

Reliant Kitten Register

NEWSLETTER – TWENTY

January/February 1998



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

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A Happy New Year to you, I have had quite a bit of in depth correspondence recently, so much so, that letters which I would normally answer in these pages, have demanded a more immediate response, and indeed some research is needed. I'll briefly outline some things here.

1. The man himself wrote to me in November, Jonathan Heynes, (Managing Director of Reliant Motors) I both telephoned, and wrote back the following day, but was unable to speak to him, and have not yet had a reply - watch this space.

1A. Update on that, he wrote back 09/01/98, and has asked a number of questions, one important fact to emerge is that we have an agreement that subscribers to this organisation can now enjoy a 15% discount on spare parts bought directly from the factory, the Parts World telephone and Facsimile numbers are as follows :- Tel : 01827 286898 Fax : 01827 286899

Payment will normally be accepted by Visa / Mastercard.

They offer a 24 hour delivery by Parcel Force.

Orders worth over £50 delivery free.

I was asked to ensure that, where possible, we identify what we want by Reliant part number.

Also the question of what to call the new 4 wheeler was asked, suggestions please, just a pity that Bedford used the Rascal name!

They are only looking at the idea, so don't get too excited just yet. I was asked if any of us would buy one at @ £7000?

We have in fact exchanged more letters since then, if anything significant emerges I'll let you know, one point that did emerge is that their prices have become a lot more reasonable - a clutch for example for £65 (plus vat, but less our 15%, and because they are offering free delivery on orders over £50, is in fact not too bad at all - make sure it has the correct release bearing for your car!)

2. Simon Chisholm sent me more faxes.

3. Chris Bartlett sent me a fax raising a considerable number of interesting points, some of which make me realise just how badly I communicate with everyone! Indeed Chris has since sent several more communications; I am struggling to keep up! Thanks Chris - he is working on that Index I spoke of some time ago, and on the 15th December, was at edition 8 and working hard. The information will soon be available on a database for all our benefit - more on this later.

4. Girls (yes both of you!) living in Ealing (London) seem to have developed an appetite for Kitten headlights, which I am finding hard to come by these days, see notes page. There must be a suitable joke or song title here, but nothing springs instantly to mind!

5. Special mention should be made to an elite group of most helpful individuals on whom I repeatedly call for assistance when subscribers need help with parts or advice - John Box, Guy Stanley, Adrian Hanwell, Dave Smith, Jim Spence, and of course Dennis (what is his second name - could we run a competition?) at Michaels, who has recently graduated to his own personal telephone number - 01757 291699, which he tells me is a blooming nuisance because he gets even more interruptions than he used to ! That's the thing about Parts Hotlines Dennis!!

We really do owe a debt of gratitude to these chaps, and let's not forget the man who does the colour front covers for us, John Pearce. All these people make many of our lives simpler, and help to keep Kittens (and other small 4 wheeled Reliants) on the road, and this organisation together.

6. Synthetic oil, did I ever tell you that, John Blagburn did in fact tell me this many months ago, but I now actually have it in writing from Mobil, that there is a Mobil-1 oil, formulated specially for 4 stroke motorcycles, which is in fact more appropriate (and sadly even more expensive!) than the Mobil-1 0-W40 that I have been using for a while. It is available, oddly enough, through any reputable Motorcycle shop, though at £13 plus a litre I am a bit hesitant!!

It is now the 16th of December, I ended up, warm and dry, manning the Main Control at the Buchanan Arms Hotel in Drymen for LeJog, there were no Kittens, not even a Liege this year (still recovering from the Marrakesh run no doubt!) but there was a Scimitar, who, unfortunately had a brake pipe problem, which, while quickly repaired by a local garage, was then running a bit late, and decided to skip the forest stage.

