




# The MESSage



Newsletter of the Middlebridge Enthusiasts Scimitar Set

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July 2024

## Mick's MESSage

We have to start this MESSage with some sad news from Steve McCauley: -

### John McCauley - Obituary

John McCauley, the co-founder of Middlebridge Scimitar, passed away peacefully at home on 27th May 2024, at the age of 90.

John was born in Liverpool on 30th August, 1933. He was offered his first job, at ICI, in 1952, aged 19 at a salary of £200 a year.

John McCauley married Brenda McCourt in December 1956 and they moved to Canada in March 1957, where John worked for Shell Oil. They returned to live in England in the Autumn of 1960.

John joined an organisation called the FBI, based in Nottingham. Not "that" FBI, though. This was the Federation of British Industry, later renamed the Confederation of British Industry, the CBI, to avoid confusion with the actual FBI. His role was to promote, to represent and to support British companies in the East Midlands.

John McCauley became the export manager of an automotive manufacturer in Nottingham called Crosland Filters in 1969. He travelled the world in this role, including to places like Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, Finland, Denmark, Norway and the United States of America.

He was a director of the Dutch subsidiary of Crosland. After Crosland Filters, John worked in economic development for Leicester City Council, which built on his experience at the CBI, and his knowledge of business.

Later, John McCauley was the co-founder and Joint Managing Director of Middlebridge Scimitar. He started the company with his friend, the engineer Peter Boam, and, in 1987, they acquired rights from Reliant after the Reliant Scimitar GTE and GTC models were discontinued. They went on to develop an improved car, the Middlebridge Scimitar GTE.

John McCauley successfully raised money to open a factory in Nottingham. The Scimitar was re-engineered and a total of 79 cars were hand-built, before production ceased, due to financial difficulties on the part of the investors.



John was justifiably proud of Middlebridge Scimitar. He loved to attend the Middlebridge Enthusiasts Scimitar Set (MESS) events, notably the 25th Anniversary celebrations at Gatcombe Park in September, 2014, where he was delighted to meet Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal, Princess Anne, a noted owner of a Middlebridge Scimitar GTE.

John McCauley's career did not end with Middlebridge. He was always interested in politics and public service. He was duly elected in 2003 as a Labour Councillor for Newstead, in the Borough of Gedling in Nottinghamshire, and he served proudly until 2007. It is the stuff of legend around here that he won by precisely one vote.

John McCauley was a man of great integrity. He believed in fairness and honesty, in the rule of law, of doing the right thing. He was highly empathetic and believed in helping other people if at all possible. He was universally kind to people. He had a wonderful smile and would go out of his way to be pleasant to everyone he met. If he gave you his word, you knew he would move heaven and earth to keep it.

John's funeral took place in Nottinghamshire on 21st June. The McCauley family was delighted that MESS members Mick Gaughran, George Sampford, Alan Timmis, Bruce Beauchamp and Mark Beedham attended John's funeral, and that three Middlebridge Scimitars were on display.

John McCauley is survived by his wife, Brenda, and their two sons, Steve and Phil.

Steve McCauley



The MESS were honoured to be invited and to bring some cars to the crematorium where many of the family members looked over, sat-in and had a spin in the cars. The photo of the three Middlebridges was taken by one of the guests, Penny Whiting. The service itself was a beautiful light hearted tribute to a true gentleman. (I will let George craft some words to explain the service). Joining me on behalf of the MESS were George Sampford whom I collected in Crick in my MB, Bruce Beauchamp, Alan & Sandra Timmis and Mark Beedham and his Wife.



**Middlebridge 50, 33 and 26 at John McCauley's Funeral (Photo by Penny Whiting)**

## Middlebridge 33

Outstanding work on No33 has now been completed; the extremely annoying Willwood brake squeal has now been fully sorted and after trying everything, the pads were taken to EBC where they skimmed them, hey presto, problem solved, no squeal and it seems to have given a better brake pedal feel. Luckily EBC are only 7 miles from where I live.

Out of the blue and on the route to the NEC Restoration Show (as reported on below) I had an issue at 70mph on the M6, I was beckoned to pull over, I pulled into one of the so-called safe lay-bys and the gentleman explained to me that my reverse lights were on continually, I was somewhat relieved and thanked him, I then performed a quick fix by removing the reverse light bulbs, issue sorted and I was back on my way to meet Bruce and Alan to erect the MESS stand. The following week the car went to have



the wiring checked and all good so a new inhibitor switch was purchased from Nigel at QRG and installed. As an aside, it was great to see a nice touch from Nigel, he has altered his regular back page Slice advert and added an awesome Middlebridge picture alongside the Reliant timeline pictures, Nigel does seem to work on quite a few Middlebridge cars and indeed has worked on mine.

The car also had an intermittent wiper issue sorted and I can now confirm that the wipers are in rude health after being given a good thrashing over the Sandringham weekend.

After storing a huge box of Do-Do mat for near eternity (6mm sound deadening material) it was finally installed under the front seats and as far forward as possible, at long last another job off my list. The only other job I needed to complete was changing my exhaust system back to my original. The drone from my replacement performance exhaust drives me insane and 50mph is blumin awful but silent at 70mph. Unfortunately, most of our Motorways seem to have a 50mph restriction. After this, incredibly, I have no outstanding works on No33, but for how long me thinks....

I had several distance runs over the last few weeks and have been enjoying the silence. Sadly, my first trip was to John McCauleys funeral, a 2 hour journey each way, I took George and he let me know his thoughts on my car. He's never backward about coming forward so the silence didn't last!

As some of you know I recently retired and treated myself to a nearly new all singing & dancing Ford Ranger. Well, about a week after it arrived home a delivery van reversed into the rear of it while it was parked at my house, there was no issue as I live in a small cul-de-sac, they knocked on the door. He gave me his details and it went to a local Coachworks Company for a rear tail gate and bumper 'phew' with insurance costs going through the roof, Matt suggested, I use an independent accident management company as going this route means my own NCB will be totally unaffected when I renew next year, you don't have to mention the incident! My car has now been returned and the bill was over £7,200 for a tailgate, bumper cap and a parking sensor!



## A Right Royal Wobbly

The MESS were having an organised and leisurely start to the new classic season. or so we thought. This all suddenly changed to near panic when Alan Cavendish Tribe was speaking with the organisers of the Prestigious Sandringham Classic Car Pageant event and out of the blue they wanted MB No 5 at the event and to be part of a Royal line up of cars in a special marquee in a prime location on the Sandringham estate.

No 5 had a noisy thrust bearing and everyone agreed the cure was to replace the 3 part clutch. So, with two weeks to go before the event it was booked in for the simple job to be done. If only life was that simple; as soon as the box was removed we were advised that the issue was gearbox not clutch.

