




# The MESSage

Newsletter of the Middlebridge Enthusiasts Scimitar Set

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## MICK'S MESSage

Firstly and most importantly, I do hope that this MESSage finds everyone well and coping with this very bizarre situation that we find ourselves in. I know some of you have been moving forward with your Middlebridge projects and I have supplied parts to assist a few people.

Things have been very quiet on the classic car front for Matt and myself as work seems to have taken over our whole world. (We need this to go away!) With things changing so quickly politically and needless to say commercially, I wonder if there will be a few events after all. We have a lot of preparation to do on the Middlebridge for any shows after her long stay in North Yorkshire.



MB33 with some Special Guests at the NEC 2019

Matt's foray into Ford ownership has stalled as the garage took full advantage of the Government's offer and closed. They have re-opened now and we are hoping to have Matt's car in two / three weeks.

May I apologise for the delayed email replies etc, Both Matt and I are doing 12 hour + days in order to attempt to cope with supplies of hand gel etc due to the Covid-19. To be honest I had hoped that the next few years would pass without drama prior to me retiring. I had zero intention of working like this.

As some of you will be aware I headed North to the wilds of Yorkshire in early July to collect my Middlebridge that has been there with Mark Wilson since November. I must say I had a wonderful 3 hour drive home in the sun and feel quite energised about using her more throughout the summer and hopefully at a few events too. I believe George is looking into a MESSy meet which I'm sure he will mention further on in this epistle.



Amongst some other fettling, for me the most important job Mark did was to remove my original Burr Walnut dash that was just starting to lift in two of the corners.

This is real wood laid onto the plastic dash and is a very old and highly skilled craft that takes many, many hours to achieve good results. Not wanting to be without my MB for god knows how long I has a complete spare dash in my garage. Mid 2019 I posted the spare dash along with a sample of the Burr walnut finish to be hydro-dipped in as near as possible the same wood (burr walnut) finish as was possible to achieve. The end results were very impressive and the new hydro-dipped dash would replace the ageing original three part dash.



Mick's "damaged dash"

(If this was all that was wrong with my MB I would be chuffed Ed.)



MB33's original dash panels ready for storage until refurbishment

I should point out that although the old dash is currently cling filmed, shrink wrapped and safely stored away I do intend to get it fully restored and returned to MB 33 for another 30 plus years. It has been suggested that I look for ex Rolls Royce staff that used to do this type of work and apparently some set up on their own businesses around the Crewe area. Needless to say should anyone be able to help or advise me I would be very grateful.



New dash in place, very impressive!

The good news is the Country is finally opening up and I have a car I can use and not worry about how long it might take to get the original dash restored back to her former glory.

Take care everyone and let's hope normality returns soon and I do look forward to meeting up to put the world to rights. "At a distance of course" .



## Coming and Going

Not much has changed since the last update with the Covid-19 situation slowing everything down. MB's 19, 43 and 70 remain for sale on Mick's website. However, Dan Mitchell alerted me to the fact that Graham Walker has put MB17 and MB78 on his website. He also has MB2 in for restoration. The latter is particularly interesting as I believe it was GW's demonstrator back in the day.

Graham has done an impressive job on both cars with a full respray and both are well presented, although I particularly like the colour combination (and history) of MB78, a one owner car.

There still remain a couple of other cars that are not being actively marketed, including MB42.



**MB17 Awaiting Restoration**

(Photo Dan Mitchell via Mick's Website)



**MB17 Post Restoration**

(Photo Graham Walker)



**MB78 Post Restoration**

(Photo Graham Walker)



**MB78's Fantastic Interior**

(Photo Graham Walker)

## GEORGE'S (LOCKED UP) JARGON

Not much happening on the MESS front, dear reader, whilst we're all awaiting news from Organisers of events that we were going to attend this year. The occasional update received seems to act as a reminder that we're all just 'treading water', and much patience is necessary until some kind of normality returns.

I have been in touch with a good friend of the MESS, Richard English, who organised the 'Best of Beeston' events. When he is able to do so he will investigate what is happening to the possibility of Princess Anne's Middlebridge being on permanent show at Nottingham's Castle Museum. I've offered to talk with the Museum's Management to negotiate our hope that we can also use the car for certain events, such as the NEC. Access to the car and moving it easily will be the challenge, of course.



