

# The MESSage

Newsletter of the Middlebridge Enthusiasts Scimitar Set



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August 2021

## Mick's MESSage

Well, a summer of sorts is here, we've been cooked for weeks with me looking forward to my first outing since the start of Covid. I booked to attend the Silverstone Classic with the RSSOC in anticipation of some good weather and company; well it just rained and rained for the three days. The area that the gazebos & cars were parked on became a quagmire. Needless to say there was plenty of opportunities to chat in the gazebos over the three days.



Mick's MB33 at Silverstone Classic  
(Photo © Roger Pennington)

Sadly, but inevitably, there were no hoards of people interested in looking at or discussing the cars on display. All of the cars looked great initially, but it soon became clear that it was a totally futile task in trying to continually dry them off.



The Parade Lap at Silverstone Classic  
(Photo © Roger Pennington)

I left approx. 4pm on the Sunday when a strange extremely bright object suddenly appeared in the sky! The drive home was an awesome one as I met with a guy in an e-type and by the time we reached the M1, I can honestly say my car was fully

exercised, nice n warm and bone dry. We waved goodbye to each other, "happy days"!

I drove straight into the garage just before the weather changed again. This gave me a great base for the trip to Scimfest with Matt and I madly cleaning the car for entry into the concours de-elegance.



A Very Nice SE6a at Silverstone Classic  
(Photo © Roger Pennington)

We were at Scimfest on the Sunday and it was great to meet up with old friends that I have not seen since Scimfest 2019, however

and sadly, there were also many old faces missing from the event.

It was good to see John and Jill Unwin there in their Middlebridge which had towed the caravan to the event with ease, We look forward to seeing you both at Sywell and hope you will enjoy our annual event.



MB65 at Scimfest

The other MB in attendance was owned by Alan Cavendish Tribe, it was the first time I had met Alan and once again Alan will also be at Sywell for the Middlebridge event of the year. Alan was at Scimfest for the three days and walked away with two trophies for the Autotest "well done Alan".

As usual Matt and I entered the concours and came away with a 3rd place in the concours de-elegance. we only missed out on second place due to my stupidity. Aaarrrrrrrrr...



MB35 at Scimfest

We were kept very busy trying to fit everything into one day but we did manage to take a few pictures for the MESSage, hope you like them.



Concours Line-up at Scimfest

Incredibly the paint on MB33 is now 19 years old and I personally think still looking good. I do have to say that over the last 8-9 years the standard of cars in the concours has risen dramatically which is great.

If all goes well, over next winter MB33 should be treated to some 'paint love' to celebrate the 20 year paint job. More on this when Matt's mate

agrees. Personally I'm looking forward to it as I have never seen this particular process done to a Scimitar.



MB33 at Scimfest Concours

I saw the pictures on Facebook of the Middlebridge rear disk conversion and I have to say it looks awesome, it is more effective and does away with a ton of parts and weight. This combined with the Wilwood front calipers must give awesome stopping power when compared to standard set up. (this could be costly for me) (*See Peter Freeman's writeup later in this MESSage—Ed.*)



## Sywell "Piston and Props" 25 & 26 September

This event has become a must for the "MESS", it is just so relaxed and totally non-competitive. This year I personally look forward to seeing many owners/enthusiasts that I have not seen since before the Covid outbreak, this includes close friends as well. The regulars will know that the location is an airfield and completely in the open. The event will be baptism of fire for our marque gazebo as it has not been erected post modifications, let's hope it protects us from sunstroke over the weekend.

The 'statement of interest' forms have been emailed out so I hope to see you there over the weekend. O joy, shorts on and knees out!! ;o) 'Fingers crossed'



MB23 at Sywell



One of the Rare Non-Dry Sywell Years!

## Fuel

During the summer E10 fuel will hit the garage forecourts so how does this affect us as Middlebridge drivers, there are some simple things we can do to mitigate the risk from E10.

E5 Protection grade fuel will remain available for the next 5 years and hopefully longer if Boris and the government pull their finger out.

Ensure that you have replaced ALL of the fuel hoses on your Middlebridge to ones of the correct grade. (We have had several dangerous near misses with fuel lines already).

