

Reliant Kitten Register

A Very Merry Christmas to All Our Readers and, We Trust, a Prosperous New Year



Newsletter 115

November - December 2013



A seasonal picture. The last production Tempest seen here playing in the snow.

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The Register caters for all the under 1 litre Reliant 4-wheeled vehicles plus all of their derivatives: Foxes, Rebels, Tempests, Salamanders, Ciphers, Jimps, Asquiths, Vantiques and all other specials including the Liege.....



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The Register is a member of the FBHVC, which monitors UK & EU legislation and lobbies on our behalf to protect our freedom to use vehicles of all ages on the roads. Readers are invited to show their own support of this worthy cause by becoming members in their own right. Contact the editor for details.

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**SALES, SPARES, REPAIRS,
ENGINE RECONDITIONING**

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e&oe

Seasons greetings to you and yours. This year has been something of a roller coaster one for me. The level of support and the number of people who have helped make things easy for me has been inspirational. Just as well as it happens, because I have fallen short of the mark on a number of occasions.

All, they say, is well that ends well, and as I start this edition having just returned from a most enjoyable trip south in September my motivation is high, but the task ahead looks a bit daunting!

Trying to prioritise from a far too long list of tasks and wishes. I guess top of the list – if I am to end the year focusing on vehicles other than Kittens – which I am planning seeing a lot more of within these pages next year – I need to hear from our Jimp owning and enthusiast friends – talk to me, please, of course I can do it all myself, but I would far rather others (in all probability better informed than I) were involved.

Right, now that's off my chest, it is time to move on to another area, that of the supplementary sheet, which, these days, contains the adverts as well as any last minute news.

I fear that I have on occasion omitted vital information from that, it is therefore imperative if you are talking to me that you do your best to ensure that, rather than write details down, I actually type them into the appropriate document – it might mean the conversation takes a bit longer, but it will help ensure that I am less likely to forget to put things in the right place! (and hence lose sight of them completely).

On the spares front, I am aware of a number of shortcomings, glass rubbers seals being one, vital when doing a respray or re-trim. If you have information that may help, please do not be shy about sharing.

We are (will have by the time you read this I expect) about to re-order back springs, front dampers, and possibly acquire some headlights (without the pilot light facility – and we are running low on stock of the right ones).

Ball joints and steering racks we have an adequate stock of, but old units for reconditioning are always needed, if you have any old ones please get in touch as a matter of some urgency – it helps a lot if I can tie these things together to save on double postage costs – and collection may be possible early in the new year (March) but I need to plan ahead, so, if you have any old bottom ball joints or steering racks, please get in touch now.

Speaking of forward planning, both Phil and I have a number of Rebel and Kitten doors, bonnets and boot lids that want re-homing, obviously packing such items is a pain, but as I said, all being well, I will be coming south in March, let's plan ahead please.

One thing which has become clear recently, it has probably been the case for a while now, but I am sometimes slow to realise things, more of my mail is electronic as distinct from Craig – our postman – putting the real thing through our letterbox late in the morning these days.

My in-box (the technical term used by the computer world for the location of received electronic mail!) which I have been trying to keep on top of since earlier in the year when it got out of hand – the target is to keep it in single figures by the end of each day, is currently sitting with 66 outstanding items in it – early November – so I need to buckle down (knuckle down / buckle up?!) and get on with some work!

I know, though you may not, that several of our readers do not nor do they aspire to, own a computer or other device that might give them access to the electronic world out there.

An interesting (worrying) discovery has been made in relation to human beings and the internet in regard to search engines, Google being the commonly recognised one, in that they encourage the human brain to become lazy. Simply put, because we know we can look almost anything up on-line, we no longer memorise things – heaven help us when the power goes off!!

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## REBELLIOUS CONDUCT 24

After 8 years of ownership, my luck finally ran out. LRF 671K failed to emerge from it's 2013 MOT with a pass certificate. Worse still, it came home with an even bigger problem than it had when I put it in for the test.