About the only way to move MB5 legally these days!

On my personal Middlebridge front, little has been done to my Scimitar's electrics, yet. My hatred of such illogical stuff dampens any

desire to get on with it. Running out of other tasks to attend to means that the day of reckoning looms ever closer, however. There are those amongst us who have no problems with electrics and can readily suss-out an immediate answer. Not me though.

My experience differs completely. Back in the '70's I commuted through London on a rare 250cc CZ Enduro, basically it was the World Class Scrambler, with lights - simply to comply with Enduro Regs. The English-made backlight was always a problem. The meter would show a circuit, the bulb would light on the battery, place bulb in the holder - nothing! Try new bulb, still nothing. Experts of the marque also baffled by that. Eventually solved by buying a completely new English rear lamp of the approved type. It was quite a powerful motorcycle, it readily popped the front wheel in the first 3 gears, not my style at all - I like my wheels on terra firma at all times.

Some years later I had a R\*\*\*\*\*t 6A which failed to start on my drive. The RAC chap was highly delighted to work on what he called 'a proper car'. An aftermarket electronic ignition system had been fitted, 'Newtronic' (I think it was the late Chris Lloyd who called it a 'Newchronic'), anyway... The earth for this device had been the wiper motor housing, indeed that unit had a number of earth wires coming from its screws for other devices. Mr RACman put his meter on the wiper motor faceplate to check circuits, standing back in amazement he said "I've never seen that before". His meter showed a circuit on some parts of the faceplate - but not all of it! To this day I have no idea why a solid metal plate



should behave in such a manner and if I hadn't seen it for myself, I would have said someone's pulling a fast one.

The point is that I have no confidence working with electricians on vehicles as it doesn't always make sense. As an aside, I've rewired a number of houses since the '60's, my previous property was checked over by a qualified electrician to get the necessary Certificates, he was that impressed by my standards that he asked me to work for him.

In an old issue of Slice you will also read how I installed electric mirrors from scratch into my 6A, taken from an old Audi A4. I'm not afraid of having a go clearly, it's just that when I do something and it doesn't work, I have no idea how to solve it...

### BLOW ME

My VW Transporter's starter motor started to become a problem. To gain access to it the turbo had to be removed. This was renewed in 2015 at 93k miles with a 'Genuine VW Turbo' according to the Invoice, costing well over £800 inc. Investigation of this turbo, which has started to deteriorate at 32k miles, has shown that it is a shonky Chinese copy and not a Genuine part. The garage that originally fitted it are making all manner of excuses, clerical error, mis sold item purchased, etc. They have now admitted that it was not a genuine part, but refuse to return the £800. RAC have given invaluable legal advice, but I desperately need it back, so rather than engaging solicitors at this stage, I've reluctantly accepted a compromise. Once I have the VW repaired and back in my possession, Trading Standards will be given the first opportunity to investigate this particular fraud.



George's allegiance is clear to see on his badge bar!

### PAINT YER DRAGON

My Velocette motorcycle has benefited from a few upgrades, including electronic ignition, which had been crammed into the bike's (enlarged-battery)/toolbox, along with an input plug from the battery charger and power to the starter motor. Though functional it needed a tidy-up, an improved locking system, and a repaint to keep it looking standard. It's all done now, but the painting by brush has been a nightmare. No matter what I've tried there has been a continuous problem with small fibres and dust. Maggie suggested painting it in my new study. I used a large 'under-bed' plastic box to place the separated lid and body onto blocks within it, then placed a similar box on top as a lid – and still it picked up fine particles. The last coat I applied I wore only my underpants (!) having experienced fine lambs-wool hairs falling from my jumper when painting the roof of my narrowboat some years ago. Still it wasn't free of bits.

Strangely enough the enamel paint that I used, Craftmaster, I also used on my 1930's sidecar chassis and mudguard years ago

without such problems, and it was painted outside in my porch. It's used by many boat owners, steam traction owners and the like, which rarely get painted in ideal conditions.

