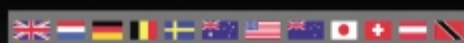


Midascarsforum.com

magazine




 **MIDAS**

 **Forum group** 

issue 01
January 2009

ONLY YOU'LL KNOW THE SECRET



 **MIDAS**

MIDAS 30 years! Happy anniversary!



Fly Drive - Castle Combe - Midland Classic Shows - Brooklands - Suspension mod

In this issue:



Top: Castle Combe action

Top right: show reports

Bottom: Fly Drive gallery

Right: new rear suspension

And much more!

The Midascarsforum magazine is produced for the Midas cars forum members and is only available in pdf format and free to download. Articles are taken from the forum or have been sent by members to the editor. Interesting stories or other contributions can be sent to the editor: Hans Efdé at hans.efde@hccnet.nl or at hansefde@yahoo.com.

Cover

Cover page of the very first Midas brochure picturing the prototype MK1 Bonze.

Back

Wintertime! Mouvinen in Finland wakes up and finds his Bronze (the first Midas in Finland and possibly the only one) covered in snow, November 2008.

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Editorial

Real value

Previously I wrote an editorial called "value" in which I questioned the low prices people were selling their Midas cars for. Now a few months later it has come clear that the economy has gone haywire because of excessive loans and the value of goods and property has collapsed.

It turned out that all those expensive cars in the street and big houses could be bought because banks believed in their value and lent people money to buy them. That is, YOUR money you had put in the bank as a saving or pension. Sorry it's all gone now. Vaporized since everything was a big air bubble. That 100 grand Aston Martin was just worth 20, that million pound villa, really not a penny more than 500 grand.

And your Midas? Well that's just worth what you think it is. If you consider it to be the best car in the world then spend your money on a new engine, paint, interior and so on. And it will only be more valuable. But just in your eyes. And there is nothing wrong with that. The only thing that counts in the end is the grin on your face when you drive it. The value of things is now open for discussion anyway. If you say your Midas is worth 15 grand you're an idiot. But if 1000 people say it as well, it's suddenly true and you have invested wisely. It's like in the fairytale of the emperor and his clothes.

Welcome to the first edition Midascarsforum magazine. It is a sort of celebration issue because in December 1978 the Midas Bronze was unveiled at Alexandra Palace in London. For us it was the start, but in fact for Harold Dermott it was the end of a 2 year period of hard work to get the car production ready! I had hoped to have Harold's story of the Midas start up in this issue, but

unfortunately he has not found the time to write it up. Perhaps we'll read it in issue 2.

As a replacement I have reprinted the first interview Harold gave in *Alternative Cars* in 1980. It gives an interesting insight in the first years of the Midas company. I hope you enjoy it and the rest as well. Many thanks to all contributors who made this edition again possible.

I wish you all the best for 2009 and hope to meet you at one of the meetings. If all goes well the Dutch Midas Squadron will be present at Stoneleigh 2009. Now back to the garage.....

Hans Efdé

Interview with Harold Dermott

Alternative Cars, Summer 1980

TALKING POINT



To start with, Harold, tell me briefly about your motor industry experience.

Prior to the Mini Marcos, I got a degree in Mechanical Engineering from Southampton University and then joined Leyland as a graduate engineer at the age of 22. Leyland in those days wasn't what it is today. It was a most peculiar organisation, and one got terribly bogged down in systems. I ended up in the Research and Development department at Jaguars, and after a couple of years there, it became apparent that there was just no future. It was the old business of, you know, you stay in this grade until you're x years old, and then you'll get promoted. It doesn't matter how good or bad you are - that's where you stay. It didn't seem to be the future for me.

But it gave you a good solid grounding?

Oh, absolutely, yes. It gave me a good solid start with motor cars, and also showed me how to do some things and how not to do some things. It was experience, and there's just no substitute for it.

Considering the Mini Marcos was first introduced in the early 60's, and by the time you took it over was perhaps in danger of overstaying its welcome, didn't you feel it was rather a dangerous project to try and revive?

Yes, looking back, it was an extremely dangerous project to take on. But we had done a lot of research into kit cars and specialist cars, including why some of them had gone bankrupt. We decided there was a pattern as to why they didn't work, and we set about to try and avoid

those mistakes with the Mini Marcos. The first thing was avoid the direct marketing - not having dealers, and instead selling cars from small ads in the back of motoring magazines. The second thing was obviously the product. The car hadn't been reviewed for a long time, so we had a good look at it and made various changes. Going to self-coloured fibreglass doesn't seem like a big change, but of course it saves the customer a vast amount of money and time, because he gets a car which is all one colour, shiny and so forth, instead of having to get down and spray it. Also it guarantees a higher standard for the finished product. Some people do seem to spray their kit cars with the vacuum cleaner in the drive, which doesn't give a particularly good finish.

Would you say that your own business ability was a large part of giving the car a new lease of life?

I don't think so. The Mini-Marcos had always been in the shadow of the larger Marcoses, and was regarded as the poor relation. We just had the opportunity to step back and look at it by itself, and realise that it was very much a car for the late seventies and eighties - much more so than its larger brothers would ever be.

You're now making two cars a week. Apart from the gel coat, were there any other major changes you made to turn the car into such a successful proposition?

We improved the structure in various areas and made it easier to make in various places. But the main reason for its success is realising who we're selling it to. It is not a sports GT car; it is an economy car - that is what we sell it as. 80% of our customers fit

either an 850cc or a 1-litre engine, which gives you some idea of the proof of that fact. Dropping the ridiculous GT tag, emphasising that it's totally rust-free, economical and practical - that's what brought the sales.

