



The MESSage

Newsletter of the Middlebridge Enthusiasts Scimitar Set



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December 2018

MICK'S MESSage

My Car No 33

Well, after my gearbox woes and all due to a 2p O ring my car ran great to and from Curborough. I was initially very disappointed with breaking down but on reflection this is the 1st time I have been let down by my MB since 2003 and on reflection that is a good record. I had a couple of localish events in the following couple of weeks followed by a hard punch up to Event City Manchester on the Saturday morning. I was working on the Friday which is the advertised set-up day but was allowed access at 08.00 on the Saturday morning hence the early morning workout. 05.30 start latest. ;o(

I do feel that any owners of Automatic Middlebridge cars should consider changing their 2p dipstick O ring at their earliest convenience, this could save you a lot of money, possibly a gearbox and some embarrassment too. I have added this tip to the marque website for future reference.

JR Rocker Covers:

I finally received mine! Bizarrely It was mentioned to me at Curborough that the O/S cover was impossible to fit due to the throttle assembly. I was quite surprised at this as I know that Alan and Peter have already fitted them to their cars and the only minor issues were the Oil Filler Cap location and a slightly longer belt required. I didn't envisage any surprises as my oil filler cap is already located on the other side of my engine and to the rear. [The pictures should say it all]. Well, they fitted with a small bit of fettling, time taken 2 hours. (*Show off! ;-)* Ed.)



MESSEMBly

A monthly MESS meeting is held on the first Monday at 7pm in The Elms Pub, Lutterworth LE17 4HB.

Food available and Travelodge next door. Every enthusiast is welcome to join us, owner or not.

Banter expected and encouraged. Ditto rude jokes.

Manchester Event City

This is the third year we have done this event and once again Bruce came up trumps with a great stand. We were allocated a brilliant pitch that was in-line with the entrance! Needless to say at 10.00 hrs on both days we were instantly swamped. As mentioned above, the Saturday was interesting for me, well that's one way of putting it. 04.30 pull the car out of the garage and hey presto NSR tyre totally flat, quick tyre change, pack the kit 'n' clean up. (not to F1 standard ;o). Drive to the garage top up with fuel and sweets left Northampton at 05.30 and arrived at Event City 07.45 just in time for the 08.00 entry time. Now that was pushing it!

Needless to say it rained on route 'well, Manchester' thus ensuring that Matt and myself had a serious cleaning regime to complete prior to the 10.00 kick off.



Post event, It was nice to see Pete's car 'ASBO' on the front of Classic Car Weekly.



(Pete thought so too but reckons Mick and Matt getting on their knees to worship ASBO was going a bit far! Ed.)

Sywell 'Piston and Props' Northamptonshire 22/23 Sept' 2018

The MESS always look forward to this event, we all thoroughly enjoy the relaxed light hearted banter and atmosphere and all of the different activities on offer including the many classic car displays, there's always a great selection of classics in the car park, hot rods, drag racing, Lancaster Bomber, Spitfire, Mustang and many more, there's also a live band all day that the ladies really enjoy and much more as well.

This year was a little subdued however as on the Saturday the weather was awful, it rained all day and was freezing cold, we were all shocked when Will and Jane just turned up out of the blue for the day, (They certainly won the furthest travelled) it was great to see them again.

The Sunday was better, not so cold and with sporadic outbursts of rain. We were delighted to have two new cars 'n' owners there, we welcome Simon Hall with MB 23 and Paul and Kate Crocker in MB 67 which bizarrely was bought from Will only a few weeks earlier and some 600 miles further north! We the MESS look forward to meeting up with them for much good hearted banter in the future. ;o)

This is my local event and annoyingly we had bright sunshine for the following 7 days!

Mick G



Simon's MB23 Looking Fantastic, Even in the Rain!



MB 66

By the time you read this Matt and myself will hopefully have re-started work on the mechanicals (cold permitting). Our aim is to have her ready and looking the business by July 2019.

Email Auction—Middlebridge Scimitar GTE Framed Original Certificate

Thanks to everyone who made a bid for the Beaujolais Certificate, we had six bids in total, as below: -

1 Stuart Daburn	£500.00
2	£475.00
3	£455.99
4	£400.00
5	£375.00
6	£40.00

A HUGE thank you to Stuart for his winning bid. The money has gone into the MESS account and will go towards helping with the 30th Anniversary event next year.

Middlebridge 30th Anniversary

It does not seem four years since the Gatcombe event and it is a truism that you should never say never again! This time, hopefully with a bit of additional help so it does not fall all on Mick and George's shoulders, the intention is to have a 30th Anniversary event at the Silverstone Classic 26/27/28 July 2019.



