with my latest find. I traded for a 2.8 Liter V-6 with a 5-speed transmission.

Fitting an engine into the narrow bonnet led me to search for a GM 60-degree V6, found in Chevrolet S-10 pickups and FWD sedans (they are also widely available here and inexpensive!). The engine is physically smaller than other 90-degree V6s, and, using modern thin wall casting techniques, weighs less than an MGB engine! With valve-covers (rocker covers) that measure just 15.75" at the outside, it fits into the space neatly.

After scrubbing the engine and converting the fuel system to carburetors (much simpler) and a distributor from an earlier engine (no

computer!), I will go about fitting the engine to the frame. I plan to add cycle fenders to the front wheels to complete the "Midge" look. More details to come this winter. TB.





Early December.

Mark Powell continues to rebuild his Midge. It must be coming up to a year now since the rebuild started. I don't know if Covid has been a hinderance or a help, but that's not bad going for a ground-up renovation.

Currently (December)
he is working on a
pair of windscreen
pivoting frames, and I
hope to get
something together
about that in the next
magazine. (That's a
hint Mark) So I'll not
put any spoilers in
here. (Spoilers would
look silly on a Midge
anyway).







From Peter Vivian. 12th December '20

Just to let you know the second part of the feature about my car is in the latest 'Complete Kit Car'. Still a couple of errors but overall a nice article and they were quite complimentary.



On Tom's page, the Alabama flag (in case you wondered) is, like Scotland's a Saltire and represents St Andrew's cross, it just happens to be red. It's not there for any religious, political or festive purpose. I just found it by accident when I was looking for a small space filler.

Then I thought James would want a Scottish one and Michael a Schleswig-Holstein one. It was very interesting researching the history, although you can never be too sure when using the internet as an information source.

I could put the George cross against most of the pages, but that seemed a bit over the top, and I'd have to start checking county variations, worrying about border changes and political matters and wondering how to make a 30/38 proportioned English/Scottish one for myself. I was about to delete the whole thought train when it occurred to me that I could use up a whole quarter page explaining it.

It would be nice if we could have a flag for the whole of humanity, or Earth based life forms though.

Suggestions on a postcard to the usual address....



UK 2020/21 Events

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

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

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

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

Lin has found somewhere to get his Suzuki prop-shafts repaired. He therefore recommends

Feltham Prop Services which are part of the Bailey Morris group.

It's always nice to come home to a real fire... less so bringing one back with you.

Not exactly an advert as I'm not getting a commission or any freebies, of course if a brown envelope of used fivers turns up I'll modify this disclaimer.

No doubt you'll all be looking for a Christmas / Birthday / Easter / anniversary etc present for your Midges, or have relatives looking for 'something for the man who has everything' (other than penicillin). This might help...

I had an email from Paul Holden email address... info@glossfireaction.co.uk) and the main website is at https://www.glossfireaction.co.uk/,

They sell a new kind of fire extinguisher and are offering an MOBC discount of 10% on the 'Fire safety stick'. There's quite a lot on the site so I'll not repeat it all.

There are extinguishers on Amazon for £10, certainly cheaper but they don't have the advantages listed at the bottom of the web page, to which I direct your attention.

I have mounted extinguishers in the Midges, but they tend to be expired by the time I check them, are rather bulky, and would leave a lot of powder residue if I used them. So I've put one of these there. They are quite a step up from a pail of water or a bucket of sand.

I have put one in my kitchen as well as that's the most likely place inside the house. There are some videos on their use on the website.

The discount code for the MOBC is 562MOBC11X which is live now if you redeem the coupon on the cart page. This is for members of the club irrespective of where they put them. I'm not entirely sure about the 'alternative handbrake' position in the picture above, but if you are smart enough to have a Midge you should be able to work something out.) Paul will offer discounts to other car clubs like Moss and Burlington if they should be interested, I think most Midge owners have other hobbies and interests which might benefit.

The main advantages are shelf life (10 yrs+), can be used on any fire type and lack of residue, but their compact nature certainly helps those of us with small storage space. There are longer lasting ones, but the 25 second ones look good to me, and frankly I think if this doesn't put your fire out then the car's a gonner anyway. They are not cheap, until you consider the cost of not having one at the critical time.

If you want to get the discount other clubs, feel free and mention MOBC for added kudos.

Obviously the discount isn't for any old motorist, in spite of most of us being exactly that, so apply through a club secretary or similar if



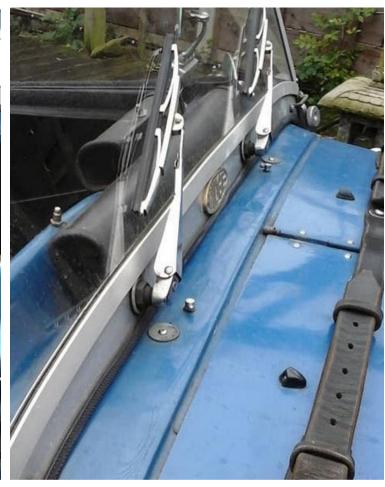
you want a discount code.

Jim.

These are not ideal for EVs because of the thermal mass of the battery (On consideration I'd be reluctant to use water as well) but seem just fine with petrol and diesel electrical fires.