You've supported Steven Roberts' Mini-Marcos racer for some time now. To what extent do you think this has helped the business?

Well, awareness is a very difficult thing to measure. You don't do any one thing in a business this size, and then suddenly everybody in the country hears of you. It's really a question of building a wall of bricks one at a time, and there's no doubt that Steven's car has put one brick into a very large wall. His car has been enormously successful and, yes, it has increased awareness of the name. As you know, I'm a great motorsport enthusiast, but unfortunately the returns we get from racing are minimal. In fact, we can only direct the sale of one car to our presence in motor racing. The situation isn't helped by the majority of the motor sporting magazines still regarding kit cars as a joke, and doing their best to avoid giving us coverage, even when we're winning. It's not sour grapes - you've only got to look through the magazines to see that is the case.

This leads me on to the fact that you're not actually supporting Steven any more.

Yes, the situation is this: Steven has won a National Modified Sports Car Championship for two years running - 1978 and 1979. He also won the 1500cc class in both of them, so he has really won everything there is to win. Now from here we could only go one way - either repeat the success or go backwards. To guarantee a repeated success would have required a large investment of time on Steven's part and some money on our part. In view of what I've just said about sales from motor racing, I felt that we could not justify that expense at this time. Also, I attended a meeting of the RAC last June, the annual meeting for airing views on each formula, and it was quite clear that for Modsports the way the rules are written, if I was starting with a clean sheet of paper, there's no way I'd choose a Mini-Marcos. I could tell you which car was going to win each of the categories now, if you like. The racing is more or less incidental. Davlin will win the 1150 class, Fiat have spent £60,000 on developing an X1/9 which should win the 1500 class, an Elan will win the next class and a Porsche will win the big class. That's it, and it's become silly, so we feel it's best if we retire gracefully whilst on top. We've recommended to Steven that he races a Davlin,

MANUFACTURER OF THE MIDAS AND MINI-MARCOS, HAROLD DERMOTT RUNS ONE OF THE MOST PROFESSIONAL AND AMBITIOUS COMPANIES IN THE KIT CAR BUSINESS. WE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SECRETS OF HAROLD'S SUCCESS. PETER FILBY ASKS THE QUESTIONS.

because we feel that car will be more competitive than the Mini-Marcos. The aside to that is, because of the large amount of work that is necessary on a Davrien once you've received it from the factory, Steven's car isn't ready yet. So he's been running the Mini-Marcos for the first few races of the season, and is currently leading the STP Championship!

What have you learnt about your customers from the statistical surveys you do?

We've discovered the average age of a Mini-Marcos customer is 31, much older than you'd expect. Over half of them (54%) are married which immediately leads to the 2+2 configuration to provide space for children. This might explain why we market the car in the way that we do.

Let's move on to the Midas now. As a small business, how have you been able to afford to design and develop it to such a high standard?

With great difficulty! It has been an enormous drain on your financial resources. Basically it's taken all the profit we've made out of making Mini-Marcos and doing contract laminating work, plus a bit more. It's also been achieved by enormous efforts on the part of our work force, especially John Ingram. Also on the part of Richard Oakes who designed the car. A lot of people have put in a lot of effort without, say, the sort of reward they might get if they worked for ICI - let's put it that way. This of course is the sort of thing that happens in small businesses. Yes, it has been an enormous drain.

How long has it been going on now?

We started in September 1976 and it took about 18 months to finish the pattern. Then we made the moulds and built the first car just in time to appear at the Performance Car Show at Alexandra Palace in December '78. The car then underwent nine months of pre-production testing on the continent - Pavé testing, Autobahn testing, generally trying to break the car. We also tested for water ingress, dust ingress, all the sort of testing that major manufacturers do - as much as we could within our



resources. We also had to productionise various one-off components we built for the prototypes and that took nine months.

I know a lot of money has been spent on special studio photography and on some superb colour brochures. Do you think you can justify this sort of cost for a small company?

Well, you've got to start as you mean to go on. The Midas is intended to be the most sophisticated small kit car that you can purchase anywhere in England. We think that the publicity material that goes with it must also be the best available. Various journalists including yourself have been kind enough to say it is the best available for kit cars, and that's the sort of standard we want to set.

Tell me a bit more about the people you've got behind you, who they are, what they've done and what sort of influence they've had on you.

Well, my brother, who is a director of the company and works part time for us, is otherwise employed as a senior executive in a very large advertising agency. He is used to analysing statistics to give information about marketing.

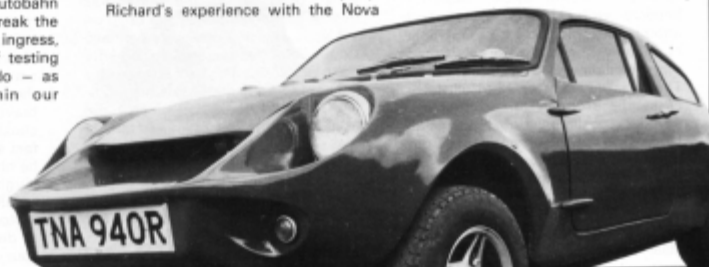
Then there's Richard Oakes, of course, who styled the Midas and is another director of the company. Richard's experience with the Nova

was invaluable to us - it's always very useful to have the benefit of someone else's hindsight. He gave us a professional talent and in fact now runs his own design consultancy with which we work very closely.

