

## ***A MEMBER'S MIDDLEBRIDGE***

I enclose some photos of our latest Scimitar GTE. It's the Middlebridge manual development car which we bought in June 1989 from Middlebridge via Kenilworth Garage, colour Antique Grey goes mauve iris! (metallic blue in sun; grey in the shade). It started life as a May 1985 Reliant Scimitar GTE6b but was totally rebuilt by Middlebridge in late 1987 and registered in their name in 1988. The factory have confirmed that it is identical to the production cars i.e. 2.9EFI engine; manual 5 speed box (with an excellent 5th gear as overdrive top); 15 in. wheels; improved suspension (Middlebridge springs and Bilstein shock absorbers); improved dashboard; lights etc but it's badgeless and B reg!



I have previously owned a 1973 5a for 13 years (1976-89) and it never once let me down in over 120,000 miles (I also sold it for the same price as purchased in 1973!). Fortunately I bought it from a friend who had kept it immaculate and I gave it a full service every 4,000 miles. The club has been invaluable over this period and we have had great service from the Scimitar specialist garages. Will Sparrow has even made spares available on a Sunday! Don Pither's delivery service by the post is unbelievably quick and Graham Walker has also been invaluable.

We have now driven the Middlebridge Scimitar over 8,000 miles and the enthusiastic support of the factory has been very impressive. I understand a fully illustrated parts manual will be available shortly to dealers.





We are delighted with the car and can summarise our experience to date in note form:

1. General construction:- it doesn't leak and is better built and markedly better finished than the Reliant cars. The body is often mistaken for steel as it is so smooth.

2. Handling:- the whole car is taut and the ride more comfortable than a 6b on Bilstein shock absorbers; Middlebridge springs; 15in performance wheels and 195x65 Avon Turbospeed tyres and rear autoroll bar.

3 Performance:- the 2.9 engine is certainly smoother than the old Essex V6 and both more powerful and lighter. It seems about as fast as a new 5a (0-60 in about 9 secs) but needs more revs to achieve it. Economy is remarkable:- over 8000 miles it has averaged just over 30mpg on unleaded fuel and after allowing 8% for an optimistic non-standard speedo.

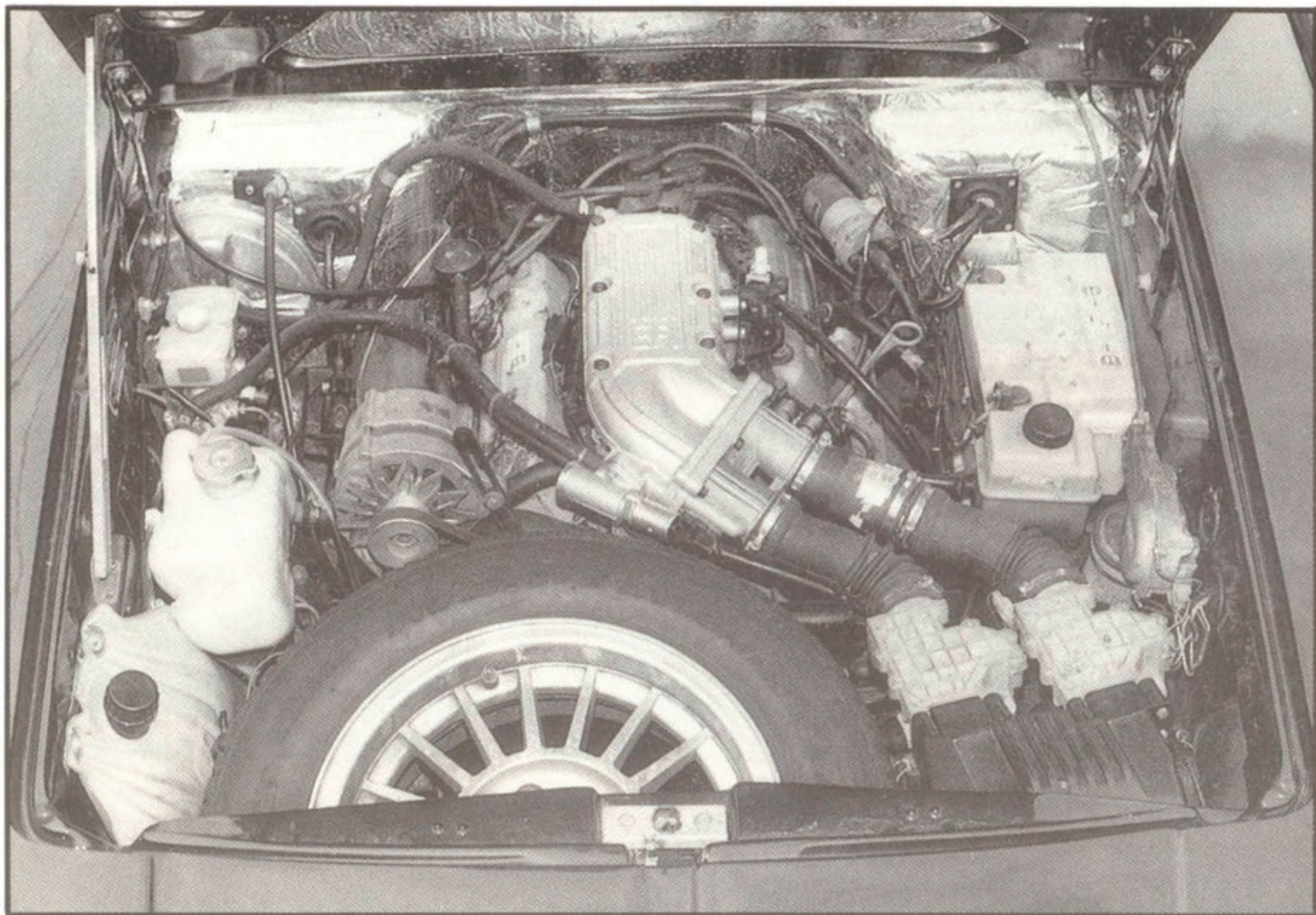
4. Engine Cooling:- even in the hot 1989 summer the electric fan was hardly ever on (and I checked several times to ensure it was functioning!

