



MG Midget

Run by Alastair Clements
 Total mileage 758
 Miles since May report 136
 Latest costs £1080.21

FAMILY GUY HAS A BELTING DRIVE

Safety has been high on the agenda over the past month. One thing I had failed to take much notice of since buying the MG – largely following the ‘if it ain’t broke’ rule – was the brakes, but it seems that they were broken after all. A lunch-time inspection to nip-up the shoes and give the handbrake more bite revealed that the offside-rear wheel cylinder was leaking badly. It had dropped fluid all over the inside of the drum, soaking the shoes and spraying the wheel and tyre.

Happily, C&SC is just a couple of miles away from Moss Europe. Even more handily, Pete Bidmead at Moss used to own a ’57 Midget ZB like mine, so knew exactly which bits I needed. Hurst lent me his modern and I collected a new cylinder, an axle-set of shoes (both shared with the MGA) and other essentials including some DOT4 and brake cleaner, plus a fanbelt to add to the spares stash in the boot. Apart from a persistently leaking

connection to the rear union, it was a smooth cylinder swap, and when I had to leave it to run an errand Port and Elliott kindly bled the system for me. They did a fine job, as an impromptu emergency stop the following morning confirmed. The only irony is that the handbrake, which led to the discovery, is still ineffectual so the adjustment clearly needs to be made at the other end.

Just one thing has prevented the Midget from being the perfect family classic that I had hoped it would be: seatbelts – or, rather, the lack of them. The trouble is, I love the MG’s interior, which has been beautifully restored to period spec, and have so far been loath to alter it. In the past I have simply bolted in a pair of proprietary belts, but this time it really had to be done properly if I was to avoid ruining one of the car’s best features. Never mind the fact that it didn’t have any anchorages fitted at the factory.

A combined recommendation from Port and Elliott – well, more a quick look at the beautiful job Stuart Quick and his team made of the rear belts in the Interceptor – persuaded me to get in touch with Quickfit Safety Belt Services. I ran the car up to Stanmore – where it was reassuring to note that the MG slotted into the workshop beside a lovely pre-war Lagonda, an Aston DB5 and a Ponton Merc – and Quickfit’s seatbelt guru Pavel ran through the various options available. We settled for a brown webbing – a close match for the leather retrim – with classic chromed buckles and concealed inertia-reels. For extra safety, Pavel also persuaded me to add a dual-buckle option in

the rear, where my youngest daughter’s seat will go, so that when her seat is in we can use the recommended modern fittings, but for shows or adult passengers they can be tucked out of the way leaving classic chromed ‘airliner’ catches.

What a fantastic job! The rear belts are beautifully done, with the inertia-reels bolted to the bulkhead in the boot so the webbing emerges through a subtle chromed slot in the parcel shelf. The front set-up has been cleverly engineered with a bolt-on bracket behind the B-pillar trim so that I still have access to the notoriously problematic trafficators. Once the webbing has the patina of age and the chromed buckles have picked up the odd scratch, they are going to look like they have always been there – which is just the look I was going for. The whole lot cost just shy of £1000, but

Pavel reckons a similar job it can be done for £3-400 less if you’re less extravagant about the fittings and not so precious about hiding it all.

The best news, of course, was that I had the car back in time for the Easter weekend, when we could finally enjoy it as a family. The car was pressed into service for shopping trips, dog-walking and the picture-postcard pub lunch that my wife has been dreaming about since I first mooted the idea of a proper ’50s family classic. Oh, and it even passed the sleep test as we trundled home, with three girls dozing gently and one very happy driver.

NEXT UP

- Quickfit Safety Belt Services: 020 8206 0101; www.quickfitsbs.com
- Moss Europe: 020 8867 2020; www.moss-europe.co.uk



Drum check revealed leaking cylinder



Neatly fitted B-post inertia-reel bracket



Belt and braces, with two sets of buckles



Like mother, like daughter: Emma tends Niamh while Elsa cuddles Barbie. MG later passed the sleep test when all three dozed off

