

MIDGE MAGAZINE



Winter
2022



Russell's Midge

MOBC. the Midge Owners and Builders' Club



Hello All.

Nothing particularly serious, but the last few months have been somewhat busy for me, and I've not had the chance to work on the magazine as much as usual, so apologies if you find some typos. Ideally I'd have mentioned this before, but as I said, I've been busy. One option might be a 6 monthly issue rather than the current quarterly. I'll put a note in the final page (Tailpipe) to evaluate readership.

Reading over the issue before going to press, I can see this Christmas issue is a wee bit thin but we seem to have managed, although on some pages I've had to use deliberately long words. If we are to have more than an Easter card in spring I'll need some 'copy' or we'll have to consider a page 3 girl. (remember them?) or a horoscope article.

If you have anything Midge related you'd like published, pop it over to jim@jimhewlett.com. Ideally jpgs should be 100-200 kB and maybe 100 words

Covid, illnesses (not me I'm glad to say), community work and recently a number of neighbourhood problems (frozen pipes, defective heating, broken locks, disintegrating sheds) have slowed me up. Only yesterday I heard from management that the dishwasher has died. Mechanical rather than a life form but still sadly missed. Still, it's not all bad, the frost heave has subsided and I can get into the garage through the main door again.

JH

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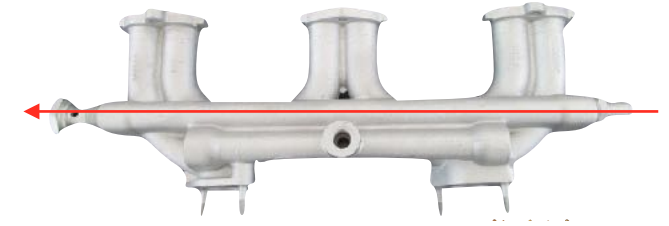
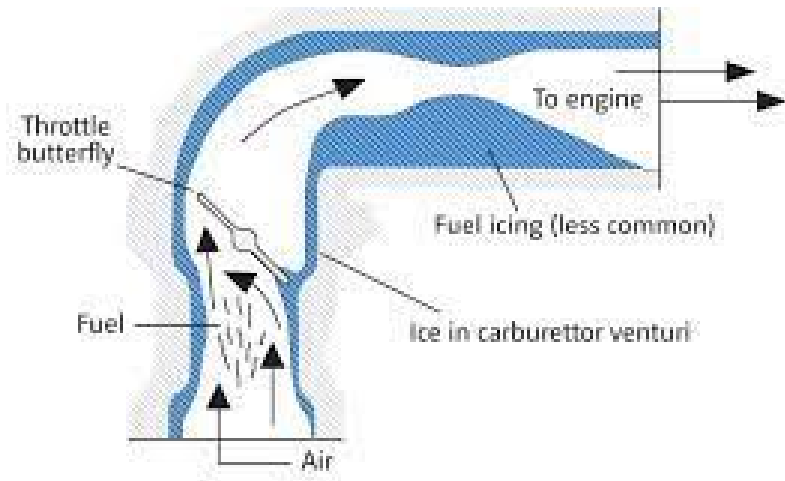
Page 14, A winter warmer

Page 15, Tailpipe

Welcome Eddy Rakhorst



Carburettor icing, how to avoid it, and other fascinating facts.

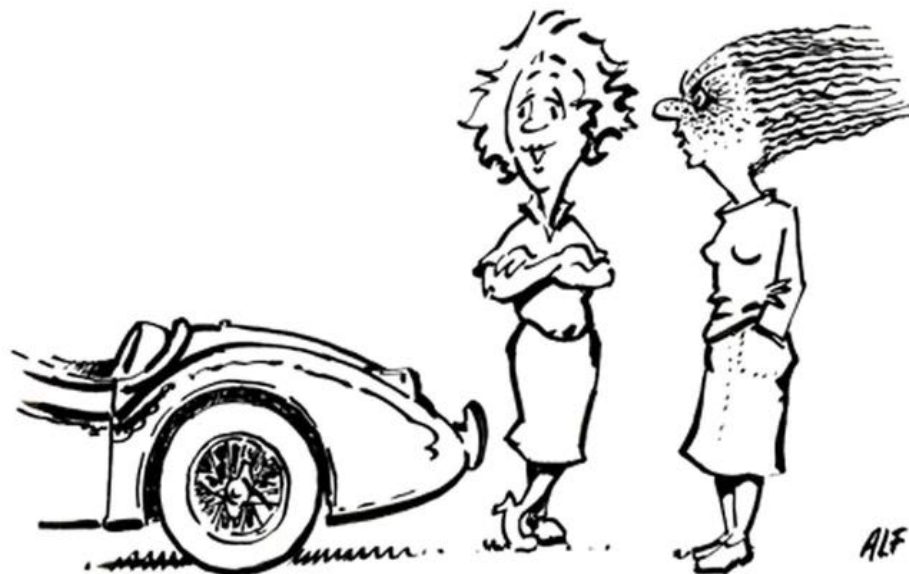


Carburettor icing is not something we come across very often. I haven't had it happen since I was running a Bedford van rather like the one shown here or maybe older. The engine was covered by a heavily insulating lump of unidentifiable fibre, mainly carpet, old goats* and cardboard I think. This prevented the heat of the engine and the cold of the air getting to the occupants, but not in a nice way, it was sort of dusty, damp, smelly, floppy, rigid and unstable.

