



# The MESSage

Newsletter of the Middlebridge Enthusiasts Scimitar Set



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April 2017

## MICK'S MESSage

### My Car No 33

Unfortunately, not much achieved on 33 over the last month. This is mainly due to Matt calling in some favours with No 66 below and of course the freezing temperatures.

### Matt's Car No 66

Good news, we have made progress on 66. A new battery and 'hey presto' we now have reliable starting. The leccy window issue is now sorted & fully functional. Her main issue upon purchase, the auto box, has already been replaced and road tested. While she was on the ramp we noticed that the rear fuel pipe was griflex so this is now on the shortlist and will soon be replaced. We also made a trip to Nigel QRG for some shiny stainless wipers & arms as the car had none fitted when purchased.

### MESSY, torque: (My personal thoughts / gripe only)

I just felt the need to respond to George's fuel article as printed in the last MESSage.

With 2017 just around the corner we will soon see E10 fuel arrive at the pumps. The current unleaded is E5 equates to 5% Ethanol this has already caused issues in Classic car circles irrespective of marque or status. Needless to say if your Classic is a Muira or Bentley etc then it's just an inconvenience that your engineer will take care of and probably without the owner ever even being aware.

The problem is we don't all have a classically experienced engineer on hand! E5 (Unleaded) is already causing problems for classics including our Middlebridge cars as it effects the fuel line material & fittings. Just look at our website, we have several accounts of near disasters with fuel lines / fittings and their degradation! If you have not checked your fuel lines and fittings then I urge you to get them inspected as soon as possible. The reason for this gripe is that E10 is 10% Ethanol which will in my personal opinion only, potentially further accelerate hose and fitting failures it is also clearly not a fuel that our Cologne engines were originally designed to run on. The good news if you can call it that is that E5 will remain available at the pumps for the foreseeable future. As mentioned at the start of my gripe, this is my personal opinion only and it is quite possible that it is purely coincidental and that the fuel system failures are actually age related as the original components were probably manufactured around 1988 some 29 years ago now. It would be great to hear from anyone with an opinion on this subject.

## 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.

## George's Grumblings

The appeal for voluntary funds last time had brought quite a mixed response.

Christmas is never the best time to ask folk to dig into their pockets for anything other than 'charitable' donations, of course, nevertheless, the financial demands of running The MESS have to be addressed, as outlined in previous MESSages.

Two owners sent a staggering and generous £100 each, and one other sent a cheque for £500!!! This now shows a balance of £765.74 in The MESS account. The three members have been sent very appreciative 'Thankyous'. Such astonishing generosity is overwhelming, so thank you all, once again.

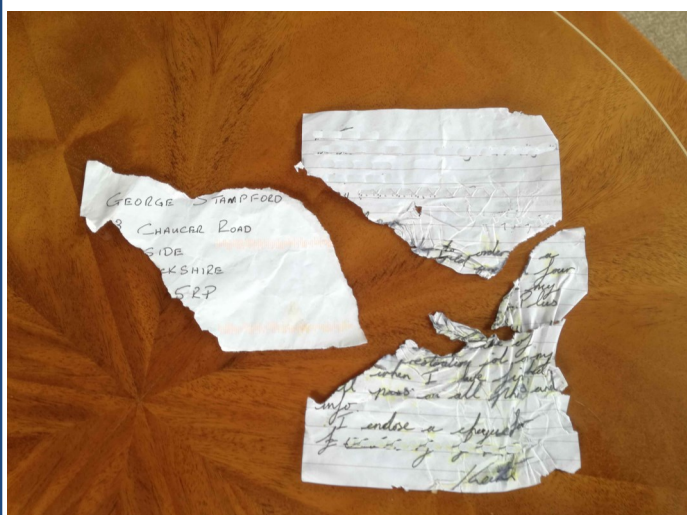
The appeal for more voluntary funding continues though, as the day-to-day running of The MESS will gradually bite into that balance. (*Editor's Note e.g. the running of the website costs around £200 per annum—We all use that and Mick has been funding most of that himself for many years.*) You can be assured that I/we do make every effort to get full value for money for anything that we need to buy. This year we will re-do the display



information panels that have graced our Stands since the inception of The MESS. They have served us and Joe Public well, imparting information on our cars, but they do need updating. It is quite possible that you have considered sending a donation, so if it's simply slipped your mind, please send a cheque made out to 'The MESS' to me at 106 Carlton Road, Bilton, Rugby, Warwickshire CV22 7PE. Any amount of money is most welcome, at any time. Thanks.