Arthur Birchall is another asset to the company; he's had 13 years' experience as a mechanic in Formula 1, including a position as Chief Mechanic with Team Lotus. He, of course, is capable of building cars to an extremely high standard - exactly the sort of person we need with the Midas Superkit because it is virtually a complete car. We are, if you like, trying to build a Mini-Porsche, a car which is built of high quality materials, beautifully finished and assembled by probably one of the best five mechanics in the country.

The Midas could cost its owners anywhere between £3000 and £5000 to put on the road. How do you feel you can justify asking someone to spend that much money on a specialist vehicle when there is so much excellent mass-production competition around?

There's no way that we pretend to compete on price with mass-produced vehicles. If a customer can only see as far as the initial cost of a vehicle, then we very happily point





him at some production line wonder. We hope that our customers will be discerning enough to realise that with a Midas they are buying a car which is going to last them a very long time. A Midas in ten years is going to look much the same as the day it was bought, because it can't rust, ever. So that is one enormous benefit. Also, it is a genuine 2+2 package which will give you over 40 to the gallon, cruising at 70mph with a maximum speed of 100 – and there are very few cars offering the same deal. So we think it's quite easy to justify the price. It is, after all, no more than an MGB GT which the Midas beats on every count.

I know it's fully proven but do you think many customers worry about the all-glassfibre monocoque construction?

Of course they do, yes. It's the single most raised question, and probably the thing that people are most worried about with our vehicles. I could fill probably four pages talking about the strength of our vehicles.

Well make it one page! What about the Midas that's been rolled?

O.K. For a start, there's experience. The Mini-Marcos has now been in production for 14 years, and is a glassfibre monocoque. The Midas structure was based on that of the Mini-Marcos, so we've got a structure which is well-proven by experience. Let's face it, at the end of the day, that's the most important proof of all. We also know from experience (unfortunately) with people crashing Mini Marcoses and with one crashed Midas, that the structure is enormously strong. We've had two 100mph closing speed head-on impacts with Mini Marcoses and another car which hit a telegraph pole at 70mph. The Midas did a 70mph roll-over, falling 8 foot onto its roof. That was car number 11 in all these cases the strength of the structure saved the occupants from injury. In all cases I've had nice comments from the customers saying thank you for building such strong cars. So again the proof to the pudding is in the eating.

Of course, the other thing is that glassfibre is extremely widely used in

shipping. The Navy build warships 150ft long purely out of the stuff, so it shouldn't really be that difficult to build a vehicle with a structural length of 7ft.

You know my feelings about the Midas. I'm sure it is an exceptional car although I feel it's rather let down by its interior trim standards.

I don't think that's completely fair, Peter. The car that you drove was a pre-production car and the trim panels weren't too brilliant, but I think you'll agree that the car outside is much better trimmed. The material we've chosen is vinyl-painted glassfibre to give extremely hard wear. If you want the sort of trim that you find in a TVR or a Lotus, it would put £500-£800 on the cost of a kit. Our experience is that everybody wants this until they find out how much it costs.

The Mini Marcoses and the Midas both use Mini engines. How much longer do you think you can go on building cars using a twenty year old power unit?

It might be a twenty year old power unit but it's got extremely good specifics, especially fuel consumption. We are of course not committed to using the Mini power unit. We used it for the Midas because it gave us one less problem – i.e. it was a power unit that we knew. Obviously the job with a front-wheel drive car is that there are literally dozens of fwd power packs available, and if the Leyland engine becomes unavailable, we have the choice of either using its replacement or of using a power unit from a different manufacturer altogether.

Can you say anything about possible developments of current cars – in terms of future models?

Yes, I can – there won't be any! As we've been saying, the Midas has been a tremendous financial drain on the company, and obviously we have to put some money back in the kitty before we can consider any modifications, either to the Mini-Marcos or the Midas. Let's face it, the Mini-Marcos is still selling extremely well – still selling more than we can make, so there's no real need to change it.

So we can't hope for a convertible Midas or an estate Mini-Marcos for quite a while yet then?

Not in the foreseeable future, no.

If any, which other specialist/kit car companies do you admire?

Hmmm... I certainly admire Tim Woolley's success with his very simple kits and I will be interested to see if the apparently more complicated Sierra is as successful. The other specialist company I particularly admire is TVR. I hope this won't offend him, but in my opinion Martin Lilley has done a similar job to myself in taking an ailing, ageing design (the original TVR) and turning it into a success. Now his company has just brought out the Tasmin which could be regarded as the equivalent of the Midas. My only hesitation about TVR is the wisdom of discontinuing an existing model when bringing out a brand new model, but they have a great deal of experience, and I'm sure they know what they are doing.

How do you get on with the other kit car companies?

Most of them I can pick up the phone to and be on first name terms with – we all get on well. The problem is that I feel that we should be working increasingly together to provide a united front for the legislation which is the biggest single threat to our continued existence. I tried in 1978 to get something going along these lines, and was met with massive apathy. In conjunction with GP at Isleworth, we are now joining an American-based organisation called the Speciality Automotive Manufacturers Association. We shall possibly be liaising with GP in the future to try and get the British branch of the association moving, and approaching the Department of Transport as a united front to try and get this situation clarified.

Lastly, Harold, why do you think that the general motoring press and the media still have such a strange attitude about kit cars?

Looking back, it's quite easy to see how the kit car industry became a laughing stock – by presenting itself amateurishly with bits of bent tube and tin that fell apart, starred fibreglass, flapping hoods, etc. And you have to realise that most motoring journalists are afraid of being made a laughing stock of themselves if they write what they actually think. They'd rather jump on the current bandwagon. It takes a brave journalist to state that a car considered by others to be a joke is in fact a good and sensible car, because he himself is in danger of becoming a laughing stock. There are some excellent kit cars around but the motoring press are very short sighted to dismiss them – as the success of your own magazine proves.