Before the van died of embarrassment I ventured out one winter morning and, reaching the top speed of 50 MPH, was disappointed to have the engine die on me on the dual carriage-way. A tube was supposed to have been feeding warm air from around the exhaust manifold to the carburettor but had disintegrated somewhere south of Edinburgh. Being subjected to the pressure drop inherent to the Venturi effect that sucks the fuel up, the water vapour in the air intake turned to ice, (as high altitude water boils at a lower temperature, but the freeze point stays at zero degrees) The iced carburettor generates problems because the compressed air gets hot, loses heat and then cools when it expands again, thereby acting in the way that your fridge works. Essentially high speed causing low pressure is one of the factors that is supposed to keep aircraft up. It is occasionally the factor that brings them down (wing icing). It works through the low pressure that occurs when the air is rushed through the waist or narrowing seen in the diagram on the left. The diagram should have a delivery pipe or jet where the line from the word Fuel is shown. Fortunately having your van stall on the dual carriageway is not as serious as having your aircraft stall in mid air. Modern cars don't have carburettors so they don't suffer from icing but the Herald and Spitfire engines have a hot water pipe (top right) running through the inlet manifold to reduce the chances of it. I guess it also steals a little heat from the exhaust for the inboard heater if you are lucky enough to have one (page 14), but if your engine loses power on a cold morning it might be because you have disconnected that little rubber pipe that didn't seem to do anything. So just join the two ends that used to go to the cabin heat exchanger and don't turn the tap (that controls the flow) off, that'll keep your manifold warm. JH)

January 1st 1988 Kit Car Magazine was 34 years, 9 months and 25 days ago, which is 12,717 days.

Found by Keith Warren



HE FITTED THE AGRO SCREENS. THEN?

POSTBAG.

In Praise Of The Midge

I was highly delighted to see the feature on the J.C. Midge in your October edition. I was beginning to think that I kept the only one in captivity when what should appear, not one but two Midges in the same article. I remember the venerable Pen Roberts remarking that one he had seen must be the best one built so far, a cutting comment as I was sitting in my own Midge at the time! I pointed out, however that my brief had been to produce a car according to the advertising blurb at the time; under £500 on the road.

My Midge saw the light of day on April 1st, 1986 at a cost of £750, including tax and insurance. This figure did in fact include full weather equipment but alas, no furry dice which it seems are no longer available in British Racing Green.

My heart goes out to anyone who has completed a Midge, they deserve congratulations if they still have a wife and children who recognize them at the end of the project. My specimen took some four hundred hours to complete from first worrying the chassis with a wire brush to attaching the last donated badge, but the venture was well worthwhile and with 15,000 miles on the clock, it has been the best advertisement I could have had for my little business.

Yes... I'm the chap who sells the mould That puts the louvres In the engine side panels Of the J.C. Midge From J.C. Sportscars.

We know a song about that, don't we Johnny?

Anyway, I can thoroughly recommend building a Midge, but... be warned! You should always allow extra time on all journeys to explain to the assembled crowd that they

couldn't possibly have owned one "exactly" like it all those years ago!

J. Neil Russell,
Russell's Motor Services,
Baldon,
Shipley,
W. Yorks.

Not Many People Know That

Having read the ongoing articles on the J.C. Midge and having talked to others I was forced to do some research on plywood which I share with you, either for inclusion as a letter or for your own editions as an article.

Basically there are three British Standards for plywood; BS 1088 (1965) Marine ply, BS 4079 (1966) Treated Marine ply and BS 6566 (1985) plywood.

BS 1088 states Marine Ply should be constructed from untreated tropical hardwoods and free from all core voids (knots). The 4079 spec is identical to the above, but the wood must be treated against fungi and insects, including termites and marine bores.

BS 6566 (1985) covers all Plywoods except marine though some criterion are the same, notably the number and thickness of plies and grain orientation, but assuming BS Plywood is used that should be no problem; all you need to know is what you're buying. All BS Plywood should be marked thus as an example: BS 6566/ 4mm/ (1/ 2/ TRO) WBP/ M/ Treated OS.