Whilst I was driving home the VW and towing the caravan, Maggie received a message from the lady who bought our previous house in Rugby. It transpired that a cheque and letter had been sent to me, unfortunately, their doggie intercepted its arrival and added part of both to his diet. Somewhat puzzled, I had no idea what it could be... Next day I collected the chewed remains which was an order for some Middlebridge Badges.

How many, and of what, were possibly still inside the beastie and I had no intention of going through its exhaust system for clues. The order came from a member who clearly hadn't taken note of the address that I moved to, just over



Well Done on Deciphering the Chewed Letter!

a year ago! We had his email and phone details, sadly they were both out-of-date, his letter's post-code was partly missing too. Dan came up with his new email address, so I was able to establish contact and saved the day.

The point is folks, if you do change your contact details, please let us know, 'coz it can take quite a bit of time and effort to sort out. As an aside, I took the chewed cheque to my Bank... "Is this redeemable?" I woefully queried, "Looks like a dog's chewed it", she said laughing, "Exactly that", I confirmed. Despite my surname being misspelt the cheque did go through ok.

Kind Regards

George SAMPFORD

(Please note: no T between the S and A, and a P sits between the M and F) The Family name comes from Great Sampford in Essex and means 'a sandy-bottomed stream', so there...

## Handbooks

I assume that everyone is happy with the Handbooks that they have as no-one has asked for a copy for their own car. I do not have a problem with that whatsoever, what does concern me is that folk have mentioned that they



would like a Personalised copy and haven't bothered to follow it up!

## Shows

At a recent MESsembly we discussed attending a Classic Car Show on the Isle of Wight. Peter (Hooligan) Humphries of Asbo Fame, was definitely up for that one. Further inquiries showed that it was already close to being over-



Photo. Jerry Ree

subscribed and we hadn't even advertised it in the next MESSage.

Now, if you could give us some idea of your interest in this show, then we can do something for next year, sooner rather than later. You won't be condemned for backing-out, should your circumstances change (should you fancy it for next year), but it would give us some idea of interest at the moment.

Maggie and I thought we could take the caravan there and spend a week or so exploring the lovely island, however a quote of £318 from the Ferry company is not a figure that I'm willing to pay. Plus there would be the additional cost of taking the Middlebridge, too. It has been claimed that the Isle of Wight Ferry is the most expensive stretch of water in the world! I can well believe that. There was a chap that I worked with on a night-shift in Brixton, South London, back in



the late 1960's, he used to drive to and from his home on the Isle of Wight every single day! The mind boggles over...

Twice, since just before Christmas, I have also made inquiries with the Isle of Man for a similar Middlebridge jaunt. Twice I have been expecting information and details - and nothing has arrived yet. Clearly, some industries are making too much money and don't need to offer a service, or want our patronage... Shall I bother anymore?

## The Tenuous Connection

### Daimler Dart SP 250 to Middlebridge Scimitar

*For those who did not make the NEC show last November this is the text of the banner that was used to link our stand to the adjacent Daimler SP250 Owners Club. Another group that operates purely on a subscription free basis and relies solely on the help and generosity of SP owners, and what a nice bunch they were too!*



Ogle SX350 Prototype

In 1962 Daimler approached 'Ogle Design' seeking a replacement body for the Dart chassis.

David Ogle produced a coupe body which Daimler (unfortunately) rejected.

Reliant Cars at Tamworth, on the other hand, thought that this was exactly the shape they were looking for to replace the ageing 'Sabres'. After a few minor design modifications, the Reliant SE4 Coupe was born.



Tom Karen with the SX250

Rather than fitting the superb Edward Turner designed 2.5 V8 Daimler engine, Reliant used the more agricultural (but cheaper) Ford straight 6 of 2.5 litres, then the 3 litre version, followed eventually by the virtually indestructible V6 3 litre Essex.

Designer Tom Karen joined 'Ogle' and penned the more familiar and famous Reliant GTE in 1968 which was also later presented along-side the redesigned



SE4

Coupe at the 1970 Earls Court Motor Show. Such was the public demand for the GTE SE5 the revised Coupe never went into production, however, the 2 Coupe samples made still exist to this day. Over time Tom Karen redesigned the 5 into the 5A, then the wider and longer 6, 6A, 6B and the lovely GTC.



SE5a to Sabre

In 1987 Reliant ceased production of the GTE to concentrate on the small 2-seater sports car market whilst still producing the amazing 3-wheelers, of course.

Middlebridge bought the GTE and GTC manufacturing rights from Reliant and after 2 years of development and refinement and over 450 differences between the marques, the bespoke Middlebridge Scimitar was launched. Tom Karen remarked – “I consider the



Reliant Publicity Photo SE6

Middlebridge to be the ultimate development of the Scimitar...”