Just the one other thing, the Register itself, as you will know, from time to time I have published parts of it in the magazine, but there are so many cars on it now ! I have, finally, created a separate database for each model, (yes, yes, I realise that I threatened to publish some bits at the end of the last edition and failed to do so) and, at the moment, my thinking is that I will publish a yearbook, which will include the full details on each type. I'm not promising that it will happen this year, nor am I promising that it will be free, though that is my hope (the Register actually ran out of funds in November '97, but I believe that that was due to my increasing the magazine frequency by a disproportionate amount to the subscription,) The new level of subscription, will, I believe, not only avoid such problems this year, but perhaps allow me to finance the proposed yearbook.

On the subscriptions front, and I realise that in the main I am preaching to the converted, and so to the majority of you I say, Thank You for your prompt response and continued support. To the rest however, subscriptions are due for renewal in January each year, and if you have not renewed yet, please do so now, as this will be the last Mewsletter that you will receive if you don't - you have been warned!! I did have one of the last lot returned to me, in spite of a re-direction label put on by the Post Office, marked, "Address inaccessible" and since he did not get the last one there is probably not a lot of point in my asking Alan Critoph to get in touch, but if any of you know him, and are in touch, please let him know that I am having difficulty getting the Post Office to deliver his mail.

David Myres was the nnn nnnn chap to whom I was referring in my talk about Rebel body colours last time round, but you knew that anyway, didn't you? Thanks for the call David, do remind me about that Rebel exhaust part that I owe you.

Also, another omission from the last edition, after all my efforts to get the front page story together, I go and make a mess of it by failing to get it researched in time, and again forget before going to print, to fill in the gaps, its well seen this is an organisation full of forgiving folk, or I would be out! Mike Copland of Norwich it was this time who kindly pointed out to me on his very prompt renewal notice, that it was his maroon Kitten that featured on the front cover of edition 9, and should have said so on page 7 of edition 19, feel free to mark your copy up accordingly.

Also the Edition 11 cover was a Peter Towns, design, not Townsend as I said. He used to be on the Aston Martin Lagonda design team I believe. That car was advertised for sale again just recently.

Dave Smith, I only mention you in here Dave, to remind me to include your letter of information about your Kittens past and present, and to thank you again for all your help in locating parts for other subscribers, also to ask if you had realised that there was a reverse side to the renewal notice ? see copy enclosed - Oh for goodness sake Brian, remember to include a copy with his magazine !!!

While on the subject of the reverse side of the renewal notice, form design again ! It's not till they start to come back that you learn just how poor a job you did of designing the thing in the first place - in fairness the actual form was not too bad, what I failed to do was ask you to complete both sides regardless, that is to say to specifically cross out all 5 categories on the First Aider side of the form if you did not want to be involved. About a quarter of folk did not mark the back of the form at all, which leaves me wondering if you simply did not realise that there was more information sought, or if you really did not want involved.

None the less, from your wonderful, prompt and encouraging response I am delighted to be able to tell you that I have had even more on my plate than usual, that is to say out First Aid Scheme is up and running. I am putting together a supplement which is broken down into geographical areas with details of those in each area willing to help, and the type of help they have indicated they may be able to offer, together with their names addresses and telephone numbers. Yes it was difficult to decide how many sections to break the country into, and yes there are doubtless many other ways of doing it, but I had to start somewhere. I am still expecting some more renewals, so what I have at the moment will, I hope, very soon be out of date, if you would like to see what we have so far the simplest thing from my point of view is for you to send me a C5 s.a.e. with a slip of paper marked "First aid", and I will send you a copy of the preliminary list.

