

The MESSage

Newsletter of the Middlebridge Enthusiasts Scimitar Set



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August 2023



Middlebridge No. 5

Well, it's official, Princess Anne had one of those Middlebridge Scimitars.....

After 35 years of ownership we can confirm that HRH The Princess Royal has sold Middlebridge No 5 to a private individual. The agreement will see the car sensitively detailed while preserving its heritage by minimizing all the works needed to retain the car's uniqueness, originality and status.

The first phase is complete; the car has been inspected, received a full service, all fluids changed and is in good running order at 114,600 miles.

A suspected radiator leak was discovered during the thorough vehicle inspection, the original radiator was removed and professionally restored to the original specification. The car was presented to a DVSA Test Centre where it passed the MOT with no advisories. The interior has been fully detailed and one very small repair

was



The last photo of Middlebridge No. 5 at Gatcombe Park before its change of owner

undertaken to a seat using the original material taken from the car to maintain its originality.

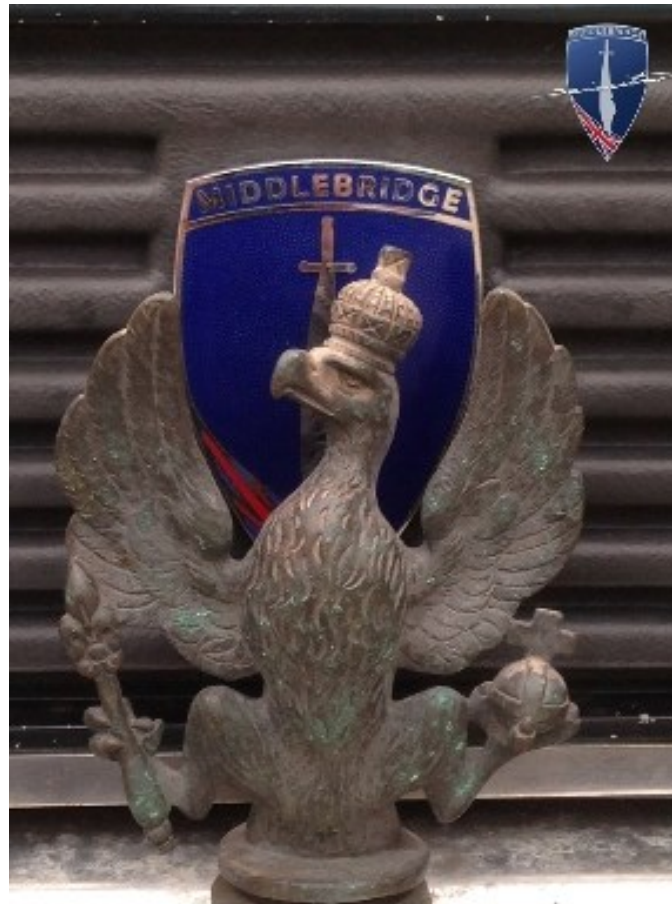
While the 35 year old paint is generally in very good condition the car will now have the minimum paint correction needed to improve its appearance and will be polished as required whilst retaining the all-important originality.

As part of the agreement to retain the heritage of this famous Middlebridge, the last Scimitar to be owned by HRH The Princess Royal, the unique front grille badge bar has remained with the car together with the three mascots, including the 1420 Royal Hussars Mascot given to HRH as Colonel in Chief of the Royal Hussars. The renowned Horse & Rider emblem is still mounted on the bonnet, portraying a horse being ridden by a female rider in competition. It is believed that this was a personal gift from her late mother, HRH The Queen around the time of the 1976 Olympics. HRH The Princess Royal competed with the late Queen Elizabeth II's horse 'Goodwill', whilst representing the



country at the 1976 Olympics in the equestrian three-day event.

The car has been allocated an age related registration mark and the 1420 H registration has been formally removed. The numberplates were presented to the 1420 Hussars Museum, it is understood that they will be put on display with some other items. The Princess Royal did, however, choose to keep the bespoke model of her car that was given to her by the MESS at the



30th Anniversary event.

We await to hear what the future holds for this car, a unique piece of motoring history. We have however been assured that it is likely to go on display and will be made available for certain events in the future.