5. Ventilation:- the warm air is very effective and the blower fan hardly used. It even demists easily with warm air only on dull days!

6. Heating:- it warms up quickly (3 miles) compared with about 10 miles for my old 5a.

7. Engine management system:- there was a slight 'bug' on purchase and I don't like the complication of EFI as you feel helpless to 'sort it out'. The engine would occasionally surge to 1500-2000 rpm when cold on an odd occasion such as braking towards a roundabout when changing down. If the engine was then switched off and on quickly (when stationary) the idle speed would go back down to 700 rpm and all would be well for another 200+ miles. A thorough investigation by a Ford engine specialist (Stuart Jones at Soans of Leamington Spa) indicated that a new engine management system was required (Ford Ref S.P.W.I No.10 March 1989). The latest version, part no 6186127 (for a manual car) completely solved the problem. I gather





Ford Scorpio owners are familiar with this problem. The usual advice is 'change the idle control valve' (check it is a 2.9i valve and not a 2.0 or 2.4 which have right-angle plastic bodies which won't allow the spare wheel to fit (part no. required is 6172132 and the alloy body is stamped K1 not K2). Unfortunately this won't correct surging for more than 500 miles but if the engine won't hold the idle speed then the valve may be faulty).

The new engine management system cost £287+VAT! Fortunately the car had a 12 month parts and labour guarantee from Kenilworth Garage who have been very quick and fair in dealing with any problems.

8. Rear lights:- much safer now they are larger.

9. Stainless steel exhausts:- they are non magnetic but leaked badly because it is a development system. They certainly don't leak on production cars! Some stainless steel welding cured the leaks and the whole car is now very quiet.

10. Front suspension:- bushes and trunnions are unchanged from a 6b and both the top inboard rubber bushes and one trunnion have been changed.

11. Hub spoiler:- very effective but 1 inch (25mm) more ground clearance would be a great help especially when parking near low kerbs. It also needs drain holes for water - now drilled - or it collects about 1 gallon!

12. Turning circle:- I still think the same as a 6b. This would make a useful improvement if the turning circle could be reduced.

Overall we are delighted with the Middlebridge Scimitar GTE and wish Middlebridge every success.

(Phil Wormald of Middlebridge phoned last week to explain that the car was also used for drive and static noise tests; radio tests and temperature tests for type approval during development)

*Dr Don Mitchell/Leamington Spa*



# **TURNSTYLE**

## **REGALIA**

It has been some time since I mentioned the Club regalia but you can hardly have failed to notice the expanded range of items now on offer. You seem to approve judging from the response, so far.

The aim is to please, but to those of you who are looking for products aimed specifically at the Reliant model you own, your continued patience is requested. The problem of course, is the cost of producing items in small numbers and selling them at a price that you are prepared to pay. For example, as last year was a significant one for the Sabre it was hoped that an enamel Sabre shaped brooch badge could be made available but because of the initial tooling costs the selling price would have been too high. In the end a few Sabre T shirts were produced but not many were sold even amongst Sabre owners. However, Coupé and SS1 owners, you have not been forgotten. "Thinking caps" remain in place!

Of the new items on sale your attention is drawn particularly to the leather gear knobs which are supplied with the club badge centre piece and also to the bronze grille badge supplied in response to those of you who expressed concern over the long lasting qualities of the acrylic badges.

Finally, please note that SLICE nos 92 and 96 are now sold out. This is unfortunate but I have a recollection that numbers of each of these issues had to be scrapped after printing as they were not up to scratch. Nevertheless it is clear that SLICE back issues sell well so if you are missing back numbers you would do well to order now to avoid later disappointment

## **CLUB INSURANCE**

Just under two years ago I agreed, foolishly perhaps, to take our Club insurance under my wing to establish what cover we actually had and whether we were adequately catered for. I was rather alarmed to find that not much had happened to the policy since its inception several years ago. Certainly the range of cover was inadequate and the sums insured rather low. In fact, I struggled to get the policy on the right footing but I was frankly never entirely happy with it for the extent of cover was not clear to me, (and I have worked in insurance for 20 years!)

The insurers at the time that the last renewal (Nov 89) was due failed to offer us renewal terms until 2 weeks after renewal date was past, by which time I had arranged with GenMan's agreement, a new policy through the company for which I work.

As to the policy itself the Club now has a fully up-to-date policy providing the widest range of cover we could obtain on a practical basis at a fairly competitive price. I do not propose to go into the various covers arranged but wish to draw your attention to just two aspects.

Firstly, those of you who tow the Club's trailers on the Club's business need no longer arrange cover under your own motor policies, We have all risks cover on the trailers and this includes road risk which was specifically requested. Thus damage to the trailer and its contents is now covered. Third party damage caused by the trailers whilst attached to your vehicles is normally automatically provided by your own motor policies without having to inform your insurers.

Secondly, we have Public Liability cover for all events which we organise or at which we have a Club stand. This includes the smaller regional events. However, for the policy to be operative for these events you MUST advise GenMan in advance, in