After ringing around most of the specialists including GW & QRG all had long lead times and no gearboxes. Most were hundreds of miles from Derby where the car and gearbox were. Suddenly we were backs to the wall and staring at taking the box to Kent with no agreed lead time. Panic set in and

as I continued my frantic keyboard internet search (classic gearbox restoration / repair specialists) suddenly a company cropped up called The Gearbox Centre, incredibly just a mile from my house. I popped in and, yes, one of the guys specialised in classic boxes and loves the type 9 gearboxes! After explaining our predicament and grovelling, Steve agreed to look at the box as soon as I could deliver it to him.



**Now, Where does this bit go?**

Let the fun & transport logistics begin. Tuesday Morning, Bruce collected the gearbox from his friend at the Derby garage, Tuesday evening, Bruce and myself in Rugby at the Brewers Fayre where it was trans-shipped to my car, Wednesday morning 09.00 I delivered the box to Steve, the Classic Gearbox specialist, Steve rang me Wednesday PM to say he had fully stripped the box, found the issue, a faulty stub shaft. Steve ordered a replacement damaged component and a full gearbox service kit. He was hoping to have the box ready for me on Thursday!!

Sadly however, one component was missing on the delivery. Steve part built the box and the missing component was delivered 09.40hrs on Friday and by lunch time I had re-delivered the gearbox to the garage in Derby. The service that The Gearbox Centre gave me and the MESS was nothing short of incredible.

Alan Cavendish Tribe completed the logistics when he trailered the car from Derby back to the GBCJ on the Monday. Also, before anyone asks, they are incredibly busy and just pulled this out of the hat for the MESS. We do look forward to seeing Steve at the NEC in November on the Saturday. I do also need to thank Bruce for recommending TJ Auto repairs, who also did an astonishing job to get the car mechanical work



**The Offending Part!**



completed and worked on the car on the Sunday to ready her in the shortest time possible for the car's return to the Great British Car Journey.

All our thanks go to –

TJ Auto Repairs, Long Eaton, Nottingham. Tel: 0115 9464048 (Stuart)

<http://www.tjautorepairs.ltd/>

The Gearbox Centre, Lyttleton Rd, Northampton. Tel: 01604 755230 (Steve)

<https://www.thegearboxcentre.co.uk/index.html>



**Renewed 'Box on a Nice New Tailgate.**

## Lanyard Project:

Here's a small but we feel important step for us, at many of the larger shows exhibitors wear lanyards to identify them to their marque etc. Having the lanyards means we don't have to wear marque regalia at the events, this means any owner with a car in display could be loaned a lanyard to identify them to the Middlebridge marque. Their first outing was at the Sandringham Pageant of motoring. Needless to say once again Bruce was instrumental; he created and manufactured our two sided ID tags. Thank you Bruce.



## Memorabilia thank you:

May I take this opportunity to thank two people, Mr David Brown for making contact and delivering an assortment of memorabilia to me on behalf of Mrs Christine Watchorn, wife of the late Phil Watchorn the Middlebridge Production Manager. We thank you for Phil's memorabilia and be assured it will be catalogued and stored along with all of the Middlebridge memorabilia that we have collected over the years. Thank you from Mick and all the MESS.

## Classic & Sportscar Magazine:

It was nice to see a large multi-page feature on Middlebridge No 5 in Classic and Sportscar magazine. The spring edition hit the shelves early May. I thought it read well for the marque although there were a couple of glaring errors.



## Middlebridge Website:

The website is fully up to date, thank you Martin. I thought it appropriate to let you see one of our weekly emails from our web hosts. I will let you all do the maths when you read the figures below but suffice to say we think the site is doing an incredible job especially considering were talking about a production run of only 79 cars!! This figure was the week before the Sandringham event and after anything like that we would naturally expect a surge in views.

Hi Mick,

It's time for your weekly update on how your website, [middlebridge-scimitar.co.uk](http://middlebridge-scimitar.co.uk), is performing.

For the week ending 26-May-2024:

Your number of visitors increased by 26% compared with last week.

You had a total of 5,375 page views.

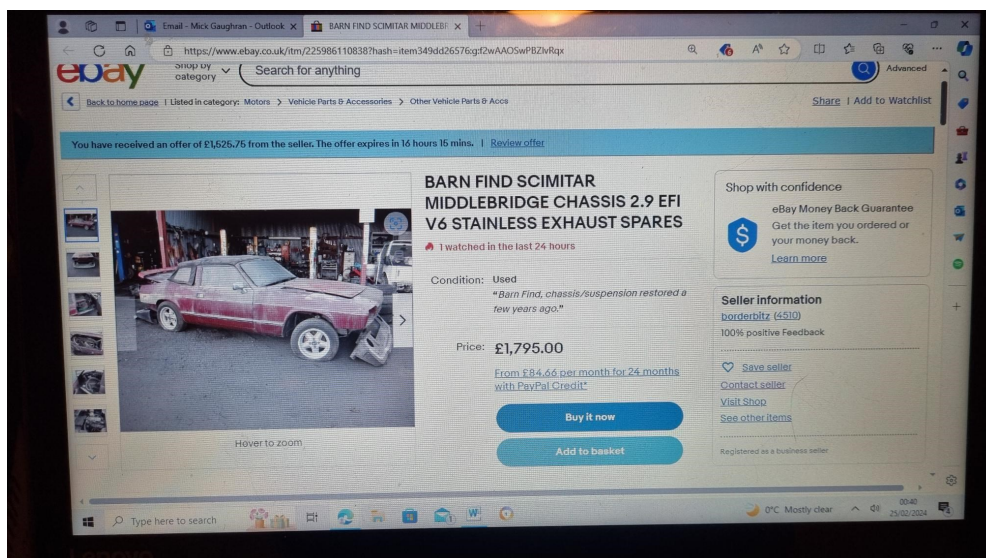
Your most popular page was `/images.php`.

Incredibly, the next week we had 6,627 hits!!

Please note one IP address / home address can only get one hit per day so those figures are individual visitors, I'm lost for words.