Necessity the mother of invention

rear suspension mod by Alan Donowho

The Challenge

Much as I liked my mark 3 convertible; it became apparent during the outings which we had with our little N.E. Midas group that it didn't handle very well. I couldn't keep up with the guys in the coupes. This car was a GTM model and GTM's philosophy was to use as much of the original donor as possible. This car had Hydrogas suspension front and rear with no shock absorbers at all. It felt very floaty on motorways and if you hit a pothole in the road it skipped across the road sideways and was most disconcerting to drive at any speed. One of our group Russell Wilcox has a Hydrogas pump and he agreed to check my pressures. We increased the pressure in the spheres and set the car at the recommended ride height. The car was worse and bounced sideways across the road even more. So we reduced the pressures to find a compromise and for those of you that know the car, that's the reason it looks "boy racer" low and for those of you that know me. I'm long past being a boy racer. The time the poor handling of this particular car became really apparent was on our first trip to the Moffat classic rally. There were three coupes present and my convertible and Stuart Leach a Midas owner for some twenty odd years (you would have thought he would have wised up by now!) decided that he would be the official tester and check the ride and performance of all the cars present. Well with performance I did not have a look in, my car having a 998cc engine! My car was also pronounced as the worst Midas that he'd ever ridden in and John Bell's (now sold) dark blue coupe was the best. What to do and what have I bought!

The Solution

Me being fairly new to Midas ownership I discussed the problem with Stuart Leach who is something of a Midas oracle, well you should be after twenty odd years. So I picked his brains and he explained to me that earlier cars were fitted with coilover shockers to the rear of the car. So this is what I would do. I did some research and found that there was a bracket that you could fit to the radius arm to accept coilover shockers. Simple, so all I had to do was obtain some of these brackets. So my first port of call was to ring Alistair at Alternative Cars, sorry no stock left was the answer, but ever helpful he suggested I try Charlie. Charlie explained that he was poorly and was not really making bits and pieces any more. But he did have some stock of the material which he used and he would send it to me in the post. So the simple solution was not to be had! What to do?

I sat down and thought about it and decided that I didn't like the brackets anyway, it wasn't a good engineering solution it was just a make do. I would design a new stub axle and make it a one piece affair, now that's a proper job I thought to myself, nothing to come loose or drop off. (But that's only my opinion). So again I consulted the oracle and he kindly measured the offset of the original fabricated brackets and I would incorporate this dimension into an extended stub axle. The idea really came from the mini rear shock absorber mounts and I'd never heard of them failing, but I would make them stronger. The new stub axle was designed with a 1/2 inch (12.5mm for you Dutchys) instead of the Mini's and Midas's 3/8inch

(9.5mm) shocker mount and out of some stout material EN19 steel. I did a drawing, got approval from the oracle and got a number of pairs of stub axles made, with the correct left and right handed threads.

The Task



radius arms from Ebay that a lot of us had acquired. I then set about refurbishing the subframe so that could just refit a complete assembled subframe to the car. I looked at the subframe and thought I don't need all of that metal which holds the Hydrogas spheres and cut them off! I then sent the subframe to be shot blasted and powder coated. What I was left with was something which resembled a Mini rear beam axle

I replaced the wheel bearings, refurbished the brakes, and assembled the new radius arms which I also had powder coated black. The new extended stub axles were duly pressed into the radius arms. I had to make alterations to the handbrake brackets. Then the whole of the rear beam axle was now ready to fit into the car. Of course most of you will have noticed that I cut off the rearmost mounting on the subframe, not to worry I had thought about this and found that a 35mm engine mount fitted perfectly. The other concern which I had was that there too much offset on the stub axle, would they bend? I needn't have worried they looked correct and was sure that they would be robust enough. All engineering was done by the seat of the pants with no calculations involved, mainly because it was so long ago since I did sums, that I can't remember how to do the calculations anymore.



Meanwhile back at the ranch, whilst I was waiting for the stub axles to be made. I had obtained a second hand rear subframe. I had also purchased some of those cheap



I removed the old subframe completely and set about fitting the refurbished frame. I had to fit the bare frame to set the position of the new rear most mount and drill appropriate holes. Unfortunately the said holes were in exactly the same position as the rear bulkhead on the convertible, so I had to cut slots in the bulkhead, in order to fit a nut onto the stud of the mount. To cut the said slots I have a wonderful tool called a Fein Multimaster. It looks like an angle grinder, but instead of going round, the head vibrates at about 20000 vibrations per



minute and on the head of this tool you fit various blades. The machine then cuts into the fibreglass with no effort whatsoever, you then get a very neat cut about 1.5mm wide and as long as you want. It's sort of an electric chisel. With regards to tools my philosophy is: He who dies with the most tools wins!

I then assembled the complete subframe and attempted to fit into the car. Those of who do your own work will know, that develop various techniques with regards to working on your own in the garage. I don't advise you to try and fit the subframe on your own. There I was, big fat guy lying prostate underneath the back of the car, holding one side of the frame up with my leg and the other side, I think with my head, sort of position 792 of the Karma Sutra,

trying to fit nuts and bolts in position. No don't even think about!



All of a sudden the subframe was in the car

The next thing I had to do was fit the new coilover shockers. These shockers were ordered from Dave at Dampertech to the Midas spec, but with a 1/2inch bottom mount hole. I can say now that I think that the Midas spec should be changed as the stud which goes through the fibreglass turret is too short and anyone who does this modification in the future should try and get longer top studs. The reason being is that you cannot get two full rubber mounts and have to make do with one cut in half.

