

CLASSIC CAR WEEKLY

BUYING ■ SELLING ■ NEWS

6 WEDNESDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2010
CLASSIC CAR WEEKLY

News Club Spotlight

SHARPENING THE SCIMITAR



The resurrected Middlebridge logo, never worn by the cars when new, although it was designed at the time

BY RICHARD GUNN

Owners of Middlebridge sports cars – the little-known company that took over Scimitar production from Reliant – are striving to have the company recognised as a separate British marque.

As the Middlebridge section of the Reliant Sabre and Scimitar Owners' Club celebrates the 21st birthday of the cars' production, registrar Mick Gaughran has had the Middlebridge badges re-made. "When new, they carried the old Reliant badge, which was down to politics and money," says Gaughran. Middlebridge Scimitar badges were designed at the time, but never made. The 21st Century version is as close as possible to the original.

"We've had just 100 badges made. With just 78 Middlebridges built, that makes them a lot rarer than a Bugatti or Ferrari badge!" Already 45 Scimitars have had it fitted, and Mick is hopeful the remaining cars will adopt them. "There aren't many British cars any more, so we want to try and give Middlebridge its identity." He also pointed out there were major differences between the old Reliant Scimitar and the new Middlebridge version, including, most significantly the 2.9-litre 150bhp engine from the Ford Scorpio, giving 140mph plus performance plus a galvanised chassis.



Former Middlebridge managing director John McCauley (centre) is presented with a mounted version of the Middlebridge badge by George Sampford and Mick Gaughran in Nottingham

Recently 12 of the cars gathered outside the castle in Nottingham – Middlebridge's home city – as part of the ongoing birthday celebrations. With all the attending Scimitars sporting the new badge, it was an opportunity for special guest, former Middlebridge MD John McCauley, to see what the cars would have looked like had the original concept come to fruition in the 1980s. "I'm immensely proud and grateful," said John. "Every person here shares one thing, enthusiasm. We always felt we'd

created a new generation of Scimitars, and hoped it would have a long life."

Middlebridge acquired the rights to the Scimitar in 1987 and envisaged building 300 a year. The model was launched in 1989, but slow sales, the acquisition of the Brabham Formula 1 team and a legal battle over the Le Mans Bentley 'Old Number One' caused the firm to go into receivership in 1990.

■ For more information visit www.middlebridge-scimitar.co.uk and www.scimitarweb.co.uk, or call 01189 540725.