I knew the exhaust down pipe would need attention. From the silencer rearwards, it has a stainless steel system. Only the down pipe to the silencer was the original mild steel, plus a high percentage of ferrous oxide. In preparation for the MOT, I booked the Rebel into **INFINITY EXHAUSTS** in South Gloucestershire for a stainless steel down pipe to be made and fitted. This they did for £100 which I thought was good value. The Rebel now has a full stainless steel system so no more problems there I reckon. Having made this investment in the Rebel's future, I then decided to fit a new thermostat to improve the sluggish warm up time and a new fan belt (£5) to replace the 'cat o nine tails' that was flaying everything within its extended reach.

A quick check round of the usual items and I was quite optimistic that the Rebel would soon have a new MOT. Last item, to lubricate the front trunnions the evening before the MOT. That's when I found some roughness in the offside front wheel bearing with the wheels raised. There was no noise or play in the bearing, it just didn't run smoothly. No time to do anything but to cross fingers – it failed! OK, I can accept that but when I went to drive LRF home, the driver's seat back collapsed. I reported this to the MOT test centre whose response was "Well, things do break during an MOT test". To hand the Rebel back with a broken seat without telling me was, I feel, very poor service. Obvious to me, the tester had applied excessive pressure to the seat backrest yet failed to report this. The bearing was easily replaced (£20) but I was far more concerned about the seat. Stripping the seat cover from the frame revealed that the backrest tubes had cracked across the lower webbing strap hook holes. It was a clean break with very little distortion in the actual tube ends. The tubes are of very thin section and no doubt, the webbing strap hook holes weaken this area. Fortunately, the repair was simple. Insert 2 six inch long mild steel bars of suitable tight fitting diameter. These I further secure by drilling and tapping through the tubes and into the bars and securing with 10UNC screws. I felt that this was both better and easier than welding. I reckon that this weak area is now stronger than when new. All of the webbing straps I replaced with added diagonal straps for extra support. The lower strap I had to omit as of course, the holes were now gone and I couldn't buy any new ones.

I resubmitted the Rebel to the same MOT centre who took all of 2 minutes to check the wheel bearing and had the cheek to charge me a re-test fee despite the repairs being affected in just 3 days. I think I will be going elsewhere in future despite the receptionist saying "See you again" as I left! So, LRF 671K will soldier on into yet another year of service on top of the 30,000 miles that I have so far inflicted upon it.

It has cost £130 plus the MOT and a retest fee so that is still good value for hopefully, another year of economy commuting.

Terry Horler No. 755 from Bristol

*Many thanks for the update Terry, sadly I know the feeling when you come face to face with an individual who has no grasp of the situation they are trying to address. Great to know that the Rebel continues to serve. Ed.*

Dear Brian,

3<sup>rd</sup> October 2013

I hope you are keeping well and you've been able to enjoy the unusually good summer we've had this year, the pessimists are already saying it'll be a bad winter but let's cross that bridge when (or indeed, if) we come to it.

I'm pleased to say I took the Kitten van to a couple of events in August, one was a general classic car show organised by the Yorkshire Thoroughbred Car Club which was held in a park in Barnsley - apart from a couple of SS1 Scimitars it was the only Reliant product on show. There was just one 3-wheeler car there which was a Bond Mk? (F or G possibly?) It's funny how certain shows seem to attract certain cars or types of cars, for example I don't recall seeing a classic Mini there but there were a few Austin 1800 'Landcrabs' - when did you last see one of those? The second show I went to was the ROC event at Pontefract Racecourse, I just went for an afternoon but enjoyed chatting with other owners and looking at their cars. Thanks to those with much more knowledge than me I found out the heater hoses had been incorrectly fitted on mine and that the tapped hole at the rear of the cylinder head should have a pipe leading to the heater rather than a blanking plug!