Middlebridge Development Car

Mick has been searching for this car for many years without success but has now pieced together enough information to give a reasonable background to the car and enough to place it on the register. Thanks are due once again to Dennis Nursey and the Gentleman that actually purchased the car from the Middlebridge auction. This Gentleman visited the Middlebridge stand at the NEC Classic Car Show in 2022 and told Mick exactly what we needed to know but, ultimately, didn't really want to hear.

APL 248 was essentially a work in progress second generation Middlebridge Scimitar. Middlebridge had purchased a Reliant SE6 in red, first registered on 22 June 1984, and

performed many alterations to it in the way it did with the original prototypes. Dennis distinctly remembers the car going down to the South West to Chris Field in Totnes to have the modifications done. On one trip to discuss progress Dennis managed to get banned for doing over 100mph in his Cosworth. However, he managed to talk his way out of that and got away with only a two week ban!

The car was notable at the auction for having a clay front end similar to a Bristol Beaufighter, it also had a large sunroof. The front end had a modified grille, modified bumper and the sills were curved down at the wheel ends. Dennis recalls that modifications were also made to the rear end but cannot remember what they were.

Post auction, it can now be confirmed that the car went to the Birmingham area where the clay front was hammered off to reveal the original



Last five bargain JTEs at Middlebridge auction. Note revised front style of nearest car

APL 248 at the Middlebridge Auction

front end. The car was then repainted and sold through another auction to someone in the London area. The last log book change in February 1991 aligns with when the Gentleman who visited the NEC said he sold the car after quick turn round.

The registration of the clay fronted car, APL 248, has been checked via the DVLA site and it is still shown as being on a Reliant, the details of which seem to match an SE6 and with the last log book change in Feb 1991 three months after the auction as the buyer stated. It was last taxed just a couple of years after expiring in 1993. What happened to it after that still remains a mystery but after so long it is unlikely to be languishing in a back garden and has probably been lost. To round this off, the Gentleman who bought the car provided

Mick with a couple of photos of the repainted car showing it with the APL 248 plate.



Coming and Going

Andrew Sait has had to part with MB54, a casualty of the new London ULEZ and Andrew Kerr has sold MB60. Both have gone to enthusiastic new owners and we are keen to hear from them and what they plan for the cars.

George Sampford has finally parted with MB63 and it is now with its new owner in Germany, the second car to be exported there in recent years. So, we welcome Ralf to Middlebridge ownership and he has said he will keep us updated on its progress. His first task is to get the headlamps replaced and aligned for left hand drive. Then it is an appointment with his mechanic to check the

car over before going for the TÜV inspection which is a precondition for the registration of the car in Germany. We look forward to hearing how he gets on.

NOTE: MICK has had two enquiries from people wanting automatic Middlebridges and would be happy to put anyone in touch. Please just drop him a brief email.



We currently have one car for sale on the Middlebridge website.

Pre-Production Middlebridge, 1 owner car, manual and in excellent condition. (Please refer to the Middlebridge Gallery and history sectors for more information on this car).

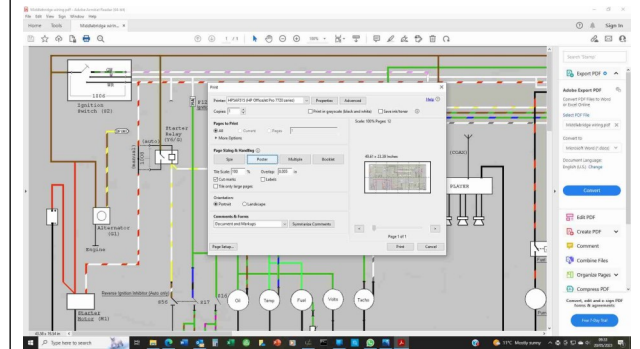
Wiper Parking

Peter Freeman notes that the parking switch has failed on his wiper motor and, on investigating, he has found out that it is not exactly the same motor as reliant GTEs and does not have a slip on switch but one which is held in position by two screws. The identification on the motor just says Lucas so that was not much help. He has, however, now found out that it is a 16w motor and these switches are no longer available. There is an alternative available for an eye watering £93.70 - https://www.scparts.co.uk/sc_en/switch-658334.html or the motor can be modified to take the "normal" push on switch. Peter is still deciding on which course of action to take.

