



Midge Owners and Builders Club Midge Magazine - Autumn 2011

Secretary: John Bircumshaw,
15 Westminster Drive, Burbage, Hinckley LE10 2HA
Email: johnbirc@btinternet.com

Dear Members,

Are you an eBay enthusiast? Over the last few weeks I've been checking the 'Triumph' section regularly, and it's been quite interesting how many Midges have come up for sale. I suppose this is the season when it's easier to sell a sports car, but two things have surprised me. One is that the prices of our cars are still competitive in spite of the recession (I always knew they were undervalued!) and the second thing is that there are Midges out there whose owners are not Club Members. In all cases I get in touch with the vendors and inform them about the MOBC, but I don't usually get a reply! I'm attaching an updated Members' List to this magazine, so you will see the current state of our membership. We have eighty members at the moment, but there's always room for more, so if you see a Midge Owner who is not a Club Member, then please persuade them to join.

Over the last two or three months I've been to a number of Triumph meetings which have not been particularly well supported - perhaps it's the cost of petrol which has affected attendances. At the Annual Meeting of Club Triumph I was told to come to the Club Tent to receive a prize. This was unusual for me, so I was anticipating my trophy, only to be told by the organizers that they had made a mistake and I hadn't won an award after all! You may imagine my embarrassment at the situation which has resulted in my resigning my membership from this particular Club.

Enjoy your summer motoring, and if you have any experiences to relate then please let me have them for a future magazine

Happy Motoring,

John

An Apology

Due to unforeseen circumstances I have been unable to set up the visit to the Haynes Museum for September. I hope to arrange a Club Meeting next spring.

BETTER NEWS ABOUT BADGES



**Type 1 Badge
suitable for a
Badge Bar**



**Type 2 Badge
suitable for a
radiator grille**

I'm very grateful for the enthusiasm shown by members for the two types of badges which are being made. The situation has been a difficult one with the manufacturer holding on to my samples and not replying to my emails or phone calls. Fortunately, all is not lost, and after a visit to his workshop I was able to retrieve the original badges. I sent an ultimatum that the badges were needed by September or the order would be cancelled, and have now been promised the badges within the next week, so they should be available as you read this.

A picture of the badges is shown above, and there are a few spare ones, so if you didn't order one initially, they may still be available. Just let me know your requirements. The price is yet to be fixed, but will be in the region of £10 for the large

one and £5 for the small one, both plus post and packing. You may be assured I shall not make any profit out of the deal - I'm running at a loss at present!



Here's James Orr with his Scottish Midge and family in the summer sun

IN THIS ACCOUNT, JIM HEWLETT TELLS US ALL ABOUT HIS EARLY EXPERIENCES WITH KIT CARS AND THE LESSONS THAT LIFE HAS TAUGHT HIM!

How not to do it

Being born and raised on a farm, not long after the war, I was taught how to make do and mend. Part of that was combined with a natural tendency to tinker with things and an aversion to giving away money. The result was referred to by me as The Special, although others may have had other terms for it.

I had been given a Convertible Morris 1000 in '72 as a first car by a family friend and this needed a development of my mechanical skills. Taking bits off, cleaning and repairing, finding out how they actually worked, led to replacing bits, modifying and retro-fitting new ideas like internal heaters and radio/cassette units. Scavenging abandoned cars and finding scrap-yards left me able to bodge, convert and adapt fairly well.

Wandering through a scrapyards in Bishops Waltham I was offered an unused 'Opus' chassis and decided that I should have a go. I did not have a clue what was involved, but it looked like fun.

I should point out that I was so clueless I didn't even know that the next stage was to buy a 'tub', so I made one, largely from scraps I found on the farm. To cut a long story down a bit, the addition of a Vauxhall Viva HA front suspension unit, and a Ford Anglia rear axle got me off the ground, a 1300 Ford provided motivation in the form of a crossflow engine and gearbox, Morris 1000 petrol tank, the radiator grille from a Mercedes, and Morris Commercial van headlights made up most of the

mechanical bits. Dexion shelving for the doors and tail-light housings were fairly ugly, but effective, and Austin Somerset wheels made it roll and I maintain that the bonnet (a Morris Traveller roof) was actually level. I did have some mudguards made, front and back, at a very reasonable price.

Then I got married and it all stopped.

Although the Special drove well, went round corners and even indicated intended direction, the truth was that it would have been impossible to make it legal. It out lived the marriage but was reduced to component parts and sold off in '84, at more or less the price I paid for it, (more than could be said of the marriage) I just wish I could remember where the alloy mudguards went. That said, I learned a lot from the build, an education I have profited from over the years, and it set me up for the Midge, only 30 years later.



Jim's first attempt at a home made car. It makes a Midge look Hi-Tech!

It was 1981 and I'd just realised that I'd made a fundamental mistake in my kit-car design. Two actually, the first was getting inadvisably married. Not really part of the kit, but it had a serious effect on it. Enough said. However the second was the bodywork. (I'm talking about "the special" here; the marriage was really nobody's fault.)The car drove well enough and all the bits worked. however, the body was all wrong, mainly because I had no idea that you could get bodies or "tubs" to fit the chassis, and so had made something myself out of this and that. For all its ugliness it had working doors and a folding screen, storage space and a comfortable ride. The real fault was my lack of practice and maybe a bit too much of the trial and error, with the errors still in.

