



The MESSage



Newsletter of the Middlebridge Enthusiasts Scimitar Set

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MICK'S MESSage

My Car No 33

With the weather finally getting better we have started preparing 33 for the 2017 season, she is already in good health so all of the work I want to do is preventative in nature. She has already been treated to new seat belts throughout and the bodywork brackets re-manufactured in hi grade Stainless Steel, this is because the originals were rusting. I have also removed some of the wood veneer door trim pieces on my car and sent them off to a specialist for refurbishment as they were showing signs of age. I'm hoping to have them back soon but was quoted 12 weeks minimum as they are very busy and needless to say the finish has to be matched both colour and grain wise.

Unfortunately due to work pressures this year, I just can't get the time I need to spend on my car and I have had to make a hard decision to farm out some of the work.

17.04.17 was the agreed delivery date and I had a great trip up to Mark Wilson's place in North Yorkshire. By the time you read this I'm hoping that Mark will have completed my to-do list and 33 will be back with me with everything A1 and her being used 'n' enjoyed as intended. We discussed my to-do list at our monthly Gathering at the Elms and it was suggested that I write about some of Mark's work in future MESSages. One or two job's in particular may interest other Middlebridge owners and I have covered a few of these below and should follow up with more in future MESSages. "hope they are of interest"

Front Suspension Bushes:

During the strip out of the front suspension Mark removed the AVO front shocks and was stunned at the condition of the bushes (see pictures) The AVO shocks have been on the car for 2 years and 3,500 miles. We have both seen this problem before and George and myself had also discussed this issue with AVO face to face at their Northampton HQ some time ago when we were working on the progressive front spring project.

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.

The bushes fitted to my new GAZ shocks were of an Old design which is just a plain steel tube with a rubber outer bonded to it, this concerned both Mark and myself as these bushes are known to wear through the soft rubber and leaves the steel tube to grind its way through the shocker Eyelets. We both agreed that there was little point in fitting my new shocks without sorting this problem. Mark suggested a solution and we have gone down this route. The bushes were removed from the new GAZ shocks and even though they had only been fitted to move the car in and out of the garage they were showing deformation already, the eyelets were then engineered to accept the O.E. Bilstein Scimitar bushes that should last for many years without issue. Hopefully one common problem resolved.

Hmm.... this could be interesting as my rears have been on for approx 6 months with the standard GAZ bushes. [will have to take a peek soon ;o]



Better Bushes!

Wishbone Bushes:

Since 1995 Mark has used an MG Metro track control arm bush which has a rubber outer bonded to a steel tube which is machined to fit over the Top Fulcrum pins, the rubber compound is a very high "Shore hardness and has lips moulded on the outer ends, this effectively seals the fulcrum pins and sleeves to keep out corrosion, as the steel tube is a sliding fit and bonded to the rubber, there is no chance of the bushes "sawing their way through the pins as the top arms move up and down and even if there is



Mick's Blingy New Diff Cover

already corrosion on the pins the steel sleeve when greased will preserve the pins from further wear.

Mild steel component prep:

One of the outstanding jobs was a very minor leak from the diff gasket which Mark did a great job on. At the same time as curing the oil leak Mark fitted a rare lightweight alloy diff cover. Mark also went to town on the watts linkage and ARB by blasting them clean, spraying with a professional acrylic zinc primer and finally finishing off with an acrylic gloss black finish. "very yummy" (Hope you like the pictures.)

Front Brakes:

The front brakes were something that Mark and I had discussed in great depth many months earlier (Curborough 2016) and was the main job for me. Mark had all of the components in stock and ready. A set of new drilled and grooved discs and a new set of 3 pot E'type callipers were the basis of the upgrade. I did not want to go the Wilwood route as I didn't want flashy alloy callipers to stand out plus added to that Middlebridge had intended to use a Jaguar set up. We think that with a combination of 3 pots, 20% + more pad braking surface area and a slightly larger disc diameter we should see a minimum of 20% better braking efficiency.



The Jaguar Brake Set Up on MB33

Note; I have now collected my car from Mark's place and I can confirm that the braking is much better than my standard set up which incidentally was in top notch condition. This formed part of a great if not very long drive home. ;o)



Blingy Callipers!

Matt's car MB66

Matt has continued to work on 66 however at a sensible rate now that she is up and running. The rear fuel pipe has now been replaced and she has had a very thorough service with all new oils, grease etc. and I must say she feels all the better for the work.