This can be decoded as: BS 6566; Determines the number and direction of plies and sizing tolerances etc. etc.

4mm; The thickness, believe it or not.

1/ 2; This refers to the face or back of the board and timber appearance ranges from 1 to E, with occasional B, BB and C.

The other three main grades hard to find;

1, B. Surfaces visible.
2. Surfaces to be overlaid, eg veneered or painted.

3, BB. Surfaces unseen, painted or coated.
4, C. The cheapest, surface not seen.

TRO; Tropical hardwood.
TEM; Temperate hardwood.

CON; Coniferous.

Now on to the interesting bit. WBP refers to the bond between veneers. They are WBP, CBR, MR and INT.

WBP; Weather and boil-proof. Resists weather and highly resistant to micro organisms, surviving boiling water for 72 hours followed by up to 3 days at 15 degrees in water and resists wet and dry heat.

CB; Cyclic boil proof, a slightly less arduous test.

MR; Moisture resistant which is only fully weather resistant for 4 years.

INT; Internal, real warp stuff.

"M" refers to the durability of the timber used in construction of the finished ply, determined by placing 51mm square section stakes in the ground.

H; Durable, ie. each stake lasts for 25+ years.

M; Moderate, ie. each stake lasts for 15 to 25 years.

E; Each stake lasts 10 to 15 years.

G; Each stake lasts 5 to 10 years.

And finally, the wood is either treated or not treated and the preservatives used are:

TO; Tar oil.
WB; Waterborne.
OS; Organic solvent.
GLA; Insect, fungicide added to the glue during preparation.

Anyway, as according to BS external Ply does not exist, it has become BS 6566 12mm (1/ 2 TRO) WBP M treated OS or something, just hunt over the sheet and find what it says. If it doesn't say, your guess is as good as mine. As a matter of interest Jewson's catalogue mentions each BS grade and they have branches all over the country (I don't work for them either) but be sure to be sitting down when you look up the price of Marine BS 1088 Ply! Obviously this is not the definitive guide but might make the basis for an article similar to your excellent GRP ones (that was you wasn't it, if not you could always beat the opposition to it). PS. The BS 6566 is in 8 parts. All 8 are needed for the full picture and are available from BSI, don't know the address or cost. Similarly, much is made of C and U regs. Where can one get a copy?

Tim Basing
Newcastle Upon Tyne

I assume, as it doesn't actually say, that this is intended to lead the prospective Midge builder to select the correct standard of plywood with which to construct his car and as you have obviously expended much time energy on research, may I thank you on behalf of all those enthusiasts who will benefit and who are currently assembling boxwood bodied cars.

In respect of Construction and Use Regulations, much is made of them as their provisions are legal requirements on all cars. You can get a copy from your local HMSO. Ed.



Peter Vivian's Triumph 1300 'Special'

I originally built my 'special' 30 years ago from full size paper patterns, it loosely resembled an MG J2 being slab sided with a slab tank and contained no compound curves. It was constructed from ¾ inch plywood and skinned in aluminium. After nearly 25 years of fairly hard usage including 2 years of it being my only car through sunshine, wind, rain and hail (which REALLY hurts) with no hood or heater it was looking a bit tired and in need of a face-lift, on a trip back from the excellent Supercar Sunday at Wilton House the gearbox suddenly started behaving like a bowl of porridge so I embarked on the rebuild.

I'd always wanted a boat tail rather than the previous slab tank so set about designing a new body from the ground up. I've been a woodworker virtually all my life so it seemed an obvious choice to build the framework in Ash like a Morgan. I had planned to contract out the metalwork for the new 'boat-tail' but this proved not as easy as I thought with the first quote coming in at £2,000 for just the top of the boat-tail! I had another quote for a much more reasonable £800 but for one reason or another he wasn't able to carry out the work so I decided to have a go myself. I bought a sandbag on eBay and turned a bossing mallet on my wood lathe. Using the same 1.2mm thick aluminium I had clothed the rest of the bodywork in I started bashing the aluminium into something resembling the correct shape, the only problem was it looked like a raspberry! I needed an English wheel. Buying one was not an option due to the cost so I made my own. The technique took me a long time to get a result that I was reasonably happy with, I did it in 2 halves as the wheel I had made was quite small. The only remaining body parts from the original incarnation were the bonnet tops, louvered side panels and the radiator surround.

The engine proved to be another stumbling point. I had entrusted the rebuild to a local company, two years later I collected the engine in bits with only the re-bore and crank regrind completed. The second engine builder took the head away to be upgraded for unleaded petrol and I never saw him or the head again. Another couple said they'd do the work and then never returned my calls. I finally found someone who proved as good as his word and a couple of months later I received the completed engine fitted with a fast road camshaft. I had the flywheel lightened and balanced and fitted electronic ignition to replace the troublesome contact breaker, a single new 1 ½ inch SU carburettor from Burlen Services supplies the air/fuel mix.