Just 79 Middlebridge Scimitars were hand-built in Beeston, Nottingham, before production ceased, sadly, due to losing a court case. Middlebridge had bought the famous Bentley “Old Number One”, however, they disputed its authenticity in court. They lost the case which cost them a hefty £10m and consequently the Classic Car repair business in Milton Keynes also folded as did the Formula 1 Race Team.



Middlebridge Publicity Photo

In a nutshell, the replacement Dart body became the Reliant SE4 Coupe which begat the final Scimitar made by Middlebridge - all penned by Ogle Design.

## On a Plate?

As some of you may know, I have an interest in registration marks and have ASE 5A on my 5a and MBS 14A on MB14. I understand that some people cannot fathom out why some of us have a fascination for letter and number combinations on a registration plate and the subject can certainly provide strong opinions, usually about “waste of money” and “vanity”.



Whatever your opinion, I certainly would not spend the sums that certain plates make. However, some simple combinations of letters and numbers that are visually pleasing can be picked up for not a lot of money.

I also appreciate combinations that relate to the make or model and I was pleased to hear from Chris Bartlett, the owner of MB61 who emailed me to confirm a change of registration for the register.

Chris had acquired C1 GTE for MB61 and joked: "I really wanted G1 rather than C1, for obvious reasons, but G1 is already on another Middlebridge and the owner declined to sell to me, which I thought was dashed unsporting and frankly just not British, seeing as how my case for the transfer was plainly irrefutable and clearly in the best interests of the marque!"

My own pet dislike is where plates are mis-spaced or additional caps are added to make a letter or number appear as something else, so I am hoping Chris resists the temptation as the plate looks good to me as it is.



MB 61's New Plate



Good Use of the MB Shield Too!

## Steering Pumps Again

Peter Freeman, MB9, has been having some issues with pulsing in the steering and asked about a replacement power steering pump. While trying to find a MAPCO pump, as listed on the Middlebridge website FAQ, he was told that the MAPCO pump was no longer available. He did, however point me to a very useful site (apologies if you already know this) <https://spare-part.org>. If you search on QUINTON HAZELL QSRPA110 it will bring up a list of suitable alternative pumps.

A very useful resource if you have a part number. As before, it is worth mentioning that the replacement pumps come without the pulley, so don't throw yours away!

## Throttle Cables

John Unwin's progress with MB65 continues and it is now apparently road legal, although without carpets! John said they were riddled with carpet moth so they have been removed "a delightful job!" and they will stay out until the respray.

He has also taken the opportunity to remove the heater assembly and intends to replace it with a unit from a SE6b.

During the process he sent the throttle cable to Speedy Cables for replacement and they informed him that they cannot make new ones owing to availability of parts. Fortunately for John they were able to repair his by replacing the inner and a couple of damaged grommets.

If anyone has a stock of old cables or suggestions for alternatives, even a part number as above, then I would be grateful for any information.

## Middlebridge 25

I had corresponded with the owner of Middlebridge 25 last year when he helpfully provided some information on the car for the register. At that time he was in two minds about whether to sell the car as his job had taken him abroad and the restoration he planned for the car had stalled leaving it languishing half done.

We can all convince ourselves that we will get round to finishing a project "one day" but the owner finally realised that he was not going to get MB25 back on the road any time soon and contacted



Middlebridge 25

me and Mick Gaughran with a view to selling it as a restoration project.

It was quite convenient for me to go and view the car and give an opinion as, surprisingly, it was only some 30 miles from me in North Scotland.

The car had been off the road since 2006/07 and with the current owner since around 2008. Acquiring it shortly after it had been resprayed the current owner rebuilt the front suspension and he had replaced the corroded heating fans. To do some of this work the car's interior had been partially dismantled. Most of the dismantled parts looked to be in the back of the car in boxes but the keys had been lost.



Many, Many Blisters!

The biggest issue was, unsurprisingly, the paintwork. Ten years on from the respray, every single panel was blistered. In fact the only parts that were not were the bumpers. I later found out that the previous owner who had resprayed the car had taken off the original rubber bumpers replacing them with a later moulded set from Graham Walker.

It was quite difficult to put a value on the car given its condition but as MB64, which was similar but in better condition, had made £5,000 at auction a price of £4,000 was suggested and the owner agreed.



Advertised both on Mick's website and through the Scimitarweb forum it generated a lot of interest and a deal was agreed with it heading down south to Yorkshire to a new owner who is going to complete the restoration.



MB 25's Partially Dismantled Interior

Just to show what a small world it is MB25 was captured on a transporter going through Aberdeen on her journey south and the picture posted on Facebook!



## Embroidered Middlebridge Sew-on Badge

Many thanks to everyone who responded to Chris Bartlett's enquiry about the embroidered badges. Chris received orders for over 40 badges and is now in the process of sending these out to the owners. As you can see below, they are superb quality.



