

# RELIANT KITTEN REGISTER

MEWSLETTER Number SEVEN

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Hello again, welcome to edition number seven of your favourite bedtime reading. The magazine of the Reliant Kitten Register.

We have some interesting decisions to make (you see, I am not the dictator some folk think I am!). Terry Scott, who runs the Rebel Register, and is not at this time able to produce a magazine, has indicated his willingness to allow me to include those of his subscribers who may wish to be included on the mailing list of this publication. So, assuming that more than a couple of them do, the question might arise as to what name we might give to future editions. Also, although there are vast areas of overlap from a technical point of view, how much space in the magazine should I devote to Rebels? As you are probably aware I own a number of Rebels, a larger number than I do Kittens, and so it would be all too easy to become completely sidetracked, fear not, as long as I continue to receive such a volume of stimulating correspondence as I have in the past year or so, you are quite safe, if that be the word, for the foreseeable future.

Right, back to this name thing, at the risk of cutting too deep into some of the three litre brigade's skins, one suggestion was "A Small Slice". (the R.S.S.O.C. call their excellent monthly publication all 96 pages, and colour too, Slice, no doubt a reference to the cutting edge of the Sabre and Scimitar). There are no doubt many long winded alternatives, one immediately thinks of things like "The Raleigh Safety Seven and Early Reliant Owners Club", and my apologies to them if I got that wrong, but one could end up with something like "The Reliant Kitten Mewsletter incorporating the Reliant Rebel News", or some such forgettable mouthful. Ah, such fun, but why - he said, delegating as all true leaders do - don't you think about what such a publication might be called, and let me know what you think. We could even run a competition and offer a years free subscription to the individual who comes up with the name we finally adopt! - This is getting to sound much too much like democracy for this dictator's liking, can you imagine the situation where I get 25 suggestions (well I can dream can't I) and have to list them all and have you all vote, we could even, oh this could be fun, right, enough of my waffle, you get the idea, talk to me.

I am happy to be able to tell you that the batch of alloy rocker covers which we commissioned earlier this year are well in hand. The prototype arrived last month, and while there are a couple of mods required, I had failed to realise that we will have to get the holes drilled in the top. Yes, if you are quick you can probably still place an order for inclusion with the first batch, (SPECIAL PRICE OF £ 30.00) and if there is sufficient demand we will have a second batch done, the cost including postage to your home U.K. address from the second batch on will be £35.00, if you are interested, just send your cheque, together with a note of your name and address, and telling us whether you would like yours to say RELIANT, REBEL, ROBIN or KITTEN on top. Such cheques should be made payable to the "Reliant Kitten Register" and sent to Phil Hallam.

Delivery is likely to be 2 to 3 months as we need to make up a minimum batch quantity.

Still with Phil Hallam in mind, he has available, subject to knowing which type of points your engine uses, service kits, comprising 4 GKN spark plugs, an air filter, an oil filter, that is the short dumpy Reliant type, points as mentioned, for the princely sum of £ 17.00 including postage to your home (U.K.) address. Cheques this time get made out to Phil Hallam, and sent to him.

I am still able to offer Lucas exchange alternators, their ref. LRA100, that is the 34 amp one, for £22.50 exchange, and rear 4 leaf road springs with bushes for £68.00 a pair (+ delivery if required). Cheques to me (Brian) this time please, payable to "Reliant Kitten Register".

Alan has available a number of exchange reconditioned distributors. They cost just £24. I believe, talk to him if you are interested.

We are looking at a batch of the diagonal steady arms for the front suspension, and perhaps ultimately, lower wishbones, and a repair section for the roll over bar bottom, since they always seem to

rust away, and nobody wants to try and weld fibreglass!

If there is a part which you require, and cannot get from your local Reliant dealer, or other supplier, please let me know, as it is my intention to use the Register to help keep as many of these fine cars on the road as possible. I should remind everyone that we have copies of the Kitten and Fox (and Rebel) parts books available at £8.50 + £1.50 p&p. Also workshop manuals for the Kitten and Rebel at the same price.

For the benefit of one of our minority groups, the front cover this time should show a Jimp.

It does occur to me that since this is a car register, we really ought not to pay much attention to the number of any entry on the register, but the chassis number of the vehicle, and use that as the base index. The fact is however that until I get more organised it is simpler to keep adding new entries on to the end of the current list, but one day!