## Ebay, Reliant GTC Listing (Barn find)

A Reliant GTC was advertised on eBay complete with a Middlebridge Chassis. (how odd) I contacted the seller and asked if he could confirm that it was indeed a Middlebridge chassis and could I please have the chassis No as stamped on the chassis. This was mid-February and guess what, I have had no reply to date. The car was also retro fitted with a Ford Cologne 2.9 EFI engine. (Ed. I had a bit more luck and got this info but it still doesn't clear up if it was a MB chassis or a galvanised Reliant chassis — "A brief history of this vehicle as I know it, we are a breakers yard, the boss has owned this for at least 20 years, original plan was a toy for himself. The later chassis was used, lots of new bushes and a convertible top, never finished, sitting in our shed for 15 years plus. Looking towards retirement, he is now selling. The chassis does not have a plate and we do not have any paperwork." )



## Heritage Certificates

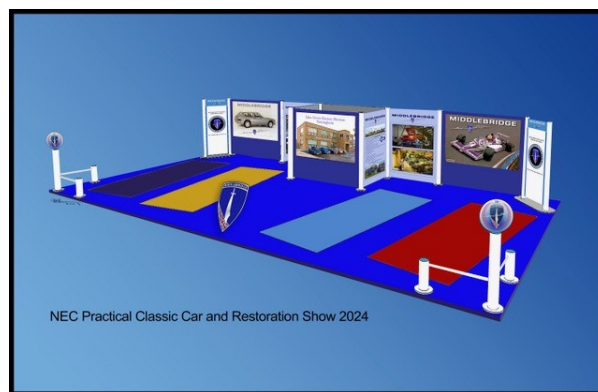
After months of work behind the scenes by Alan Cavendish Tribe, finally we can now announce that The Middlebridge Enthusiasts Scimitar Set (MESS) now have a Heritage Certificate Template and are in a position to supply an official MESS heritage Certificate to owners upon receipt of specific car information, some of the information will need to be in photographic format to ensure the correctness of the Heritage Documents, only after data verification can a document be issued by the MESS and is signed off by two people. We have spoken with the British Car Museum (Gaydon) and unfortunately, because we do not have the original Middlebridge factory build records we have had to create our own marque specific document and keep full records for the future.

For further information, email [alan.cavendish.tribe@gmail.com](mailto:alan.cavendish.tribe@gmail.com)

## Practical Classics Classic Car & Restoration Show,

### NEC 22-24 March 2024

Wow, this is different an event in March, it's a very early start to the year but it's an indoor event so not controlled or effected by the weather. This was a first for the MESS, we had only ever displayed at the big November NEC show but what a surprise, the show was a lot smaller but very good, we had lots of interest in the cars on the stand.

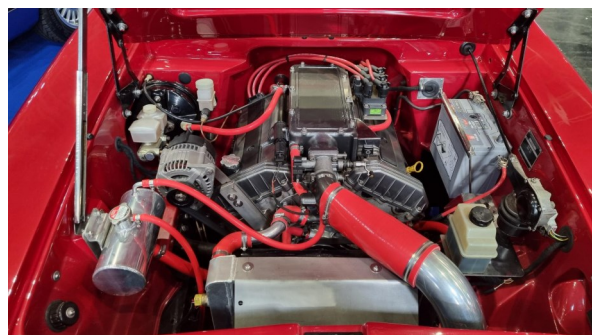


You will see from the pictures, Bruce 'once again' pulled an awesome stand out of the bag. Bruce's pre-event electronic stand overview ensures we all know exactly what to do when we arrive in convoy at the stand location. (I think it's fair to say we all know our specific roles now). The whole stand was erected and the cars cleaned and in position

in 1.5 hours!! (However, the weather was kind to us and the cars were not filthy and wet).

Once again, Kohji and Dennis visited us on the Friday as did some Middlebridge owners over the weekend; I think it's fair to say we were kept really busy over the 3 days. Bruce & I manned the stand on the Friday and boy were we both exhausted at the end of play, phew.

Needless to say the Red 24v Cosworth powered Middlebridge drew lots of attention over the weekend and looked stunning in its Land Rover metallic red paint.





Alan's Renault Electric Blue & incredibly original car shocked many people when they realised it was 35 years young, on the end was Bruce's car in its stunning Porsche blue colour which always draws people to it and then hits them with his totally stunning interior. My car was the 4th car and I think she looked well & still drew people over the weekend. We also took details of 6 people that are very keen to potentially purchase a Middlebridge, Bizarrely enough, 5 of the 6 want automatic cars.

One Middlebridge owner has already offered us a rolling chassis for the same event next year. I guess it's another early start to the season next year!

The stand breakdown always amazes us, it's Bruce's Middlebridge and small trailer containing the whole stand and off he goes.

## Sandringham Pageant of Motoring 26.05.2024

Well, how and where to start, Alan Cavendish Tribe and myself arrived at Sanders lunchtime on Saturday in our now filthy Middlebridges, we were armed with Bruce's site plan intended to mark the stand out, and create a centre spot for the Royal car. At the same time George was trailering the Royal car from the Great British Car Journey and arrived in the afternoon, George dropped the trailer in the agreed location and went off to find his overnight pitch.



Alan and I completed the provisional stand erection, we parked my car in the centre spot for the night. Just before we left, Alan had a great idea, We decided to take some special shots of the Royal Car in strategic positions at Sandringham, we quickly unloaded the car and drove it to the Royal Marquee and then to a location near to the house and finally to the church on the edge of the estate that the Royals use each Sunday, we then quickly returned the car to its trailer for the night. Alan and myself then drove back to Kings Lynn in his lovely original Middlebridge for a few beers before



meeting with Bruce & Ali, and Syd and Sandra for more beer and banter, we agreed to meet at breakfast at 7am.

At morning Breakfast we met with Grahame & Rosemary, MB 60 who had arrived from Somerset! 7.45am and we all left Kings Lynn and were instantly joined by David in his lovely Guards Red Middlebridge No 69 for the half hour drive in convoy to Sandringham, we still had a stand to complete and be ready for the 10.00 kick off.

With everyone's help we were sorted in time but, unfortunately, the weather was not great and it didn't improve much on the Saturday either. Our allocated stand was huge in size and the Royal car attracted much attention all day (I was surprised just how much, we

even had to get someone out of the car at one point!) in the afternoon we were booked to do a parade in a special arena while the cars were discussed with their prospective drivers, George drove the Royal MB No 5 and Alan drove my car while I shot a short video. Was the event a success, Yes, because a large number of people visited the stand and took leaflets away and in spite of the weather we all had a great time, had a laugh and met new friends, which is what it's all about.



Sunday evening everyone stayed over, I however had to drive straight home from Sandringham, while fuelling up near Rushden Northants, two guys came over to talk about the car as they loved the shape and had never seen one. It was at this point I suddenly realised the full extent of the mud, she was plastered up to her waist and the wheel arches were full, stupidly, I thought I had negotiated the Sandringham quagmire quite well. After a good chin-wag and a laugh about keeping her clean I handed out two of our flyers to the guys who seemed very interested in the marque generally. Event aside, my car ran great, wipers had a good road test, radiator & fan had a good test from 70mph to zero at Kings Lynn for over half an hour!

