

RELIANT KITTEN REGISTER



Mewsletter 126

September - October 2015



Pictured is Mick Penistone's very nice, restored April Yellow Kitten. Featured in the May – June Mewsletter. Recently sold, it's now relocated to Scotland, owned by David Leslie who put it through the MOT only last Monday, having worked on it all day Sunday. You might observe there is no rear window fitted in the above picture... Now replaced, David broke it dropping the car too quickly off the trolley jack!

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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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Web page: <http://www.kitreg.org.uk> or have a look at <http://www.reliantkitten.co.uk>

Dinky Cars

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

I N D E X

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E & o e

Hello again and welcome. Carrying on from the last edition, and in particular its front cover, John Pearce helping me out again (still!) much appreciated John, what, had I had the room, and the details at the time, I would have told you was :-

The original TV Batmobile was built by George Barris in 1966, based on the Lincoln Futura Concept car. Bodily not that many changes were made, mainly paint and gadgets..... This car is in California and was sold last year for \$4,650,000!!!! The purchaser has, thus far, remained anonymous.

Liege Page

I was going to show you a lovely picture of Kevin Clark's red Liege, No 015, the day it passed its SVA test in here, but John convinced me that it would make a great cover picture, and Kevin is working in London just now, and has promised a write up in time for the next edition, so it seemed like a good idea to wait till the whole story is here 7/8/15 was the big day.

Kevin, the words well done hardly cover it – suffice to say that you are one of a very small group of exceptionally devoted, determined and talented individuals on the planet.

The rest of us mere mortals can only begin to imagine how you must have been feeling that day. CONGRATULATIONS, and many thanks for including me on the circulation list.

Now, just thinking out loud here, given that you only live about 70 miles from here, and given that your wife's best friend's mother lives about the same number of yards from here, I wonder....

Brian

.....

LLANGOLLEN GET-TOGETHER

July 19th 2015

Were we lucky or were we lucky? At 3am on the morning of the get-together I woke to the sound of rain on the window and feared the predicted on/off rain forecast was correct. By the time I got Kitten out of the garage at about 8.30 the rain had stopped and stayed away all day, influenced no doubt by the gazebo put up for shelter by Geoff the museum owner.

We had 24 members there of which 7 came without a Reliant, so many thanks for your support. Some members taking advantage of Geoff's kind offer to camp in the field overnight. It was good to catch up with old friends and make some new ones. Attending were 3 Kitten

vans, 2 Kitten saloons, 2 Kitten estates, a Fox Tandy, a Rebel saloon and 2 Rebel estates. Unfortunately, apart from Yoland's Tempest, there were no other Reliant 'based' cars, although Roger's Birkin created a lot of interest. The Comino that we had hoped have there was at the last minute unavailable, perhaps next time.

Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves, many remarking favourably on the venue on the banks of the river Dee adjacent to the small but very interesting motor museum. Geoff commented that several members spent some time rummaging through his extensive collection of spares, many finding items worth buying.

The feedback I have received so far has been very positive and it has been suggested that we make it a 2 day event at the same venue next time. Next year is the Register's 25th anniversary, so it would seem an appropriate time to try this out. Perhaps on the Saturday a run up the Horseshoe Pass, cut across to Corwen, call in at the Rhug Estate (who rear buffalo for their meat) where they have a large grass overflow car park where we could all park together and perhaps indulge in a buffalo burger or two from their café. I'm not sure if, when we pay for this it would be classed as a 'Buffalo Bill'..... Suitably satiated we could return through Llangollen back to the museum (the round trip 30 – 35 miles) for the rest of the afternoon.

Anyone considering turning this weekend into a mini break, the attractive town of Llangollen, situated on the river Dee, boasts the picturesque canal and nostalgic steam railway together with many eateries and varied accommodation. Camping will still be available at the museum for as many nights as required.

Sunday could be spent at the museum giving people that can only make one day a chance to catch up with other members. All feedback would be much appreciated either through the Mewsletter as we have plenty of time, or direct to me at rkrshowpostbox@gmail.com. Here's looking forward to next year.

Malcolm (Rush) No. 352 from Whitchurch

Sounds like a plan to me Malcolm, this is one of those occasions in life where the words "Thank you" seem wholly inadequate. But they do

express the sentiment, and not just mine, I too have had a lot of very positive feedback about the venue, its staff, and the organisation.

Thanks also for your story, and the pictures.

I had considered putting two to a page and devoting almost half of this edition to the occasion, but, as we are going to do even better next year, I thought I might save that for then, our 25th, and meantime try, what for me, is something different. So, here goes



John Parker 301



Yoland Brown 715



Darren & Michelle
Watson 988



John Pearce 304



Steve Casey 772



Tony Wiese 967



Andrew Norman 291



Ray & Sharon Best 555



Syd and Steve Carroll 993
(beside Malcolm's car!)