One point I must make is that it makes my life a whole lot easier if everyone who wants to make use of the Register, in any way at all, first joins up. I do not have a good memory, and it is a real pain when I am unable to get in touch with people easily - one example recently a cheque bounced, one of the rocker cover deposits, and I thought that I had nothing more to do than 'phone the individual and clear things up, the problem was that while there was a subscriber with the same surname, it was not the person who ordered the rocker cover, and I didn't know where the individual concerned lived. Happily that situation is now resolved. Many thanks to John Metcalfe for putting me in touch with the man in question, and would he like to subscribe to the Register please.

So the moral of this story is simple, if you want to use the Register, first subscribe to it. Yes I fully realise that I am preaching to the converted, but had to vent my frustrations on someone.

John Blagburn deserves special mention as it is with his help and contacts that many of these offers are possible, not to mention his willing help in collecting many of the parts for me. Thank you John.

### Members Letters

Dear Brian,

24/03/95

There is even less of the Kitten than you saw on your recent visit (*I had managed to drop in to see this restoration for myself during a trip south in March, Ed.*) As I've just taken the front seats out. I'm taking the old covers to a chap who specialises in making replacement car upholstery, and the seat frames need some welding and general repair. The windows will be back in by next weekend - *I was asked how the windscreen was going to be refitted with the new dashboard in place? Ed.* -

I have a feeling that our roll over bar has gone (since I don't know exactly what's meant to be there, there is a slight element of doubt) as nothing emerges from the square section fibreglass tube / channel beneath the center pillar. Do you know if the Robin bar is the same section it might be easier to find a Robin one in a breakers yard. I'm mulling over the repair in my mind, but the suggestions in the Mewsletter will be a great help. Mind you, without the Mewsletter I would be blissfully unaware of the problem - *Now Rob, let's not look upon these things as problems, merely situations to be resolved! Ed.*

When we finish the film in the camera we'll send a copy of the photo of you and the Kitten, and perhaps another of the Kitten if it has changed enough. We certainly intend to get to a rally somewhere over the summer if the opportunity arises.

Rob & Fiona Wilkes - Oxon

*Oh, by the way, that roll over bar, it is secured to the end of the outrigger just behind the doors, the outer ends of the outrigger are flanged at about 90 degrees how do you do a small 'o' at the top of the line like 'in word perfect someone please? Anyway to the two holes in the flange on the outrigger, bolts the roll over bar, if that is of any help. As I may have said before that is one of the parts we are considering having a repair kit made for - I just have to decide whether to adopt the Phil Hallam solution or the Les Cruickshank one, either of you guys like to put a price on a batch of say ten, complete with bolts or whatever, please very nicely?*

Dear Editor,

2/4/95

I was interested to see in the Reliant Owners Club 'Top Gear' magazine the item on the Reliant Kitten Register. Until this item I was unaware that there was such a thing, which may explain why only a quarter of owners are subscribers. Hopefully I will be part of a flood resulting from that item.

My Kitten MKT 386R, is temporarily off the road. It ran well but last year the clutch went. I thought that as the engine had to come out to repair it *(not necessarily so, Ed, you can replace the Kitten clutch with the engine in the car, by removing the gearbox, having said that it is not the easiest gearbox to remove, and most people change the clutch as you intended)*. I might as well take the opportunity to replace the engine with an electric motor - I had had an electric Hillman Imp Estate, but that had 2 disadvantages - 1. it rusted, 2. it was a relatively heavy vehicle, so the batteries found it hard work up the hills.

With the Imp now in Dover Transport Museum *(funny that, the Glasgow Transport Museum has the other one! Oh, were there more than two? Ed.)* I now had the opportunity of converting the much lighter Kitten - which has little to rust. The motor is installed, and I hope that the spring weather will allow work on the installation of the electrical controls. The planned scheme uses a 36 Volt D.C. motor rated at 3 hp, but I have run it at up to 60 Volts, it will be powered by four 12 Volt traction batteries rated at 106 Ampere hours.