The next area to focus on was the interior, our plan was to remove all of the seats and carpets and replace the carpets with some original MB ones that we have already purchased. As for the leather interior this seems to be the real area of focus. First the seats were removed and both front seats were separated from base and back panels and buttons removed. On inspection both front seats needed new diaphragms which were

purchased from Nigel QRG. Once the new diaphragms had been fitted it was time to start to remove the original dye. We did not feel that the navy blue colour did the car interior any favours so we opted for a light grey colour to compliment the rest of the cars interior panels.



While at the NEC Classic Car Show in November Matt spent time studying the leather restoration process and techniques, we bit the bullet and purchased a full interior resto' kit with the intention of restoring Middlebridge 66.



With the interior out of the car, head rests removed, seat tops & bases separated, buttons removed and new front seat diaphragms fitted it was time to open our new leather restoration kit.



Here's one we prepared earlier!



Stripped out interior

The first job is to remove the old navy blue dye and rub down the age related cracks and imperfections until the panel was a uniform greenish colour which indicates that the old dye was now completely removed. I have made this sound simple but it is a long, dirty and smelly job especially if you're not used to solvents and we had to go over the same areas several times until we were happy with the finish. Once at this stage we left the panels in the warm to fully dry out for 24 hours before applying / dabbing on the first coat of the new grey leather dye. The first coat looked awful and patchy but Matt assured me that this was the same as the finish on the seat at the NEC stand, we agreed to meet up the next evening to go for a second dabbing session with the sponges, the seat now started to look grey.

Time to leave the seat to settle overnight and meet up again the next evening as both of us were now very keen to finish one seat prior to taking on the whole interior. The seat was starting to look very well and we were keen to dab on the third coat and call it a night.

When we next met up the seat looked very good and had a nice leather finish, our next job was to

down the seat with wet 'n' dry paper to remove any imperfections, clean off and dab on the final coat of colour.

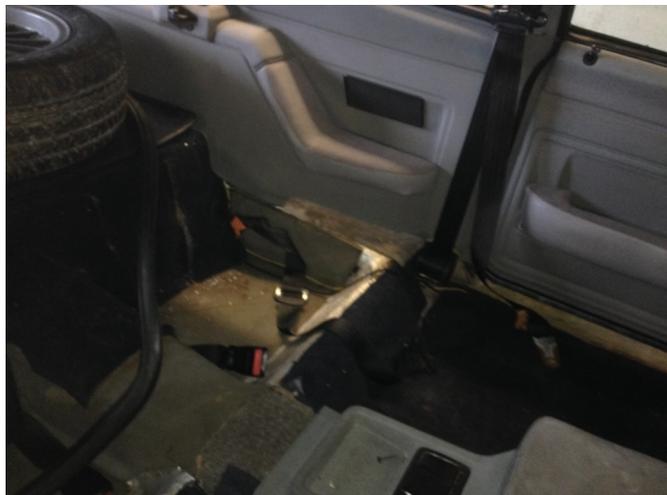
Once the colour was dry the finish was inspected and the seat was then treated to three applications of sealant to finish the job off. This is the first time we have taken on a leather interior and I must say we are pleased not only with the result but also with the new fresh look interior of MB66. The initial seat took us a week on and off but we spent 5 weeks on and off completing the rest of the interior. I think that the pictures say it all.



Trim Repairs

MB 66 is a very original, low mileage car and we want to keep her as original as possible, this is why we chose a 'Middlebridge' grey leather colour to match the original trim of the car.

Hope you like the new look interior, next on the shopping list is to get the wheels refurbished and probably a few months away, a full respray in her original colour. Renault Electric Blue. We are looking to have a specialist do the respray hence the uncertainty on the lead time, the reason for the respray is not micro blisters but different shades of paint on the bumpers and bonnet which is a relief.



Original Grey Panels

Coming and Going

Shortly after the last MESSage, MB41 appeared for sale on eBay. This was an auction car, Lot No 772, and sold for £13,100 + £1,731 car tax. It was the latest registered Middlebridge (on a N prefix) until MB77 was put on the road but that has an age related H prefix plate. We had very little information on MB41. It was known to be in the Birmingham area and back in 2013 it appeared to be in daily use but attempts to contact the owner came to naught.



Middlebridge 41

It was being sold as a restoration and apparently had not been run for the past two years, yet the

MOT only ran out last September. It looked quite tired but was essentially all there and formed the basis of a good restoration.

It was listed as being sold on behalf of a firm of Solicitors and as the car was described as a Reliant Scimitar they clearly didn't know what they had. That is quite surprising as the DVLA listed it as a "Middlebridgescimitar" which is what would have been on the V5c.