Kirsty Payne 942



Simon Hodges 881



Kerry Croxton 526



Duncan Bradford 046



Diary of a Kitten.

A tale of two Kitties.

By Chris Tooth *June 2015*

Some twelve years ago I picked up a Kitten estate fairly cheaply to get over withdrawal symptoms from passing my Reliant Scimitar over to a friend who eventually scrapped it. Full of good intentions I stripped it down to its parts only to find the chassis somewhat needful of steel. As a metallurgist I recognised the rust bug and this was a basket case. This story is a story of twos as it came with many extra bits and pieces including a spare chassis in far better condition. Some welding and a coat of red lead and ready to go. The roll bar in the body to which the

seat belts were attached was rotted through at its ends. At that point many things got in the way disillusionment, health, employment, a boat project etc. so work stopped until retirement. Of course it's a truism that you don't have time to work when retired, and real effort to get started had to be made. At this point the stripping down twelve years before revealed parts scattered everywhere and shuffled up with Scimitar parts.

Although stored under cover I had not moth balled the engine intelligently, and the engine was dead with rust. Diesel got the pistons free but some tappets were solid. A local garage had been a dealer and service agent for Reliant in the past and they had a yellow head engine stored in a dry shed. It will need checking for condition, and they advised an overhaul before use.

Now perfection is good, but 37 year old cars resist perfection. Reality checking must be applied before gilding the lily. There is a Cornish principle I learned at work. Near nough is good nough and good nough is perfik. We will try perfection where possible, otherwise use uncommon common sense.

First job is to get the engine sorted and fitted into the chassis. The original engine had required jigs to jack the head off, it was siezed onto the head studs. Anyway, pistons were solid and the tappets could not be moved. Lesson one I should have oiled it well and turned it over regularly.

The replacement engine was filthy. Here it is Before & After



Throughout the strip down and rebuild it was clean, clean and clean again. I stripped the yellow head engine and found that the head was easily removed and looked to be in reasonable condition, no apparent leaks in the head gasket. All the oily dirt appeared to be a blocked breather in the rocker cover.

Now the head, clean again and again. Using my nearly fifty year old valve spring compressor to strip down and check for wear.

Then grind in the valves. The exhaust valves were not too bad but not perfect. 'Good enough' will have to do. My sucker tipped valve grinder, another fifty year old tool, could not be found, horray, as it is a useless and frustrating piece of kit. Eight inches of dowel stuck into a plastic disc and double sided sticky foam pad works a treat. Nice unbroken grey finish from some fine silicon carbide was acceptable. Cleanliness is vital. One thing that annoys me is the lack of discrimination between Silicon and Silicone. Silicon oil would be very difficult to pour and Silicon kitchen tools are scratchy.



Enough rant, modern Gunk is biodegradable but works just like it always did. Ports and combustion chamber were polished with a Dremel lookalike and washed, washed, and washed again. New valve oil seals were fitted and the whole reassembled. There appeared to be no play in

the guides. The exhaust studs were wire brushed and a nut run up and down to free up. Nice to be able to assemble with clean parts that require fingers only.

Now for the pistons. Lag with grease and leave over night to soften the carbon. I have a favourite brass strip for scraping the piston tops, and I found it. I have always coated the cylinder bores with grease which collects any dirt and can be easily removed. Empty cylinders are filled with cloth or paper towel while removing the carbon from the next piston.

As the water pump was seized and red with rust the block was also full of rust and by poking about with wire and compressed air eventually cleared it. Warning, watch out for eyes and lungs, clouds of rust, red rust in the sunset, is not healthy. Having removed the drain plug at the rear of the block to facilitate washing out, it had to be painted, didn't it?

Cleaned the top thoroughly, check for free fit to the studs, add some grease and pop the head gasket on. Tight fit, but applying the head and a tap with the mallet did it. Always some compromise. Torque the head, twice and in the proper order, leave over night and torque again, it does settle. The three side ones need 15 ft lb and the torque wrench won't go in. They need a 30 lb pull at 6 inches. I have used a spring balance on the end of a spanner in the past but this time I used the torque wrench to calibrate number one arm muscle. Once the engine is run the head will be torqued down again, and again after 500 miles.

Clean the push rods and rockers and oil well, fit the rockers and torque the three bolts down, leave for an hour or two and torque again. Now set the gaps. There is a minimalist method which I used but cannot now find. The rule of 9 works, and if done carefully can be done in two rotations of the engine. Rotate the engine using a spanner on the crankshaft pulley, watch for a valve going down. Now adjust the gap of the valve that adds up to 9. If valve 2, counting from the pulley end, then adjust valve 7. Rotate carefully for the next one.