This is not the first electric Reliant, several three wheelers have been converted and a Swedish firm converts the Fox. Indeed several unconverted bodies were available last year for this purpose. There is also a hybrid version being tested, the main drive is electric, to provide rapid acceleration, while a small petrol engine can be run at its constant, most efficient speed, hence gaining the maximum benefit from both propulsion methods. The big advantage of electric vehicles is that they are non-polluting, this is particularly valuable for urban traffic jams, as the vehicle only uses power when moving. Of course there is still pollution from the power station, but it is more cost effective and efficient to control pollution from there, than on each individual vehicle, especially as the power station is not stop / starting all the time.

They are also cheap to run, until now there has been no road tax and no M.O.T. *(Really? Ed)* although insurance is still essential. *See the new proposals, Ed.* The electricity cost for re-charging is a lot less than the equivalent petrol cost, but you have to replace the batteries eventually. They are ideal for home to work journeys as that may be only 10 miles or so a day, so a petrol engine will hardly warm up.

For anyone interested the Battery Vehicle Society has a regular magazine, and a section on converted vehicles -

Contact :- Mr. K. A. Mitchell. Of course I have a 'Spare' Kitten engine - so if anyone needs one, all or part, just contact me.

Chris Lowe - Canterbury

*Thanks Chris for sharing that with us. Reliant and old Joe Lucas were pretty involved a decade or so ago, on work on a prototype hybrid electric car. Sadly I can't remember any details. I seem to remember hearing about it either in one of the Reliant films (videos) or perhaps in the book "The Scimitar and its Forbears" - Ed.*

Dear Brian,

Thank you for your letter and the Reliant Kitten Mewsletters. I'm a big Reliant enthusiast, my father has a GTE and a GTC. I'm a 22 year old student so Scimitars are much too expensive for me. My mother drove a Kitten saloon for many years.

There were only 40 Kittens ever imported to Holland, and one has to my knowledge been written off. You understand that the Kitten is a very rare car in Holland. The Robin is well known here, but when people see the Kitten they always ask if I rebuild a Robin with a Mini front suspension.

One year ago I bought a Kitten without engine for £150. I also bought a Robin wreck with engine and made one car out of them. I drove 10,000 miles with this low-budget car without very big problems, just some rear axle, transmission and gearbox problems. But what can you expect from a £150 car?

I recently bought a very good 1981 Robin which its one owner had just drove 15,000 miles with it from new. The car drives very well. So my next holiday you can find me in the garage giving my Kitten a new heart.

We also own two Cyphers, one is a Stevens Cipher (Green) and the other a Reliant Prototype (white / black). The Reliant one is in very bad shape, but we are working on it. In about a year or two it will be on the road again looking better than new. The Steven's is a running car, there is a lot wrong with it, but it is driveable. There is no car so much fun to drive as a Cipher, it's very much like a go-kart. In August I will spend my holiday in Great Britain with the Cipher. I would like very much to meet some other Reliant enthusiasts so please send me some information on the Doune weekend.

I will also visit the Reliant factory then.

Thomas Touw

*Thank you Thomas, I was interested to see the pictures of the Cipher as it has rectangular headlights, and from memory, I thought they had round ones - must dig out the relevant magazines, if I can find them. Thomas had a list of questions which I have answered, except the current whereabouts of Tony Stevens, can anyone help please?*

Dear Mr. Marshall,

July'95

I have recently come into possession of a rather tired P registered Reliant Kitten, and whilst I plan to rebuild the car as a sporting 1930's replica / runabout of some sort (perhaps a Tempest or something similar) I do not want to destroy any parts that any of your members might be able to use.

Accordingly if an advert in your newsletter is appropriate please acquaint your members of the fact that I do not propose to use the body shell, including the doors, seats and all the glass and trim. I will not know till later in the year which other parts, if any, will be available

Brian Midgley.

*Thank you Brian for the offer, would any one interested please contact Brian direct, and, as I have said before, there is this trailer which is available to move such things if you can't make your own arrangements.*

*Ed.*

### **Article from a bloke in Yorkshire**

When will you Scots chappies learn that just because a bloke is from England that does not make him a southerner (Mewsletter No. 5).

In Scotland you have always been big on dividing Countries up, e.g.Highlanders, Lowlanders etc, but here in England we are all united in one, as Englishmen.