One of the two small outlets from the water pump had been removed and the hole tapped and blanked off with a dummy temperature sender, so heaven knows what the water flow around the engine was like. Someone said it was best not to drive it too far like that but of course I'd already driven it back from Devon! Anyway, it's all sorted out now and I've fitted all new heater hoses new top hose with 3 'bumps' plus the correct thermostat housing (previously it had one with a vertical outlet from the earlier engine, and a rather distorted top hose!).

Reading through some of the Mewsletter back issues on the website I kept seeing you mentioning greasing the front suspension so I've done that and fitted all new grease nipples with angled heads to make it easier, and fitted little plastic caps on them so they don't get damaged! I've also re-greased and adjusted the front wheel bearings then I realised the tyres were starting to 'feather' on the edge of the central tread so I bought a Gunson Trackrite and checked the tracking; as suspected it was toeing out by one degree so I've put that right, it should drive a bit better now!

I've replaced all the ignition parts and learnt a little lesson along the way - I bought a new condensor, cap, rotor arm and points for the 45D4 distributor and all was well until I came to fit the points. It was at this point I realised the distributor is actually a 59D4 because the engine is a later one (Rialto), fortunately all the other parts are the same. The carburettor was the original Kitten one though (without an overflow pipe) so I've bought a spare later one and refurbished it with new needle, float etc, and of course fitted an overflow pipe. I've also taken the opportunity to fit a new braided neoprene petrol pipe from the pump to the carb and, rather than route it over the top of the engine as intended, have fitted a longer pipe and taken it round the back of the cylinder block, clipping it to the bulkhead for extra security.

Two of the mounting rubbers for the heater fan have broken (don't they all?) so, as a temporary fix, I've fitted a large jubilee clip around the steel tube which protrudes through the fibreglass panel to prevent it falling back into the engine bay. I'm currently improving the door cards, the previous owner had made new ones from 1/8" plywood but not taken the time to fit them properly so I removed the vinyl covering and made them fit better, adjusted the screw holes where needed and then refitted the vinyl. I was wondering where I might be able to source the plastic trims which fit around the metal casing for the door release handle, then discovered they were fitted to MGBs (and other Leyland products) so that solved that problem.

So, it's been a fairly busy summer, okay I've not done anything major to the car but the fiddling about jobs do take some time. There's a few more still to do plus I want to continue with the rustproofing underneath so that should keep me out of mischief over the winter!

I've attached a couple of photos - one of the Kitten which I took at the Barnsley show (with its newly fitted hubcaps and correct windscreen wiper arm!) plus one of an Asquith Shetland which I saw at a show in Darley Dale, Derbyshire a couple of weeks ago. I'd not seen one 'in the flesh' before so it was a really nice surprise to see that.



I'd better sign off now. Oh, I almost forgot - thank you for including my articles in the last Mewsletter, it was good to see those in print - looking forward to reading issue 115 and to seeing which non-Kitten will be on the cover this time!

All the best, take care!

Tony Wiese No. 967 from Wakefield

I took this picture at a carpark in Silverburn on the south side of Glasgow earlier this year (2013) just before members of the SWTVC (Scottish Western Thoroughbred Vehicle Club if you must know!) set off on a BBQ run – sadly I did not have time to join them for the run or for the BBQ, but I did manage to meet some old friends nevertheless.

If only one of the cars with red wheels had had blue ones, how much better a picture that could have been! Oh, and that was just the way the happened to park, it was not staged! What an untidy bunch they are!!



Also there that day was old friend Harry Reid, I first met Harry when he owned a Bond Bug in the 1980's. The only Reliantish link I could find with his current Austin seven is that it has a David Gould **fibreglass body**, built on a 1930 chassis. It has a 1932 engine with the 1937 high compression cylinder head and a 1934 gearbox. Harry has owned the car since last August (2012).

