




The MESSage

Newsletter of the Middlebridge Enthusiasts Scimitar Set

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December 2019

MICK'S MESSage

My Car, No 33

Once again I'm delighted to report that MB 33 is running like dream and boy have I made the most of it. Due to time constraints I have been doing my long distance events there and back in a day.

This has meant clocking up to 400 miles + in a day. The Concorde trip was also a day trip of some 350 miles with a lot of it done at over 33 degrees! Next on the event schedule for MB 33 was Sywell 'Piston & Props' which is a mere 10 miles from home and I enjoyed going there in convoy with Matt in No 66.

My car then had a well earned break until 2nd November when she met up with Bruce, George and Alan at 06.00 hrs at Crick, from there we shot south to Regent Street, Central London as we were invited to display the Middlebridge marque at this prestigious event.

The following Thursday saw No 33 heading to the NEC Birmingham to be part of Bruce's 2019, 30th Anniversary Stand. Hmm despite the praying for dry weather, there was a lot of time spent cleaning!



MESSEMBly

A monthly MESS meeting is held on the first Monday at 7pm in The Brewers Fayre, Central Park, CV23 0WE. Every enthusiast is welcome to join us, owner or not. Banter expected and encouraged.

MB 66

Tis early September and Scott of 'Obsessive Car Care' has completed all of the outstanding works on MB 66 he has also given her a good road test to Silverstone, he 'what's apped' me pictures of her there. I think he chose this location because it was to be her 1st outing post re-commissioning at the Silverstone Classic some weeks earlier. The next evening I found a fully valeted car parked on my driveway.



Matt decided to sell MB66 and 'm delighted to report that Steve, the new owner, has kept in contact and has written an article for inclusion in the MESSage about his epic test drive and trip home — and it's up's and down's. (Oh Dear!)

In a rather bizarre twist of fate Steve flew to the UK via gate 66 'spooky' when we met up a couple of days later we were seated at table 66 for our meal, It was Steve that noted this very strange coincidence. Steve's initial road test went well until and out of the blue the stereo binnacle decided to jump off, rather embarrassingly I apologised and we put it in the glove box. I hope you enjoy hearing about his initial Middlebridge Road test.



MB66 at Silverstone 2019 (and above right.)

I do look forward to receiving regular updates for the MESSage in the years ahead from Steve about his adventures and the work undertaken on MB66 to further improve her.

Matt already has his eye on a replacement car, he assures me it's 3 door, 1980's, alloys and sounds great, sounds familiar, Hmmm... Find out in the next MESSage.



MB66 in 2012

Sywell 'Pistons & Props'

September 21-22 2019

This is an annual outing for the MESS and this year we had 11 cars on display.

The Saturday was full sun but Sunday PM saw us huddled in the gazebo.

We love this show because of the relaxed nature and the venue. It's like a mini Goodwood Festival. Bruce and Allison were looking the part too. (See pictures).



Along with a vast array of classic cars and bikes there were- hot rods, race cars, drag cars and much, much more. As you will see once again this year we had a Lancaster fly over along with Spitfires, Hurricanes and many others. Please refer to the events area of the website for more pictures.



Regent Street

Route 66, Regent Street Motor Show,
02.11.19

The 'MESS' were invited to display the Middlebridge GTE marque at the prestigious 'invite only' London 'Regent Street' Motor Show.



George, Bruce and Alan met up with Matt and myself at Crick to head south down the M1.

We all decided to head straight to the Ace Café for breakfast prior to heading to the City Centre to meet up with Andrew who was coming from a different direction.



The weather was very windy with lots of rain too. To be honest we the owners were flabbergasted at the amount of interest shown in the marque with literally hundreds possibly thousands of pictures of our cars taken on the day.

I would have liked to take more pictures but we were all kept so busy on the day.

Lancaster NEC

Classic Car Motor Show 2019

This year, we were located in the Anniversary Hall and boy did Bruce put on a show, many people including our hosts remarked on the quality of our display, "Thank you Bruce".