The car sits on 14 inch MGB wires replacing the Triumph 13 inch wheels. The original mudguards were simple trailer items but this time I found someone online custom making them in 3mm Aluminium for a reasonable price unfortunately I got the dimensions slightly wrong so had to 'pie cut' them and have them TIG welded followed by ages spent filing! The colour is the same as the original version, Jaguar Indigo blue painted by the same friend who painted it 30 years earlier!

The car previously had 2 engines, 2 steering wheels, 2 sets of wheels and 2 interiors. I had never been happy with the interior so tried for a more professional look. Anything that involved stitching I contracted out, anything I could glue or staple I did myself. I went with red as a contrast to the blue and was very happy with the result. I was gifted the aluminium filler cap which I think came from a vintage Aston Martin. The Brooklands aeroscreens were added more for looks than effect.

When I first built the car I clocked up over 40k miles including many rallies, this time I'm still getting used to it and tweaking things like the ride height at the rear but I'm not planning to use it as my only car again!

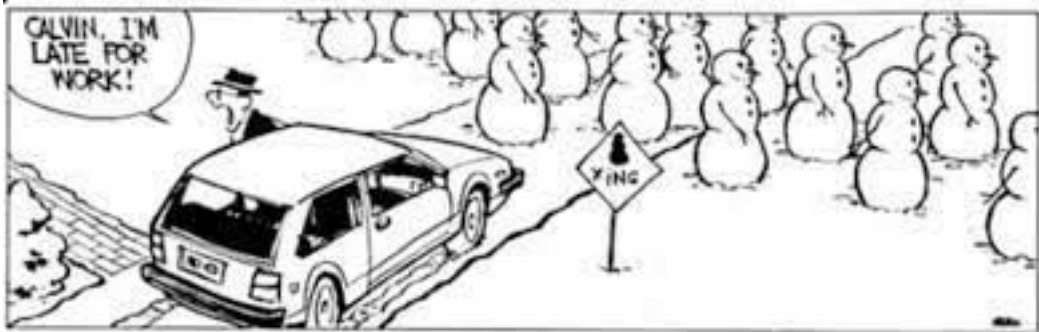
Peter says he had a 'phone call out of the blue a few weeks ago from the editorial assistant at 'The Complete Kit Car magazine'. He said they'd seen Cory Turner's video on YouTube and wanted to do a two piece feature on my car. I sent him photos of the 1st build plus the transcript of the YouTube video and also a copy of an article in a forerunner to Complete Kit Car from 30 year's ago.

The 1st part of the feature is in the current issue of the magazine, unfortunately the editorial is rife with errors and misquotes, it is almost as if they didn't read any of the information I had sent them. My favourites were that I am a lecturer in woodworking at Southampton University, I am in fact, a Technician in Product Design at Bournemouth University, and that the doors were of such poor quality I sent them back to the manufacturer! That would be me then. I've no idea where they got these from.

A couple of weeks went by and I received another phone call to arrange the photo shoot for the second part. After a lot of driving around looking for a suitable location the photographer settled on the slipway at Baiter, I think he made a good choice. As with most photographers (I know from personal experience) he still wanted a few more so we headed for Sandbanks and went over to Studland on the chain ferry and found another location, personally I much preferred the first one.

After a short interview in the queue for the return ferry we went our separate ways it had taken around 4 hours and I must admit I had had enough by then. The next issue is published on the 4th December, I look forward to it with interest! PV.





HAPPY CHRISTMAS, AND I THINK WE ALL
DESERVE A HAPPY NEW YEAR



Useful information for the festive season

You will know how ice cubes in your drink can look a bit untidy and lack excitement, this produces clear cubes with an interesting insert.

In these days of energy price rises this may seem a little profligate; however you can amuse your friends and stun your family by following this ancient recipe for transparent Ice cubes.

Boil a ½ pint in a kettle and let it cool. This may need doing twice, experimentation will bring enlightenment. Half-fill some ice-cube trays with the cooled water and freeze them. Select a few interesting things like mint leaves, berries and watch parts. An alternative is those little chocolate details found on expensive chocolates. Apply judgement at this point if you wish to avoid choking elderly relatives and small children. Parts of lego characters, small lego cubes and the pilots from Air-Fix craft are ideal choking hazards. Petals, leaves, smarties, silver cake decorating spheres and small sliced fruit are safer. Dead insects are not advised, not even false eyelashes.

Add an amusement to each part cube and freeze it on with a small amount of now cold water. The freezer should be cold enough to thoroughly chill the cubes and you'll be able to top up with pre-boiled nearly frozen water without loosening the amusement.