The other decision which I had to make was spring rates, again I consulted Stuart. He explained that his Mark 3 coupe was fitted with 160lb mainsprings and 4 lb runflat springs. Runflat springs are designed to be flat when the mainspring is compressed, then when the mainspring is on full droop, the runflat extends and takes up any slack in the mainspring and stop it falling out of its seat. Alternately you can have a stronger runflat spring which gives you an initial soft setting before engaging the mainspring, so

Continued on page 16

Castle Combe and Angouleme

report by Malcolm Hazell

I attended the races at Angouleme in France on Sunday 21 Sep and drove back over-night on 26 Sept to attend the track day at Castle Combe. It was much more competitive than I expected, and having returned from France at 1am my car was full of junk, including a full tool kit and spares set, a spare wheel, my son Daniel's huge speaker set, and packed lunch! Next time I will take them out of the car before lining up on the track - Alistair Courtney went past me as if I was in reverse gear.

My driving was not good enough to take advantage of the car's top end speed, and the acceleration was hampered by the added weight, so I need to be a lot more street wise next time. The two attached pictures do give a very real flavour of what was a well attended Midas event.

Angouleme was fantastic but only had Tony Moss and myself from the club. A Mini Marcos was pitted against an EType and a bevy of other supercars in the 60's event, but did surprisingly well around the twisty town ramparts that make this event so special. The cost of entry to the paddock and main stand was a reasonable 20 euro, and some of the worlds greatest classic cars were on show, as well as racing, with lots of former F1 drivers showing their metal. Both these events are well worth remembering for 2009, and neither will break the bank (although it seems other things are doing that around the world).

If anyone is interested in attending Angouleme next year Tony Moss and I can provide all the info. It includes a classic rally around the Cognac and Dordogne regions on the Saturday, along some of the quietest roads you can imagine with stunning

scenery, so the club could have a really good outing whilst promoting the marque. I hope this is of interest.

Best wishes
Malcolm Hazell
malhazell@hotmail.co.uk

below:
Mal in action. Another picture in the gallery



Castle Combe Mini Track Day 2008

report by David Johnson

Dear Hans

Thought these photos might be of some use to you for the magazine. They are of my white Midas Gold convertible being driven by my youngest son Christopher Johnson.

This annual event was very enjoyable and you will see from the photograph of the Club stand that it was very well attended. Tony Moss did his usual excellent job setting it all up and must be pleased by the comments of the general public who came on to the stand saying what a good display it was. All the track photos are professionally taken so could I ask you (if you use any of them) to acknowledge the photographer who was Jim Gailsford of Colerne.

Hopefully this will become an annual outing for the club and would strongly recommend as many members, including

our overseas contingent, come along next year and have a good day's fun.

Regards,
David Johnson

Thanks David. I've placed the best picture in the Gallery section. ed.



Castle Combe Mini Track Day 2008



Christopher Johnson having fun on Castle Combe. If you weren't there you missed one of best club days of the year. Good news is the club is invited for 2009.

photo by Jim Gailsford

Clubstand looking very good. Perfect weather, friendly people and a lot of interest in our little marque



On the left Mal Hazell in his excellent Bronze being chased by a few tinboxes.

Fly Drive Lelystad 2008

photos by Peter Camping



Peter Camping's Gold Convertible in front of a Catalina flying boat on display in Aerodrome, the aircraft museum in Lelystad.

This magnificent aircraft is airworthy and flies regularly.





The Fly Drive event is one of the best combinations of vintage aircraft and classic cars.

Held in July in Lelystad where Dutch airport Schiphol from the 1930ies has been rebuilt.

Photo below. The Catalina and a Grumman Tracker in KLM colours. What? Did KLM operate a Grumman Tracker? No, it was just used for education of aircraft mechanics at the KLM training center.



Midland Classic Tour 2008

the last summer day

Your editor Hans Efdé and son Thomas on tour. Somewhere in scenic town Blaricum caught by the camera team of the Almere Automotive friends club.

Below.
Car parked to find puzzle clues in a forest and cooling down in the Almere city centre.



Full story on page 20.



Brooklands museum visit

Mike Perkins reports

Visit to the Brooklands Museum 5th October.

Together with Ian Croft we set off from Bath in atrocious weather all the way to Brooklands, as arranged at the Club's AGM. What a place. Although arriving mid morning there simply was not enough time to see everything properly. With the rain now ceased, we nosed around the various old buildings associated with the racing-car side of this, the first purpose-built motor-racing circuit in the UK. Then we decided to explore the aviation side.

There are something like forty aircraft exhibits from the early string-and-canvas days to Concorde. Brooklands was also a prominent aerodrome and many significant aircraft, including Wellingtons and Concorde were made here.

After food and refreshments, and entering many aircraft, in the little time left we tried to cram in the racing-car side of the museum, but couldn't cover it all before closing time. Thanks to Michael Eskriett for also turning up on the day.

The photo shows all the attendant Midas's assembled on the remains of the famous Brooklands Banking!



Yeek right and Kim Yong II is still alive, nice photoshop Mike. ed.