We had 27 cars at the Gatcombe event and we know there have been a number refurbished and/or put back on the road since then so are hoping to beat that in 2019. It is a great chance to get as many of the Middlebridge production run in one place so whether yours is a daily driver, concours or on a trailer get it there to fly the flag for the marque.

Ideally we should have at least 30 for the anniversary display and at the time of writing at the end of November we have 17 cars confirmed and 2 probables. 19 at this stage is pretty good going but we need



more of you to let us know, even if that is only an expression of interest.

One thing we are looking to do is to produce merchandise for the Anniversary event and because we are reliant (no pun intended!) solely on donations, we would need people to give us pre orders and possibly deposits to allow us to order this and not impact on the limited funds we have for running the mundane costs like insurance etc.

I think I have most folk on the owners' mailing list but if you have not received the event details then drop me an email to will_anderson@live.com and I will send them to you.

Auctions, Sales and Lend/Lease

Original black luggage cover,
£85, Dan Mitchell,
01926 814484,
Warwickshire

A Brace of Load Covers

Well, like buses, you wait for ages
then two come along at the same
time!

Please contact the sellers directly if
you are interested.

A folding luggage cover in
brown, £100,
George Sampford,
07816 448494 Rugby
(George will donate the
Proceeds to the MESS)



Coloured Metal RSSOC Badge

- George says he is not sure of the origins of this but has never seen another one this colour (Cue half a dozen on eBay next week!) He is not sure how much it is worth but is open to offers with any money raised going to the MESS funds.
 - Offers (inc. £2.50 postage) to will_anderson@live.com and the highest offer received by 21 December 2018 will win the item.



Middlebridge Cloth Bags

- I have five of these left on a first come, first served basis. Approx. 13.5 inch by 13.5 inch with MB logo and website address on one side.
- £5.00 minimum donation to the MESS (plus £2.50 postage).
- Email: - will_anderson@live.com



Brake Master Cylinder

- Brake Master Cylinder and Reservoir, £100 plus postage. (It's heavy!)
- Email: - will_anderson@live.com

GEORGE'S JARGON

PEARL ANNIVERSARY EVENTS 2019 - number 1

It seems highly likely that the Classic Car meeting at the Silverstone Race Track, July 26, 27, 28, will be our Major Event for next year. It's on for 3 days but you can do 1, 2, or all 3 days. I'm taking my caravan for the duration, arriving at the Silverstone Woodlands Campsite, on the Wednesday or Thursday, to help set-up The MESS's allocated site. Maggie will drive the Middlebridge, whilst I tow the caravan with my Wally Trolley. I'm hoping that the bands booked for entertainment are ridiculously loud and unbelievably raucous... eat your heart out Abba.

For those of you that are not 'camping' but are seeking other accommodation, areas to consider for hotels or pubs are Towcester (4mls), Buckingham (6.7mls), Brackley (8.3mls), Stoke Bruerne (9.7mls). Milton Keynes is 15.9 miles away, Banbury is 16.5, Bicester Village is 18.8. I imagine that there are a number of nearby village pubs that may offer accommodation, too.

The last 3 places mentioned could be of interest to those keen on mega shopping as they all have large precincts to exercise the plastic. Brackley has some antique shops, Stoke Bruerne is a lovely canal-side village with pubs and a museum related to the canal.

Despite there being 3 bus services that stop at Silverstone, there aren't any timetables printed currently, as there have been vast alterations to the roads in and around Towcester, which is on the A5 (Watling Street), and is crossed just north of the town by the busy A43. These roadworks have been an absolute mare for ages now, and The Stagecoach bus service have given-up with accurate timetables and routes until January, at least, when it is hoped some kind of sanity will return. Stagecoach Northampton website shows numbers 83, 88 and X91 stopping at Silverstone and the routes that they should take. If you come in your Middlebridge and leave it on site, you may

be able to use the bus service to your carefully-chosen dwelling rather than a Taxi.

It has been suggested that The MESS membership could have a 'Pearl Anniversary Meal'*, maybe on the Saturday evening. If we do get 30 cars to this event, it's possible that we could have 60 or more folk sitting down. Such numbers would probably require a restaurant in one of the towns, but before I'm volunteered to research such a venue we need to know (roughly) how many folk fancy the idea. Then there is also the problem of transporting such a number of people to and from the venue. Stagecoach do have a couple of 'Heritage' buses that can be hired – a couple of London Routemasters, plus some from Lincolnshire (I think), and a single decker. Once more we need to know numbers before I spend time on further research and costs.