As you will see from the pictures we had two very special cars on display. We were loaned HRH the Royal's Middlebridge No 5 and to the left of it the Cadbury's Reynard 89D as campaigned by Mark Blundell during 89-90 season and finished 4th at the 1989 Superprix in Birmingham.



It was particularly amusing when visitors made the usual "Princess Anne had one of those" remark while standing in front of MB No. 5, at least it was the first couple of times!



Bruce and Peter were also kind enough to display their cars. A huge thank you is owed to Will who once again easily took furthest travelled and manned the stand along with Bruce, George, Matt and Dan. Thanks to all.



Regalia

Finally we can confirm that we have a new regalia supplier. George and myself have met with Jo, the business owner and 'Tailor Made' of Daventry are currently creating an online shop for us that will hopefully be live by mid-December. The shop will display our regalia but Tailor Made will embroider any of the thousands of items on the website for you. Should you want goodies for Xmas I would Google the company as Xmas is just round the corner and all of the goods are bespoke.



As I reflect on yet another remarkable year for the Middlebridge marque I also ponder on my personal highlights and I think No 1 must be the full Concorde experience followed closely by the Silverstone media day. Why have I not put the Silverstone Classic 30th Anniversary 1st, I'm sure a few others will agree that these events are very full on and quite stressful.

A really important part of the Middlebridge marque's awareness growing is our website and once again this is all thanks to Martin North who has run and updated our marque website for yet another year. The MESS, me personally and all of the owners & enthusiasts would once again like to say thank you Martin for a job very well done.

Finally, on a lighter note, you know Christmas is coming when you see your first Robin in the trees. Hehe...

(Ed: Looks like a Rialto to me — bah humbug..... ;-)



Christmas Robin?

The Swedish Scimitar

My Scimitar saga began in the 1980s and I sold my last Scimitar in 2005 prior to taking a three year work contract in Norway. During this period, which ended up being ten years in Svalbard, it was not practicable to have an 'interesting' car. But 14 years after leaving the UK and now based in Sweden the possibility arose again.

First plan was to look for another 'coffee and cream' SE6a or a tidy 6b. But it's not easy buying from Sweden, particularly when considering the length of the drive back here. My wife, Anna, had only heard of Scimitars via me but, to be fair, she had heard a great deal. She had definitely heard enough to know that 'coffee and cream' was not high on her wish list. As it turned out her first meeting with a Scimitar was to be when collecting blue MB66 prior to a 1,700 mile drive back to Sweden via the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark and over the Öresund Bridge connecting Denmark to Sweden.

Since it was important that this journey should go well it was important to source a solid car and not a restoration project. This was when the idea of purchasing a Middlebridge began to form.

Such a vehicle would also provide the perfect tourer for summer vacations. A Middlebridge also appealed since I have already had 5a and 6as. It seemed to tick all my boxes, with the one important exception that being relatively rare, examples in my price range come up infrequently and hence a bit of research was required.

So, with the basic MB plan sketched out it only remained to set in motion. My moment of genius was to contact Mick to see if he knew of any MBs that might be coming on the market and if I could get some tips. As luck would have it, Matt and Mick were in the final stages of re-commissioning MB66 with the intention of putting her up for sale. No time to hesitate so a deal was quickly done and it was just to finalise collection and plan the journey home. At this point the fun and games began. Plan A was to collect MB66 from the Silverstone 30 year celebration. But MB66 was having nothing of it. Despite Matt, Micks and Scott's best efforts her head gaskets failed, she overheated, and the autobox decided to play up.

The gearbox problem was traced to a vacuum pipe issue but was going to come back to bite us later. The engine was a little more serious and given the lack of known history it was decided to source a known used engine as well as rebuild the radiator – belts and braces. These issues took time to fix so Plan B was implemented with a revised collection date set to early Oct.