Continued from page 8



giving you a more compliant ride. On my Mark 1 Midas when the rear spring went to full rebound there was an almighty bang as the spring unloaded. In that case the spring was too strong; this runflat idea should sort that problem! What weight springs will I fit Stuart? And he said 140lb mainsprings and 40lb runflats. His logic being that the convertible is lighter than the coupe and his coupe used 160lb springs. This time the oracle was wrong 140lb springs were too hard for me even with my great weight. I changed them to 120lb springs and I think I may change them again to 100lb ones, but I'm going to wait until I've fitted coilovers to the front of the car. That's another story which I will explain more of later. But to be fare to Stuart, it is a matter of personal taste and how you want to set up your car. I think

I heard someone say that Hans uses 180lb springs, but Stan Armstrong used 90lb ones on his k-series modified coupe.

As an aside Charlie actually came up with his modified brackets and kindly posted them to me and very good they are. But I'd decided to go with my own design. So I have a pair of Charlie's modified brackets, probably the only spare set available, so if anyone needs a set, please email me.

The results

The car handles a hundred times better than it did, with no more skipping across the road. I can drive it with a bit more vigour without my backside twitching, wondering which way it was going to jump. But it's still not good enough I still have a bit of scuttle shake to sort and the front suspension to reinvent. I need to be able catch the coupe guys! But the real test is whether my wife will get back into the car again, as she likes her comfort!

I hope that you will agree that the car looks much neater underneath; you should be able to change the fuel tank without removing the subframe. I have plans to fit a rear Metro turbo anti roll bar. This according to the Metro guys would really make the car handle. I have brackets to fit the anti roll bar to the boot floor and it would then attach to the extension of the stub axle. But that's for another day. Hindsight being an exact science, the real reason why the car skipped across the road was because the rear Hydrogas spheres were interlinked across the back of the car, then when one wheel went up the other was pushed down causing the car to skip across the road. I didn't realise this until well into the project, but the whole Midas thing is a leaning curve and gaining pleasure from what you achieve. A good tip again from the Metro forums, for anyone not wanting to go to the trouble of



sure individual spheres would be better than the original linked set up.

My car has done a few thousand miles with this stub axle set up. There are no adverse effects, there is no sign of any bending and the subframe has not moved. In fact there are now four cars, running with this modification, but two of the owners may not know that they have had their cars modified, as the cars were sold on! There is nothing wrong with the original bracketed set up as

produced by Midas, GTM and Charlie.

This design was bourn out of necessity as I thought that I could not obtain the original brackets.



The Front Suspension.

I remember when David Manifold did the Watsons spring conversion to his front subframe, one of the reasons he did it was because Hydrogas units have a limited life and eventually we wont be able to get them anymore and I couldn't agree more. But it's my task to try and modernise my Midas and to that end, I am trying to replace my wonderful 998cc engine with an up to date modern engine with fuel injection and a five speed gearbox. I will reveal more when I'm sure of success. I also intend to fit coilover suspension to the front of the car, because it's adjustable and will give you a more compliant ride, with the added benefit of longer travel. Below are some pictures of an idea which I have stolen from a young man called Ralph? Ralph is building a rear engine V8 Metro and he is making a wonderful job of it. My thoughts are about all of his wonderful efforts, how



changing the rear subframe, would be to individualise the rear Hydrogas spheres: i.e. do away with the pipe linking the spheres together and make the rear of the car truly independent suspension, just like the front of the car. But you would then not then have the benefit of the shock absorber, but I'm

long will it be before all of his efforts rust away and how lucky we are to own a Midas, that may last another hundred years. With its well designed and strong (and some say ugly) body shell. Is this the ultimate recyclable green car?



This type of coil spring suspension will not work with a Midas fitted with an A-series engine, as there is an engine mount in the way of the driver's side of the front subframe. But it should give you some ideas. Maybe someone will come up with an alternative suggestion. The main thing about this design is that it feeds the suspension loads back into the subframe and not into the fibreglass, which has been tried on some other cars!

Link to Ralph's Project.

<http://www.metropower.co.uk/forum/forums/thread-view.asp?tid=42039&start=1>

When you see what Ralph is attempting, it's pretty humbling, with regards to what we have done with our Midas's! Who will produce the first rear engine Midas?

Food for thought and well done:
Richard Oakes, Harold and team!

Regards
Alan Donowho



Letters

Readers' views

What a terrific story of the early days of the Midas from Andrew Elphick. I was the founder of the Bath Motor Club in the mid 60s, and being just nine miles from the original home of the Mini Marcos, with Jem Marsh giving a talk to our club.

Then buying my first Midas in 1979, plus arranging the tenth anniversary meeting, where Harold Dermott gave a speech, I was quite aware of most of Andrews facts. However, it is so important to see them written down. The French Midas article was very interesting too.

I have re-read the article by Mal Hazell in the No59 edition of TGT, and rather belatedly want to thank Mal and Alistair for the epic task of returning the Gold moulds and cars back to the UK under somewhat traumatic conditions. The Club is very fortunate in having such dedicated people around. Thanks also to Tony Moss and friend, Daniel Hazell, the couple from down South and Mals friends, for helping with it all when the Polish truck arrived at David Wrights yard. Thank you gentlemen.

Mike Perkins

I have just had time to re-read TGT 59 and noticed the comments about bump stops. My back numbers of TGT are in NZ so I cannot refer back to previous articles, however I do remember sending in comments during the months after first having my car on the road (April 1992).

My Midas Gold Coupe had the Harold Dermot variable rate coil over springs and I lived down and travelled daily on bumpy Northamptonshire lanes. I found the ride too jumpy for my liking and then discovered that everybody else's Midas lacked the rubber bump stops mine inherited from its Metro Van donor vehicle!! I removed those stops and used them to give our children's see-saw shock proofed bottoming out! If I remember rightly those bump stops were fitted to the rear subframe.