It is important then that you make some kind of commitment as early as possible so that we can make the Pearl Anniversary as delightful, as enjoyable, and as successful as the Silver Anniversary events of 2014.



*An alternative eatery nearby is 'Jack's Hill Café', just north of Towcester on the A5. It's a 'truckers' café with expected trucker-type food... I visit the place most months as it's a regularly organised meeting place for 'bikers' and is filled (wall-to-wall) with Harleys, plus a few Italian and British bikes. The clientele then are mostly shaven heads, pot bellies, body piercings and tattooed eyeballs, the blokes look just as rough too.

Anyway, the choice is yours... I have eaten there once – and survived.

A huge 'Thank You' goes to Mark and Sue Cropper for getting this event organised. It's very encouraging that more recent and younger Middlebridge owners are helping with the progress and promotion of 'The MESS'.

It should be added that this important meeting differs from Gatcombe in many ways. Then, it was vital that we had the best possible presentation of our Cars at such a prestigious venue and event. This time, we will be looking to impress fellow Classic Car enthusiasts, consequently, cars that were frowned-upon at Gatcombe (if they were leaking oil, tatty, etc), would be welcome and acceptable at Silverstone as we hope to achieve an entry in the Guinness Book of Records. We still expect to show the best that there is, obviously, but if you are in the middle of a rolling restoration and it's drivable (even if you have to trailer it), come and join us.

EXHAUSTING TOMES

I have no idea just how old my Scimitar exhaust system is, but during the 10 years that it's been in my custody, it has had the occasional weld to keep it quiet and road legal. This time, gases seem to be escaping from the manifold-to-downpipe connection, so off it came to investigate the cause.

It's probable that the bell-shaped part of the downpipe had stretched over the years and no longer had an effective seal. Rummaging around a parts-supplier I found a copper exhaust ring that might solve the problem. It did. During the next journey (to Jack's Hill Café actually), the familiar sound of a blown exhaust reappeared.

Off came the wheel and glass-fibre deflectors within the wheel-arch area again, and with the engine fired-up it showed that the gases were now escaping from the manifold-to-cylinder head this time. After soaking the nuts in copious amounts of WD40, for almost a week, the cast-

iron manifold was successfully removed without damaging it. In doing so, however, the fragile mild-steel downpipe broke away from the stainless-steel 'Falcon' silencer, oh joy!

It's beyond me just how those gaskets have been doing their job for all these years without failure – the face of the manifold was pretty poor, a steel ruler showed it was not very straight either. An engineer ground it flat and it looked like new, but the other problem was the raised 'ring' on the manifold's outlet (which the 'bellmouth' of the downpipe couples to), was incomplete. I suggested that some weld could be added to the defect but I was advised that cast iron is a real nuisance to weld. All I could do was gently file away some of the good stuff to allow the pipe to fit closer to the defective side, plus the use of another copper exhaust ring again.



Nigel at QRG has the manifold gaskets and nuts – all my local Ford stockists claim that they are obsolete...

Firstly I had to get the downpipe and silencer glued back together, and here my MOT Tester and Son-in-Law, Bob, came to the rescue. Yes, he knew of an excellent welder who also specialised in stainless. A visit to Turweston Airfield in darkest Buckinghamshire revealed the workshop of Michael Hausmann, who trades under the name of Hausmann Fabrications Ltd. Between us, Mike managed to rejoin the two broken exhaust sections with lovely even welds. Putting it back on

the Scimitar it now fits better than it ever did. That has solved the problem for now, however...



It's probably time for me to renew the whole exhaust system, and in stainless all the way... Mike H has an excellent reputation for making top-quality stainless exhaust systems, indeed the system that I saw, made for a VW Splitty van, was superb with perfectly even welds, but more of that later.

With that in mind, Micky G and I revisited Mike's workshop taking both our Middlebridges as we have quite different exhaust systems. As mentioned, mine still has the original cast-iron manifolds, these are unique to our cars and that particular part is obsolete. If you break one there are no spares, unless you know otherwise.

Mike the pipe can make a new system that either connects straight onto the existing cast-iron manifold, or he can make a 3-branch manifold, in stainless, that connects to the silencer, making all 3 pipes the same length, much like the system that is fitted to Micky G's Scimitar. All bends are mandrilled ensuring that the pipe's diameter remains the same throughout, whereas the original Falcon pipes narrowed down during the bending process. He makes all the silencers too and would make them to look exactly the same as the original patterns.