I now spent a week clearing out 30 years of 'it might come in useful' stuff from the workshop to find the dipstick. It was in the last place I looked (evidently).

Both sumps were found to have holes, the newer caused by scraping on the ground during storage. The other looked fine until the rust was removed with Hammerite Rust Remover GEL, when four small holes appeared. Silver solder filled nicely and coats of heat resistant enamel applied. I used two coats of BLACKFRIARS Quick drying Metal Paint primer with a 150 deg. C usability, then three coats of black. I was good, I painted both sumps so now I have a spare. The rocker cover was treated in a similar manner but with five coats of yellow, very pretty. Not petrol resistant as I subsequently found.

I did a test to see how thick the paint layer was. Two red primer coats and two black top coats were 0.008 inches (0,2mm). The same in cellulose was only 0.002 inches (0.05mm). Testing well cured paint with petrol showed that the cellulose was fine, but blistered the enamel. A spray coat of cellulose over the enamel gave it some petrol resistance.

The yellow top came without a flywheel so the old one was fitted. A new lock washer was filed out of steel sheet.



The distributor was next to receive attention.

I stripped it down as much as possible, cleaned, removed rust and polished the distributor cam, and finally oiled the weights and the points plate. The cap was badly corroded where the leads were inserted into the cap. Indeed one had cracked the post so I eventually found another cap and transferred the leads. Interestingly the old cap had a solid carbon contact which did not seem right for the rotor arm did not have a spring contact. Once the Kitten has been MOT'd I will fit fully electronic ignition. This was very successful on the Scimitar. The pin holding the float was corroded so a jig was made to push it out. The pin was cut in the gap between the float and the casting.

Next the carburettor. Big problem, as it was very badly seized and I had soaked it in diesel and wrapped it in a diesel soaked cloth.

A long soak in light oil allowed some movement in the throttle lever and after removing the throttle disc, gently pushed the spindle out. A loose fit is not good as air leaks here adversely affect performance and makes setting difficult. The suction chamber would not move once the screws were removed with difficulty. Not good so leave to soak.



Might end up trying to get another. Webber would be nice but expensive and it needs a different manifold. Soaking and gentle heating got the top off but I damaged the needle getting it out. Got a nice new one from Burlen Ltd, this was the proper one for the yellow top engine. Their service was excellent, the needle arrived only a day or two after

ordering. In fact ordering on line and paying by Paypal is fantastic compared to 40 or 50 years ago. Everything comes within a few days and because they give full delivery details, we can even intercept the delivery. We live a bit off the beaten trail.

The exhaust manifold was cleaned and sprayed with 800° C paint.



The inlet manifold was also cleaned and sprayed.



Hi Brian,

July 2015

I've become a couch potato, no project! Things did go extremely well with the DVLA I am now the custodian of a new V5 for a, RELIANT SPECIAL, "SPORTS" couldn't be better, unlike other projects, I am hanging on to this one, it is fun to drive, and now that it is official!!! It looks like the Register will have to put up with me for some time to come.

I have cut the height of the seats down, it looks a zillion% better, "in proportion".

Wishing you all the best, Mike

Thanks Mike.

Clearly we need your guidance, one of our Tempest guys is having difficulties with the DVLA.

I look forward to the new picture(s?).

Take care, enjoy the couch, but don't get too attached to it!

Brian

Hi Brian,

The DVLA thing really just took time, having sent off the form with the required photographs, I waited, then I waited, some weeks later they requested photographs, as the ones I sent, in the same envelope as the form, were missing??? I then sent more photos, and waited, then the V5 arrived.

All in all it took about 4 months, but worth the wait, at last its finished.