I must end this with a thank you to George who essentially pulled the trailer for 5 hours each way to make the event such a success, Bruce & Ali for yet another awesome stand and the ingenious use of the trailer, Alan Cavendish Tribe who spent hours and hours organising the event for us and believe me this is not an easy job, Syd & Sandra for bringing MB50 and his lovely jacket, we can't forget Sandra's awesome cakes that we all devoured. David for bringing along his beautiful Guards Red MB No 69 to display and finally Grahame & Rosemary who travelled from Somerset in MB 60 for the event, It was great to meet them and see No 60 again, thank you both.





## MESS Calendar 2024

(Please note events highlighted in blue already have MESS members attending)

Date	Date	Event
06/07/2024	07/07/2024	<b>Hollowell Steam Rally</b>
23/06/2024		<b>GBCJ Reliant Themed Day incl. Middlebridge</b>
28/06/2024	30/06/2024	Three Counties Show Ground Classic Car Show
29/06/2024	30/06/2024	Bloxham
13/07/2024	14/07/2024	Powderham
17/08/2024	18/08/2024	<b>Scimfest</b>
06/09/2024	08/09/2024	Goodwood Revival
06/09/2024	09/09/2024	<b>Isle of Wight Classic Car Extravaganza</b>
21/09/2024	22/09/2024	<b>Sywell Piston &amp; Props</b>
08/11/2024	10/11/2024	<b>NEC Classic Car Show</b>
T.B.C	Work in progress	Caffine & Machine
T.B.C.	Work in progress	Dagenham,Cologne, Essen Road Trip
T.B.C.	Work in progress	Middlebridge 600

## For Sale

Chris has informed us that MB61 has now sold and we look forward to hearing from the new owner. It looks like GW have also sold the refurbished MB2 and it would be good to know where that went. Only the Middlebridge Prototype remains for sale and we have a number of people still interested in acquiring an auto car.



Dr Dan Mitchell, the owner of the Prototype recently exhibited the car at the Leamington Spa “Classics at the Spa” show which had 257 attendees! Dan says—” I exhibited my car again at this event and met several Ex Reliant employees again. A Great E Type V12 Jaguar next to my car ! There was good interest in my Middlebridge all day.



Having thought MB21 was residing in the north of England it was a surprise to me to see it going through the May Morris Leslie classic auction near Perth in Scotland. Sadly, I found this out after the auction and do not know where the car went so if the new owner is reading this please get in touch.



(Credit for photo – Retro Ratchet)

## Wanted

I Hope someone can help me, I would like to give a loving home to a good condition Middlebridge Scimitar!

My main requirement is that it be automatic, in an ideal world it would have a leather interior but not essential. The car does need to be in good / very good condition and have maintenance history records.

On reflection, I may consider looking at a lesser quality car that requires some work.

I do look forward to hearing from you via the contact details below.

Contact:- email [prf@ifaulkner.co.uk](mailto:prf@ifaulkner.co.uk) Mobile 07785 772107

## Light Hearted Banter

I thought I would once again finish off my epistle with either a look back to better times or something a little light hearted. Hope you like the two pictures.



**This has got to be the photo of the year.**



## MESSEMBLY

In person. The monthly MESS meeting has resumed and be held on the Second Tuesday of each month at 7pm in The Brewers Fayre, Central Park, CV23 0WE. Every enthusiast is welcome to join us, owner or not. Banter expected and encouraged.

Virtual MESSEMBLIES will continue with the invitations sent to members by email.

## MIDDLEBRIDGE ACCOUNT

Lloyds Bank, Lewisham (309089)  
120 Lewisham High Street, Lewisham  
London SE13 6JG .

Sort Code: 30-90-89.

Account No: 49350668.

BIC: LOYDGB21256.

IBAN: GB79 LOYD 3090 8949 3506 68.

Sit back and enjoy a Bill Bryson-esque tour of the Isle of Man with Syd (AKA Alan Timmis of MB50 fame!) Ed.

## LOST!

### (On a small island)

So, we have this notion that a trip to the Isle of Man (Ellan Vannin to the poetic types) might be fun so three of us Middlebridges, plus one interloper, sign up with Scenic Car Tours (SCT) for their May bash.



The interloper is Colin and Mira's chariot, a Marcos LE400. Very loud, very muscular and very beautiful. It looks like a proper race car because it is a proper race car (designed for Le Mans). Don't ever park next one and expect to be noticed, it just won't happen.

Why are they with us? Well the beast does have a very practical picnic tray atop the boot which may come in handy for snacking and that's good enough for me.

**Wed 15<sup>th</sup> May.**

All goes well and this scribe together with Peter and our lovely carers (Sandra and Marie) meet at upmarket Lancaster hostelry (Premier Inn) for nosh and over night stay.

### **Thursday.**

We take ferry at Heysham to sail the Irish sea. On same day Paul with Kate, and Colin with Mira float out of Liverpool. It may be sensible for all to leave from same port but we are setting the tone here ..... none of us is sensible!

The sea crossing was flat calm and on arrival at Douglas, Peter and I separate. He to upmarket golf club address and I to cheap accommodation (Kennels). Stupid satnav takes me into an industrial wasteland and smugly states "You have reached your destination". What rubbish. We are very clearly **LOST!**

Abandoning satnav and using common sense we are soon having a very acceptable chilli and rice with Bushy's fine ale in the Kennels. Anyone out there want to buy a lying satnav?

Paul and Colin arrive unseen, much after dark from their Liverpool ferry.

### Friday.

Scheduled for the 'Sloc' today but not until 14.00hrs so the morning is ours. I report an overnight infestation of Fiats (500's) in the car park to management with suggestion for Rentokil. Management assures they are pets and harmless. Owners of the teeny weeny creatures turn out to be affable bods, bye and large sane.

SCT invite us to advertise our presence to the natives by fixing SCT signage to front end of MB50. Gave up and lobbed it atop the dash panel! If the bloody tour firm wants me to advertise their wares for free they must supply stuff that does not require an obliging bumper or holes in the bodywork for tie wraps.

New friend Richard (has Jag) makes a special tool from welding rod and threads tie wraps though the grill. He is farming stock and thus resourceful. Does the job but swears a lot. We are agreed, bailing string and welding rod ought be part of every tool kit.



Set satnav (will I never learn?) and aim for southernmost part the island, 'The Sound'.

Why then are we in Port Erin ..... twice? OK it's a nice place and the countryside hereabouts fabulous but it's not The Sound is it. Rubbish satnav has misled us again and we are .....

### **LOST!**

Ask a native. He laughs, "You're **LOST** mate! Miles away." His guidance tells us to go this way and that way and what do you know we end up at The Sound. I look at the sea and consider ..... shall I chuck satnav in it?