Well, apart from yellow bellies (Lincolnshire), Geordies, and of course 'proper' southerners who are all nancies etc, but living in Leeds Dave Wardman is O.K., oh no he's not, that makes him a Wessie (West Yorkshire). Well in Howden we are all true English Yorkshiremen, or is that Humbersiders? Perhaps you were right after all, but at least we are all united in the one thing we have in common, our Reliants.

John Metcalfe.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Brian Marshall and Phil Hallam, for all the time and energy they put into the Register on our behalf. - *He made some kind of threat to make me type this, Ed.* - Please support the ventures that they implement for us. I have ordered springs (still lying at Dave Wardman's, I'll have to pick 'em up) Rocker box covers, and an alternator. I am not desperate for these at the moment, but strike while the iron is hot and all that.

Regarding the other parts which fit our cars, we desperately need a book, listing all of those parts. We also need a book listing all of the common and successful conversions. Any volunteers?

P.S. does any one know what vehicle the Fox wheels are off?

John Metcalfe

*Thanks John, that reminds me, I am told that the front seats from the Talbot Samba Sport can be fitted to a Kitten, provided it (the Kitten) has the elasticated door pockets, and not the solid cubby hole in the doors. You do need to get the runners as well as the seats. I must say that I have looked at a couple of ordinary Samba seats, and they do not seem ideal, perhaps the Sport is quite different.*

Now, as to this list of alternative parts thing, I quite agree, it does seem like a good idea, and a lot of work, and it would have to be on the clear understanding that any such recommendation was simply based on owner's experiences and I don't want a bill for modifying anything that is not quite what you expected. There are so many bits that are the same on other vehicles, or do we include the similar but not identical things too? Where does it end, but I accept the criticism that to avoid at least attempting such an exercise would make us as bad as a certain Owners Club, and we wouldn't want that, would we?

So, to that end, I will start to compile a list, and any contributions you wish to make will happily be included. Perhaps the thing to do is use the same order as the factory manual or parts book, and list alternative parts in the same order. One problem I see is the modifications, albeit minor ones, which some similar parts require, so lets try and make the list a double one, i.e. identical parts, and similar

parts, and put similar parts which do not need any modification in the identical parts list in *Italics* to indicate that they are not the same, but require no modification for use. ( or is that a third category, and so should we produce three lists !?!

I can just see the concourse judges in 20 years time saying "Yes, but that part was in the Kitten Register's standard alternative parts list, so it qualifies as original" What was that about many a true word ....

### **The Doune Classic Winners 1995**

The sometimes confusing situation of having more than one hat so to speak, was clearly brought home to me last Saturday. I had been approached by Wall to Wall Television, who were making a series for B.B.C. Scotland called "The Big Country", all about people with unusual hobbies !, and wanted to do a bit on Reliant's. Now of course what they meant was Tricycles, not realizing that there were small 4-wheelers, and of course the imminent Doune Classic Challenge does not include three wheelers, so Brian's phone bill rockets, in an attempt to produce as many tricycles as possible, not just that, but to have them at the Blair Drummond Safari Park entrance on the Stirling to Callander road, for 8. o'clock on Saturday morning, this on the Thursday night - not a lot of notice.

They had approached me in my capacity with the Reliant Owner's Club, and I was busy trying to organize the Kitten Register's team, which is of course solely Kittens, no matter, on the Saturday morning at the appointed time, we had a Robin, a Rialto, a Kitten Saloon, three Kitten Estates, two Rebel Saloons and a host of assorted enthusiasts all waiting for the camera crew. An hour of cavorting, well just ask to see the video and see what adjective you would use to describe the antics, and we were off to sign on at Doune for the big event.

The two teams made up of purely Reliant Kittens, we generously allowed Ralph to help out a couple of VW Beetles who could not find a third team member, were the R.O.C team, "The Roaring Reliants", consisting of Alan Marshall, Phil Hallam and Adam Grieve, this was Adam's first time at this sort of thing, and he had only had the Kitten for a couple of weeks, all driving Kitten Estates. Our lot were "The Resin Rockets", consisting of Les Cruickshank, John Blagburn and myself, two saloons and an estate.