On the subject of wiring Andy Goss writes: -

I recently purchased MB6 and love it to bits. Since owning, I've been spending some time checking out various items and one of the major tasks was fitting new reflectors to all the head lights. Whilst doing this some other electric issues raise their

heads which has demanded much scrutiny of the fantastic wiring diagram produce by Peter Freeman (huge thanks to Peter).



However, I printed this on an A4 sheet of paper and because of the detail it's almost impossible to follow. While playing with Adobe I discovered a printing feature describe as "poster" in the printing dialogue box. This feature takes the original document and expands it to cover multiple A4 pages. By printing this way, it expands to 12 pages (you



can see this on the righthand side of the dialogue box). Then by carefully cutting off margins, then some nifty use of Sellotape, it's hey presto an easily read wiring diagram.

And here is a photo of the original A4 sheet and the "poster" version.

(Sorry the poster version is a bit tatty, it has seen some action!)

SPA Classic Car Event 11 June 2023

Dr Dan Mitchell writes: - A 30 degrees plus day and luckily the organisers, the Rotary Club of Leamington Spa had the sense to open the gates to the display field early so I was in by 8.30am but left at 3pm as by then it was just too hot even under a large umbrella.



The sunshine certainly made the original pearlescent grey blue green paint on our car look great.

There was high interest in my car helped by visitors who had worked for Reliant and Kenilworth garage a major Reliant Scimitar and GTC garage in Warwickshire and the large number of motor Engineers in our area.



Our youngest son David with his wife and 2 of our Grand Children also attended. The youngest, aged 5, has a school project to find as many different cars as possible so should do well!

Most of the visitors I spoke to knew the Middlebridge story and the cars. I now have two experienced local Engineers keen to come home to discuss and inspect our car. My car was between a white Panther Kallista also with the 2.9EFI Scorpio

engine and an amazing Concours 1925 4 seat Swift with a magnificent 400bhp Chevrolet Corvette in black behind my car. The Corvette had an appropriate number plate Y8 GRR ! When the owner bought this car, he was closely followed by Police cars round most of the M25.



The variety of cars on display was amazing and this year motorbikes were also invited to attend. There was also a late manual Reliant Scimitar GTC and another two cars parked close to mine were a very early Gilbern with MGB engine and a French Mehari which I had never heard of before!

On the subject of spares, I have sold 118 MB wheel centre caps to date and have just found another two sets in my workshop.



The picture above is a brand new set in original wrappers.



This picture is a second-hand set in good condition which just need a good clean.



These are a set of original centre cap badges. I have over 40 of these left.

Dan

Recommissioning MB46

I had wanted a Middlebridge since I first saw one in red at the Motor show at the NEC in 1988 . The Middlebridge and the Reliant stand were back to back.

The idea of owning a new Middlebridge didn't go away with me purchasing Sports car magazine and Motor magazine that had articles on them and visits to Graham Walkers to get more information and of course the latest brochure .

However Middlebridge went into receivership, and so did Reliant so owning one was put on the back burner.

The urge to own a Middlebridge got greater and with the help of Will Anderson I purchased number 46 G892BDX , affectionately known as the "Bridge" in 2017.

I have attended numerous shows including the Silverstone Classic in 2019 and with the exception of fitting a stainless steel tank in 2018 , I didn't really do anything to the car just enjoying driving using the car for the first 3 years. In 2020, I was going to Fuzz Townshends open day at Bicester, when a

water pipe split. The pipe was replaced and the last time it was used Sue said the brakes felt spongy. At first I thought it was due to Sue being used to driving electric vehicles, however I took it for a drive and quickly realised that the brakes had suffered a major failure.