The Sound is a desolate but lovely spot. I wander to look at the Thousla Cross (look it up. I'm not here to pamper lazy types) and Sandra is chatted up by optimistic old codger. Young and fit she's OK with that, but old and "codgerified"? she can live without 'cause she already has one of those (me).

As we leave The Sound, Peter and Marie arrive. He later claims he saw a basking albino seal. Must be said here that he is ex-rozzer, therefore all evidence offered from his sworn statement at the stand is possibly/ probably/ certainly suspect, M'Lord!

Eventually we four pairs meet up at the Sloc. A stretch of country road that SCT have conned Local Highways Dept into closing for the day so that we can play. No doubt natives, who now are barred and have to make all sorts of diversions to get home, find this inconvenient but money has changed hands(?). Local bureaucrats who care little for local peasantry are pennies richer and if the natives are caused to suffer a little for our pleasures then that's just the way it is. Get over it!





Marshals at the start of each run give clear (very, very clear) instruction to each driver as to finding the way back to start for the second run. "Impossible to get lost" they say!

Off we go! Paul and I do our first fun run and work back to the start position, to give it a second bash. But where are Peter and Colin? Peter likes a challenge and is determined to prove Marshals wrong. Does the run, then ignores all instructions and ploughs his own furrow to ..... goodness knows where. Colin, poor fool, follows him and both are now well and truly **LOST!**

Paul and I do a second run each chuckling all the way and wonder if we shall see Pete and Colin again before the return ferry sets sail.

All had previously agreed that after the Sloc we meet at the Coffee Cottage, Foxdale, for cuppa. But now two of the party are missing and as they got **LOST** where it is "impossible to get lost" Paul and I wonder, could they find the way to the Coffee House on their own?



Paul and I decide to stick with plan 'A'. Wait in the Coffee House car park to see if they turn up. Eventually, big noise in the woodland. Squirrels, much afeared are dropping nuts and scampering up trees which trees now being swiftly vacated by birds flying off in all directions. That'll be Colin then! Here they are. No they're not. They rocket straight past! Still **LOST?**

Head-banging racket returns and our heroes park up alongside. Paul and I are overjoyed to see Peter and Colin again, express our deep concern they may have been captured and eaten by natives. And, because we are gentlemen and do not wish to embarrass our friends, we do not suggest they may be idiots. Into the cafe to laugh at Peter and hear pathetic excuses for the diversionary tour.



Sandra makes sport with waiter at the till. Reckons cash might have gone in pocket rather than till so demands receipt. He starts a

nervous stutter but eventually accepts defeat and comes up with slip of paper. Felt a little sorry for him, he was always on a loser with the memsahib.

We all agree to meet later for evening meal at 'The Forge' which is a mere stroll from the superior golf club address of Peter and Colin. Noting the menu advertises Tomahawk steak at £60 a pop (veg extra) I do this with some trepidation. Apparently, it is only proper that we peasants make the several miles journey to our betters territory rather than t'other way round because ..... they must not be inconvenienced.

We meet. Me ready to order two bags of crisps then cut and run for cheap curry at the Kennels but now find there are more sensibly priced offerings than Tomahawk steak. The company is far too enjoyable anyway to leave behind so we have lovely evenings with good pals.

## Saturday.

Free day. Group decide on a steam train ride, Port Erin to Douglas and return is the thing. I've been to Port Erin twice (by accident) so know my way there and happy with that. Excellent ride for steam enthusiasts I suppose but don't expect to see too much of the wonderful Manx countryside. Much of the journey is in cuttings or tree lined.



In Douglas someone suggests a pub, I think 'twas Peter who seems to know a lot about pubs. So off we go satnav guided. Pay respects to George Formby en route (finely clad in TT rider gear but not ever so chatty today). We go as directed by satnav before admitting it is a rubbish contraption and admit we are **LOST** (but this time on foot so does it count?). Never mind, someone round here will sell us a pint. Further stroll and we are back at the Station to join gang(s) of young things in party mood. Some immodestly clothed and all very jolly. We shared a carriage with a Dutch couple (from the cruise ship parked offshore) and a native who was glad to be anywhere the young ones were not.

Chug, chug and off we go. Native advises the trams can get up to 35 mph after which the drivers nose will bleed and he instructs the fireman to calm it down. Personally I think the contraption is swaying and bumping dangerously much above walking speed. If you do enjoy fairground rides it could be fun I do suppose.

The Dutchman requires very little encouragement to tell us about his several heart operations and a knee joint jobbie. Cheery cove he is and by the time he leaves I'm imagining all sorts of ailments for myself.

Very acceptable evening meal in the Kennels. Paul and I talk the toot about cars and drink fine Bushy's ale. Another excellent day and off to bed with smiley face.

## Sunday.

Scheduled for Jurby Motor Museum in the morning, afternoon tea at Creg-ny-Baa then TT pit lane for photo-shoot. The motor museum is a must! Brilliant showing of cars and super-brilliant showing of motor bikes.

The day then got interesting.

Colin needs fuel (thirsty beast the Marcos) so we decide to head south, fuel up then go middle island to Snaefell and see how far up the mountain we can get by road. Then to make our way to Creg-ny-Baa for cucumber sarnies, cake and coffee. Eventually we shall end up in the TT pit lane. Paul prefers to do things slow time and invites the rest of us to push off, he will rejoin us at leisure. Wise man.

We have a plan and it is a good plan! Can't go wrong, can't get lost.

You are joking!

Fuelling done. Peter has satnav programmed and fully armed, takes charge and launches up the road to ..... where?



Is this the same Jurby we left some time ago?  
Shouldn't we have turned right at that last elbow?  
Surely we are heading North and a lot off-piste.  
Could our leader be a little pissed?  
We must trust our leader.  
We follow the bleeder.

On, on and further yet. We are about to fall off the land and settle in the Irish sea when Peter finally draws a halt to proceedings. Emerges from ASBO's cockpit and with ear-to-ear grin to proudly announce we are at the island's most northerly point.

Pardon? But Peter, according to the agreed good plan we should be in the middle of the island and much above sea level. Thou art a plonker and we are most assuredly ..... **LOST!**

Not my fault, he claims. Asked satnav for Snaefell, it came up with the route and we gunned it. (Actually, it came up with 'Snaefell View' which is some location in a remote northern village which has a fine view of the mountain.) Peter in full denial refuses all blame and I'm thinking we've wandered into a Morecambe and Wise routine involving Andre Previn where all the right notes were played but not necessarily in the right order.

We dried our tears, gave Peter the sack and I'm commissioned to lead us south. They're looking for me to be the next Patsy.