Though Falcon no longer make our type of silencers or exhaust systems, there are companies that can closely match them – it's a sort of franchise set-up using pre-bent (and narrowed) pipes and silencers made in China. I've yet to find anything made in China, personally, that gives me any confidence – nails that have both offset heads and points, that simply bend rather than

enter wood, screws that have no slots to take a screwdriver, and despite drilling pilot holes in the soft wood, still snap in half because of the rubbish metal used... and this is the country who will make our next generation of nuclear power stations, apparently. This mind is truly boggled! (Rant over).

Back to Mike's exhausts then. Made in 304 Stainless Steel, 16swg/1.6mm. A full system, including 3-branch manifolds, would be around £1500, plus vat. Using the original cast-iron manifolds, however, would be around £1000, plus vat. There is a one year's guarantee for manufacturing defects. With the value of our cars continually increasing, it really is worth considering fitting a quality product and will be money well spent. We do know of some folk who have fitted systems from a well-known main suppliers that didn't fit properly nor lasted very long either. You pays yer money...

Please let me know if this is of interest to you as I will use my car as a donor to make either system. Once a pattern is made it should be relatively simple to replicate, and possibly slightly cheaper, but if there's no-one else interested it will just be a more expensive one-off for everyone.

FUEL TANK

Has anyone a genuine Middlebridge fuel tank that they are throwing away? Mike H will fabricate tanks in similar top quality stainless-steel, but he needs something to copy. Measurements can be easily taken from the outside, but inside our tanks differ from the Reliant version with baffles



to prevent fuel surge. We could have a look using an endoscope, but it would be better to see it in the raw and possibly upgrade it. Micky G experienced his engine dying on quite mild bends when he fitted a 6A tank for a short while. Lesson learned! Mike H will need to cut open a tank to see what is required in the baffles. A drain plug might also be useful. I've also been looking at different sender units and will see if improvements exist and a better method of attachment to the tank rather than the original and crude ring seal.

I did buy a stainless tank for my 5A years ago from Don Pither. The sender unit was held in place by captive nuts and used studs thereby dispensing with the iffy ring. This was a much better method to secure that part. I think I was one of the first to buy his tank and when I fitted the sender unit a couple of the studs snapped as they were too long. Don suggested that I return the tank by courier, which I couldn't do as I was using the car daily. On a Saturday, I drove to his place in Gloucester from Warwickshire, where he kindly let me lay in his cold, dirty and draughty barn to replace the tank - without any help from him whatsoever! Not even a cuppa was offered. This time I shortened all the studs before fitting them. Based on my experience, Don had some notes printed which were stuck to the tanks advising that the studs would probably need shortening before fitting. Would you believe it dear reader, that was the last time I bought anything from Don!

NEC CLASSIC CAR SHOW

Once again, it was a very busy and thoroughly enjoyable few days, with many visitors showing a lot of knowledge. Friday used to be a Press Day and reasonably quiet, now it's also the day when people tend to go who are looking to buy – many seemed to know quite a bit about the Middlebridge marque and probably have an in-depth insight of most classics – they know what they are looking for, and at. Saturday also showed many informed visitors, who perhaps couldn't get time off work on Friday, mixed with the average enthusiast. Sunday was quieter this year, though the nearby auction seemed more audibly intrusive this time, but it did bring some passing trade. It's known as 'PPP' day – punters 'pick it up, put it down and p**s off'.

Elsewhere you will read of current and past owners who also visited our lovely looking stand, designed by our very own Bruce Beauchamp. The Daimler Dart Club, with whom we are contiguous asked where they could get a display like ours! Our cars are bespoke and so is our Stand. Well done Bruce.

I wonder if we are a little different from other clubs inasmuch as there being only 79 cars made and about 30 or so cars having changed hands in 10 years, we know who originally owned them and who does own them now, and often on first name terms as there are only 100 or so folk involved. Very often the original owners want to be kept informed of what we're doing, so 'The MESSage' is sent to both current and past owners. Isn't that a bit special?





Dennis Nursey entertained us with engrossing tales about his days at Lilac Grove. Another visitor was Nigel Harris, who used to work for Reliant and built up the rolling chassis, filled the brake lines etc, solved any mechanical problems, sometimes visited Gatcombe Park to service Princess Anne's car and tested Scimitars before they were sent to Dealers. He tightened the last nut on the car – the one on the steering wheel, having made sure the wheel was correctly aligned. Nigel also helped to train the green staff when Middlebridge bought the Scimitar rights. After 27 years working for Reliant, he came back from one work-related trip to be given instant redundancy, leaving that day, that hour, taking his tools... what a way to treat loyalty, eh.



Though it was also exhausting, tiring, Mick and I were equally elated at times, which will become apparent just 'why' in the near future, when further announcements will be made... intriguing innit! We both feel that our efforts have borne

bigger fruits than we could have ever imagined since those that we aimed for just a few years ago.