After correcting the advert, MB41 was withdrawn from eBay in slightly strange circumstances but it subsequently sold and the new owner has been in touch and confirmed his plans for a full refurbishment. Good news that we can expect another car to be restored to a high standard.

MB36 remains for sale and we saw three other cars coming to the market recently. MB44 is considered the last production Middlebridge with a plaque in the engine bay to prove it. It has been in the family of the current owner since 1993 and while needing some cosmetic TLC and paintwork it looks a well cared for car which is still for sale at time of writing.



Middlebridge 44

MB10 has come up again with the current owner deciding that he is not going to manage the Cosworth conversion he had planned and has decided to move the car on to someone with more time to complete a refurbishment. At time of writing the car has just sold and we hope the new owner will get in touch with the MESS.

MB42 also came up for sale with the owner moving the car on after 13 years. This is where it gets embarrassing..... I sat on my hands for a number of weeks then decided I had to go look at the car as it ticked all the boxes of what I was looking for when I first considered a Middlebridge;

auto, leather and the light blue metallic paint that I think suits the shape of the car.

One quick jaunt (800 miles round trip) to Manchester later and I had put a deposit down on the car with the intent of picking it up in July. The owner (who is a thoroughly nice chap and a confirmed Scimitar enthusiast) has looked after it well mechanically but the interior is tired and needs refurbishment so there are plans to upgrade that amongst a few other minor cosmetic touches. For those of you paying



MB 42



MB 42 Interior

attention to my scribblings you will have figured out that will result in me having three Middlebridges. This is not something that is sustainable (so I am told!) and I will probably move MB46 on. I have been in discussion with two well known club members who are interested in the car so watch this space.....

I duly flew down to Manchester on 22nd July and picked the car up. The 463 mile trip home was without incident and was shorter than the 600+ miles I did in picking up the last two cars from Bristol. A testament to the reliability of the cars and the good maintenance of the previous owners.



MB42 at Cullen

Middlebridge in the Magazines

Dan Mitchell has been working with the classic press to update the valuations for the Middlebridge and notes that in Classic Cars August 2017, on page 208, they have listed Middlebridge Scim' under the Reliant heading with prices of £30,000 Concours, £24,000 Mint, £16,000 Good and £10,000 Rough.

Middlebridge 14 & 46 Update

MB46 has been used locally for short trips and although it continues to drive well I have to look into why the drivers electric window has suddenly stopped working.

MB14 had the front springs and dampers replaced and the lower wishbone bushes done at the same time. This was just prior to our journey to the RSSOC International in June and I got the car back on the Saturday before we were due to travel south on the Thursday. I took the car out on the Sunday for a run only to find that the starter had decided to start - making unhealthy grinding noises.

Having tried my local garage (we need a make and model and the parts supplier can't find your car on its system), Graham Walker – who could

supply but it would take 3 days, finally I turned to Jim Pace, who managed not only to get a friend of his to source me the correct new starter but also to arrange to have it fitted in a little under an hour in a garage in Sunderland prior to the International. The man is a magician; he even laid on the sunshine for the duration of the visit!



MB 14's Nose Problem

While that went well the story with the suspension was not so good. For reasons yet to be determined, although I have my suspicions, the front settled about an inch and a half lower than it should have been. I have had the car over five years and never hit the spoiler but managed to catch the underside about half a dozen times on speed humps or road camber during the trip. Thankfully the damage seems to be minimal but I was less than happy, as you might imagine.



Middlebridge 9

My suspicions were confirmed when I got the car home and found that the adjustable seats on the shocks had unwound. Needless to say the garage reset them free of charge!



Middlebridge 3 Outside the Bowes Museum

The International will be covered in the RSSOC's Slice magazine but we had three Middlebridges there, Gordon and Lesley Collins in MB3, which Gordon tells me he has had since it was about 18 months old, MB14 and Peter Freeman's MB9 as chase car and support vehicle. Thankfully, I don't think that his services were required, a testimony to the reliability of the 34, or so, cars that made the event.

Middlebridge Statistics

A while ago I produced a table that listed the "make" designation that DVLA had for the Middlebridges I could find on their database. At that time I could not get information on 13 cars. I have now reduced that to 5, some of which are cars registered abroad from new and one which belongs to HRH. The recent change to the accessibility of the data has helped and I set out below the latest position for the production cars.

What is surprising is that 6 cars come up on the vehicle check system as Middlebridge Scimitar – a fact we were told is not possible as it exceeds the 20 character limit on the DVLA database field. We still have 2 cars listed as Reliant, 7 simply as Scimitar and 1 Scimitar GTE.