Fast forward to 2023, and arrangements was made for Paul Turnbull of GT Evolution to collect the car so the brakes could be upgraded to Wilwood brakes and do what ever work was needed to get the car through an MOT

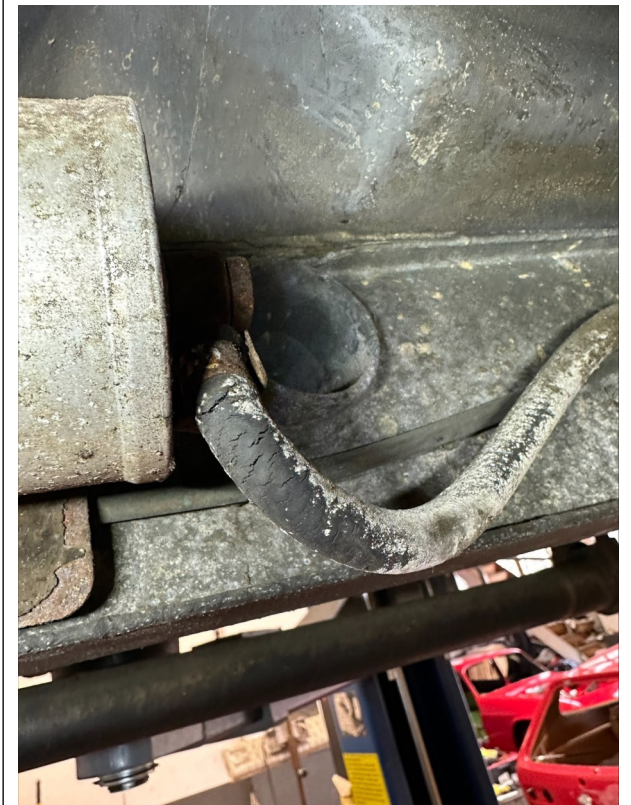
On investigation, the discs and the dust shields was badly corroded and the suspension had plenty of road grime and surface rust.



A piece of lead with electrical wire had been placed on the clutch arm.



Petrol pipe was badly cracked and the brake pipes needed replacing. *(A reminder to us all to check petrol pipes, Ed.)*



The car had new AVO springs and dampers fitted and Paul cleaned up and overhauled the front suspension.

With other little jobs completed such as the alignment of door, need electric window mechanism the car was ready to collect.

The drive home was around 100 miles and it was a real pleasure, I had forgotten how good it was to drive, and it also stops now!



A few weeks later I won a prize at an ROC event.

I highly recommend the Wilwood conversion and GT Evolution, next on the to do list is some new tyres, whilst the tread is fine , cracks have started to appear.

Mark

Mick's MESSage

General Chit-Chat

Top of de morning to ya all, finally, we have some better weather and I'm personally looking forward to getting out and about to some events. After reading about the IOW event last year I was so envious, I have already booked my place with Alan for 2023 extravaganza. On a different note, I have read from two sources that our annual MOT is potentially being ditched in favour of a bi-annual one, apparently the DFT are pushing for this and it includes all post 1982 classics. They are also proposing to change new car 1st inspection from 3 years to five years, just imagine what astronomical mileages some new cars could clock up in 5 years! Thinking aloud, that would make full service histories vital for people buying these cars in the future. Personally I do try and keep all my classics in A1condition and the bi-annual would not make a lot of difference, however people skimping on maintenance etc, could end up with quite dangerous cars on our roads in my personal opinion. What's your thoughts on this.

MB 33

As mentioned in my last epistle I finally took No33 to Paul (GT Evolution) in Huddersfield, The car drove great but the weather was horrendous with the wipers got a 3 hour + workout! looks like a lot of cleaning when I get her back. The Willwood brake conversion has now been fitted to the front, Paul also fitted new rear wheel bearings along with all new seals and gaskets, the rear wheel cylinders didn't look too good so these were also replaced at the same time while working in that area. I am looking forward to the drive home to allow me to assess the difference for myself. I hope I'm not delusional but hoping for near modern car braking performance. While my car was at Paul's I did ask for a few other jobs to be done but one in particular may be of interest. I have uploaded the details to the MB website, I spoke with Paul about my steering being some-what stiff, I guess the two possible culprits are trunnions or Power Assisted Steering Pump, on checking, the trunnions were perfect leaving just the pump, I knew from speaking with owners that the pumps were obsolete and you could buy similar on eBay, however Nigel at QRG came up trumps and is now selling reconditioned PAS pumps, (All of the details are in the FAQ

area under steering) should anyone want / need a pump. I have now arranged to collect my car on Saturday 11th February and will soon start preparing her for another season.