Cheers, Mike

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Hi Brian,

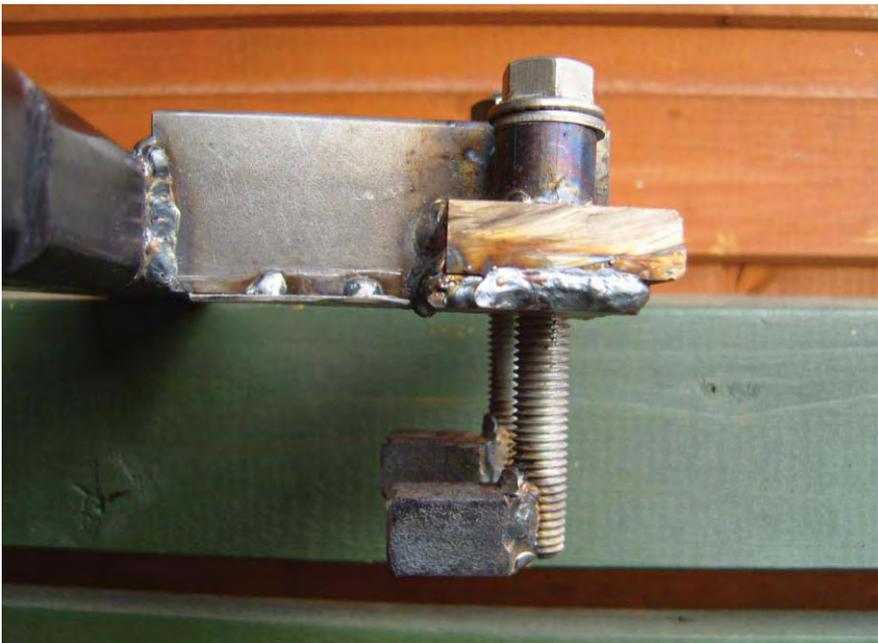
4th August 2015

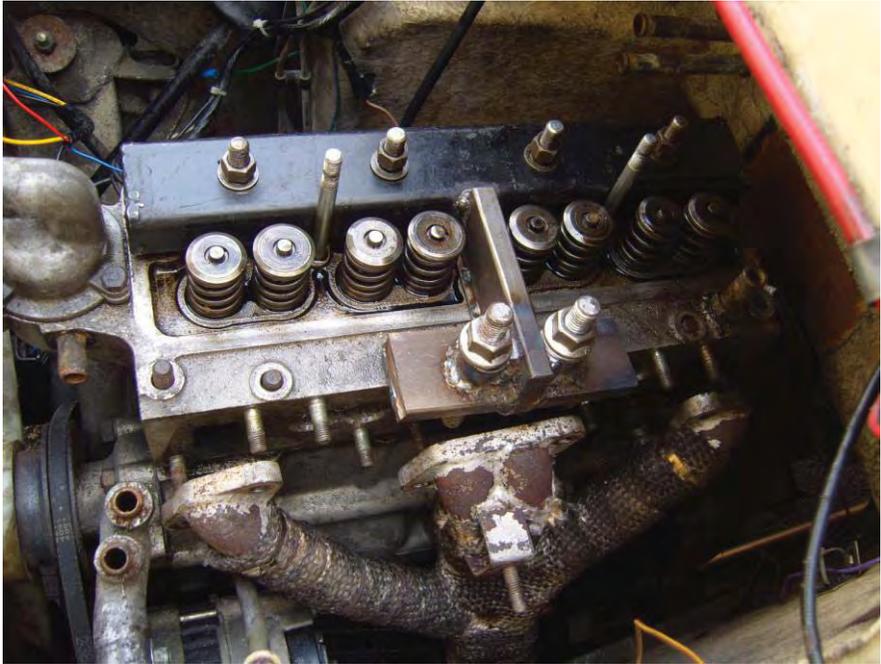
Well, I had the Tandy camper go down to running on three cylinders, and found that I had lost compression on No.2 cylinder, so, off with its head.

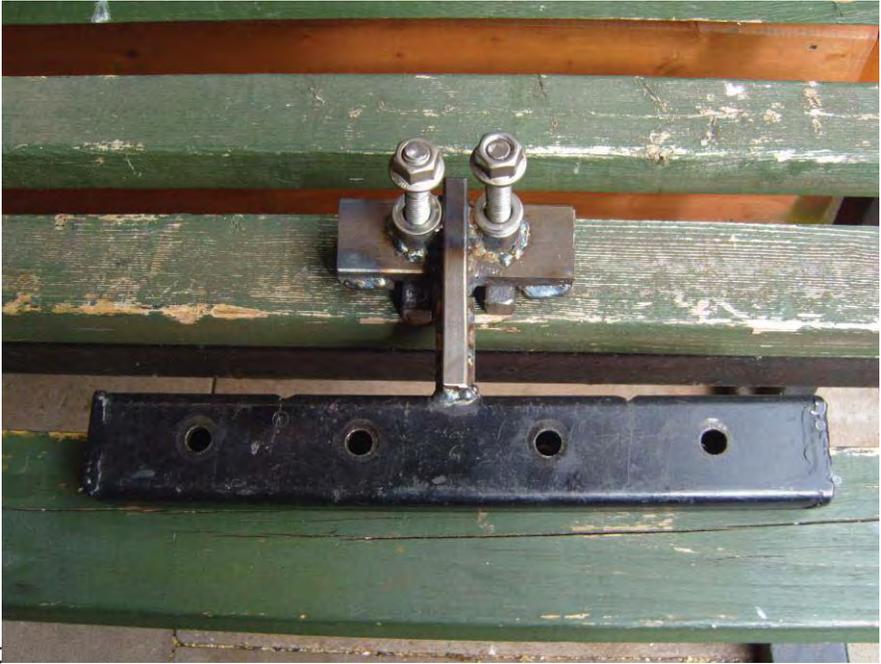
I use a normal head removal tool, as many Reliant owners do, and find that the problem, if there is one, removing the head, usually turns out to be one or more of the studs on the exhaust side rusting to the head.