Expertly following road signs (sod the satnav) I lead the troupe to Laxey where M'Lady begs for wee-wee stop. OK, it's anyway a good place to seek a native to ask for onward guidance up yonder hill. A tram station hove in view, good place to suit both needs methinks so I pull in. Bumpy, bumpy bump, bump, bump. What a silly place to put railway tracks.

Moor alongside platform, Sandra bolts to the conveniences which are conveniently placed and a native comes forward to meet me. How nice of him, how very pleasant people are in Laxey.

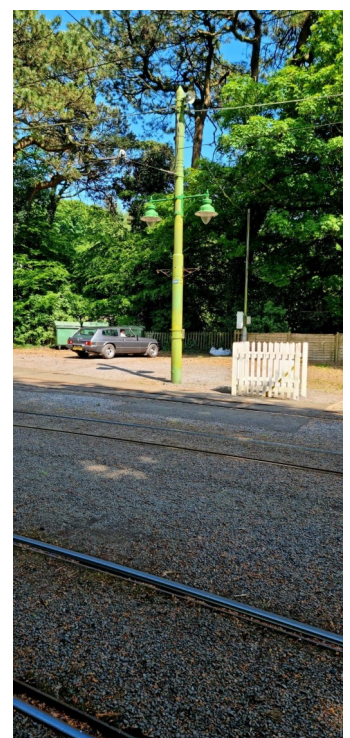
"You can't come in here. Didn't you see the NO ENTRY signs? You can't park next the platform. What happens if a tram is coming through?"



Oh dear, it seems I've met the Station Master and he's a bit peeved at my entrance. Not at all the nice man I first thought.

NO ENTRY signs sir? Surely such things are mere suggestions, optional, not to be taken literally. As for trams on the move, they have brakes do they not and can stop to give way to my greater need! Oh, and by the way which is the most direct motor car route up yonder fine hill?

He seems taken aback, but still makes stuttering instruction that I leave. This won't do at all as Sandra not yet returned so I continue to discuss this and that until she appears at which point I follow the Station Masters very pointy finger and depart his lovely little station. Bumpy, bumpy bump, bump, bump.





Find troupe on the High Street. Follow me gang, a native has instructed best route.

Three miles out of town it's clear 'the native' is a vindictive bast\*\*d and has deliberately misdirected me. We are **LOST!** Colin takes charge, guides us though a capillary artery to the main track and shepherds us to the Victory cafe near top of Snaefell. Good man Colin.

Meet Paul, chin wag for few minutes. Down to Creg-ny-Baa led by Paul who, according to Peter, has hand brake issues (as said earlier, Paul does things in the slow lane). Partake of afternoon tea and agree that after the TT pit lane shoot we shall go round the TT course in one shot. Another good plan which cannot go wrong?



All is well until quarter mile of our destination. Peter suddenly decides he has better route, leaves the main drag and takes off into residential area. Is he on house hunting expedition or is he **LOST?**

The ever reliable Colin takes him by the neck, leads us back on course and with the grandstand and pit lane in direct frontal view takes us into ..... the local Police Headquarters! We are so close to the pit lane that we can throw a brick at it and although it is impossible to now get lost, Colin does get us **LOST!** How we laugh.

After the pit lane photo-shoot three of us set off to do The TT course in one. Paul, like tram driver (related?) gets nose bleeds over 30 mph and has opted out. I'm pushed to the front because the others are frightened to lead. Each is worried that if they lead and get lost they may lose 'street cred.'. I have no 'street cred.' to lose so couldn't care less.

We do the circuit in very law abiding manner in less than 55 mins (5 mins stop at Cre-ny-Baa to arrange evening meet up). 'Though lap time record for crazy TT rider is less than 17 mins he wasn't constrained by 20/ 30/ 40mph speed limits. Reckon we did OK and didn't get lost once.

End of day we all meet at cheap Kennels to say good byes. Return Ferries tomorrow for all but me and Sandra. We decided to extend our visit an extra day to do our own thing.



Make Your Own Caption for this! Ed.



### Monday.

Does not exist on the Isle of Man!

First we shall go to the Aviation Museum. No you won't. It's closed Mondays.

OK we shall go to Laxey and take the electric tram to the top of the mountain. No you won't. It doesn't run on Mondays.

Fine! We'll visit the Laxey Wheel. Oh no you won't. Didn't anyone tell you it's closed to the public on Mondays.

Take my advice ..... when on the Isle of Man stay in bed Mondays.

Undeterred Sandra and I go village hopping. Fish and chips in Port Erin, this time not lost and I'm now on nodding terms with locals.

Flagged down in Castletown by smartly dressed geezer who asks "Is this really a Middlebridge?" Amazed that MB50 is recognised I answer "yes it is and I'm looking for somewhere to park and enjoy you township." "Over there and tell me all about it." I park the car and we talk car toot.

Turns out he knows a bit, owns an Alvis, is local big wig barrister and Coroner to boot. Gives me his card and invites me to look him up next time on the island. Funny old world ain't it. Who'd have thunk a Middlebridge would be recognised in sleepy old Isle of Man?

**Finally.**

All in our gang but Paul did at some time get **LOST!** Clearly Paul is defective of the valuable **Get Lost Gene**, is to be pitied and we pray for his sake it is treatable.

The award for most miles **LOST!** belongs without doubt to Peter. He is to be congratulated but, I suggest, not encouraged.

Syd.



## GEORGE'S JARGON JULY 2024

Where to start then...!

Since our house move last October most of my time has been trying to renovate what I call 'Minging Manor', with that very rare moment doing something different. After a busy day, all I want to do is collapse in front of the mind-numbing TV and not have to think too much about the day's events and disasters, nor tomorrow's challenges. I'm too exhausted to even compose Jargon copy, hence the lateness here.

During these few months my 1959 Velo Clubman has lain dormant in the garage and has yet to be started or ridden, so the occasional Middlebridge event and MESSsembly has been some kind of salvation.



## RESTORATION SHOW NEC

My fears that this show wasn't really for 'Middlebridges' were completely unfounded – quite the opposite, in fact. This was the first time 'The MESS' had attended this event and I detected a slightly different kind of enthusiast from that often seen at the November show, I don't recall anyone mentioning HRH for a start, and most seemed quite knowledgeable of the marque anyway.

At one stage I casually mentioned that I'd rescued Steve's gorgeous red Cossie powered Scimitar from a rotting barn in Scotland. Crikey, that remark and story created a heck of a lot of interest, I imagine because it's rare to actually talk with someone who has literally actioned a 'Barn Find' rescue. I repeated the story to see what the reaction would be, and yes, it did often seem to be of much interest.

All in all, I thought it was a very successful show and Bruce's stand deserved an award, once again.