Right, I think that is about me finished correcting errors from the recent past, apart from pointing out that my neighbour Robert, who proof reads this for us, did not in fact get to see the whole of the last edition, which is why so many wrong words crept in, my fault entirely; on with the future -:

Not too technical

The following article I first came across a few years ago now, and used it then in a magazine that I am still editing almost 10 years later! None the less I still feel that it is perhaps time to remind those who may have forgotten, and to the rest of you - well, read on and 'learn', with apologies to Joseph Lucas:-

My thanks to Mr I. Matthews of the Daimler and Lanchester Owners Club of Australia for the following :-

From the Adelaide Antique Auto Club of Australia comes the following enlightening disclosure on the faults of Joseph Lucas Ltd of Birmingham, England; a company that manufactures ignition systems for automobiles of British origin. Among the descriptions are the following "Lucas - Electrically eccentric", and "The reason the British drink warm beer is that they have Lucas fridges" and "Joseph Lucas, Prince of darkness". These slogans are particularly prevalent amongst owners of old British Motorcycles.

"These and other scurrilous sobriquets, some of which are quite un-printable, are from time to time heaped upon the shoulders of Joseph Lucas Ltd. This is really quite unfair, and displays a basic inability to comprehend the fundamental principals of a vehicle's electrical system. "

"Forget all that nonsense about magnetic fields and the flow of electrons along a conductor, for it's just that - nonsense. A myth put about by auto electricians to support their lavish lifestyle at your expense. The reality is smoke! When you think about it it becomes startlingly obvious - smoke makes all electrical things function. If the smoke escapes, the component stops working, the last time you had to grovel under your car to replace the starter motor, didn't it start smoking before it stopped working? Of course!"

"The wiring loom in your car carries the smoke from one device to another, pumped around the system by the dynamo, and when the wiring springs a leak, it lets all the smoke out, and everything stops. The starter motor, because it is the hardest working component, requires a lot of smoke to work properly, so it has a very thick wire going to it."

"The battery stores up lots of smoke dissolved in acid which is why they were once called accumulators, until it became apparent that we unwashed home mechanics would twig the secret. Naturally, if you try to dissolve too much smoke in your battery it will escape through those little holes in the top - this is why these new fangled batteries with sealed tops explode when they get too much smoke in them."

"But with regard to Joseph Lucas and his wrongfully sullied reputation - why is he so maligned? Why are Lucas components more likely to leak than say Bosch or Marelli? Because Lucas is British, and British things always leak, British engines leak oil, British sports cars leak rain, British hydrolastic units leak fluid, and British Governments leak secrets, so, naturally British electrical components leak smoke!"

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Frank Morgan, our man in Northern Ireland, well one of them, is in the process of having a reconditioned chassis fitted to his Kitten, please let us know how it goes Frank.

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Ah, an odd corner! One thing that I must do is use some of the older articles which get deeper buried each month in my blue 'To Do' file. You see what happens is that, for example, it is now the 8th of February, this edition should all have been completed and away for copying last week, I have an almost blank page for the Foxes, and what arrives in the post. Duncan Bradford's letter, so rather than file it, and search for an old, and probably just as interesting story, I simply use his because it is in front of me, and by using it now, it can go straight in the green 'To go' folder. Quite how long I should keep these old letters before they 'go' (into the paper re-cycling bin) is anybody's guess, I have them going back 4 years or so now, and it all takes up space!! Archiving, that's the thing! But I can honestly say that the use of Duncan's letter immediately has nothing at all to do with his fawning remarks, other than to get the embarrassment out of the way as quickly as possible

Rebel round up

One man who I know has been doing a lot of work on his Rebel Saloon recently is Jim Spence, yes you are quite correct he is the man who has the Kitten Estate car with the Fiat 1600cc engine and five speed gearbox, which is I believe still for sale.

His Rebel however is powered by the same type of engine that Guy Stanley has in his Tempest, that is to say the Hillman Imp device, in fact both the engine and gearbox came from the 1 litre Talbot Sunbeam (short floor pan Avenger to you and me!)

Jim took this project over from Scott and F.J. Rogers last year, when they realised that they were never going to find the time to complete the project. Don't misunderstand me here, Scott and F.J. ran the Rebel for a year with the Sunbeam power unit, but then decided to fit disc brakes / a much larger fuel tank, different back axle, wooden dashboard wide wheels requiring flared wheel arches - all at the same time. Any one of these mods could probably been accomplished without the car being off the road for too long, but all at once was just too much, and the project got completely bogged down.