Addendum: Well, I can confirm that 33 has now been collected & Paul very kindly gave her a lovely Autoglym wash for me, (thank you Paul). She was filthy after the drive to Paul's place. I can confirm that after a thoroughly enjoyable 3 hour drive home the brakes are what I had hoped for. My car's not a sprint car but essentially she now requires less effort to brake, This gives give the car a more modern brake feel & performance. The spec' of my upgrade is as follows below and is available from Nigel at QRG. At long last I have become one of the Middlebridge Wilwood converts. (The upgrade was sold to me by Peter Humphries who demonstrated to me just effective they are, when he braked hard in ASBO (his MB No 27) I was nearly ejected out of the passenger seat on test! The level of braking efficiency stunned me and was far & away above normal Scimitar braking. I do hope I never have to use mine like that but it's very re-assuring to know you have the capability. Please don't forget, if you do this upgrade to notify your insurers, it cost me no extra money. It was also nice to once again have slightly lighter PAS with the new pump fitted. I

have since had a look through my history file and I can confirm that the above work was the most expensive bill by far I have ever had for No 33. Not bad for owning her for over 20 years!!



- 1, Wilwood Superlight Callipers c/w lug type mount
- 2, Disc size (Diam + width 278 x 24 Vented discs (optional)
- 3, Hardware, Kit, Bolts, washers, nuts, calliper adaptors.

With the warmer weather now here and my car having had her 2023 shakedown run, it's time to don the overalls and get preparing her for the coming season. Once she has had a proper wash and dry I will polish and add a surface protection film to all the painted areas and the wheels as well, the wheels are standard MB wheels but diamond cut with untreated alloy on the offsets, I

clean and ceramic coat them annually. Being a bit of a tart (or so George tells me) I decided to further improve the appearance of the new Willwood front callipers, off they came and a bit of paint 'n' lacquer and hey presto they look much better. Needless to say that's just my opinion.

No 33 has now also had a full service and I'm looking forward to getting her out and about, I'm particularly looking forward to the Isle of Wight event that sounds like it will be a great show and a great time with friends.

MESSEMBly

In person. The monthly MESS meeting has resumed and be held on the Second Tuesday of each month at 7pm in The Brewers Fayre, Central Park, CV23 0WE. Every enthusiast is welcome to join us, owner or not. Banter expected and encouraged.

Virtual MESSEMBlies will continue with the invitations sent to members by email.

STOP PRESS—The Tuesday 8th August Meet will be at The Bell & Barge, Brownsover Road, CV21 1RG. 01788 569466. It's a Harvester pub. Food available. Accommodation next door.

Classic Car Price Guide 2023

This was a project that Dr Dan Mitchell undertook for us some years ago now but I'm delighted to say that our values have remained at the same level as set by Dan. You will find the 2023 valuations on the Middlebridge website under the FAQ Area / New Owners. Once again, Thank you, Dan.



Le Mans Classic

Please see a couple of great pictures from Paul Crocker who made the trip in his awesome Middlebridge, No 67. Looks like his MB will be busy this year as Paul has also booked for the Isle of Wight event.



Light Hearted Banter

I thought I would once again finish off my epistle with either a look back to better times or something a little light hearted. Hope you like the pictures.



GEORGE'S JARGON

Last month's MESSEMBLY was enhanced by the most welcome company of Andrew Sait, visiting Warwickshire from the wilds of Essex. It wasn't just a MESS social call, Andrew was actually taking his Middlebridge to show it to a prospective buyer the following morning, who lives the Buckinghamshire side of Banbury.

Living close to the M25, Andrew is financially hammered every time by the ULEZ ruling should he dare to stray into Sadiq Khan's anti-vehicle London. Andrew is in the fortunate position of having older classics which are not financially penalised in that way. How sad, eh! I am hoping that he will continue to involve himself with future MESS Meetings, all the same.

Thanks for your all past input Andrew and for your very generous donation (once again), to the MESS funds. Whilst that's in your mind dear reader...