Finally (and trust me, it seemed a long time) MB66 was MoT'd, running well and ready to collect. Anna and I flew to the UK on a Friday in October and stopped with friends who then drove us to meet Matt, Mick and MB66 the next day. Immediate impressions of her were even better than Matt and Mick had

described. She is a 30 year old car but wears it very well. After a quick look around Mick and I took her for a test drive. After about 50m the radio's plastic surround dropped off with a definite clonk, 'Oh', said Mick, 'its never done that before' before looking around for somewhere to store it. Scimitars never seem to miss the opportunity to embarrass their owners.



Steve and Anna Picking Up MB66 From Matt & Mick

The test drive thereafter went very well and over lunch we sorted out the paper work and MB66 set off on a two hour run to its first overnight stop in Wiltshire.

No further problems were encountered and the first impressions that MB66 was a very solid vehicle were enhanced. Day two of the tour was to run up from Wilts to Shropshire to stop the night with my sister. The two and half hour run went very well. She is a very fine cruiser and all was well in the world of Scimitar until less than 500m from our destination when the gearbox failed to select gear correctly. Inspection revealed that the gearbox had dumped its oil out en-route. Getting her on a ramp at a local garage the next day confirmed that the problem was an internal oil leak so we were looking at a gearbox out job.

At this point our plan of driving directly back to Sweden began to look fairly remote. Step in Mick and Matt to the rescue. They had a spare gearbox we could swap if we could get MB66 to them. Hence, on Monday we set off for Northampton with my sister, Cath, following in a support car. A couple of times I saw Cath flashing headlights at me but it was hard to discern what she was trying to tell us and it didn't seem too urgent. Turns out that what she was trying to tell us was that our car was on fire. Gearbox oil was dropping on to the exhaust and periodically burnt off in a cloud of smoke. However, all seemed to go well and we arrived at Scott's workshop around 5pm.

By Tuesday evening the gearbox was swapped and we set off for North Yorkshire. Again, the journey was trouble free except that Anna was perturbed by the regularity that I passed her items that had dropped off. I managed to pull off both the sunvisor and the rear view mirror on the journey (both now re-attached). After stopping over Tuesday night we drove on to the ferry in Newcastle and the journey to Amsterdam and mainland Europe.



MB66 on the Ferry to Europe

We'll jump over the catastrophically amateur toll system at the Tyne Tunnel on the way to the ferry terminal and just say that we arrived safe, sound and refreshed in Amsterdam on Thursday morning thanks to the DFDS ferry. Next step was a blast around Amsterdam, through the Netherlands, into Germany and up to the German/Danish border. We drove almost seven hours this day and MB66 did us proud. Not a glitch and just a joy to drive. The next day we crossed into Denmark, passing through ID control where the officer was far more interested in MB66 than in our ID. He seemed to think it cool to see a marque he had not encountered before.



MB66 with Öresund Bridge as a Backdrop

After being waved on our way we headed towards the Öresund Bridge that connects Denmark to Sweden. A very impressive structure with an equally impressive £50 toll ! A quick photoshoot stop to get a picture of MB66 with the Bridge in the background and then on into Sweden. By this time it was late afternoon so we stopped for the night in a small town a couple of hours from the Bridge and then a relaxed six hour drive to Uppsala and home the following day. This part of the trip was indeed relaxed apart from the getting pulled over as part of a random police vehicle check. It really was a moment of "oh crap,

what now?" especially as the car that was already in the car park appeared to be in the process of being dismantled by two officers. However, my officer just asked for driving licence and then breathalysed me before waving me on. That two apparent Swedes were driving an unfamiliar car on UK plates didn't seem to perplex him at all. Then again, he was probably thinking of the paper work he could be letting himself in for if he started to ask too many questions.