Whilst on the topic of suspension and bumpy lanes let me reminisce further: the original dampers didn't last long under the onslaught and gave up just as the excellent AVO units were introduced; they gave a nice ride (in conjunction with the aforesaid variable rate springs) but I found I was getting 'topping out' (like bottoming out but on the inside wheel when going through sharp bends on rough roads) a bit of thinking and measuring against the original units demonstrated that the piston shafts were too short - AVO then increased the length and that problem was solved. Before leaving UK and containering the car to New Zealand had the AVOs reconditioned at reasonable cost (can't remember how much), so they are ready for their next journey when I get the rest of the car completed.

Perhaps you remember Hans, from your first trip to UK (when you stayed with us at Little Preston prior to the AGM in Leamington) commenting with horror at the leading edges of my rear mudguards which had been heavily gritblasted by the loose gravel at the side of the lanes where I lived! That's one of the differences between town roads and rural lanes. I'd like eventually to add sideskirts, in addition to the front mudflaps I already use, to counter these effects as NZ still has some unsealed roads: has anyone tried this?

Regards

John Maclaren

Midland Classic Show 2008

Hans Efdé enjoys the last summer day

Sunday 28 September 06.00. BIEP BIEP BIEP. Hell no, it's my day off. Pleeease let me sleep. Why on earth did I set the clock? 30 seconds to fire up the brain.

Oh yes I had accepted an invitation from Peter Camping to go to Almere to join him on a puzzle tour together with 250 classic cars.

Weather forecast had been excellent the whole week. My Midas Gold Convertible was already fully prepared waiting in the shed.

Fuel tank topped to the brim, soft top stored behind the seat. Tools in the back.

I jumped out of bed (oh that sounds sporty, in fact it was more of a stumble and arse scratching) and peeked through the curtains. Darn, fog as far as the eye could see. And that was not very far. A very quick splash with water and got my clothes on.

Of course it was Midas club sweater day today. The very special almost sacred darkblue sweater (you already got yours? Order large size, they fit small) that I only wear on tours and meetings. I only handwash it in warm water, my wife may not come close to it.

Then I woke up my 9 year old son. He was still in deep sleep and I had not informed him that he would be the involuntary navigator.

But he is a nice kid, hardly complained (perhaps still in the twilight zone) and got dressed without too much hassle. A 10 minutes breakfast, then our coats on and into the car to get moving. Why does it always take so much time just to get away?

Oh yes, when I had pushed the car outside, my wife had woken up and had rearranged the clothing of my son Thomas. He came around the corner and I laughed so loud I am afraid I woke up the neighbourhood. My cautious and lovely wife had changed Thomas into an artc traveller. This was not a boy, just a pile of clothes with legs sticking out. The

poor kid complained that his body temperature was rising fast, so I chose his side quickly, pushed my wife in the living room and got Thomas a decent jacket. The cubic meter of remaining cloth was left in the corridor.

I fired up the Midas and that lovely deep rumble made my stomach vibrate. I love it! Some blue smoke mixed with the fog, but no worry. I had a liter of oil in the back. Swiftly we were on our way.

On the move I noticed that the heater did not work. Apparently the thermostat was stuck in open. Well could be worse. It could have been stuck in the closed position. Drawback was now that the window was fogging up on the out- AND inside. And it was cold without the roof. But we already had lost too much time so I did not want to stop to put the roof on. Which is a 10 minutes job (ad to wishlist: soft top, refer to MX5). Hmmm, perhaps we should have put our winter coats on.

After a drive of about an hour southwards we arrived in the city centre of Almere where we registered. In total 250 classic cars were going to participate in the Midland Classic Tour. Organization was splendid and well sponsored. Behind the coffee table I found Peter Camping. We were going to drive with both our cars, but his had developed starting problems the day before. Too bad, the program was interesting. A tour of about 90 km's through one of the most scenic areas in Holland (and richest) and at the finish a line up of the cars in the centre.

The first problem arose when I had to fit the rally plate to the car. I tried everything, but the nose of my Midas is pretty much stuffed with holes covered in chicken wire and lights. I don't even have room for an official license

plate. In the end I got the ducktape out and taped the plate on the bonnet. When I saw the pics of my car I saw it looked like sh*t. If you have a better idea, please email me! After a cup of coffee (orange juice for son) and a pee we went on our way. We received a 4 page questionnaire with all sorts of questions we had to answer on our way. Oh dear, not my strongest point filling in these things. I easily get bored and will give strange answers. I prefer to enjoy the landscape, which is one of the great features of driving a convertible. So we did. We passed beautiful houses and even the landhouse of our previous queen Juliana. We got lost in the forest that we only noticed when the roads worsened and eventually just were sand paths. Luckily plenty of other participants around, so in case of doubt just follow one.

Early in the afternoon we got back in one piece. The Midas had performed without a flaw. The weather had been perfect, clear blue sky and around 20 degrees. In the city centre we had to hand in our questionnaire and got an oil tray to protect the expensive pavement from oil stains. We just got one, but we saw old cars with four trays. All shops were open (it was a Sunday) and a large crowd was admiring the cars. We were directed to a nice parking space and went for some food.

I bought an icecream for Thomas and

together we listened to the music of a big band. Peter Camping and an ex-colleague and good friend from KLM showed up and we chatted along. What a beautiful end of the season. A quick goodbye and back home again. During the drive home we saw dark clouds gathering and felt the air cooling down. Even a few splatters of rain on the windscreen. But we made it and I parked the car in the shed before the rain really started coming down.