Other facts and figures, for those (like me) who are interested in that sort of thing include that 28 cars are off the road, four predating the SORN regulations with 24 that have an active SORN.

Blue, red and green are the most popular colours accounting for 60% of the cars. There is 1 gold

and 1 orange; I can't for the life of me think who they might belong to! We have 8 cars that are known, or thought, to be outside the UK. Of the 73 cars I can find a registration date for 57 were registered in 1989 and 1990, no surprise there, and 8 in 1991 but the earliest was 1988 (2) and the latest 2012 being MB77.

DVLA Listing	Total
MBRIDGE SCIMITAR	1
MIDBRIDGE SCIMITAR	1
MIDDLEBRIDGE	7
MIDDLEBRIDGE GTE	1
MIDDLEBRIDGE SC GTE	1
MIDDLEBRIDGE SCIMITAR	6
MIDDLEBRIDGESCIMITAR	22
MIDLEBRIDGE SCIMITAR	1
MIDDLEBRIDGE SCIMITA	23
RELIANT	2
SCIMITAR	7
SCIMITAR GTE	1
Not Known	5
Grand Total	78

Colour	Total
BLACK	3
BLUE	21
CREAM	1
GOLD	1
GREEN	10
GREY	5
MAROON	6
ORANGE	1
PURPLE	1
RED	16
SILVER	6
WHITE	7
Grand Total	78

Year Registered	No.
1988	2
1989	37
1990	20
1991	8
1992	2
1993	2
1995	1
2012	1
	73

Country	Total
AUSTRALIA	1
AUSTRIA?	1
BELGIUM	1
FRANCE	1
NETHERLANDS	3
NOT BUILT	1
UK	69
EIRE	1
	78



Gentlemen (and Ladies) Start Your Engines! - The Post Breakfast Line Up Before Running in Convoy to Newmarket

Moët and Chandon July Festival Gentleman's day Newmarket

The MESS 'Middlebridge Enthusiasts Scimitar Set' were delighted to accept an invitation to display our cars at the above event. The event was invite only and was for British car marques to display alongside the race track.

On the day the bulk of us attending had breakfast together at a hotel in Eaton Socon, we drove the last 30 miles to Newmarket en mass. The event was very well organised and we were soon shown to our parking area. I took some pictures but we did spend time at the races and generally enjoying the event and atmosphere. Many people visited the classic car arena during the day with many interested in our marque and our unique history.

On the whole a thoroughly enjoyable event, we do look forward to hearing from the organisers and hopefully adding this event to next years itinerary.



The Display Area at Newmarket



With Our Daimler Friends Again!



Prototype and No's 26, 27, 33, 50 & 56

Middlebridge Rocker Covers

Alan Timmis has arranged a group buy of 2.9i rocker covers with "Middlebridge" from Redmond Metalcasting.

They have agreed to let us have the sanded smooth finished product at same price as the basic sandblasted price so there would be a little under £25 cost saving.

For £160 (inc. UK delivery) he will supply:-

Pair of covers, sanded to smooth finish and painted to any of his standard colours.

The covers would have MIDDLEBRIDGE cast on (all letters in upper case and all same height, 19mm).

There would be a breather hole 25mm dia. meter. Delivery, direct to you, would be 3-4 weeks from order.



Sample Covers

Those who wish to take advantage of John's offer should contact him directly. Say that you are wanting the MIDDLEBRIDGE offer and state which colour you require. His email address is: john@jrcast.com

Web site: http://jrcast.com/?page_id=79

Future Shows

We should have 2 or 3 Middlebridges at the Historic Wheels show at Brodie Castle near Forres on the weekend of 12/13 August, at least one Middlebridge at the Scottish Ford Day at Dunfermline on 3rd September. The Sywell show is 23rd and 24th September then we should have stands at the Manchester Classic Car Show on 16th and 17th September and the NEC at Birmingham on 10th to 12th November. Other shows will be notified to members and any write ups from local shows you attend are gratefully received.

ScimFest at Curborough

From 17th to 20th August RSSOC will be running ScimFest at the Curborough sprint circuit (WS13 8EJ). As well as seeing what some of our Scimitars can do on track, the traders will be there and Mick tells me there are likely to be five Middlebridges present. Full details are on Scimitarweb http://www.scimitarweb.co.uk/documents/Slice_275_ScimFest.pdf and booking can be made in the Club shop on Scimitarweb.