Thanks go to the other MESSEmbers who made it another wonderful show, with much banter, laughter and smut... Micky G, his son Matt, RSSOC Registrar Will A, Bruce B, Dr Dan, Peter H with sterling help from his guvnor Marie, plus of course, the proud owners of the stunning cars on our Stand – which was Mick's, Steve's, Bruce's and Peter's.



RACKED OFF

My Middlebridge steering rack was overhauled by Mark Wilson a few years ago and was never a problem whilst in constant use. Since losing its status as my everyday car it has started to leak, simply because it's not being used enough. The seals don't like being in one position for ages then woken up and to be expected to function efficiently. I could have the seals replaced all over again, of course, but the problem could readily return for the very same reason.

An electric set-up may be the answer, or is it? The electric motor powers the steering column, not the actual rack. EZ electric steering had a look at Bruce's Scimitar at the NEC, their conclusion is that it's certainly doable, however... Oil is still required in our racks for lubrication purposes, existing pipework would have to be modified to bypass its 'power' role, which isn't a problem. The problem of oil leaking from the rack of an occasionally used car would remain.

Peter Humphries had similar problems to me with his renovated rack, on his advice I have refilled my PAS reservoir with some Lucas Steering Rack Fluid which swells the seals. So far it's done the trick, only time will tell just how effective it is and how long it lasts.

Merry ChristMESS! - George.

Lancaster Classic Car Show NEC 2018

Once again we were selected to display in the NEC Premier Hall, No2. The theme selected by the NEC this year was "Built to last" our stand reflected this, everyone loved the line up of cars in front of the Lancaster Bomber. We were delighted that Steve managed to get his Cosworth powered Middlebridge onto the stand especially after a last minute hi-cup on the rolling road. We were run ragged for most of the event but it was great to see and chat with many Middlebridge owners and enthusiasts on the stand over the weekend. We also had a visit from Dennis Nursey who once again thrilled us with Middlebridge stories. More pictures will be uploaded to the Middlebridge website, previous events area in due course.



MIDDLEBRIDGE 42

Yes, things have been a bit quiet on the MB42 front but I took the opportunity to drop in past Mark Wilson's place on the way back from a trip south and had a good update with him on the work he is doing to get it into good mechanical order.



He had been having fun and games with the door fit and had the passenger door and central locking in bits when we arrived. However, I have no doubt it will not beat him. He has uncovered a few bodesges, including the mess below that was supposed to be the rear hatch lock mechanism. Just as well we had agreed to replace it with a good SE6 lock.



As well as this, both blowers were out and in a sorry state. One might have been recoverable but I agreed that, in this case too, replacement was the better option.



One of the issues with the car was that the it would run hot in traffic. It never boiled but was sufficiently different from MB14 to cause me concern, added to that it had a non standard fan fitted. Mark sent me a very enlightening video comparing the existing fan output (I think I could have blown harder!) with the motor he intended to replace it with, which was almost lifting itself off the floor!

MB42 was on Wolfrace wheels when I bought it and I wanted to return it to standard Performance alloys. I managed to pick up a set of four from a Club member but that left me with the issue of the spare. Mark came to the rescue again as he had one MB alloy looking for a home so I now have that and will get it refurbished to match the others with a set of new tyres ready for when the car comes back.

Coming and Going

First time for a long time we have no reports of cars being sold. We do, however, have a number of notes of interest from people interested in acquiring a Middlebridge, with a few serious enquiries coming at the NEC. So, if you are thinking of selling then do drop me or Mick an email.

OMG, The Power Of Facebook and the NEC!

Every year my family use the NEC as an excuse to meet up and this year was no exception, my brother and his wife flew in for the Saturday and when visiting the stand, his Wife took a picture of us and posted on Facebook.

Within ten minutes they had had a response to the picture. In the background was the Middlebridge Cadbury's Racing Car.



Apparently the Son of my Brother's mate had just purchased that very car in the States. I have since spoken with the new owner and the car is to be returned to the UK and will be running in the original Cadbury's colours. "what a small world." and what a bonus for the Middlebridge marque.

Mick



LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION!



Mystery Picture (Last Issue)

Last months picture was of Middlebridge 29 outside Charlie Chaplins ex home on Lake Geneva and was taken by the then owner Louis. This time we had a winner(s), well done Ashley Edwards, closely followed by Gordon Reid, two obviously well travelled Scots Owners!

Mystery Picture (This issue)

We are running out of mystery pictures so this one might just be too obvious, given my location and previous photos so please send in any suitable pictures and details for a future MESSAGE.