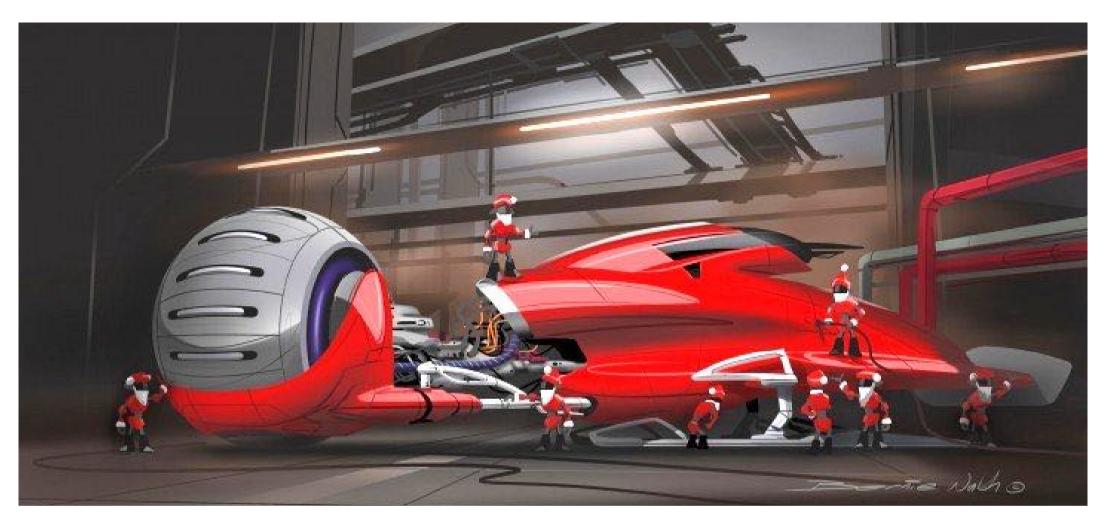
Malc Hopwood has been working away on his Midge for a few years now. I noticed his windscreen wiper arrangement in a facebook posting, it looked a bit different so I thought I'd expand it a bit. You'd best ask him if you want to copy it.

When I bought the Midge in 2007 it came with 12 months MOT. But to get it to pass, the windscreen and wiper blades had been removed. One of my reasons for getting the Midge was that I wanted something with weather gear that could be used all year round. My conclusion after giving the wiper gear a good coat of looking at was that I didn't like the set up at all. Nothing lined up and it all looked like it had given years of trouble.

Time for a re think... A couple of years before I had stripped a Citroen 2cv for the donor parts for my Pembleton trike and had kept all the screen wiper gear. I began to think how similar the midge and 2cv screens were. Both small flat and same size. So I put the screen back on the Midge and placed the 2cv wiper gear in the middle of the roller coaster dash top (hey this looks promising!) I just need to lift the screen a bit which would help with headroom on the hood anyway. I soon realise if I slipped an alloy panel in the groove on the screen frame to mount the wiper gear to it would become one unit. It could be unplugged and taken on and off as one unit. I did have to alter the sweep mechanism a bit. But everything worked well and 13 years later still giving good service.

Over the years I have blessed this extra screen hight. It makes it so much easier getting in and out. If anyone is wondering what the 2p coins are for, they are covering the holes left from the old wiper spindles. At the time I was just looking for something quick to bung up the holes. I have been asked many times what these coins are for. MH

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There are some indications that as the world population expands, so Santa's sleigh has had to undergo some modification. The roll out of this version, imaged by Bernie Walsh, appears to have been held up by Elf-land safety. Something about seat-belts I think. However there are also doubts about the 15 litre boot. Midge owners are used to small luggage spaces and are so asked to make suggestions circumventing this challenge to the storage space for bags of presents. Incidentally those concerned about the load-bearing capacity of their roof are to be reassured that the skids are more for appearance than function, and that the fairy dust does the bulk of the heavy lifting. Sub-light travel is now fuelled, as shown, by ethanol as the Reindeer biofuel pellets, or 'poop-pips' as the elves call them, were producing too much smoke and clogging up the warp-drive intake.

Have a Happy Christmas. JH

Tail Pipe

Well, rather like Malc on page 13 I was looking for something to fill the gaps and checking through the various articles and pictures that I tend to gather knowing they would be 'useful sometime'. I usually find some historical cartoon or an appropriately old advertisement and in this instance I discovered Keith had a copy of the first 'Midge Matters', as you'll have seen by now, on page three.

One of the attractions of a Midge is its simplicity and the reduced number of things that can go wrong. Power steering, air conditioning and computerised braking systems are not only complicated and fallible, but also expensive and difficult to repair, especially at home. Curiously this means they and other 'classic' era cars will be easier to electrify, and so may last longer than the more complicated cars of the '90s and later. However that won't be for a while yet and somebody will have invented a believable exhaust noise simulator by then. On consideration it would have been quite easy to engineer the Ford T and similar to make horse hoof or coco-nut noises, but sadly I don't think anybody ever did.

Getting back to magazine compilation, I have mined the old issues for a few choice items on a fairly regular basis, and the internet will usually provide something vaguely Midge related, or at least 1935 ish.

The cartoon on the left got here rather slowly. I found it first in the late '70s in a book of Punch magazines from, I think, the '60's. Post WWII anyway as UFOs weren't invented until mid war. The book was in the X-Ray department of the Winchester General Hospital and someone had left it for patients to read while waiting. In those days there were long nights 'on duty' with nothing much happening and there was nothing worthwhile on the television. (No change there then.)

Reproduced kind permission of PUNCH "It's another of those flying saucer things."

I'm not sure but I think this must have been first published in the '60s or earlier, so my finding it again on the internet in 2020 took a while and just goes to show how something so ephemeral can, on occasion, survive for quite a while. The fact that the setting of the image was 'stone age' is coincidental. No Neanderthals were harmed in the compilation, and of course it is in black and white as everything was back then. JH.

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