Please look at the FAQ area of the Middlebridge website for more detail. (Should you have any doubt about hose specification please consult either Nigel at QRG or Graham at Graham Walker Ltd.)

I would pay particular attention to the plastic connection in the engine bay.

There are anti-corrosion additives available to reduce the corrosion risk over the winter months.

It would be great to hear the various views of you all, please email in your thoughts and hopefully any ideas you may have.

*(Chapter and verse to be found here—Ed. <https://www.fbhvc.co.uk/fuels#E10> )*

## MB 69

Once again we have been forced to change direction with MB69, the goal remains the same. MB69 will be returned to full concours standard and some of the work has now been completed. The main difference is that she will now undergo a full professional respray by a Scimitar Specialist.

The plan that we have (well Matt has) is that we both enter the concours next year at Scimfest with the loser buying the meal on the way home. *(I think the steaks should be higher.... Ed.)*

## Our other money pits, whoops, (Classic Cars)

I was never happy with the paint finish on my Moonstone Sierra and have bitten the bullet and sent her for a full respray, She will then be an A1 car. Matt's car looks simply awesome with just a few small bits to finish. This should shock you original Ford black plastic headed rivets to hold on the body kit are a minimum of £8.00 each if you can source any, that's how serious the RS Ford Scene is. The last of the rivets are now on route to me from the States, would you believe.

## Regalia

The Middlebridge logo'd regalia is now available, please just navigate to the For Sale area of the Middlebridge website and open the lower link.

*(Or try here—Ed. [Regalia](#) )*

## Middlebridge Models (Frog)

I have been speaking with Rory of Middlebridge Frog model fame and he has mentioned that he currently has two Middlebridge orders to fulfil and if any owners or new owners would like a model in the colour and interior finish of their pride and joy now would be a good time as a minimum quantity is required to run the models. Rory can be contacted directly via [rory@cullenconservation.org](mailto:rory@cullenconservation.org)

## Middlebridge 48 Stolen (One of my old cars)

Sadly, no news at all on our stolen Middlebridge and now 5 months. I feel pretty sad about the whole scenario, tis bad enough that a rare Classic car is stolen but I do not know how we stand from a GDPR point of view. I am thinking from the insurance company's point of view. (Should a bare chassis or shell appear it would be good to finally know as a club the fate of one of our rare cars.

## George's Jargon

### Some Good Stuff, at last!

At last, there seems to be a minor return to some semblance of normality...

With that in mind, I recently visited our MESSEMBLY pub 'The Brewers Fayre', Central Park, Rugby, to see when 'The MESS' could resume its meetings.

The new management team, who took over from the previous lot at the beginning of Covid, were not aware of The MESS meeting there and much stuff went missing during the chaotic interim changeover period, including 'The MESS' framed information panel. Bruce and I have generated another two framed panels, which I delivered to the pub today. We shall see what happens to them when we next have a MESSEMBLY.

After the recent Zoom meeting it was decided that the first Monday in September would be the ideal next meeting date, however...

That date is the 6th September and I'm caravanning in darkest Wales on that day until the 17th. The usual attendees have been emailed suggesting alternative dates in August instead, so far Tuesday the 31st seems

popular and I have confirmed that date today with Nicole, the new Deputy Manager... We have a table booked for 10.

If you fancy joining us, please do come along. Immediately next door is a Premier Inn should you wish to stay over and even explore the area whilst there. Future meetings will remain the first Monday in the month, as before. The Zoom meetings will continue and seem to be enjoyed...

### MESSEMBLY

In person (At Last!) The monthly MESS meeting will resume and be held on 31st August 2021 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 next planned for 7th September 2021.

### Covid Considered - still

As an aside - Maggie and I continue to wear masks in shops or other potentially crowded places or events, we frequently wash our hands, disinfect goods purchased, etc. I'm sure that we

could do more to protect ourselves and others whose paths we cross.