You then have the head tool lift one side of the head and have to carefully use wedges to release the other side. I decided to modify my head tool as per the photo's, and it pulled the head off the camper even though the one stud was rusted on, no wedges needed.

One word of warning, if you modify your head puller, make sure it is in contact with all the studs you push against, otherwise you may find that the rusted in stud remains stuck in the head, and pulls the thread out of the block. Keith. (154)





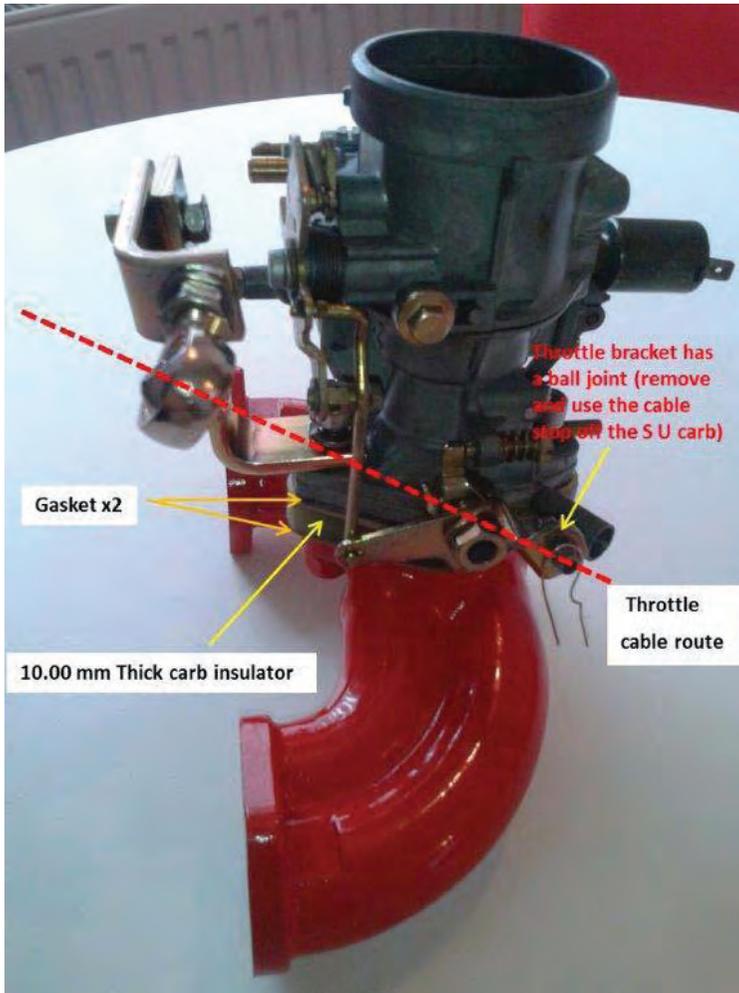


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Hi Brian,

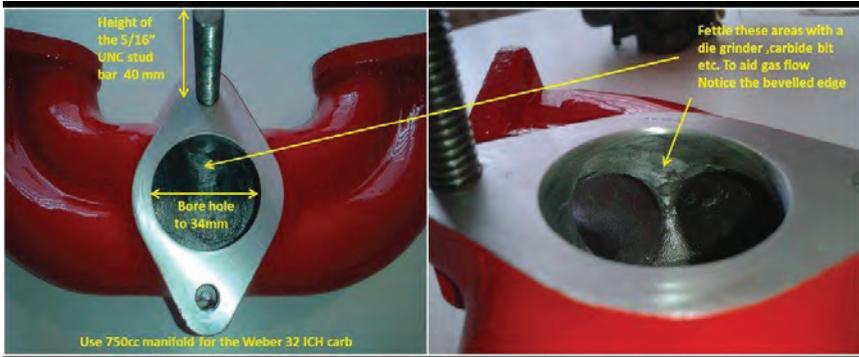
11<sup>th</sup> August 2015

I have just converted my Fox to a Weber 32 ICH carb. As there isn't much information about regarding the throttle bracket fabrication , I have attached some photos with dimensions.