## SANDRINGHAM ROYAL CARS...

Initially 'The MESS' were invited to show Princess Anne's Middlebridge in a marquee that was going to house 'Royal Cars'. We'd already committed ourselves to attend a CC event at Brookhill Hall as a kind of 'thankyou' for allowing us to use this place for a photo shoot before placing it in the GBCJ museum in nearby Ambergate, sadly the dates clashed. All that changed...



James Kerr, owner of Brookhill Hall, fully understood and appreciated our embarrassing predicament and gracefully suggested that we should attend the Sandringham event instead.

From that first contact, to the actual event, the offer changed from being within the 'Royal' marquee, to being just outside it and 1420H being on The MESS 'Club Stand'. On our arrival we were shown our pitch which

was well away from the Royal marquee!

I can think why this may have happened, but I'm not certain, however the marquee contained royal cars that had been restored by a company... I think it's fair to assume that if they paid for that marquee then they didn't want cars that had been 'restored' elsewhere. What I cannot comprehend is why we were not allocated somewhere closer to that marquee, as had been suggested by the organisers.

The current owner of 1420H, who wasn't able to attend, decreed that I should drive the car into the display ring, a really nice gesture I thought. A few people recognised the famous number plate and I said to some that I was, in fact, Princess Anne – in my best





disguise. Lo and behold, driving into the display ring, the commentator said: "...the last time I saw Princess Anne driving this car – she didn't have a beard", to the delight and amusement of the onlookers.

Would we do it again? Probably not. For one Mick and I didn't really enjoy it – something was missing!



Then there are the logistics to consider. Mick currently has access to a superb covered trailer which he delivered to 'Minging Manor' Friday afternoon. Saturday morning I drove my VW T5 north, from Rugby, suitably adorned with the 'Task Force' stickers, to the GBCJ in Ambergate. Middlebridge No. 5 was loaded and secured, I then drove east to Sandringham where Mick and Alan C-T helped to unload the car, place the trailer, which was also covered in MESSy graphics and our pitch was secured with the

plastic fencing on the Sunday morning.

Saturday afternoon I left as quickly as possible for I had booked the VW into the Sandringham Campsite and needed to erect the 'Drive Away' awning and other camping-related tasks. As Maggie didn't accompany me, I decided to sleep in the awning's inner tent, I blew up the double-mattress air bed (which went down during the night!). The awning was attached accompanied by rain to add to the fun.



At that time I thought, I'm 81 years' old, I've had a long journey, I'm cold, I'm wet...do I really need any of this!

I got to bed quite early but was woken by a fellow camper's loud snoring, he was probably some 40' away, but such was the volume he could have been sharing my bed.

The show itself was a tad disappointing, not helped by the cold weather which turned to rain, and about 2 pm exhibitors and punters were already leaving. I found the beer tent, the prices (I thought) weren't too bad, looking again it was £4.50p for half a pint, £7 for a pint. Ridiculous. I didn't buy, obviously. It rained so hard that cars were not allowed to use one exit as it was so waterlogged.



After another similarly disturbed sleep, I showered early Monday morning to meet up with Alan C-T who helped guide me onto the trailer's tow hitch. We had loaded 1420H onto the trailer the night before, however the jockey wheel had sunk into the ground so a bit of heavy-duty faffing around was required to get it all connected.

The return journey was uneventful but in both directions I felt a sense of responsibility for a valuable vehicle which was (fortunately) in a covered trailer lessening the possibility of a stray stone damaging anything. How long Mick will have access to this bit of kit is an unknown, however, if you have the money and the room, it's yours... contact Mick for details.

In total I covered 354 miles, the Core team insisted The MESS pay for the fuel which came to £111.48p.

Although we have an agreement with the GBCJ for access to 1420H anytime we want it, plus the current owner's permission also, I doubt it will be taken to many shows because of the (im) practicalities. My VW is an ideal tractor unit (I tow my caravan with it, it's also 4WD), so that restricts my choice – caravan or trailer? A Middlebridge is far too light to do the job, so what's the answer? I don't mind the towing, I volunteered to do so, nevertheless you can appreciate the problems that's arisen.

## JOHN McCAULEY RIP

The sad news of John's death was imparted to all on Will's email list, including an invite for anyone to attend, driving their Middlebridge Scimitars if possible. Mick kindly collected me from Crick Weighbridge and chauffeured me in his famous Gold Scimitar to our meeting place in a garden centre in Gedling, Nottinghamshire. Bruce came in his gorgeous Blue Scimitar, Alan and Sandra arrived in their original grey Middlebridge albeit wearing the wrong wheels, Mark Beedham and his wife joined us in his Merc. On reflection, we should have taken along our life-size model of Princess Anne.



We parked in the proper Car Park, but were hoping to find somewhere more imposing to greet the cortege, however the ideal place on grass near the entrance had signs saying 'Keep Off'.

This is the second funeral that I've attended that's been very different from any other. It was a cross between a celebration of life, reminisces, and a political rally! We learnt of John's time as a Labour Councillor, Lord Coaker and others, including close family and friends gave their eulogies, tales, and stories of John's life.

After the funeral attendees were invited to view the Scimitars, for some this was a side of John that they weren't really aware of, so - much ooing and aahing was heard and folk were invited to sit in the cars, or look under the bonnet of Mick's car. I should have added, a Classic Car meeting too then.

We, who only knew him for the past 30 or so years, had our opinions confirmed, that here was a thoroughly decent, honest, genuine, warm, respectful, principled man, with integrity, the like of which is so rare in this age. There was an abundance of laughter during the non-religious ceremony, wonderfully entertaining stuff. Isn't it good that life has been celebrated and his contribution to many people's lives is recognised? (Yes, Ed.)

I have received a donation for John's chosen cancer charity. If you wish to swell that particular appeal, please send me a cheque (or Bank Transfer), made out to The MESS declaring its intention and I'll

forward the whole amount in one MESS cheque. Thanks.

John has left us with our own legacy...



If it wasn't for his vision to salvage the 6B, there wouldn't have been the Middlebridge Scimitar.

Without that car and the Enthusiasts commitment to it, there wouldn't have been 'The MESS'.

Finally, without the MESS I/we wouldn't have met some of the nicest people imaginable, made lifelong friends and had some incredible times, with much laughter and banter. In my opinion, that is something to celebrate and treasure, and cannot be priced. Thanks John.

## MESSembly MATTERS

At our last meeting in July our longevity was discussed. To be quite frank none of us are getting any younger.

Despite looking exceedingly young, I am 81 years old. Having led such a busy life I just didn't find the time to grow old, never mind ever growing up. I, too, have been diagnosed with all manner of potential life-threatening problems and a MRI scan last September shows that I have two hernias necessitating the wearing of a Liz (truss) for now. An op is needed to save me having to keep poking back some escaping giblets now and then.