The build, on the farm, took me several years, starting in complete ignorance, although the death knell was getting married, it never really stood a chance, with the nest building and the

psychotherapy, and sadly the special died from lack of attention, although it came to Scotland with me, and technically outlived the marriage. Cost less too. The process stood me in good stead though, and I learned much about practical engineering and materiel sourcing, when to go and buy an expensive tool and when to jury rig a way around it. It's probably just as well it never got near a vehicle inspection, and if I'd made it look legal it indubitably would have taken the first opportunity to kill me and anybody within a mile or so of road.

The one thing I didn't do that I should have done was to keep the headlights and mudguards, and a few other bits. There again if I'd kept all that might have been useful I'd have needed an aircraft hanger to put it all in.

So why resurrect this memory? Well I've been married to the right girl for some time now, and it seemed like a good idea to have another go. I have more time and a fair bit more experience, somebody else has done a fair bit of the work on the tub, rather better than my first attempt. And there's a plan. If I understood it I'd feel a little more confident, but I'm sure I'll manage, one thing "the special" taught me was how to think sideways around problems.



A unique car - Front view of the Hewlett special

A NEW WEBSITE CLAIMS TO LIST THE NUMBERS OF SURVIVORS OF MOST CARS IN THE UK.

Using information derived from vehicle licensing statistics published by the Dept for Transport, howmanyleft.co.uk reveals the numbers of surviving examples of most makes and models, with licensed and SORN vehicles listed separately. And some of the statistics provided can be quite shocking.

According to the website, there are only 131 of the Allegro-based Vanden Plas 1500s remaining in the UK, just 52 of which are licensed. Triumph Cars fare a little better. For instance there are 923 Herald 1200 cars on the road from 290,000 made and my 'other' Triumph, a 1500TC shows 47 on the road from 25,550 made. In twenty years time, perhaps there will be a column for surviving Midges!



Christian Guillard has sent me this picture of his Midge. If you didn't think that the French wore kilts then think again!

COULD YOU PUT YOUR MIDGE ON YOU TUBE?

James Orr tells me that he has been able to find just one film on You Tube about a Midge and that was only listening to the start up of the engine! How about members making a film for You Tube? It could help to get the Midge known far and wide...and perhaps attract more buyers and members!



AN UPDATE AND A SUGGESTION FROM OUR DUTCH MEMBER

My Midge is technically ready and will be sprayed BRG shortly after which I can start putting it together again. New brake callipers have been fitted and a new exhaust made.

I hope to get it running by the beginning of September when we have a Lions Club rally in our village and it will be on display as an exotic!

Maybe we can arrange a meeting of Midgees in Holland next year to attend this event. I can take care of the organization here (trip, camping, hotel accommodation, etc). This all depends on the interest for it at your end. *John Krabbendam.*

Please let me know if you would be interested in John's suggestion

A LETTER FROM DAVID ROYLE

As a lifelong subscriber and advertiser with many of this country's motor clubs, magazines and motoring organisations until my retirement, I am hoping that you will not mind me approaching you with a view to asking if you could cover my new book, 'From Vintage to Classic to Amphibious', to your members and readership. As your members are interested in Vintage and Classic motor cars and their restoration, then they are likely to know the name "Royle".

My vintage and classic car restoration work on over 900 vehicles has been publicised for more than 35 years in most of the specialist motor car club and motoring magazines. In addition, over the last 23 years, the name 'Royle' has been synonymous with the design and development of the world's first high speed amphibious vehicles.

The book is currently in the final stages of proofing before going to print, and further information can be found at www.theroylebook.com where pre-orders can be placed.

You'll receive 1p change from £40 to purchase the book and there are no amphibious Midgees included, although I recall that TOP GEAR once showed an amphibious Herald.

JOHN COWPERTHWAIT HINTS AT HIS LATEST PROJECT.

After the last disappointment with the Mallory, John isn't releasing too much information on his new project. Suffice to say it should get round the IVA regulations completely and it is a plan built vehicle with a JC badge.

This all sounds too good to be true, John! We can't wait to see what you have in mind!

HOW LONG HAVE YOU OWNED A CAR?

(Thanks to Terry Brown for this article)



Mr Allen Swift (Springfield, MA.) received this 1928 Rolls-Royce Piccadilly P1 Roadster from his father, brand new as a graduation gift in 1928. He drove it up until his death last year at the age of 102. He was the oldest living owner of a car from new. It was donated to a local Motor Museum after his death. It has 1,070,000 miles on the clock; still runs like a Swiss watch, dead silent at any speed and is in perfect condition. (82 years) That's approximately 13,048 miles per year (1087 per month).

This set me thinking. Which member has owned their Midge for the longest time? I have owned my Midge for 23 years (1988-2011). Can anyone beat this? The only rule is that it must still be on the road!

NEW MEMBERS

We're pleased to welcome three new members who have joined us since the summer issue of the magazine

- Stephen Clark from Castledawson in Northern Ireland is the new owner of the Midge built by Maurice Walley.
- Terry Davies from Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire has a Midge based on a Triumph Herald.
- Alan Jones from Crawley, Sussex is about to start building his Midge.

We welcome you all and hope that you will enjoy being part of our Club.

That's it for this time, but do keep on sending anything of interest for the next issue of the magazine.