I have compared this experience with successfully hand-brushing a motorcycle back in the '60's. Thirteen coats of Rolls Royce brushing enamel were applied, the final coat polished to a black mirror finish, absolutely stunning – smooth and no imperfections.

The spare bedroom that I used then as a paintshop wasn't carpeted, just bare lino, nor did we have central heating either. My current house is mostly fitted carpets and has central heating in all rooms, with underfloor heating in the tiled conservatory, where I initially painted the box thinking it would be free of flying debris. Detritus is in the atmosphere all the time, clearly. An additional problem is that about a mile from my house is the Rugby Cement works, wash your car one day and it will probably be covered by a fine dust the next day.

Using 1200 wet 'n' dry I've flatted it and it's now with my local friendly spray painter who will lacquer and polish it to the desired finish – I hope!

### PAINT YER GATE

The metal-scrolled side-gate to the back garden was in need of paint. Wire brushes attached to a drill removed loose paint and some rust, followed by Smooth White Hammerite. Wickes were selling a 250ml can at £8 instead of £10. What a mare! Firstly the paint was drying very fast, a skin kept forming on the surface in the can so instead of applying liquid paint it was already dryish

leaving bits of skin behind instead. The can hadn't sufficient quantity to finish the gate, even 2 coats didn't cover the old paint completely. Another can required then...

Lidl advertised a can of 'Parkside', a similar metalwork paint that also covered rust. This 1 litre can cost £4.99, so almost an eighth of the price. The basic ingredients of both cans read similarly and brushes can be cleaned in white spirit instead of Hammerite's own and very expensive cleaner. Having tried it I can recommend using the cheaper Lidl stuff, it didn't dry so quickly, was easier to apply and it was easier to regularly stir the paint to prevent skinning, being in a much larger can. Only time will tell how the paints compare, one side is all Hammerite the other is a Hammerite base with Lidl topcoat.



## VIRTUAL MESSEMBLY

### (Or The Lilac Grove Tavern!)

An experimental MESSEMBLY meeting was held on the 1st of June via 'Zoom'. Not everyone invited joined in, however - that was due to intended recipients not receiving Will's email. On the whole it's deemed successful, I guess you need to contact Will to get on the Zoom list should you wish to join in.

*(The Virtual Lilac Grove Tavern will be open from 7.30pm the first Monday of every month, all Enthusiasts welcome, just send an email to Will to be given the log in details. Strictly Bring Your Own Bottle—we are still sorting out the Licencing! Ed.)*

On my craptop Dr Dan came through crystal clear on sound and vision. Micky G was using his phone though he changed to his laptop later and the colour look less washed out. Peter Humphries' sound was constantly struggling and distorting. He was fetchingly wearing a saucy little off-the-shoulder number – it could have been his vest though. Alan Timmis sound and picture seemed totally knackered and fuzzy. Will's picture was reasonably clear but the sound was also fuzzy. Not a roaring success then, but it was nice to see old chums again, listen to an amount of banter and some deserved mickey-taking mostly directed at Peter's steering rack problem. All's well then...

Alan mentioned that he had fitted a different heater matrix to his Middlebridge that was originally destined for a Ford Transit. He has been urged to submit an article to The MESSage to show how he did it and probably

how he could have done it differently and (possibly) better. *(Read on below for Alan's account of his conversion. Ed.)*

Anything that can improve the Scimitar's poor heating (whoever manufactured it), has to be of major interest to all owners, I suggest. Apologies for lack of pertinent copy, hopefully some of the above may give some food for thought. Take care everyone, and stay between the hedges.

George

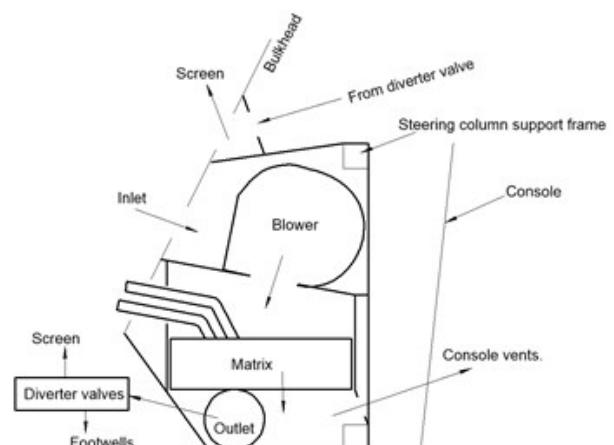
## MIDDLEBRIDGE HEATER

### An Alternative

After 30'ish years of use/misuse, MB50's heater is shot (was it ever any good?). Also, the dash panels might be described by purists as having characterful 'patina'. My view is they were ..... tatty!