If you were wondering, no that is not its original registration number. SV, the Kinross registrations, only got to 3781 before the local

office was closed. Everything then being transferred to Perth, which also was duly closed. “They” then used SV numbers higher than that to allocate age related plates to old vehicles, if you look you will even see them in films these days, which I think is a bit sad, but probably just a case of too much knowledge spoiling things!



Oh, alright then, here is a view from the front!



Getting back to the Kitten front for a moment, here are a few snaps taken at Thurlaston in September 2013 of Simon's Kitten estate, I had been looking forward to the Ciper being there as well that day, but childhood illness prevented that plan from bearing fruit. Something to look forward to another time.





Left to right, Simon Fitch, yours truly, and Tom Wardley, Ed.

Getting back to matters CIPHER, the following was received recently from Peter Bird in relation to pop-up headlights on the Cipher.

Peter Bird says :- "It was a very quick effort (only used for company / internal use) so most likely only ever seen by a handful of inner circle people.

The idea was shelved (nothing was ever ruled out, but so many details would have to wait - until we had a production budget...) because of the unreliability of Lotus pop-up lights (one eye lazily opening !) and more importantly because of the need to flash the headlamps - Without delay.!



There were other issues that would have needed sorting - such as the vibration of driving lamps when raised on stems (not so easy to resolve on a very lightweight car) and then also that old chestnut : type approval.. Not to mention, whether the additional cost of the feature would be valued by the customer and the insurance cost of accident repair adding to the premium. Additionally, there were just two of us to design, develop, build, test, show, and everything else the car....

If only we'd had Mazda's development budget !? The 'Stevens' name might have been seen - as often as the MX's. And then with decent funding...one might only wonder what his ingenuity would have otherwise led on to.."

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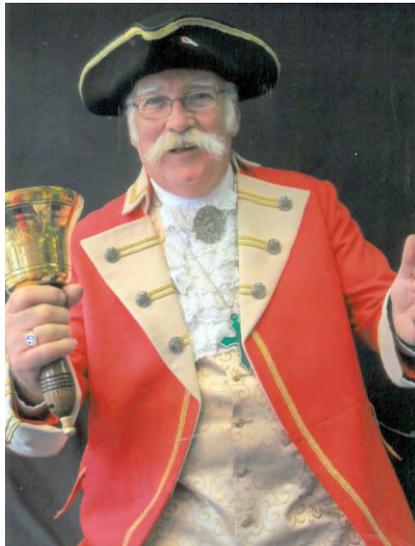
I know that Kirsty gets annoyed at me for my references to Harry Darby in connection with what is, and has been for some time, her Kitten estate, here she and it are at Birmingham in September 2013. Ed.





Another shot of Kirsty's Kitten

Here I am with a spare half page! I'll just slip in a picture of our very own Don Evans in costume as West Lancashire Town Crier. One day I'll learn how to get text beside a picture, don't hold your breath!



Right, this page was going to be devoted to telling you all about this competitive Kitten – but, your numptie of an editor did not record details about whose car it was when he was given the pictures some months ago, and my memory really is not up to the task these days. Anyway, rather than waffle on much more, or indeed remove the pictures till I get organised – haa haa, I'll leave them here, both because I am very pressed for time and material, (Moirra flies off to the sun in less than 48 hours time and we have a family birthday party to organise and attend tomorrow.... and in case you recogninse it and can help guide me back to the straight and narrow.

Ed.



Answers on a postcard please.



The 12 days of Reliant Christmas

With thanks to Helen Fitch.

On the outskirts of Tamworth Tom Williams made for me...