John Johnstone could not wait, and Derek Sloan arrived later, as did Ralph Erwin, Kitten Saloon, Les Cruickshank, Kitten Saloon, and Peter Linfield, Kitten Estate, so we had 8 Kittens and 2 Rebels there, not as many as I would have liked, but more than last year. (Stupidly I did not think to organise any photographs of the cars in a group!) The morning was taken up trying to fit interviews with the television people in between attending briefings and competing in the first driving test. By 11.00 it was apparent that we were on form having first place after the other 12 teams times were in. The R.O.C. team were lying fourth. Then the organisers had something different laid on, a Pit Stop Challenge, we had to swap 4 wheels diagonally on two Opel Manta's, and put an imaginary gallon of fuel in the tank (water between two containers in fact), the catch was we only got one wheel brace, and they had alloy wheels which are not easy to remove. Because we were the fastest team at that point we got to go first, now it is easy to say, but I believe there is some truth in it, that those wheel nuts seemed to get easier to remove as the day went on, because we were the third slowest team in the wheel change, Phil hurt his hand, and we dropped to 10th place overall after that section. The second driving competition saw a lot of confusion as the organisers did not tell us what the positions were after it, merely announcing which 4 teams were through to the semi-final, in the event we had pulled up from 10th place to 7th, although I did not learn that till the next day! This in spite of coming second - to the R.O.C.'s team of three Kitten Estates - in the second driving test. We had done so badly in the wheel changing that we never recovered.

This had a bad affect on morale amongst the film crew whom I had led to believe could expect to

see Reliants in, at worst the semi-final, if not the final, which Reliants have been for a number of years now. However they need not have worried as the R.O.C.'s team of Kitten Estates went on to win the event by 45 seconds in spite of a jamming door mechanism and three penalty points for not straddling the finish line with two wheels, they all entered the final gate at such an angle that only one wheel was in fact across the line, come on chaps, enter the gate square next time.

One thing which we have meant to do for some years now, is be organised enough to time the individual cars in the team. There are three cars in a team which operate in a relay fashion, but while Alan did have a board with three stopwatches on it, my brain only works fast enough to use two at a time. None the less I did manage to time the three cars separately from each other, but because I timed it from the start to the finish, I included the running of the individuals as well as the actual driving, and because the first and last car's driver / passenger have different distances to run from each other, and the middle car's passenger a shorter distance than either of the others, well that was the case on that particular course, I was not in the event timing like things - we will be better organised next time!

A good day was had by all, although the wind hid the fact that the sun was in fact quite strong and I for one got too much of it We did get about 5 minutes coverage on B.B.C.1 on Friday 26th of May which can only help to raise public awareness of these fine little cars and hopefully help to raise values and popularity amongst the public at large.

With hindsight we probably did not push the Register enough for the cameras, but hindsight is wonderful, at least we got some coverage on prime time television. Will we sign up any new Kitten owners as a result? We will have to wait and see.

Talk to you again later in the year, don't forget the Thistle Branch of the R.O.C.'s do at the Doune Classic weekend on the bank holiday weekend in August when the Kitten Register will have a team of three Kittens entered in the driving competition if enough of you let me know *NOW* that you will be there and will take part, - it was felt that after last years efforts, and our success in May this year, that we have a problem finding enough people for the passenger seats and marshalling, if we enter a team as well as the R.O.C. team - talk to me please. Alan is again in charge of the camp site this year, talk to him for more details. Why not come along and have a great weekend with fellow four wheeled Reliant enthusiasts? I am told that our man in Holland hopes to be there with one of his Cyphers, so you will finally get a chance to see one of them in the fibreglass so to speak. Please book early as space is restricted this year owing to past success.

The original version of this magazine included the then current register details, just to show that it has grown since last time I published it. We currently have 128 entries on the database.

One difficulty I have is when a car changes hands, so if you are very attentive you might spot the odd duplicate, or in some cases a different owner from when I first included such a list. Another problem is my own understanding of the English language, or at least my use of it - you may recall from when you first signed up, that there was a question on the form asking if I could circulate your details to other subscribers, and the odd individual has ticked the No box, which then begs the question as to whether I was referring to the individuals personal details, or the details of their car or both. I have assumed that it is the personal details that are not to be in the public domain in such cases, if you are one of those individuals, and I have assumed incorrectly, please accept my apologies, and let me know, so that I can rectify the situation.

Brian W. Marshall - Registrar