MB66 in Hjo

A long journey. In total (including unexpected diversions) we covered 1,718 miles at an average of 33.4mpg. It was certainly a full-on method to get to know MB66 but the longer we drove the more impressed I was with her and the preparations that Matt, Mick and Scott had done. At all times she felt solid and composed, started first turn of the key and even soldered on through rain storms that would have had my previous 5a and 6a's coughing and spluttering. I can see owning a Middlebridge is going to be somewhat addictive.

Next stage is to start the MB66's registration process. As far as I can see there are only two Scimitars currently registered in Sweden. Fingers crossed it will go OK but we have a little time to get it completed since the mandatory winter tyre season is fast approaching. We use studded tyres on the

daily-driver Golf and I'm not sure MB66 would wear them well. So, it'll be into the garage for her for the winter where I can start to attend to various projects including improving the heavy brakes. Maybe a QRG Willwood brake upgrade kit? As Matt and Mick have said, MB66 is a solid car that needs some TLC, sorting out the none functioning heater, electric windows, rear heater etc. All 'small' jobs to keep me busy over the winter.



1,718 Miles Later at Home

So, would I do the trip again? Of course! And more importantly even Anna! In fact, we are already planning how we can come back with her for the 35 year celebrations. Hope to see you there.

To conclude, a very enjoyable adventure and a huge thank to Matt, Mick and Scott at Obsessive Car Care for preparing MB66 so well.

Stephen Coulson

MB66

Coming and Going

Apart from MB66, Glyn Howell has decided he has too many projects and has put both his Middlebridges up for sale. MB43, previously owned by John Nutting is a well known car that has appeared at the NEC and was one of the award winning cars at the 25th Anniversary event at Gatcombe. Glyn completely renewed the interior shortly after

buying the car and matched it to the exterior colour.



MB43 Interior

Some of you may remember MB70, another car rescued by Mick and Matt after its owner sadly died part way through its restoration in 2016. Glyn had intentions to completely refurbish the car but is now offering it for sale for someone else to put their mark on it. Adverts for both are now on the Middlebridge website.



MB70 with the Gunning Family

MB78 has also sold, this time to a certain Mr Graham Walker so keep an eye out for it in its refurbished condition in his showroom sometime soon. There are another two cars that could be for sale but are not being actively marketed at present.

GEORGE'S JARGON

That's another year done then, thirty years of Middlebridge existence celebrated, time to reflect on successes – and any failures.

The highlight for me was being asked to accompany Mick and Bruce to Silverstone to be videoed and photographed whilst circulating the Grande Prix circuit as part of Silverstone's very own publicity. We did 2 complete laps and the video was also shown on TV across the East and West Midlands News. Apart from having a really good day out with chums, we each received £25 in food vouchers to compensate for the interruption to our very hectic lifestyles. How good is that!

The Classic Car press were also showing interest in the MESS activities throughout the year, all-in-all publicity-wise, it was a very good year for us. I suggest we have become more 'established' for want of a better word. Certainly the Middlebridge Scimitar is better known and appreciated more, nevertheless we cannot rest on our laurels and risk complacency, so next year we intend to consolidate and seek different places to exploit our presence, without vast expense. Your input and suggestions will be very much appreciated.

Last week my Middlebridge pulled a large trailer to the local 'tip' laden with all manner of rubbish including 12 sacks of wood chippings from a heavily pruned apple tree. As soon as I stopped a chap came up to me beaming, 'that's a Middlebridge Scimitar, isn't it?', he exclaimed! Conversation followed. Many years ago he once owned a Reliant Scimitar which was a constant source of annoyance, repairs and breakdowns, it was the only car ever to defeat him he said. He very much admired my car...

This year's NEC brought mixed fortunes. The MESS was asked to display in a new 'Anniversary Hall' as we were celebrating 30 years of the Middlebridge Scimitar. There is no doubt that our display was the best in that Hall, courtesy of Bruce's creative talent, and enhanced by having HRH Princess Anne's car and the Cadbury Race car on our stand. Both created a lot of interest and were photographed constantly. Great!