Remember the deep frozen cubes will need to moderate in the fridge as they might crack otherwise, and don't touch them as a layer of your skin drifting in the drink lacks the essential amusement factor.

Our newest member Eddy Rakhorst from Beekbergen in Holland springs fully formed onto our pages with a very tidy Midge. In his words:-

I bought the car two years ago, it was technically ok, all optically poorly finished. I have replaced the tires - fenders - interior - seats - upholstery - lighting - dashboard - windscreen. It is a 1967 Triumph Herald 13/60 Saloon, my starting point was to give it the most old look possible. The wheels are 19 inch and very important for appearance. Mechanically it is ok, I have renewed the exhaust to stainless steel and renewed some gaskets, it is a nice car to tour with and is admired by many.

A very neat Midge with several optional extras and apparently no expense spared it features tall wheels and tyres, a detachable folding windscreen and a nicely 'period' dashboard. I'm hoping we'll learn later the secrets of getting the mudguards up to such a snug fit.







There are not many Midges that get a three page spread, but I feel this one deserves it. Here's a bit of its history.

The above are pictures from early in Eddy's ownership, and although even then it was tidier than mine, I think you'll agree it is now exceptional and the more sombre tones suit it.



The 19" wheels and the high profile radial tyres have produced a very authentic 1935 style and appropriate ground clearance.

I don't think the original builder would be displeased with how it has turned out. A quite exceptional example and it has a genuine BMIHT certificate.



The importance of communication.

A chap I know of has a modern lifestyle in that there's no landline in the house and he has a single general purpose vehicle to get to the shops; an early model of Land-rover known for its reliability if not its fuel economy. The house is not 'off grid' but it is a distance from the shops, neighbours and towns. A distance magnified by Scottish winters. It is well served by a mobile phone mast and both he and his partner each have a reliable cell phone. This proved, however, to be not enough.

The chap, we'll call him Bob to spare his blushes, was preparing for a fishing trip with a friend who lives by the coast. The jaunt was loosely planned but shortly before setting off, Bob called his fishing friend to explain he'd be arriving in four hours. Bob finished loading up the Land-rover with everything needed, pausing to carry out a few tasks, like getting some logs in and securing the garage. While doing these things his partner received a phone call telling her of a sickly relative. Knowing the fishing trip was fairly flexible and not knowing exactly where Bob was, she set off in the Land-rover immediately for what was expected to be a short but urgent visit. She could ring Bob to explain the matter when she knew exactly when she'd be back from the mission of mercy. The fish and the friend could wait another day.

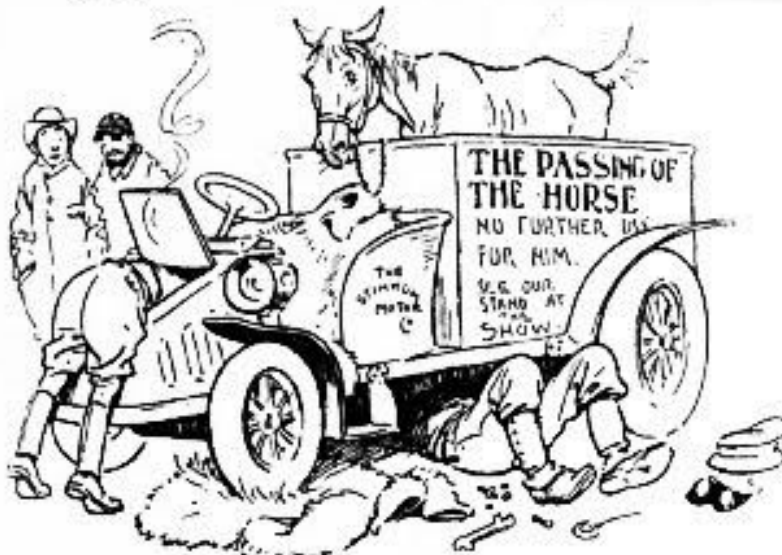
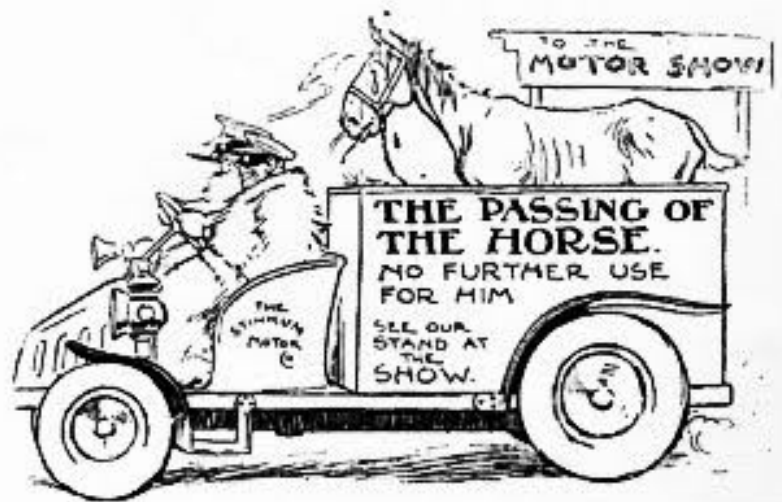
When Bob returned with some logs he was surprised to see that the Land-rover had gone, and with it his mobile phone. Had it been a kidnapping he wouldn't be receiving a ransom call, and an unexpected elopement would be unexplained for much the same reason. History doesn't illuminate his thoughts or expectations, but we can assume he would have expected her back after a last minute dash to the shops or similar. Presumably he became more concerned as time passed. No doubt his partner had phoned Bob but didn't get a reply. Probably being in the relative's house and too far from Bob's phone to hear herself ringing it, but she was unable to explain her four day absence. I just hope she didn't ask for an explanation for his inexplicably not answering the phone for several days. The eventual conversation went unrecorded

