

RELIANT KITTEN REGISTER

NEWSLETTER



FOURTH EDITION

SUMMER 1994

Welcome to the fourth edition of the magazine of the Reliant Kitten Register. I will begin this edition on this warm and sunny August morning, by asking you a question, yes the same one as last time we spoke – **WHEN DID YOU LAST GREASE THOSE FRONT BALL JOINTS?** And while you are at it, do the front and rear hardy spicers on the propshaft too.

I am in fact just back from England, having liberated another Kitten from the south, in this case a Scottish registered car, which is on its way to the Shetland Islands!

It seems to be the case that I find myself in England three or four times a year, with the trailer, so if you have a Kitten, or any other similar size of car which wants moving, it might be worth giving me a ring to see if it could be tied in with anything else.

Speaking of giving me a ring, or even writing to me, someone pointed out a very basic omission from these pages, and that was my address and telephone number, see page 7 for details.

Someone, and please excuse me for not remembering who, asked how we know exactly what a Kitten does to the gallon. Well, we just fill the fuel tank brim full at the start and end of the journey / test period, and use the customs recognised value of 4.54609 litres to the gallon to find out how many gallons we put in, and then divide that number into the number of miles the car has travelled since the last top up, and I do know that I am not the only one who keeps a note of every drop of fuel put in the tank!!

Another question which someone asked, and again I must apologise for not remembering who it was “What happens to the profits from the Register?” Well I can assure the individual concerned that there are no profits, all the money is used in postage, correspondence and magazine production costs, which does bring me to realise that it is two years since I started this, yes Sandy, I know it is even more than that, but it is two years since I got going, and no one has yet been asked for more than one subscription, it is time to review that situation as I had to get a new ink cartridge for the printer last week, and that cost over £20, and the postage for this lot will come to over £17, never mind the paper and envelopes! I will enclose a renewal form, which will, as you will see, have an increased level of subscription, as I am about to give in to pressure from a number of readers / subscribers, and make this a quarterly production for the next 12 months as a trial.

~.~.~.~.~.~.~.~.~.~

Technical Talk

The Tale of the Hallam Kitten

Wednesday 15th December, one or two more car jobs to do, and about an hour to spare, so I have just dismantled the gearbox. It's in reasonably good condition except that the oil is multicoloured, so I'll re-assemble it with new springs and gaskets. (** don't forget Phil, this was the box I could hardly hold in second gear, Ed!*)

Friday 17th and time to start repairs to the chassis. Remove the rusty top plate near the seatbelt mount, and remove the large crossmember, after marking where I am going to cut it back to sound metal. (55mm from each end). Cut two pieces of 2" o/d tube to size and weld to the crossmember so that it is ready to go back in. I am hoping to replace the outside top hat section where the seat belt outrigger has rotted, so I've marked this and cut it using a hacksaw. Now to add strength, I've replaced the top plate with a 2" wide strip and spot-welded this to the top hat section. (*methinks we are getting to the stage of needing drawings or sketches, Ed*) Now I can grind back the crossmember that is still attached to the chassis, I've got so far, now I need to remove the back axle and springs. The U-bolt nuts are very tight and need heat to remove them – it seems to take ages. All told about 2.5 hours tonight.

Saturday afternoon, yes I spent the morning in Glasgow buying Reliant engine parts. I have ground away the ends of the crossmember flush with the chassis sides, and removed the tube inside the chassis. *(There he goes again, just like that "removed the tube from the chassis" now that would take me hours and hours, but Phil does it just like that!)* Slide the repaired crossmember in and check for squareness, and arc weld in place, remove the rotted part of the top hat section and fit the new section, spot weld, and gas weld in place, and you can't see it Brian, and I've remembered to paint the inside. That's enough, another couple of hours work tonight.

Sunday afternoon, just got back from taping the church service and making a mess of it *(you should try making a Mess of it next time Phil!)* So I decide to replace the shock absorber mounting cross member (rear). This is carried out as the previous crossmember, except that this time I've made a complete new unit. Slide it through the chassis and weld the bosses on where the top shock absorber bolts go through, then position them, and weld to the chassis. I've decided to add some modifications as follows:-

- 1) A central steel strip welded to the shock absorber cross member for rear seatbelt mounting.
- 2) Weld in a vertical tube behind the front body bolt, so I've got two 7/16" nuts to hold an inertia seatbelt point. (Only the late Kittens had inertia reel seatbelts)
- 3) Weld a tube vertically through the rear body mounts so that I can use a nut and bolt, and not the captive nuts.
- 4) Weld a plate near the large rear crossmember to take a Mini electric fuel pump.
- 5) Seam weld the top plate to the chassis top hat section (this should prevent rust from building up between the two and forcing apart the spot welds).
- 6) Grind two cut-outs at the rear of the front crossmember so that I can remove the sump bolts without removing the engine.
- 7) Drill through the chassis at the rear mounting bolts, and sleeve with tube, then add another two holes further along that chassis so that I can easily attach a towing bracket.

Christmas Eve, and I've done my Christmas shopping (only just!) so I can now spend a couple of therapeutic hours *(I can't wait to hear Ursula's side of this story, Ed!)* on the Kitten. I manage to complete items 2, 3 & 7 on the above list and decide that I need to think about how and where to mount the fuel pump.