I was asked by one of the Organisation team what I thought of the Hall. My reply that I thought it was just 'not good enough' wasn't what they expected to hear, clearly. Firstly, not every car in that Hall was an 'Anniversary' car! Secondly, if a feature of this hall is to make it 'Special' for 'Anniversaries' then the Organisers need to make much more effort, such as putting carpeting between the Stands as expected in the 'Premier' Hall where we've been for a few years, otherwise what is the point? What makes it 'Special' then? The NEC reply that carpets cost a lot of money is simply not acceptable. We, 'The MESS', make a lot of effort and spend a lot of time (and money), to create an excellent Stand and a most worthy reputation... The NEC can afford better, especially when charging an eye-watering £36 entry fee.

In between those two events we attended an 'Invite Only' Classic Car meeting in Regents Street, London. It was limited to 6 cars, and was the day before the London to Brighton 'ol' corks run', some of which were also on display. At the ungodly hour of 6am, Bruce, Mick, Alan Timmis and I met up at Crick, junction 18 M1, and headed for 'The Ace Café' in London. I'm told that we were seen travelling in convoy and a video showing us was put on some such web-site...

Having breakfasted in The Ace, we headed toward Regents Street, where my sat nav sent

me a different way from the rest. Eventually I arrived at the bottom of the Street via Piccadilly to find Andrew Sait's car already parked up. We found a better spot to spread out as many Classics failed to turn up, probably because of the appalling weather. Yes, it rained on-and-off all miserable day. We were invited by Goose to this event as they were impressed by us at Silverstone which they also organised. Pret-a-Manger £10 vouchers were issued per car and we were spoilt for choice where to use them.



It's an event I hope that we are invited to again, as this is showing our cars to the ordinary public, not just the converted enthusiast, and a footfall of 500,000 is expected for that day, in a vehicle-free Regents Street.

The journey back to the civilised Midlands was absolutely atrocious due to heavy, squally rain in the dark. Whilst about to join the M1 in London, I was overtaken on the nearside and then cut up badly. (When folk drive appallingly I prefer to keep them in front where I can keep an eagle eye on them, so not a problem). The driver had also overtaken Mick, on the inside, who was a fair few cars behind me.

Not long after joining the M1 a car was seen 'parked' on its roof, further along an ambulance was 'on call' alongside the central

barrier. I recognised the car that was stuffed into the central barrier as the very one that had cut up Mick and me. Result! Even further along a Vauxhall People Carrier was ablaze on the slip road off. The whole vehicle was completely enveloped in flames. Despite the appalling conditions cars were hacking past, well over the speed limit, some without lights, some with just one lamp lit, front and back. Truly dreadful and very exhausting. Maggie and I were glad to get home and in one piece.

ALL CHANGE

Not everyone will know the problems experienced with our Nationwide Account. They sent a letter saying that they were closing these 'charity' accounts in the near future. Trawling around Rugby's Banks and Building Societies investigating alternatives exposed a small variety of complicated choices - Lloyds Bank seemed to be the answer on a recommendation from Mark Cropper, fellow Middlebridge owner who also helps the Bond Bug Club and Reliant 3-wheeler mob.



closed the Nationwide Account on 2nd October and transferred the cash to Lloyds Bank the same day. Mick and I filled in answers to some 26 pages of questions. Each day something else arrived in the post. A Cheque-Book was issued, later a Paying-In Book arrived and an On-Line Keypad supplied. On the 18th October a letter announced that Lloyds were closing the MESS account! No explanation given either!

I contacted Head Office who absolutely refused to give any reason whatsoever. A visit to Lloyds Bank Rugby, who also contacted Head Office achieved the same result. I/we still don't know why.

Neither Mick nor I have any criminal record and we were worried that something untoward had come to light which had reflected badly on our integrity and could cause us both issues in the future.