Knowing Bob was arriving in four hours, a rather shorter notice than he had anticipated, the fishing companion spent the hours tidying the house, buying and preparing a fortifying meal and preparing for the delights of sitting by or standing in cold water. I'm not a fisherman so that's all beyond my ken. It was only later I heard of the event, or the lack of it, which evolved over 4½ days and involved three puzzled and possibly worried individuals. The picture represents the intent rather than the practice.

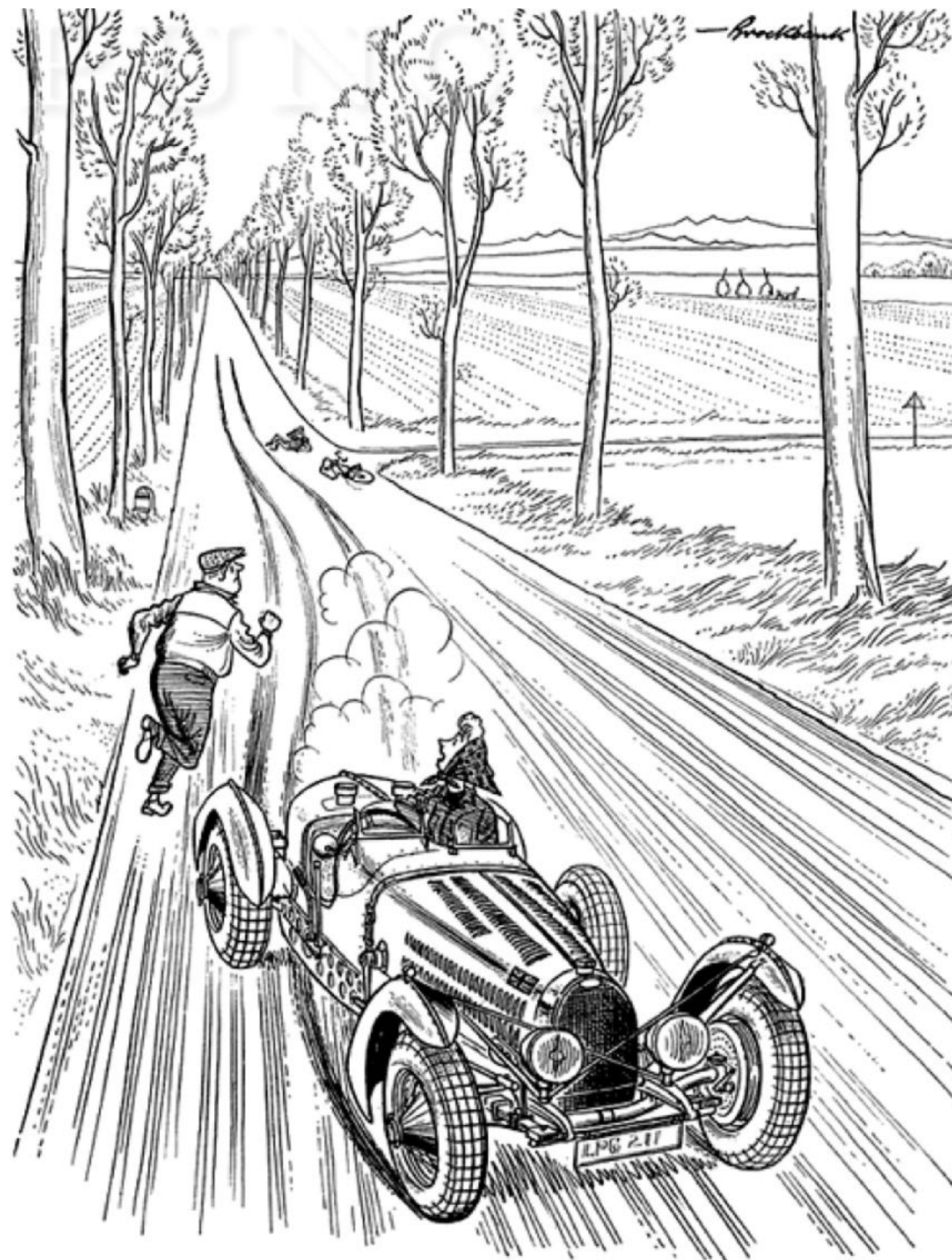
So why am I telling you this tale?