So, its 1994, Happy New Year everyone, and what have I done on the Kitten this holiday? - well, up to date, NOTHING! Strange, isn't it that we decide on all the jobs we want to do, and don't do them, or do something else instead. It's Tuesday the, 4th of January, and I finally finished off the chassis, yes, including all the mods. Now I need to get it to the sand blaster's to stop people falling over it (it hurts, doesn't it, Scott, Sandy, Brian & John?) *(Only when you are trying to work on a trailer in the same garage, Ed!)*

Monday 10th January, I manage to load the trailer (my one trailer!) with the 5 alloy wheels, front suspension, brake drums and rear axle as well as the chassis, and take the lot to Sam Warnock, my local shotblaster. I had a choice of black, aluminium, or grey, so thinking of John Major, I went for grey.

Wednesday 12th and a night in the garage so I decide to clean and paint the parts that I didn't send to Sam's on the grounds that machined parts might get damaged. I cleaned the prop shaft and steering rack, and coated them in smooth white hammerite *(I think its called smootherite, Ed)* (I don't like the hammered finish as it does not cover so well) For those keeping track of time, nearly two hours. I also spent some time chasing up my suppliers – my oil pump hasn't arrived and I am still waiting for a price for front suspension units.

Saturday arrives, the 5th of January and the task starts of cleaning up the odds and ends. I decide to take the rear springs to bits to clean them, then clean the anti-roll bar, and paint them, yes white. This colour has been specifically chosen as it will reflect light and so must be easier if I ever have to dismantle again.

Wednesday 19th, and Sam's finished the chassis. Since Brian needs a Rebel chassis blast clean, we both go to collect mine, and deliver Brian's. Well it looks brilliant, don't you agree Brian? (*Yes Phil, an excellent job*) My oil pump has at last arrived, and it is correct, however the other bits in the parcel have to go back, as they are wrong!

Saturday again, just a chance to spend a couple of hours in the garage and I decide that the epoxy finish on the chassis is a bit dull, so I've repainted it white (*and he got some runs on it!! Ed*) Decided that since I have 4 Mini-fin alloy brake drums that I might try to fit them. I've looked at this before, and found that the centre hole is too small, and the recess inside is not large enough diameter, and there is not enough material to re-machine the drums. So, I could re-machine the front and rear hubs, the trouble is that if I then have problems with these drums, the Reliant ones will no longer fit. Still, I suppose I could then use Mini ones. Time to decide – I'm going to machine those hubs!

Wednesday night and time to clean up a few more parts. I clean the top wishbones, which I didn't get sand-blasted, and paint all the front suspension components, prior to which I had removed all the rubber bushes and fitted new ones. I've also attached some new brackets to attach the roll over bar to the chassis since the originals are weak. Time to start work on the body and I have removed the front number plate and indicators to carry out some top secret body alterations!!! Time tonight just under two hours. Changed my mind, I can't machine the hubs, see sketch and my MK II method. By the way, Dave Wardman 'phoned for a natter, and is trying Fiat Uno uprights and discs on his highly modified Kitten, and suggests that if you've got the flat vinyl door pockets, Escort Giha front seats will fit.

Thanks Phil for the continuation of the story, but feel free to have a break from writing if there is any chance of you getting the car to Doune for the end of August, Ed !

~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~::~

I did say that I was going to bore you all with a Kitten versus Rebel pros and cons story, well here is a short car tale:-

The Great Debate

One of the most difficult decisions I could ever be asked to make, is to opt for one small Reliant in preference to another. I have for many years been in the fortunate position of being able to choose whether to run a Rebel or a Kitten.

The fact that in the last decade I have run Rebels for 80% of the time and Kittens for the other 20%, and the only reason that I am now running a Kitten, is that I had my last two Rebels' chassis rust away beneath the cars. This in spite of various, clearly unsuccessful, attempts to prevent such corrosion. I recently had one of the better Rebel chassis shot blasted and reinforced, and hope to have the saloon back on the road later this year. Also I have acquired a brand new galvanised Estate chassis, on which I intend to put my old estate body in the fullness of time, so my Kittenning days may be numbered!

Let's talk about the advantages of the Rebel first :-

Rebel Pros :-

- 1) It is bigger, about 3" wider at shoulder height, and about a foot longer, and so generally a roomy vehicle compared to a Kitten , especially for rear passengers.

Harry Darby, who gets singled out for special mention on two counts (at least), one because he has three Kittens, and I have only one, (incomplete) entry on the Register, my fault, not his, and because he would like to know if anyone can help him with information regarding jetting for his new carb on the Kitten, it is a K & N, he currently uses an AAC, but has been told that an AAT might be better, and while that seems to be the case at low revs, does not seem good at higher revs, or have I got it back to front, at any rate talk to the man if you can help him please. By the way he recommends the top (float chamber lid), from an HS4 as fitted to many MG's as a good way of stopping the flooding which all too often affects the SU as fitted as standard to the Kitten.

Talk to you all again later in the year, by the way it might not be too late to come along to the Thistle branch's 21st anniversary celebrations at the Doune Classic weekend in Stirlingshire, at which the Register will be represented, on the bank holiday weekend at the end of August, so far only two folk from south of the border have said they will be there, why not come along? Drop me a line or give me a ring if you are interested. Alan is in charge of the campsite, talk to him for more details – 01505 328114.

Mr. R. Snape of 8 Quendon Place, Haverhill, Suffolk, CB9 0HZ has a brand new Kitten body shell and chassis for sale. LHD but just what that entails in the way of changes I really do not know. Write to him if you are interested, I know he paid vast sums of money for them, but realises the current market value of a Kitten, so just make him an offer

~.~.~.~.~.~.~.~.~

Reliant Kitten Register,
Brian Marshall
16, Glendee Gardens
Renfrew PA4 OAL
0141 8866117

KITREG4-RKR