12 Cuddly Kittens

11 Salamanders

10 Royal Regals

9 Hand built Tempests

8 Feisty Rebels

7 Ciphers speeding

6 Jimps a jumping

5 Bond Bugs

4 Tandy Campers

3 Fox Vans

2 Kit Lieges

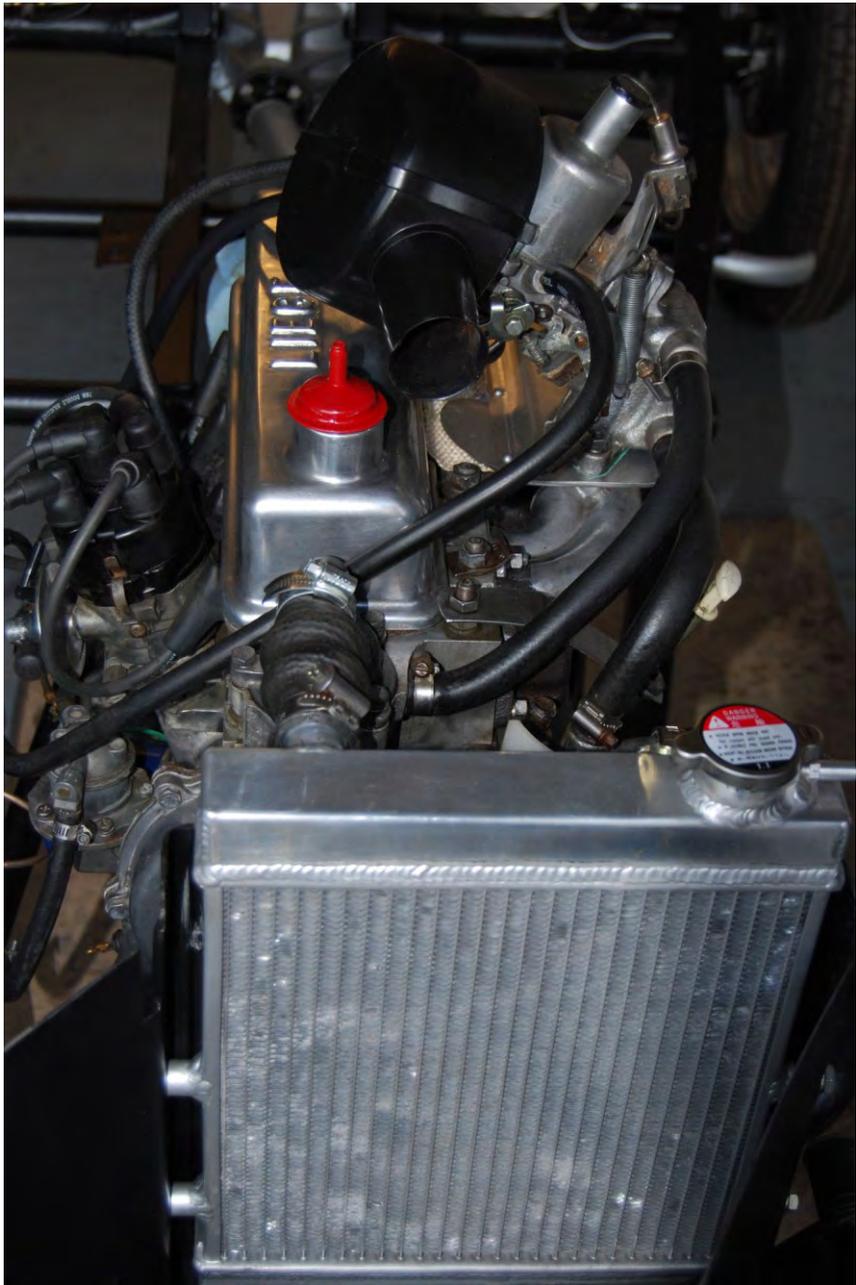
And a Robin in a fac'try

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### Liege page

Just a picture and congratulations to Kevin Clark, one of only two Liege owners in Scotland. (The other one might be for sale, if only I was...!) I was delighted to receive a video clip of the engine being fired up for the first time in November, well done Kevin, keep up the good work. Glad the alloy rocker cover polished up so well, nice job. Not sure about the fuel pipe so close to the head mind you!

Ed.