Well first there was a spare page, second it's a hint to the unprepared. Third it'll explain, gently, that it's best to let people know what you are doing, and fourth to keep your phone in your pocket and possibly a cheap pay-as-you-go spare in a different pocket... and no it wasnae me. JH.





A couple of archaic cartoons for no good reason.



"While you are about it, ask him if he knows a good place for lunch." 11

The matter of legitimate export and import has been raised, DVLA being the main question. I've not heard of any exports since Brexit, but The V5c is still important in the process and sometimes has the wrong details, so what to do?

I am happy to voice an opinion although it is not by any means official, true, correct, club policy or right. There is, in the UK at least a large amount of luck involved. I have heard of cars being de-registered by DVLA personnel because of a mere suspicion of mechanically inadequate modification (removing a Morris roof) despite a modification kit being fitted properly. Even more strangely the registration was reinstated with scarcely any more reason given. Another member simply and quite recently simply applied to have the type changed to Midge and got just that by return post. There are a few nudges that can help.

Be unfailingly polite and respectful.

Don't volunteer any information not specifically asked for.

Use the term re-body anywhere that the word Kit might be used.

Remember this is how you bought the car and you've not modified it, not even the valve caps.

The term 'In good faith' can look good but reserve it because it sounds a bit like 'I'm innocent Guv, on my mother's grave.'

Make sure you have joined the MOBC proper, (facebook isn't a vote winner) and only costs £10 for which you can also get a genuine freshly printed member's certificate (you have to print it yourself, You think we're made of money??)

MOBC members get their contact details on the website which, if you know the password, you can show on your smartphone screen and might add verisimilitude . Also you can make a VIN plate which they like. I should add that importing to the continent is tricky as we have collectively shot ourselves in the foot. I am told you can import to the UK in a crate clearly marked cocaine as our customs officials have all been deprived of money, testing equipment and buildings. (I haven't tried that myself and wouldn't advise it.)

I'm not even going to sign that.