Without knowing what that might be we were unable to justify or identify any problem. Armed with advice, again supplied by Mark who deals with such stuff during his workday, I visited Lloyds Bank again. Once more, they got in touch with Head Office again, only to be told that the situation had been resolved!!! How? Still no reasons given or what the problem was. On reflection, I did wonder if I/we had answered a question incorrectly, inadvertently, consequently we didn't fit into a suitable Lloyds Bank-type pigeon-hole?

To date another Cheque-Book and Paying-In Book has been issued, as the first lot were destroyed in Lloyds Bank Rugby at the request of Head Office... I wrote a cheque recently to open the on-line shop for MESS Regalia including its necessary artwork. I'm hoping that it will all go through without problems and we are now up-and-running with Lloyds Bank. We shall soon see. Probably the best way to test the new Account is for all you Middlebridge Enthusiasts to send me a donation by cheque (preferably), or electronically even.

I have also asked that the acronym 'MESS' can be used on cheques received, rather than our full title. I still haven't received the necessary paperwork for that despite asking

on three separate occasions now. What I have just received is more paperwork to fill-in regarding our tax position in the USA! Added to that, Mark has also experienced problems with The MESS PayPal account, which is also giving us some concern.

I do wonder if our enemies (and The MESS does have some, believe me), are deliberately making it difficult for us, so that we give up and disappear. I/we have experienced an awful lot of 'new tech' problems this year, can it really all be coincidence...?

TYRESOME

I submitted a letter to a few motorcycle magazines which appeared in all three targeted publications. I'd received a couple of emails earlier this year warning me that tyres over a certain age were not covered by some Insurance Companies, despite the fact that they complied with the law regarding tyre depth. My Velocette Venom's tyres looked almost new, complete with the mould's pimples still showing. Research showed that one was made in 1991, the other 1992. Further research revealed that some Insurance Companies suggest 10 years for a car tyre, 5 years for a caravan tyre and 7 years for a motorcycle. My local tyre dealer, apparently, changes his tyres every 3 years, but then he can afford to I suggest.

My Venom now sports new tyres and innertubes, all made this year. My Middlebridge also has five new Goodyears fitted, they replaced tyres 10 years old, still with plenty of tread, but they were beginning to crack. It is possible that tyres made (say) 20 years ago, still wrapped and stored correctly are as good as new, but what is the insurance situation should you be in a RTA and its seen that your tyres are out-of-date? I offer no solutions, only an awareness of possible problems.

In the article I suggested that folk contacted their Insurance Company to see what their specific viewpoint is. Some readers thought it a good idea, others thought it a terrible suggestion (encouraging them to find ways of avoiding claims!), some were quite vitriolic. Whatever your opinion, it's up to you to comply with your Insurance Company's rules, or else. Ignorance is no defence folks!

CLOBBERED

On a brighter note, you will all have received notice of the on-line Regalia shop, hopefully by the time you read this it will be up-and-running properly. Rather than waste your hard-earned in the January Sales, why not indulge yourself (or your beloved), with some tasty new Middlebridge Regalia. You know it makes sense to stand out from the crowd.

COCK & BULL – *EXTRA!

In previous epistles I have mentioned my support for the Stoney Stratford Vintage and Classic Car/Motorcycle meetings held every 1st January. Every vehicle arrives under its own power, nothing is trailered and a wide variety of vehicles attend. During its 10 years it has grown like Topsy and the whole little town is taken over by fellow enthusiasts. Last year was going to be the last meeting, however a group have got together and saved it. I did offer my help at the time, but heard nothing – until this weekend when I received a phone call from The Chief Marshall asking if I would be one of the Marshalls. Of course I've said Yes. He's also asked if there is anyone else that I know who could help??? Anyone else available, interested?

In the past My Middlebridge has been the only Scimitar on show though on a couple of occasions I have seen the Reliant version. If you fancy a nice ride/drive-out, I recommend this one as it has a really nice laid-back atmosphere, supported by all different manner of enthusiasts, enjoying each other's

company in various pubs and cafes and some shops, and it's free. I must mention that part of the Marshalling Role will also attempt to raise money for The Willen Hospice, so keep a fiver or two handy.