Kevin's Leige's engine bay showing the new alloy radiator and alloy rocker cover to good effect.

Hi Brian,

November 2013

As requested, the history is that there have been a number of windmills in this area (a small raised area, well above the rivers that powered many watermills in Shropshire) and there was one here in the 1590s. Later there was a mill about 1/4 mile from here, that, when it required work, the miller did a deal with the estate to buy all the machinery and build a new tower mill in the 1770s (previous mills were wooden post mills, where the whole of the body and machinery revolved). I have rebuilt the mill to look like it did, with a tailpole to turn the cap to the wind. The miller died around 1802, and the mill and land returned to the estate, it was burned out around 1860, and the insurance paid up over £100 (so I believe). That seems a lot for a derelict mill that hadn't worked for 60 years, but as the land owner was a Baronet and a JP no-one would be likely to argue! The cottage was extended about that time, and an outside toilet built in 1871! Nothing else was ever done, except the addition of an outside tap in the 1950s, but the cottage was condemned in the 1960s.



I started the restoration in 2009 rebuilding the top of the tower, lintels and other stonework, and installed windows. I had engaged a

supposed millwright to build the cap, but he turned out to be a rogue, idiot and thief! I have since learned that he has let other people down too, and is no longer acknowledged by SPAB. Thankfully earlier this year a guy who has a timber framing business that I knew, was keen to be involved, and during this summer I did as much work to the mill myself, and loads of research and drawings for the two local guys to remake what had been done so badly. They have proved a life-saver to me, as they are both skilled, and are interested in the job, and understanding the mechanics of the mill. Time and money permitting, they will build the sails next.

I then turned my attention to the cottage, building a roof, windows, etc. etc. etc.!

I'm back in the workshop now building and repairing concertinas 7 days a week, to get solvent again!

I Mot'd the Kitten van this week, advisory on wear in the ball joints, I have greased them regularly and they are only 10-12 years old, so I was surprised at that. I hardly used the Kitten van this last year, and have considered selling it, but it would have to be for good money, and I don't really want to not be involved with the Kitten Register.

Best Regards, Andrew Norman. No. 291 from Shrewsbury

***Andrew's Kitten ball joint advisory I am certain is a case of poorly trained MoT testers, they almost certainly do not realise that Kitten ball joints have internal dampers to absorb shock, and so should have some lift.***

***It is my understanding that this unusual fact was belatedly recognised by the ministry and that a special notice was issued to testing stations in the late 70's or early 80's pointing the fact out in an effort to avoid erroneous test failures, I guess I need to try and find a copy of that document in my spare time!***

***Ed.***

# Getting Technical

## Rack fitting by Alan Shaw 2013

Dear Brian,

August 2013

With regard to assembling the rack to the vehicle, everyone to his taste. The most awkward bit is in mating the larger unsplined part of the pinion shaft to the slit in the universal joint. This being done, the assembly can be completed, leaving about a locknut's thickness of exposed thread on the track rods.

The toe-in can now be checked using the set-up shown, two straight edges touching the tyres. Planned wooden slats are one alternative, a slight bowing does not matter provided the gauging edges mate. Two sets of "m" and "n" values should be obtained, (in inches for the purposes of this exercise) the road wheels being turned through 180 degrees between measurements.

The 35" dimension magnifies the toe-in error by a factor of ten. For example if the mean value of the difference between "m" and "n" is  $\frac{1}{4}$ ", the track rod adjustment needs to be 0.025". The lead of the threads being 0.050", either give one rod half a turn or both rods a quarter turn.

The steering wheel and multi switch can then be assembled on their splines to hearts desire.