Despite our love for foreign parts, we won't be climbing into a cramped metal tube, crammed amongst fellow passengers for a few hours, who could be contaminated, to enter another country whose vaccination programme is somewhat suspect. No, we will 'self isolate' in our caravan in Britain for now and attempt to be very careful still. You have been warned.

### Failed Erection...

Mick and I have tried to meet for a social and to erect/check-out the new gazebo. All has fallen by the wayside as Mick (and son Matt), continue to work extraordinarily long hours allied to health issues back at home, leaving little time for socialising. It's possible that the 'Sywell Piston and Props'\* event will see the gazebo's first outing then. We would have preferred a dry run to confirm that the additional amendments are all as we ordered, ah well, all will be revealed soon.

### Smart Move time

With \*Sywell still fresh in your minds, now could also be the ideal time to consider treating yourself and your partner to our stunning new regalia designed to dazzle and excite the masses. Contact

Tailor Made directly to see what's available and how to order. I suggest our stand would be quite an impressive display if we were all in 'uniform', with our new customised gazebo and smart fencing to match. We just have to pray that the weather is not too hot, so it doesn't encourage Micky G to wear shorts and ruin the prospect...

### Social Meets

Mick and I were also trying to find a place for just a 'Social MESS Meeting'. It really needed to be a pertinent place of interest, to have some kind of accommodation maybe, camping even, as it would probably become a weekend event. I've visited a few interesting local hosteleries but nothing really ticked every box, so Sywell may be the best we can do for now. No doubt this subject too will be discussed in depth at Sywell.

I did contact our very good friend, Richard English, who lives around Beeston, as THE place to have such a 'social'. Through his health issues, and as Beeston appears to have turned its back on its heritage, that failed to find anything worthwhile too...

All the steam rallies I've looked at have also been cancelled...

As has often been suggested in the past, please let us know of anywhere that could be of general interest to others. Ok, so Mick and I are Midlands based and often it is other fellow Midlandish owners that respond and become directly or physically involved, but there's little point us exploring elsewhere if we don't receive ideas or suggestions from the majority of owners who are scattered around Britain.

What we've tried very hard to avoid (from the MESS's inception), is excluding anyone, or to be accused of being 'elitist'. The MESS is for all, owner or enthusiast, you are the folk whose voice really does matter...

## On the Rack Again

The problem with leaky racks has been aired quite a few times in recent Zooms and The MESSage. My visit to Kiley-Clinton Engineering in Birmingham has produced a potential answer to that problem. I find it a comfort that Roger Clinton has vast knowledge of the Reliant Scimitar and is well-aware of the different racks used in the various models. He was QC on the Rover SD1 and Scimitar racks at Burmans.

The seals he uses are to his own uprated specification and claims to be better than the originals. Roger worked at Burmans for about 7 years before branching out on his own. He used

to make everything in-house. These days much of the stuff is farmed out to his well-known 'Black Country' metal specialists and only to his high standards. He doesn't use anything made in China, India, etc., apart from one item, sourced from Japan, but made in Taiwan to an exacting and precise specification.



He hasn't sold a Scimitar rack for a few years now, but has a few racks in stock, however they were probably restored around 5 years ago and would need overhauling again before release. Like many things, if they are not used frequently as intended, they will deteriorate in time.

It is advised that you fire-up your engine regularly and move the steering wheel to prevent the seals from developing problems. Ideally, drive the car for a few hours, you'll probably enjoy it too...

We also discussed the conversion of our racks to electric. I mentioned the need for much oil to be in the racks just for lubrication purposes. Not so, according to Roger. He advises that grease nipples could be strategically placed in the rack's bushes where the rods exit the rack. During the rebuild

the internals could be assembled with sufficient lubrication to do the required job, without loads of oil trying to escape. He advises that the series 3 Corsa electric pas would be man enough – it is the power source that many Escort owners are using.

Micky G has lent me one of his racks which is being restored now and will cost around £245 plus VAT. Delivery is £21 on top. These are current prices dated August 2021. Apart from the fuel that I used to get to Brum and back, I also coughed up a further £8 in Congestion Charges, so £21 is a cheaper alternative. Next time though, I could use my free Bus Pass and spend the entire day on a variety of buses, then again I'll probably lose the will to live too...