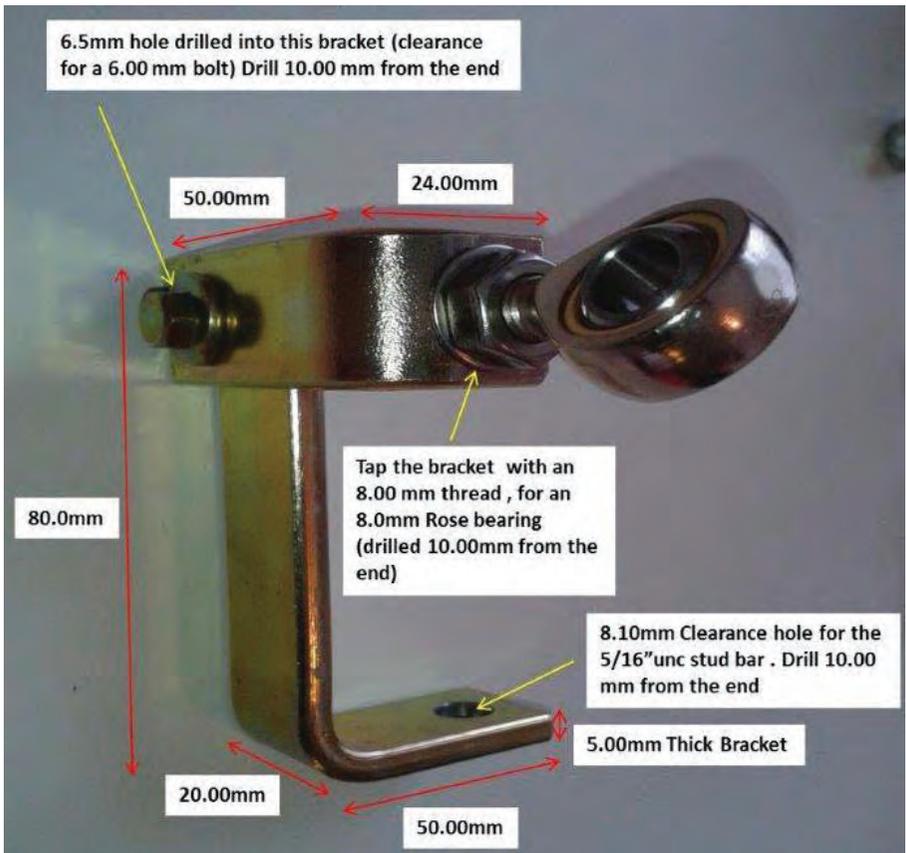


Once set up to (fast idle) which is the same procedure as the 34 ICH, just type - 34 ICH best lean idle - into google, that will give you the easy to follow instructions. One other thing, there is a small hole on the underside of the gasket mounting face on the 32 ICH , **You must not cover this on assembly**. I used the side of file to cut a groove into heat insulator and gasket.

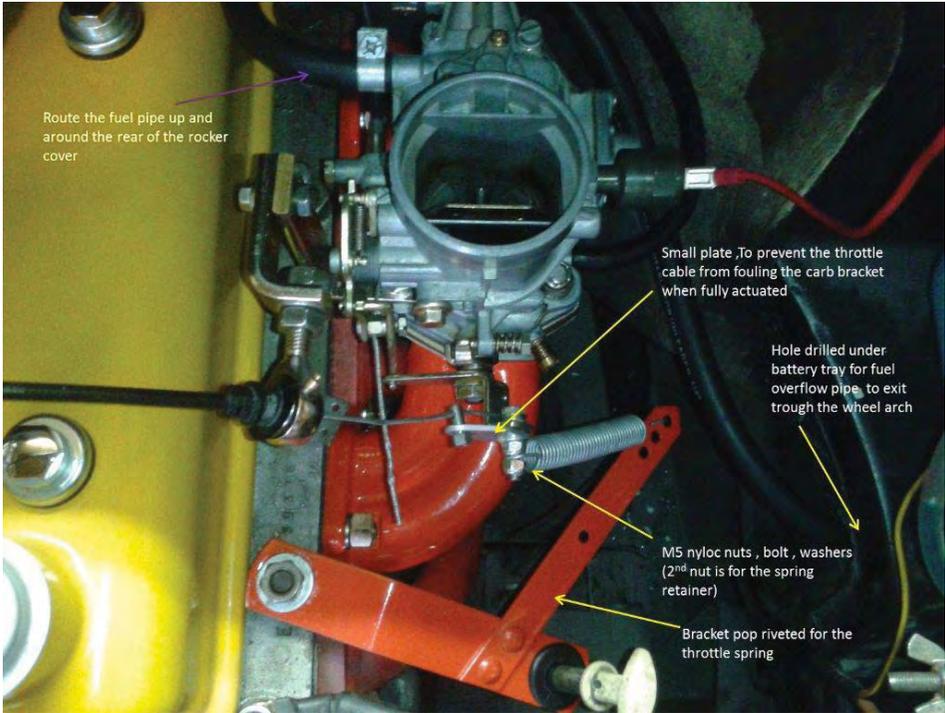
By doing this ....you can tell whether larger or smaller jets are needed.