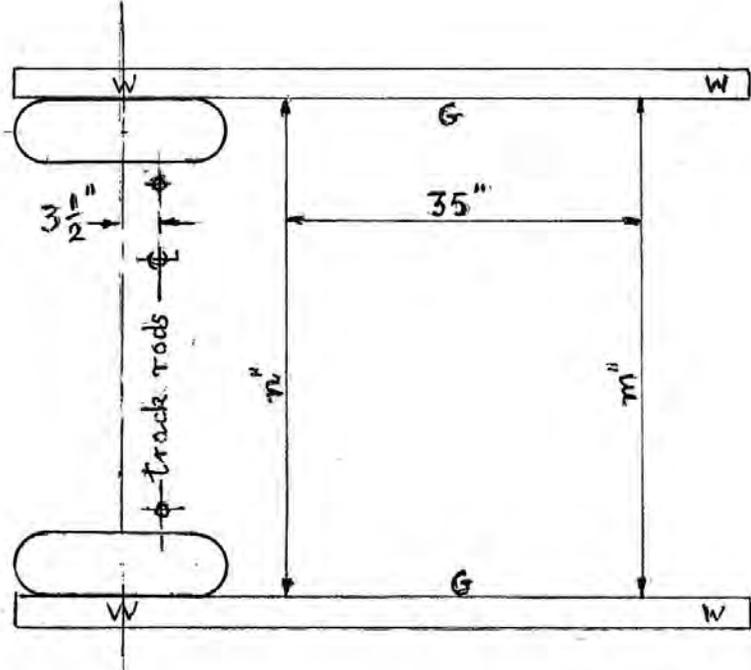
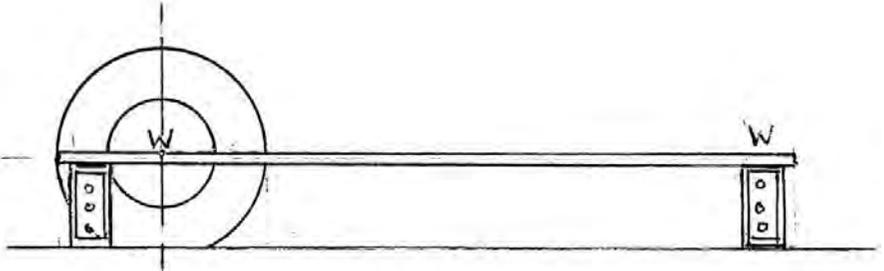
(Three and three quarter turns lock to lock, 45 degrees short of two turns gives centre).

The above method has been verified on my own Kitten which has equal wear of both front tyres, still legal tread after 80k miles.

I don't know why anyone wants to use the wheel rims as data, it's the tyres that are on the road.

After all this my Robin sits on the drive totally unconcerned.

Alan (Shaw) from Stalybridge.



## Epilogue

I have not the slightest idea if it is an age thing, a state of mind thing or what it is, but, in spite of my confidence in the past, I am running scared of the Royal Mail!

I know we are usually well within the 100g weight limit of a second class stamp, but we do sail very close to the 5mm thickness limit, and, given that not only will there be the usual supplementary sheet (or two?) in with this edition, but also your renewal notice, I have blinked and kept an A4 sheet out of this edition just to be on the safe side!

As you will perhaps have noticed there is more non-car related input in this edition, this is to some extent your fault for not providing us with more interesting stories about your adventures or rebuild projects, or anypictures. (my thanks to those who have). Not entirely fair as I have at this point, late November, a page of pictures but I put them in ages ago, and failed to include any clues as to whose car it was, and I don't think he is a subscriber, so the details are not on file!!!

Clearly I was spoiled much of this year with our excellent Cipher and Tempest articles being provided for me, and, in spite of my plans and intentions, I have yet to address the Jimp article I had intended.

Aarrgh, it is nearing the end of November, I took the other magazine I edit to the printers earlier this week, it is now less than 24 hours before I drop Moira and her brother and his wife at Edinburgh airport. Just squeezed in the picture of Don Evans that I meant to show you ages ago, but I have mislaid the one of his Fox that I was going to show you as well – one day....

Till next time, take care, oh and do please complete and return the enclosed renewal notice.

*Brian*

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