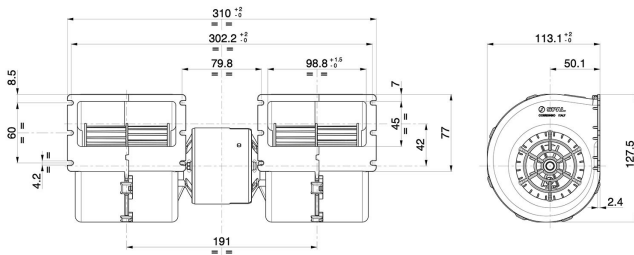
The MB heater system is hardly a masterpiece of design and as replacement matrixes are no longer available anyway\* I decided to bin the lot and start again and, while all the dash was dismantled, thought it was time to tart up the cockpit and reassemble with dash panels 'dipped' with burred walnut effect finish.

My heater design objectives were:-





A single blower close to the matrix (who thought it was a good idea to have two blowers each 2m from the matrix?)



Alan's Chosen Blower Motor, a Spal 008-A45-02

A larger heater matrix.

Matrix and blower to be common and plentiful (to ensure spare parts supply).



Original MB Matrix Below and New , Larger, Transit Matrix Above

Matrix and blower to be easily accessible for maintenance (anyone who has done it knows it is a huge undertaking to get at those parts in the original set up).

Parts used:-

Double headed 3 speed blower, Spal 008-A45-02 (£85)

Matrix, Ford Transit Mk3/4 (£20)\*

Relay x 3 (£21)\*\*

Diverter valve x 2 (£40)\*\*\*

Aluminium sheet to make heater box (£?).

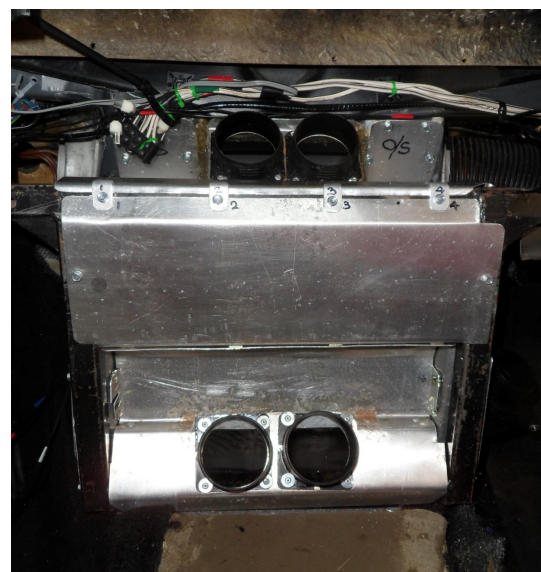
Bulkhead flanges, 60mm x 4 (£24)

Heater ducting, 60mm flexible (£?)

\* The MB heater matrix is smaller than the SE6 and not interchangeable. One main Trader has no stock and no intention of obtaining any more, the other says he's trying to source them but the cost will be at least £170 if, indeed, he obtains any at all. The Transit matrix is bigger than the MB and the hose connections are conveniently positioned.



New Heater Box Showing Larger Matrix In Situ



New Heater Box Showing Screen and Console Vents



**\*\* I couldn't find a 3 speed blower switch that would take 15A reliably, hence relays were used.**

**\*\*\* To divert the air flow from feet to screen.**

**Notes:-**

**To meet the accessibility objective the new heater box is made of several panels held together with self tapping screws thus enabling quick in-situ dismantling without need to remove dash panels etc.**

**Also, the centre console side panels were originally retained by screws into the centre console backing plate, which meant the console must first be removed in order then to remove the panels. I simply trimmed away the flanges on the side panels (through which retaining screws passed) and secured the panels to the new heater box with a single self taper at the centre.**