The carb I used was for a Fiesta 950 cc. It really was (plug and play) as I didn't dismantle it to find out the sizes of the jets,



I can tell you that the idle jet which is attached to the fuel cut off solenoid... That screws into the side of the carb is a size 40. My yellow top engine, along with manifold mods, 4 into 1 exhaust, full electronic ignition (Accuspark) and ignition module. Timing set to 12 to 15 degrees before top dead center, 13 degrees total advance. I set the gunson color tune up to check mixture, it was spot on!



All in all a massive improvement in performance and power over the SU carb. Easier starting, quicker warm up, rock steady idle at 900 rpm. No hesitation at all throughout the rev range.

Regards Dean (Howells) No. 941 from South Wales

.....

This is just to remind me that I have yet to do something about the nuts and bolts of the front Kitten and Fox suspension!! This after Graeme Shaw's helpful revelations of months ago!

Brian,

11/8/15

A wee question I'm sure you've had before.....

Neighbours have nicely commented that whilst I run the car past their house it affects their TV signal. I am satellite and so have never noticed.

I had one suggestion to change the HT leads (to mini classic) - which I've done, but ones I changed out have 'suppressed' written on them, new ones don't. For the original ones, I thought perhaps an old copper one had sneaked in, but all are silicon albeit it old.

Being remote our TV signal is very weak - the reason I have satellite.

Any idea what the solution might be? Local garage suggested a suppressor around the coil area but this didn't seem to work.

Thanks.....Kevin

*I was not able to offer Kevin any definitive solutions, can you help? Ed,*

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**Right, an odd corner to fill, and some really good news to put in here!**

**Thanks to Duncan Bradford, James Holland, Alan Shaw, and Keith Gittus, we have secured a number of new lower ball joints, and for the first time in many years are able to offer these (still preferably on an exchange basis) for £50 each delivered, or £65 if you cannot supply an old unit that is suitable for reconditioning. These prices are current and subject to review by Christmas 2015. Note this offer is only open to RKR subscribers, the retail price is £80 each delivered.**

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# Getting Technical

## Gearbox remote controls

by John Box

August 2015

Joe's picture of the Tempest R.C. in the mag (Mews 124 Page 21) does make it look a bit complicated.

The problem with the Reliant box is that it has far too much travel on the gear lever, particularly across the gate.

The Tempest design does not illuminate this defect, but ensures that it does not suffer from added "slop"

The fore and aft movement is reduced by spacing the pivot joints at the lower end.

By far the simplest R.C. is the push-me-pull-you type fitted to many front wheel drive cars, usually fitted with three speed gearboxes, i.e Citroen, BSA, Renault etc.

It would not be difficult to fit some kind of trigger latch to operate the reverse stop on a Reliant. However, not everyone wants their gear lever to hang out of the fascia.

When we were planning the Mk2 Fox, we were looking at fitting a ½ " packing piece under the gearbox lid, and moving the sphere up the gear lever. This would have halved the travel in all directions.

This mod could have been incorporated in the series 3 Robins built at Burntwood, but nobody wanted to spend the extra money!

However they did get the wider axle, and much better engines than the Beans unit, pity they never got the alloy sump.

Regards John (Box)

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While still on technical matters, and indeed John Box, the man himself gave me a ring yesterday, Tuesday the 11<sup>th</sup> of August, to catch up, and fill me in on a couple of things we had mentioned in the last edition.

Bottom ball joints and wishbones came up for discussion, as did the matter of Reliant part number 26346, a packer, which, while used on the Fox, never actually made it into the Fox parts book!

Its purpose in life being, to lower the chassis mounting of the anti-roll bar.

On the bottom ball joint front he was reminding me that he had the original drawings, something I think I knew, but had long forgotten!