It's worth mentioning that Kiley-Clinton also repair, restore, remanufacture anything to do with steering systems, such as uj's or steering pumps. The latter can be checked for £25 plus any parts that need replacing. Some





other cars rack's internals need heat-treating to improve their longevity, some benefit from hard-chroming, depending on how damaged they are, whatever...Kiley-Clinton can advise on possible improvements to any rack.

I have to say that I was impressed with the place, the general attitude, the standard of testing procedures and materials used shown to me. His son, Oliver, also works closely with Roger so the benefit to future generations seems assured too.

Should the Kiley-Clinton overhauled rack prove to be *the* answer for the Middlebridge Scimitar it will be ideal for our Reliant Scimitar cousins too.

[Rack Link](#)

## Keeping Dry

The brolly saga/drama continues, but I hope that we are now getting very close to printing. The current delay was in trying to identify the typeface that I used for the figures on the 'Personalised Handbooks'. I've trawled through about 6k typefaces now.

Whoopee! I finally found it on my old laptop, but it's not on my current system! Tailor Made will see if they have the fount, or if they can get it. If not, I may have to simply typeset the copy for TM to scan into their system. Should it be me



who provides the origination, I shall supply every number (just in case) plus the odd-balls such as 'ASBO', or 'PPP' instead of figures.

TM have finally received the brolly sample requested and the initial orders amounts to 24 so far. If you still haven't committed yourself, now is the time to, because after the initial order is executed a minimum of 10 brollies is demanded by the brolly supplier, so you will have to wait for another 9 latecomers who are also ordering a tad late.

I've yet to discuss final costs which will now include a protective sleeve for the brolly. Comprehensive details will be published as a separate email and you will need to order your specific requirements directly from Tailor Made, our Regalia suppliers.

I am hoping the gamps will be ready in time for Sywell. If so, and you are going to the show, I could collect yours for you and present it there.

## Un-accountable State

The 14th June saw another £100 donation enter the MESS account – the donator has been contacted and thanked for his generosity.

Today (9th August), I received a 'statement' from Lloyds Bank which, once again, didn't show what was actually in our account. All it stated was 'unauthorised borrowing 10.95%', nothing else. I finally spoke with the human being employed at Lloyds after an eternity of pushing phone keys and answering robotic questions, who will now send me a pukka 'Statement'.

We shall see what transpires this time, coz this has happened before and was said to have been addressed...anyway the MESS now has £1,677.59 in its account. I shall issue a cheque for the year's PLI, which amounts to £114.24 including tax, in time for the Sywell event.

Don't forget that this insurance could cover you at your more 'local' event, but it needs to be announced in 'The MESSage' before the event to comply.

I do look forward to meeting many fellow enthusiasts soon. *George DB*

## MB66's Swedish Summer Stravaiging

As elsewhere corona put a stop to most car shows but the regular summer Tuesday Upplands Historic Car meet has been carrying on since late summer.



MB66 at Upplands Historic Car Meeting

This is a small meet that occurs in the grounds of a small water mill that is now a craft centre close to Uppsala. Usually around 50+ European cars start to gather around 18:00. Many just calling in for an hour or so. The majority are not surprisingly Volvos (many P1800s and Amazons) or Saabs (few pretty Sonnets) but there is always a selection of Spitfires, MGBs and Minis.

The Morgan group sometimes appear with up to 10 cars. But it's the American section that gets the biggest turn out and often are represented by a couple of hundred 50's to 70's vehicles. This period is exceptionally popular here and I believe the largest American themed car show outside of the US is in southern Sweden each year.



MB66 Earning its Keep

The Scimitar attracts a good deal of attention. More so here than in the UK. Here car enthusiasts have not seen a Scimitar before so are curious. This even extends to passers-by in carparks – on most occasions someone will stop me for a chat.

Before going to the meet I finally got around to fitting the rubbing strip end pieces that Mick had had remanufactured It's only taken two years!

I also clay-bared the paint. Never tried this before and now wondering why not as the effect was exceptional. Well worth another 20 minutes work after cleaning the body.