Financial Gains

February's tenth MESS Anniversary saw 16 folk submitting some more generous donations which now has a healthy balance of £1600.54. I have written sincere 'Thankyous' to all those whose email addresses that I still have, Will has contacted all the other donors (hopefully). If, however, you have sent a donation and not received a reply, please contact me, and I'll look into it.

In the distant past, I had everyone's email address and phone numbers, GDPR has changed all that. Unless the newer owner willingly send me their current contact details, I shall have to rely on Will who is the only one with that specific

information these days. (*Never rely on Will, look how long it has taken him to get this out! Ed.*)

We are now in the position to afford the next PLI, new carpet for the NEC, or for any other worthy event (unfortunately no-one was able to offer storage for the carpet...) and to update the website via our webmaster. The new MESS gazebo will also be personalised with relevant graphics and my VW van will be adorned with magnetic signs as the 'support' vehicle.



Whilst we are currently in a good financial position, it's always welcoming to receive more generous donations – please see the panel regarding our Lloyds Bank Account, if that's on your 'to-do' list. Old-style cheques can still be posted to me, made out to 'The MESS' please. It should be noted that the PayPal account has been

cancelled, Lloyds Bank is the only active MESS account now.

MIDDLEBRIDGE ACCOUNT

Lloyds Bank, Lewisham (309089)

120 Lewisham High Street, Lewisham

London SE13 6JG .

Sort Code: 30-90-89.

Account No: 49350668.

BIC: LOYDGB21256.

IBAN: GB79 LOYD 3090 8949 3506 68.

IOW Extravaganza

Alan C-T has been busy organising this smashing event for later this year, it's not too late for you to join in the fun should it appeal to you. Alan has booked Yelfs Hotel, those going have transferred money into The MESS funds, where I shall issue one cheque for the Hotel, covering all exhibitors, and another cheque for the Organiser, Victor Gallucci. We are hoping that by doing it this way, the MESS can keep a tighter control of who is going, and who has paid, etc.

Those monies are shown as additional to the above balance, the MESS account is being used merely to hold the money until required.

More Events – is yours amongst them?

There are more events in the pipeline, these will be disclosed in future editions of The MESSage. Don't forget, if you have an event that could be of interest, please let us know, I'm sure Joe Public would also like to see some different cars on show - a bit difficult with so few cars made... but we do our best with what we have.

One event that we would like to attend as a group is held in Bicester, Oxfordshire. The 'Bicester Scramble' needs responding to immediately, otherwise it very quickly becomes oversubscribed. Alan C-T had tried to book a spot a few days after I had sent him the email, only to find it full! The suggestion then: is to have a list of potential Middlebridge exhibitors, so when the next event is published we can book a space for (say 6?) cars and I can send a MESS cheque along with the owner's details straight away.

Please let me know if you fancy attending this popular event, held where the old army barracks were. The site now houses a multitude of restoration craftsmen associated with the Classic Car industry and are open to inspection. A worthy visit I am reliably informed. As an added

attraction (to some), nearby is 'Bicester Village' which is a large retail outlet designed to empty wallets, purses and melt plastic.

How Good...?

As it's currently SORNed, I recently drove my Middlebridge on Trade Plates to my friendly VW garage, about 10 miles away, for a photo shoot of the Scimitar's bottom. A potential purchaser, living in Germany, wanted to see what condition the chassis was in, oil leaks, etc. It would be an understatement to say that my VW mechanic was astonished with the good condition, especially the lack of oil leaks. Ok. there is a tiny bit, but he confirms that replacing the drain plug washers, possibly the sump gasket will suffice. Not bad for a 1989 car. It's been a few months since I last drove the Scimitar, It fired up straight away, and performed as I always remembered it. Once again, the VW mechanic who was enjoying the passenger seat, was suitably impressed with the car's performance...

A now Middlebridgeless but still Enthusiastic George

SYWELL Pistons and Props

You will have received the recent email about the Sywell event. This is always a popular show and well attended. It is taking place on the 23rd and

24th September and anyone wishing to join in on the stand should contact Bruce before the 20th August .

bruce.beauchamp@virginmedia.com