Still on the bottom ball joint situation – as you may be aware, while I am aware of the existence of web forums - I don't get involved, however, they can have a useful place to share information, and Duncan in particular, has been keen that we do something to make people aware of a potential problem with the modified version of these which uses a Metro top ball joint. A number of them have failed in the past year, with exciting loss of steering, and potentially brake control. It is obviously important to retain control of both the directional stability of your vehicle, and to be able to bring it to a halt, without having to resort to "dropping" a front wheel on the ground with resultant wheel arch damage is also desirable to say the least!

So, check your bottom ball joints, if you are in any doubt, I think, though we have never supplied those Metro modified ones, that they are easily recognisable by the hexagonal outer end of the ball joint, as distinct to the round originals.

I am reminded, yet again, of one of my failings, namely the lack of a sensible simple indexing system, both in life generally, and this publication specifically!

This was brought home to me on the chassis article which John Pearce put so much work into recently, but we had already published the end of that story, thanks to J.B. some while back in the article about Tempests, and in particular the Vantique derivative, which used the last 4 chassis that Reliant made, when they were owned by Bean.

## Epilogue

You know, this worked so well the last time that I am tempted to continue with it, for this edition at least! I'll tell you why (some things are meant to be [back to old song titles again!?!] – a comment I may find hard to agree with tomorrow, we will see).

It is Friday the 17<sup>th</sup> of July, Mews 125 has been at the printers for a few days, the final proof having been approved yesterday, and Moira is, as I type, in theatre at the Southern General hospital a few miles from here, having another brain operation.

Chris Tooth's Kitten renovation article was waiting in my inbox when I logged on this morning, and, as I said to him then, it provided a very welcome distraction, which let me be sidetracked from matters that are out of my control, though dear to my heart.

So, this, your September / October edition, is more than half way to being completed in the middle of July! That, is a record!!!

I have long believed that doing this, running the Register, and in particular producing the Mews, is very therapeutic, never more so than today, and words can hardly express my gratitude to those who help fill those pages. To say it is appreciated is a big understatement.

I don't really know why it springs to mind, or were I read it, but I am reminded of the story of a highly respected medieval executioner who had two axes, one, a very old rusty one, which he positioned where his victims could clearly see it, and he would ask his assistant to hand him his axe in a loud voice for all to hear, all eyes, particularly those of his victim, are now focused on his assistant picking up the rusty old axe, as he swings his clean and sharp weapon into action.

The point being he was a considerate human being, who did what he could to minimize his customer's anxiety, as he carried out his gruesome orders.

I do remember (oh jings, was it Mary or Maria?) Julie Andrews anyway, who told us that there was an element of fun in every job that must be done, and that once found, the job became a game! (*and if you really don't get that, I seriously recommend that you make time to watch both Mary Poppins and The Sound of Music, it was definitely in one or the other, and both ought to be compulsory!*)

Enough wittering, it is time for a coffee methinks, but you can see how my troubled mind works – even if the memory and sense of humor are perhaps both a bit suspect!

Moving on, Moira has been home for some weeks now, but is having to go back in October for further scans and possibly more surgery, fingers and toes crossed she won't need the surgery.

Well, it is now the 5<sup>th</sup> of August and I have just 8 more pages of this to do. Then Dean Howell's carb tale, with wonderful pictures arrived, and we are there – August the 11<sup>th</sup> a month ahead of schedule!

As ever, **take care, enjoy yourself and grease AND INSPECT those ball joints!**

*Brian*

## *Resin Rockets*

Reliant engine tuning for economy or whizz, not quite halfshaft breaking torque, but optimising the Reliant 850 so that its full potential is achieved.



Manifolds optimised

Heads tuned, including attention to valves

Carburettor gas flowed

Rockers realigned and lightened



Large selection of good used Kitten and general Reliant spares available, just ask for details. Also new wiring bits  
- all the funny coloured cables and crimps with  
electrical advice

Al Osborn 35 Griston Road, Watton, Thetford. IP25 6DN  
01953-884681 [www.aoservices.co.uk](http://www.aoservices.co.uk)

# WWW.RELIANTSPARES.COM

Contact: Joe Mason 07973470810 E-mail: [joemason@reliantspares.com](mailto:joemason@reliantspares.com)

We carry a huge amount of second hand Reliant spares.  
For Regal, Robin Mk1, Mk2, Mk3, SLX, Rialto, Kitten, Fox, Ant.  
Mail order or collection

100+ cars for spares/rebuild. 20+ complete cars for sale  
With stock changing every week. Have a look in our picture gallery or on YouTube.

We buy, sell, collect, deliver, restore, tune, hire, export any Reliant.



We also develop and manufacture new Reliant parts  
Race exhaust systems, 4-1, 4-2-1, big bore or standard pipes,  
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carpet sets, Rebel race inlet manifolds, disc conversions, ball joint conversions.



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