## Middlebridge 36

Sadly the owner of MB36 has had a change of circumstances and after spending a lot of time, money and effort in detailing and fettling the car after Bob's excellent original restoration, he has decided it is time to sell. At time of writing it is on Mick's website [http://middlebridge-scimitar.co.uk/sale\\_full\\_details.php?id=37](http://middlebridge-scimitar.co.uk/sale_full_details.php?id=37)



A very well sorted example, this should easily find a new owner as all the hard work has been done on this car.

I have a personal liking for this car, mainly as it is one that got away from me in 2011 when I was first looking for a MB as the previous owner bought it before I could go to view it. After hearing about everything he had to do to it to get it back into good condition, I think he did me a favour! The second is that it is one of the few, if not the only, Scottish registered Middlebridge cars and is still wearing its original Aberdeen plate.

## Middlebridge 44

After 24 years in the same family ownership MB44, the last production Middlebridge, is being offered for sale.

One of four complete cars sold at the Middlebridge auction on 22nd November 1990 (lot no 770) for £17,400 + £1,766 car tax and VAT (the list price was around £25,000).

A plaque located in the engine bay is engraved "Last production by Middlebridge Scimitor (sic) September 1990 No 450044" along with the names of those involved in manufacturing the car. Another possibly unique feature is the front rubber mat embossed with a Scimitar Shield.

The car has been well maintained, but after 27 years it has begun to show its age. Apart from a re-spray (more than 10 years ago) to the front spoiler and bumper, the paintwork and interior are original. There is some blistering of the paintwork, evident on the doors, door sills and along the roof trim. The stitching on the drivers seat also requires

repair, but otherwise it is in good mechanical order. It is currently SORN but is to be MOT'ed before sale and the advert will shortly be appearing on the website.

## Calling Keith Taylor!

Following our appeal in the November 2016 MESSage, Keith has been in touch and has confirmed he is getting on with the restoration of MB34 and will update us shortly. We now have up to date contact details to keep him up to speed with the MESSage, welcome back!

## Middlebridge 14 & 46 Update

No significant updates on either car, both continue to be used. MB14 has just passed the MOT with an advisory on lower suspension bushes. That should get sorted soon as they are on order from Graham Walker and I will replace the bushes when the new GAZ front springs and dampers that I also have on order are fitted. This will complete the suspension replacement as I did the rears last year.



MB14 (left) and MB46 (Right) with their predecessor

## A Sort of Battery

Chris Bartlett has been researching the most suitable replacement battery and noted that the range of available Type 097s of any quality is fairly limited these days.

In his thread on Scimitarweb <http://www.scimitarweb.co.uk/sgwrs/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=35671> you'll see that the current consensus is that the best battery for the MB at a reasonable price is a Bosch. The trouble is, Bosch don't seem to make a Type 097. So he did some research to see what Bosch \*do\* offer that matches the 097 for physical size and shape, capacity, terminal position and cranking amps, and the answer is: Type 075.



New Bosch Type 075

He has just fitted one in MB61 (£70 delivered from Tayna) and it works fine. Obviously it has circular posts, so an adaptor is needed to get a fit, but these are available for £3.39 on eBay.

They are intended to have a captive M8 bolt head, so he has used an M8 nut as a spacer to fill this recess, and this allows the M6 OEM fitting bolts to be retained, together with the original MB wiring connections, so literally no modification

is needed to the original wiring or any other part, allowing reversion to original spec and Type 097 battery if required.



Adaptor Makes Fitting and Return to Original Easy

Chris' information started me off as I couldn't remember what MB14 had, although I had just replaced MB46's battery with one of these <http://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/190580872635?trksid=p2060353.m1438.l2649&ssPageName=STRK%3AMEBIDX%3AIT> which is an 075. On checking, MB14 still has the 097 type with the flat posts but MB46 has been converted before I bought it, as suggested, with adaptors to round post (like these <http://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/Ford-Battery-Terminal-Adaptor-Square-to-Round-NEW-One-Pair-Escort-Cortina-/201622592302?hash=item2ef1a49b2e:g:jPYAAOSwEeFVGDxK>) and I recall just looking for a "like for like" when searching for the battery so it was a Varta 075 replacing a Varta 075 at a similar price to the Bosch.



## Drive It Day 2017

The next MESSage will have some more information on the forthcoming shows but this is just a reminder of “Drive It Day” coming up later this month.

It would be good to see Middlebridges out and about on the 23rd and to get some photos or reports to include in the next newsletter.



MB14, a couple of other hardy souls and a “tumbleweed” at the Alford Motor Museum in 2015 (well, it was early!)