Steve Coulson MB66



The End (Cap) is in Sight!

## Brooklands Anyone?

Alan Timmis, MB50, has been exploring the possibility of a group visit to Brooklands with an opportunity to have cars photographed on the famous banking.

Brooklands have confirmed it would not be a problem for a group to visit the Museum and as part of that visit have some time on the Members Banking taking some photographs of the cars.

In all cases, each person coming into the Museum would need to pay the appropriate entry charge, and book and pay for their tickets through the website in advance of the



visit. For access to the banking Brooklands ask for a minimum donation of £20 per car, for a 30 minute session, In all cases, we would have to allocate a member of staff on the day to oversee the session so there is a minimum number of 10 cars to make this work for Brooklands Staff and cover costs.

There are about five owners already expressing interest and so if anyone else wishes to come along either in a Scimitar or a lesser car (!) please let us know and we can try to get a mutually convenient date for all and a great photo opportunity as was done at Concorde and the Ace Cafe.



Brooklands Members Banking  
© Brooklands Museum

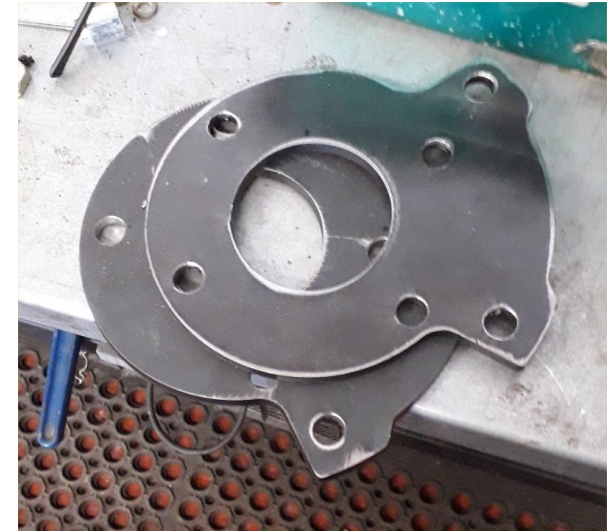
## Rear (Discs) of the Year

I travelled down to Paul Turnbull's using the Sat Nav and shortest route – arrived 5mins late of the Sat Nav estimate of 4 hours but have no idea where I was going – down some single track lanes past squirrels, rabbits, and a mother duck and her children who seemed to think the road belonged to them. Anyway up on Paul's car hoist almost straight away ( I hate him because I don't and can't have one) off with the wheels, drums etc and drive shafts removed.- I thought they might take the hubs off but there is a machine shop nearby with a hydraulic press so no need for Paul to have one..



Photo of axle with bits removed – note that I have removed all the surface rust and panted the suspension since returning home .

Paul's dad took the shafts away and told me it took 85tons to get one hub off and 100 tons to get the other off.. Next the spacer was replaced by Paul's design (below) to which the disc callipers are to be fitted.



And slide on the disc and fit the callipers.



The original brake pipe is retained but a flexible adapter pipe has to be fitted between the original brake pipe and the new callipers. The brake pads were fitted to the callipers before the callipers were mounted. and the brake pipe and flexible pipe were P clipped onto the rear of the axle trailing arm brackets – sorry not a very good photo to show where but the upper trailing arm bolt head can be seen and the P clip is just below it.



I brought with me a new handbrake cable which turned out to be a good idea as Paul could just cut the old one off. The ends ( U brackets ) of the new cable had to be removed ( hacksaw ) and the pressed ends just slotted into the calliper handbrake connections – Paul closed the calliper cable gaps a bit so to allow the cable to pass through but the pressed ends to be locked in position as the photo below shows. The handbrake cable was re-routed between the body and chassis to the calliper and the outer of

the cable tied to the original cable bracket and under the axle to the calliper  
Finally the brakes were bled and handbrake adjusted – I retained the hub and shoes etc as they came originally from my spare axle to which they will return when I have the time. The pedal is longer but fitting Wilwoods to the front made it longer anyway so the extra was not a problem for me. Back home again using the motorways was a hour quicker.