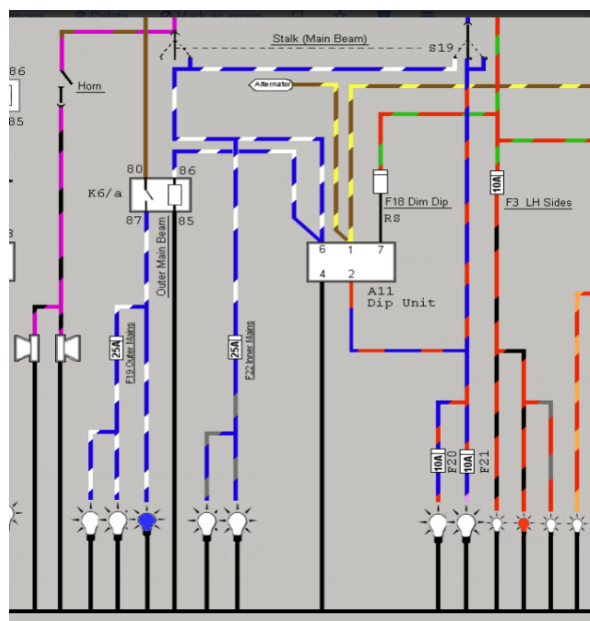
*Everyone will know the term 'Cock and Bull story...' as a reference to unbelievable claims (lying even). The phrase emanates from Stoney Stratford when Coachmen drove their horse-drawn carriages from London to the town's Coaching Inns, either 'The Cock' or the hotel next door, 'The Bull', where extraordinary claims were made about the time that the journey took by the Coachmen.

Headlight Highlights

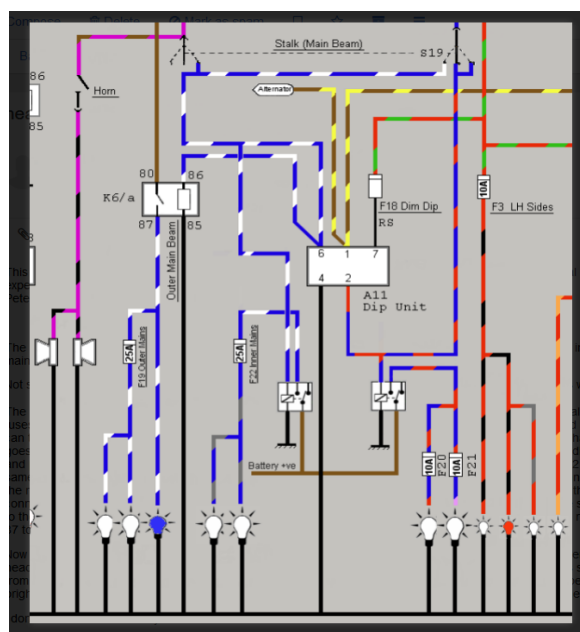
Original MB headlight wiring is dangerous because only the main beam outer lamps have a relay and all current for inner main beams and outer dipped lamps go through the switch, thus it may become overloaded and fail (MB50 switch/ connector actually melted). It could be life threatening if headlights suddenly go out when you're moving quickly on an unlit road, not to mention possibility of an electrical fire to boot.

MB50 is now modified to incorporate relays to all headlight circuits. The original headlights fuse box fuse holder clips were found to be very weak (hardly gripping fuses) and so replaced with fused relays for both inner main beam and outer dipped circuits. The original outer dipped fuses (10A x 2) replaced with a single in line fuse of 20A. I found it easier and cheaper to use fused relays than buy a new original type fuse box.

Drawings below show original and modified circuits.



Original Circuit



Modified Circuit

Many thanks to Peter Freeman for providing the wiring diagrams.

Alan Timmis MB50



From All of the MESS