I checked the oil, oops 3/4 of a liter gone in just 300 km's. (ad to wish list: new valve seals). I waited for the Midas to cool down before throwing the cover over it. It was a quiet Sunday evening. Only the metal ticking of an engine cooling down could be heard.

Check the website of the Almere automotive friends club for the gallery of this great day:
<http://www.vriendenkring-klassiekers.nl/pages/foto.html>.

New book on Mini derivatives!

I got a call from car journalist Jeroen Booij who has been busy for the last 5 years writing a book about every car that has used Mini mechanicals. And he almost forgot the Midas! I supplied him with a few pictures of Mal Hazels car and he also visited Tom Berkouwer who has been restoring a Bronze for some time now. The book "Maximum Mini's" will be published in the summer of 2009 by Veloce Publishing in England. We'll then see whose Midas becomes immortal.

Kit Car show reports

George Sutherlands keeps the Midas spirit alive

Stafford Kit Car Show 13 & 14 September

There were four Midases there on the Saturday. I don't know if anyone went on the Sunday because Alan Donowho and I went over to the National Mini Show. This kit car show was on the small side with few traders but it is trying to re-establish itself as a successor to the Donnington Kit Car Show.



National Mini Show at Stanford Hall 14 September

The National Mini Show had an excellent turn out of minis of all shapes and sizes (limos to shorty's), a couple of mini marcoses and other mini derived kits, but we didn't see any other Midases - sorry if we missed any others. There was a good selection of trade stands including some of the major advertisers from the magazines but not much metro gear for gold coupe or convertible owners. Well worth a visit if you are looking for A series/mini parts and ideas.



The Newark Mini Show 12 October

This was a much smaller affair. I couldn't find another Midas to park beside so had to make do with a distant cousin, Chris Clarke's Mk3 mini marcos that recently featured in their club magazine. There were a few traders who had been at the national show, but it was mainly given over to viewing the classic minis in the car park.



A least all three shows were blessed with good weather even if the Midas turn out was somewhat sparse.

George Sutherland
george.sutherland1@ntlworld.com



Snippets

small stuff

First Midas (Bronze) in Finland

My car was imported by a friend of mine, who bought it at Beaulieu this autumn. After my Citroën Visa broke down and I had the opportunity to buy the Midas, I decided that it might be fun (and totally different). And it will supply me with something to write about. (I work as a journalist at Finland's leading classic car magazine.)

The heater isn't that bad, but the car seems quite damp. Maybe I'm just not used to the britishness. Usually I have to dry the windows from the inside with a towel before getting on my way. As soon as the engine heats up, it's fine. We'll see when the winter really starts. Now it's just plain rainy and wet.

Just the other day I had to scrape the windows clean of ice from the inside and the outside.

Since then it's been awkwardly dry and mist free though...

Are there any cheap upgrades for the heater? The fan does seem a bit asthmatic...

Mouvinen (on the Midas forum)

Check the heater pipes!

Here's a nice one for anyone (not just in Finland) whose heater doesn't work. Alan Donowho removed the heater pipes from the engine and this is what he saw:

The heater pipe is completely clogged with aluminium corrosion. I am not sure if this is due to using regular water or if it can be prevented with special cooling liquids. Anyway, if you suffer from an almost non existent heater, check those pipes!



New message board

With more than 200 members the Yahoo forum has become a big mess. In 6 years time it has collected more than 3700 messages. To streamline things David Manifold has developed a new bulletin board that can be found at: <http://www.midascarsforum.com>.

The Yahoo forum will still be accessible because it contains also photos, databases and files. But its message board is now closed.

You tube videos

Yours editor has made 2 videos with a small video camera. I have uploaded them on Youtube. Just search for "Midas", "kitcar" etc. Links can be found on David's new forum as well.

Save the subframes!

Alan Donowho warned me that the Metro subframes are disappearing fast. If you come across a front or rear subframe, buy and store it. Without these tin bits (metal, rust, got it?) your Midas will be going nowhere. Repair is not allowed, so make sure you have spares.

Russian kitcar Pegus

Interesting project from the www

A while ago I read in CKC about this car. Although the article contained just a small picture, I found it very good looking. I found a number of other photo's on internet that I are printed below. I am impressed! Doors are a bit weird, but the nose is cheeky. Looks a bit like a marriage between a Midas and a Porsche 911. It's rear engined as well.



Advertisements

All advertisements are an issue between buyer and seller. The editor takes no responsibility for the condition of the cars and/or parts advertised.

Who wants a heated front screen?

Alan Donowho is collecting a list of Midas drivers who are interested in a heated front windscreen for a Gold. These windscreens are often used in modern cars and help defroging quickly. Contact Alan at: alandonowho@blueyonder.co.uk if you are interested

For sale: 1984 Midas Gold

For sale a 1984 Midas, stripped and partially restored with most parts to finish. The car was factory built and is on a "Q" plate. Offers wanted.

Email Paul Summers at: summers750@btinternet.com

For sale: 1988 Midas Gold Coupe Mk3

Hydro-elastic suspension, 1275 MG Metro Engine, Electronic Ignition, K&N filter, Stainless Exhaust. 5 Alloy wheels, CB radio, CD player, some spare parts. Additional electric fan fitted. Good condition for age. Lots of doc's and paper work

The bad points: The car need some work doing to the seals to prevent water ingress. The interior could do with some work as the carpets need replacing (after the seals). Some small chips in paint work. Electrics are a bit temperamental but everything works

Serious offers wanted, send an email to Chris Tribe at: chrstrib@gmail.com

Next issue

**TMF magazine 02 is scheduled for printing in May 2009.
Please send your contributions to the editor.**



Season's Greetings