On returning home I was not 100% happy with the handbrake as the lever was too vertical for my liking so I have moved the lever/cable from its inner hole connection to the outer one which has reduced the lever movement to where I want it to be.

The handbrake feels much better and smooth to operate but how much better it is with discs I will only find out at the next MOT.

Total time taken was two days but you need to be there by 9am on the first day for it to be done in two days. I enjoyed my look around Paul's "projects" the Bentley straight six and chassis was fascinating. Finally my thanks to Paul and his dad for doing it in the first place and to his mam for the sandwiches – I think I may have stolen some of his dad's!

Full bought in kit needed below - plus Paul's adapter plates.



Paul may or may not sell a kit – I don't think he has decided yet. Would I DIY it – well maybe 40 years ago yes but having learnt that so much pressure was needed to remove the hubs my hub removal (kits) would have no chance so unless you have access to a hydraulic press which can handle 100 ton plus forget DIY.

*Peter Freeman*



## Replacing front hub felt seals.

The following from Alan Timmis relates to the difference between the original and replacement felt seals on the front hub. Alan says this is an old chestnut but may be worth recording to help others.

“It seems front hub felt seals are no longer available to the original thickness and those offered by suppliers nowadays are much thicker. Suppliers say there is no problem, “Been using them for years” they say. Well, I found the thicker seals would not allow me to set the bearings end float correctly so I disagree and offer this note.



Difference Between Old and New Seals

When using new felt seals, the preferred way to set axle bearings end float is not to have the felt seal installed initially. This to avoid any compression of the seal influencing the bearing setting.



New Seal Sitting Proud

To set bearings end float:-

1. Offer the hub to the axle with bearings fitted but no felt seal.
2. Tighten the axle nut to correctly set the bearings end float.
3. Mark position of the axle nut (centre pop it).
4. Remove the hub.
5. Fit seal into hub, lubricate seal with oil or grease then re-assemble hub to axle.
6. Tighten axle nut to position previously marked and split pin to secure.

If the felt seal is of proper thickness (not too thick) when the axle nut is tightened to the set position the bearings end float will be regained and it will compress the seal just enough to give an effective seal.

If the felt seal is too thick it will compress solid (I found) before the axle nut can be tightened to the set position, i.e. before the inner bearing has abutted to the vertical link shoulder. Thus, the assembly becomes clamped between the felt seal and the outer bearing to give false impression of bearing end float. There is then a temptation to back off the nut to allow the bearing freedom to run. Bad!

If original thickness felt seals cannot be obtained I suggest the new thicker seals be cut down to thickness size before fitting. I measure original felt seals to be 5mm thick.



New Seal as it should be



## Coming and Going

Still no news on MB48, despite the publicity on social media and in the classic press. One of the other owners has made contact with Dr Ken German, a well known retired police officer with experience in International vehicle theft and fraud to see if he can provide any pointers, or at least raise awareness amongst insurance companies and auction houses to look out for the car.

After a short time on the Middlebridge website MB53 went to a dealer and was being retailed by Percival Motor Company and advertised on Car and Classic. It did not stay there long and the new owner has been in touch with the Register



(Photo Percival Motor Company)

Another car which never made it to the website but which Mick had discussions over with the owner was MB30. Due to a change in circumstances the owner, part way through a restoration, decided to sell the car with a degree of urgency and this also appeared on Car and Classic and sold to a former Middlebridge owner and experienced Scimitar enthusiast. His intention is to carry out a full restoration but the car is in a queue of restorations so it may be a year or two before it is completed but we are sure it will be worth the wait.



(Photograph Owner)

We have heard that MB17 has sold from Graham Walker and the new owner has also been in touch with the Register.

We have been contacted by someone who missed out on MB53 and is looking for a well sorted auto

Middlebridge. Unfortunately the only MB on the website is a manual and while MB42 is an auto it is also a restoration.

## My Cars

Not much to update on my cars, MB14 is slowly making its way up Dave Speed's respray list and I took out a mortgage with QRG for two complete door frame sets to replace MB14's rather crusty door frames and to be fitted at the respray.

### 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.