**Each side panel now simply overlaps the backing plate forward edge to locate and can be removed (single self taper) in an instant to access the heater box.**



**MB50's New Dash Showing the Revised Ducting Either Side of the Console**

**Heater cold air trunking is extended to connect directly the air inlet plenum in place of the original heater blowers (now redundant). Thus ram air to dash louvres and heater matrix is maintained.**

**The heater blower and/ or matrix can now be removed and replaced in short order rather than over several days but how effective is the new heater? It's ..... HOT! HOT! HOT!**

**And (as you asked!) what of the burr effect dash panels? Not over the top in my view but typical trim finish for a quality car of the period. Chuffed!**

**(All Photos Alan Timmis)**



**New Ducting and Diverter Valve with "Quick Release" Side Panels**

## KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

We recently had contact from Alan Cavendish -Tribe letting us know that ownership of MB35 has now passed from his father, Barrie jointly to Alan and his son James. It is great to hear that the car is being passed down through the family. Alan also gave us a little history of the car which he has allowed us to share.

Alan's father Barrie has owned the car since May 1991 and was the second owner, the first being Middlebridge Scimitar Ltd. Who registered it in August 1989 with 5 miles on the clock.

The car was bought from The Hedingham Car Centre, a Scimitar Dealer at Sible Hedingham, at 21 months old with 36,700 miles on the clock and Barrie was told it had been the Middlebridge Technical Director's company car.

Alan and James are the third owners, acquiring the car in June 2020 with 109,836 miles on the clock.

Quite an amazing story really as Barrie had only gone in to Hedingham Car Centre to purchase a SE5a workshop manual as present. He came away with not only the manual but having also purchased MB35! And why wouldn't you, it is a fine example in one of the best colours.

## LEAKY RACKS.....

Following some comments about leaking power steering racks, Dan Mitchell told me about a process he has used with success and his note on this is enclosed below: -

Hydraulic engineers know a great deal about seals of every type of material ,hydraulic fluid of different types and hydraulic pistons made from a range of materials .That is their speciality.



Barrie Cavendish-Tribe and MB35 being Transported to its New Home (Photo – Alan Cavendish-Tribe )



I was taught that to treat a power steering rack the best approach is to follow the steps below.

1.Drain most of the hydraulic fluid but do not run the rack dry

2.Jack up the front of the car and move the steering from left to right.

3.Add the power steering additive with the same volume of new fluid and again move the steering from left to right 4 times

4.Leave the steering rack for 5 days so that the concentrated solution can react with the rubber seals

5.Top up the power steering with fresh fluid.

I think reading the instructions on the additive tin – adding it and claiming it does not work is simply following instructions written by a marketing person and not likely to be based on any Engineering knowledge or experience!

## A BIG BIRTHDAY.....

One of our Owners is about to celebrate a big birthday.

As it is not polite to mention a Lady's age we will let you work that one out for yourselves!

However, We thought it would be nice if the MESS sent HRH The Princess Royal a Birthday Card after all the support she has given to the MESS, particularly last year for the 30th Anniversary celebrations.

Bruce is going to produce a suitable card but we would have difficulty in getting you all to sign it before the date.

So, for anyone who wants their signature put into the card please send Will a scanned copy or photo of your signature in black ink, preferably in jpeg format and he will collate these and pass to Bruce who will perform his magic and include them in the card.

If you don't want to give us a copy of your signature just let us know if you would still like your name added and we can put that in a script font.

## SILVERSTONE 2019 & MESS MEETS 2020

Where has the time gone!

One year ago we were preparing to head for Silverstone and the 30th Anniversary celebrations.

Sadly our events this year have been curtailed for obvious reasons . However, there is a suggestion that those of us in the Midlands at least (but all welcome!) try to get an outdoor get together that can be compliant with all the social distancing requirements. If you are interested do let us know and we will send an invitation round the mailing list.

George reminded me that there were a few Plaques not claimed by owners—if you see yours below get in touch with us before the end of August or George will bin them!



In the mean time here is a reminder of last year's main event to finish for now.

Stay Safe — The MESS team.





## Middlebridge Scimitar 30th Anniversary

### July 2019