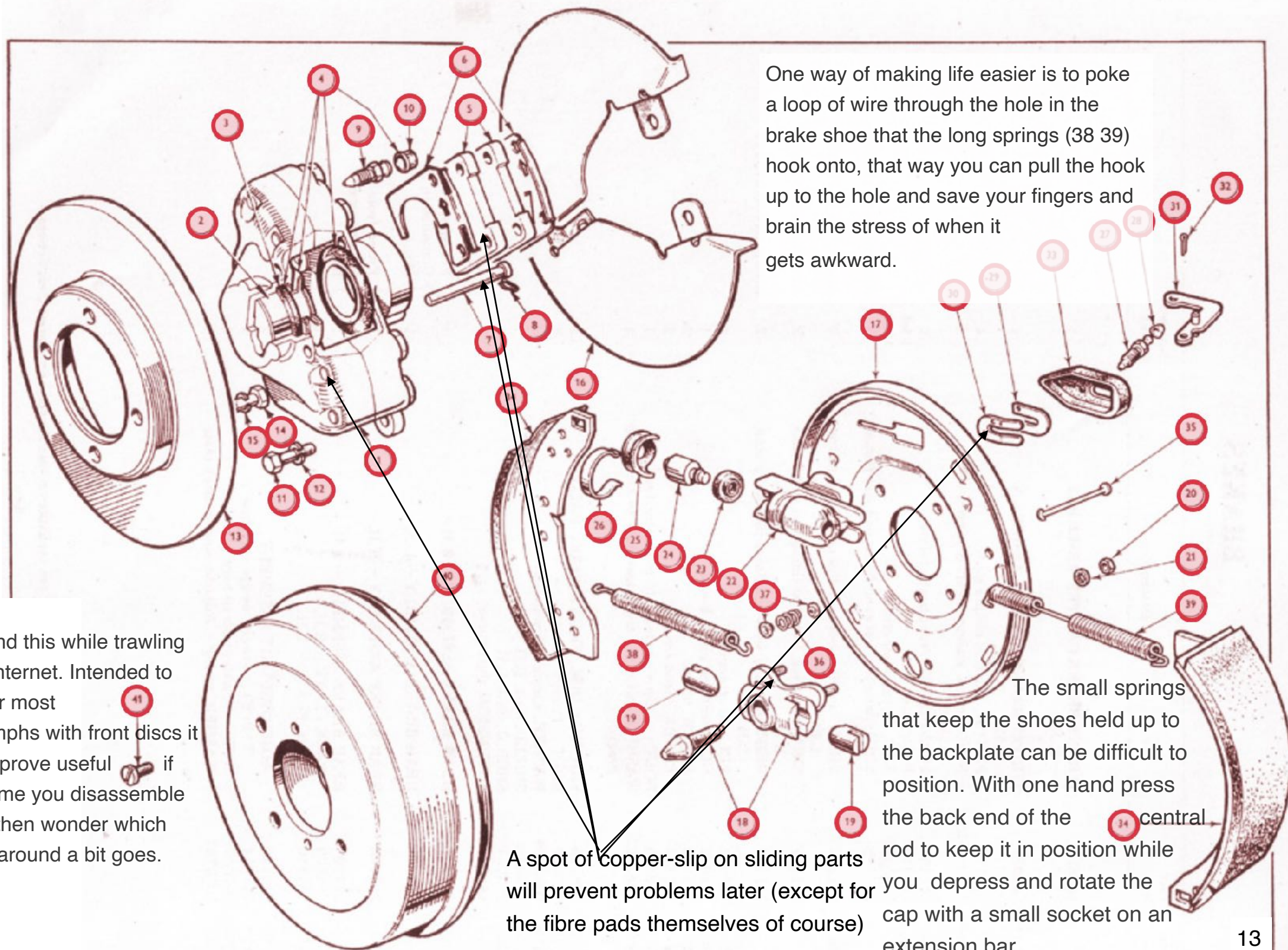
UK 2022/23 Events

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.





Winter draws on. At this time of year some Midge drivers might note a bit of a chill, and wonder about heaters. Although a roof and screens (or a tonneau cover) are better ways of keeping the heat in, it is possible to warm the interior a little. On the left is a heater matrix from a Herald and the red boxy



thing lying on its side on the right is my first attempt. The matrix, removed for clarity, goes in the green space. The tubing was going to be the air intake from outside the bonnet at the sides or from the front above the radiator and the idea was to blow air down through the matrix (now removed) into the body of the car. Later I found a fan housing (lower right) that was somewhat tidier and worked in the same way. The duct to the front is removed as it was a bit obstructive and this engine gives off fewer fumes. I had to turn the battery sideways and make some holes to blow the warm air down onto my feet. The water valve works in its original manner but on a spare choke cable and the only problem was stopping water that got down between the bonnet and the bulkhead from dripping on my feet. Very little did, partly by my not driving in the rain and partly the liberal application of sealant on the bulkhead.



Tailpipe

Well I have no idea what the Christmas weather might bring me, let alone the rest of the UK. When this gets published I could be up to my oxters in snow. If I go outside. At the moment my computer is predicting snow on the 23rd, rain on the 24th and just cold on the 25th. It is now the 22nd.

Me, I think I'll stay inside. I'm just hoping Santa has some weatherproof clothing.

I sometimes envy the pre computer days, but posting 100+ Magazines manually would be a pain, so I'm grateful for computers and our postie who will actually pick up as well as drop off. The advantages of electronic transmission means that I can print the occasional magazine and the necessary stamps while indoors dry and warm, so it's not really that bad for me. I do sympathise with the postie though, it can get quite bleak out there. We actually lost one local postie a century or two back when bicycles were all they had. Protective clothing and warm cars are much improved, but it's not a job I'd take, not in winter anyway. So remember your postie.

Considering communication and allied matters, could I ask the people who read the magazine to send an email? to jim@jimhewlett.com simply saying:-

'I read it' and noting MOBC member, facebook member, random public or CIA. (just copy and paste, deleting where necessary and use 'Tailpipe' as a subject line for easy sorting.)

I assume quite a lot are CIA because that's where my stats say quite a lot of readers are, (in which case 'Hi spooks') but that may be just a computer thing. Or maybe they think a Midge is a version of MIG fighter.

It is traditional to imagine isolated writers in lonely garrets, wind whistling in the eaves, guttering candles, frost on the inside of the windows....you get the idea. Well fret not, your humble scribe periodically comes downstairs and might even partake of a mince pie. I'm hoping to tidy the garage and defrost my spanners as soon as Spring looms. It can still freeze here in May but generally hasn't in recent years and there's a wood burning stove in the workshop in that event. (well away from the jerry cans and the acetylene bottles which might otherwise overdo the warming effect). Maybe a mulled wine would be appropriate. Keep warm, be nice to your postie, cat and spouse and have a merry one. Jim.