The point is this, how much longer can we oldies carry on with what we're doing for the MESS? We need to inject some younger blood into our Club. We are fortunate to have Alan Cavendish-Tribe join us in taking on some of the important organisational roles. We need more of that input. Can you help?

Perhaps you should bequest your Middlebridge to a younger member of your family/friends, with the proviso that they become involved in this unique Club and continue its existence for posterity.

*(And while I do my bit for both MESS and RSSOC I am afraid work gets in the way, as M&G will tell you so apologies this is late again! It does take some time to compile, proof and compose the MESSage, in my defence! Ed.)*

## NEXT YEAR?

The late John McCauley has a son who lives in the Dordogne region of France. There is a regular monthly meeting of Classics about 10 miles from his home, so he has suggested that The MESS should join the throng, so we're thinking of such an event for next year. Son Phil has been given 2 contacts for LHD Middlebridges, as he's looking to buy such a car.



How significant and unique would that be to have a car that his Dad was responsible for and enter it for a show in his adopted country, accompanied by fellow enthusiast?

For those of you so inclined, I thoroughly recommend a book entitled 'A Thousand Years of Annoying The French'. I've now read it 3 times, it's amusing, hilarious in places, it brings dusty history to a rich and heartening life, and so it should be.

## MONIES

The last appeal for MESS funds around our birthday didn't produce the response seen in the past, unfortunately. There's never a good time to proffer the begging bowl, but it has to be done to keep the MESS going. Though some of us still dip into our own pockets knowing that we're unlikely to receive recompense, we don't have bottomless pockets anymore, so any amount of donation is very welcome and Banking details are found within this epistle. Please, if you can...or have simply let it slip past you. Thanks in anticipation.

I'm hoping that I've contacted everyone who sent a donation to the MESS. If you haven't received a 'Thankyou', do please let me know and I'll look into it. It's worth mentioning that when you send a donation to indicate what it's for specifically, ie MESS donation, Cancer appeal, etc.

Thanks all. Stay between the hedges.

George

## !STOP PRESS!

James Ker has invited The MESS to his next show at Brookhill Hall, Pinxton, Nottinghamshire NG16 6JU. The date is **11th August**.

James will contact the nearby GBCJ to see if they will deliver 1420H to the show. It was Richard Usher, GBCJ owner, who suggested Brookhill Hall to us for the photo shoots, so there is a close connection already.

I suggest it would be an obligation to support this event as some kind of compensation for attending the disastrous Sandringham show. The usual suspects have confirmed their interest, nevertheless can you too make the effort to support this particular event?

## MB14 Update

Having had MB14 off the road for the winter I put it in for MOT at the beginning of March. It passed with no advisories but while it was waiting in the garage for me to pick it up the owner heard a "bang" which was one of the rear springs giving up. On investigation there was a faint hairline of rust at the edge of the break but the rest was a clean fracture. The springs were about eight years old and this is not the first time this has happened, my SE5a also did that to me a few years ago, sadly a reflection on either the quality of springs or, more likely, the quality of potholes round here.

MB14's woes continued; with the springs replaced it was now, for the first time in my ownership, proving reluctant to start, almost like it was overfuelling. The garage I am using has suggested it go to an expert in Ford engines who lives locally round here, Ricky Gauld, to see if he could diagnose what might be causing the issue.

MB14 duly went to Ricky Gauld Motorsport (<http://www.rickygauld.co.uk/>) to see if he could cure the starting issue. The diagnosis was that the timing was too far advanced and the car was running rich. Puzzling as it is Efi and nobody had touched the tuning in my ownership? Still, the results cannot be faulted as the car is back in good fettle and that weekend joined a number of other classics on a Rotary Club run in aid of the Air Ambulance. (Photo credit Beth Taylor, local press)



This Middlebridge Scimitar still cuts a dash. Picture: Beth Taylor

Organised by the Rotary Club of Buckie, Sunday, June 9 saw 24 vehicles and their owners gather at Cunningholes in the town to begin a tour that took them round Deskford, Fordyce, Portsoy, Sandend, Lintmill, Cullen, Portknockie, Findochty, Portessie and finished at Buckie.

## Middlebridge Prototypes

Following on from the tail end piece last MESSage we have had time to look into this further. It has always been thought there were two Middlebridge prototypes, Dr. Dan Mitchell's car and a red car A90 YOM. The latter was allegedly badly damaged on a road test but that has never been verified. It does, however, not appear on the DVLA online system so could have been scrapped or may have been the subject of a registration change.

During the NEC last year, we were looking through some photos that Kohji Nakauchi had found and passed on to Mick Gaughran and what appears to be a third prototype car has been revealed.

This car, B742 AOA, is shown in the three accompanying photos. In photo 1 it is in its original condition as a light green SE6b, photo 2 shows the 2.9i engine installation and photo 3 shows the car refinished in a new colour and



modified to Middlebridge specification. Sadly, this registration also does not appear on the DVLA site and Jim King has confirmed the number is one in a batch of registrations booked by Reliant which appear on many SS1, 6b and GTC's.

What is also interesting is the red car in the background of the photos which might be A90 YOM or could be the development car APL 248. However, we don't know the timeline of when these cars were in Middlebridge Scimitar's



ownership so it is not possible to say if it is either of those or a production car. There is also a possibility that A90 YOM became APL 248 and the second prototype was B742 AOA but that is just conjecture on my part and if anyone has information to fill in any more of this jigsaw then it would be great to hear from you.



## NEC 2024

I know it is the middle of the holiday season but we are in the planning stages for the November NEC Stand.

Overleaf is the advert for the show and it includes the Club code **CCCN0V487**. If you use that when ordering tickets not only will it get you a discount but it will help promote the MESS to the organisers and help our profile with the show. The code can be used by friends and family so please spread the word to anyone who is going to the show.

We will send a reminder nearer the time so if you forget you will get a second chance to use the discount code or if you decide to come last minute you can always find the code on the online version of this MESSage on the Middlebridge Website.



JOIN US AT



USE OUR CLUB CODE TO  
SAVE £4 ON ADULT TICKETS



8-10 NOVEMBER | NEC, BIRMINGHAM

Join MIDDLEBRIDGE ENTHUSIASTS SCIMITAR SET on stand 2-755 at the UK's premier classic motor event, the Lancaster Insurance Classic Motor Show at the NEC Birmingham from Friday 8 - Sunday 10 November. Club members, friends and followers can book tickets at [www.necclassicmotorshow.com](http://www.necclassicmotorshow.com) quoting our club code **CCCN0V487** to save £4 off single-day adult tickets or £2 off family, child or multv-day tickets Book by 17 October and you'll help us earn additional benefits!