I used to go over to Scott's dad's garage of a Friday evening to help with the project, but that was in 1994 - seems a long time ago now!! Still we took the car to Phil Hallam's last year to have its new wide wheel arches removed, and make the body back to standard again, while Jim is fitting bigger (13") and wider (5" J) wheels, ex MG midget I believe, they do not require the huge flairs that Scott had fitted. The poor wee car must be wondering just what on earth is going on - I might even be tempted to write that story one year!

The good news is that having filled 14 holes in the body, and fitted a new heater (there is no room for the original Rebel arrangement with the bigger engine in the car) Jim tells me that he should be ready for the M.O.T. next week. Watch this space.

The biggest single difference that Jim has noticed so far is that the Rebel handbrake mechanism is vastly superior to the Kitten's, but we Rebel owners knew that already didn't we?

I do not doubt that it was also vastly more expensive to make which is almost certainly why they dropped it in favour of the crude Mini like arrangement that the Kitten and Robin use. The word progress springs to mind (the only 4 letter word I know, that has twice that number of letters in it!).

Even closer to home, Phil is being very patient with me, he is eager to get on with the rebuild of my Rebel estate car, but I am holding things up, funds just do not permit progress at the moment.

I had a telephone enquiry about the Register the other day - happens all the time, the only reason that I single this one out for special mention is that it was from a Rebel owner, put in touch with me as so many of them are by Joy Chappell of the Reliant Owners Club, thank you Joy, keep them coming. This owner needs a good late type (full synchromesh) gearbox, the one in her car jumps out of gear, and is not easy to get into second. Now I probably can help, but if you can, please let her know - then again Phil's Mutual aid spares scheme could help here, when she subscribes I will send the relevant form.

No, I don't know either, why John Blagburn has not written anything to us about GUS recently (I happen to know that after 14,000 miles under John's right foot in less that 9 months, GUS is having a rest just now!) Perhaps we will hear something for the next edition.

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Oh goodie, another odd corner, Shona Thomas, oh I hope I haven't mentioned this somewhere else already. It really makes me feel, well I am not sure what it makes me feel, but when a youngster starts trying to tell an old man like me (I am a '52 model so work it out for yourself) all about the Beatles, well I ask you, just how could she possibly know anything about Lennon and McCartney that I haven't forgotten decades ago?

Eat humble pie Marshall, no not the American one, that was Simon and his funkie friend I think! Anyway, in their Anthology 2, just released for the first time I am told, and Shona sent me a tape to prove it, is a single called "Leave my Kitten Alone" Which Shona suggests should become our signature tune, and I have heard worse, Perhaps I should write and ask Sir Paul if he has any objections!

### **Foxes Den**

I had a telephone call the other day which set the little grey cells working, and made me question a belief that I had held, - well, an assumption at any rate - help me please you Fox owners. The Fox radiator, is it like the Kitten one, as I had assumed, i.e. held in place by a pair of set screws into trapped nuts on each side of the rad, attaching it to a pair of metal brackets which are in turn bolted to the vehicle fibreglass body. Or is it like the Regal / Rebel, held in place by two nuts and bolts, through a single pair of "feet" soldered onto the bottom tank of the radiator, and bolted onto the vehicle chassis? I await your comments with more than a little interest, as I am sure does our man in Norfolk, well one of them at least!

Hang on a minute, the late Rebels and Regals did in fact use a radiator which was held in place by two pairs of set screws, perhaps it was a late regal radiator which came to the rescue!

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Dear Brian, Feb.'98

Please find enclosed a cheque to cover this year's membership. It's a bit late because I was waiting the alighting of the muse on my shoulder in the shape of some useful, witty or at least relevant text for you to publish in your worthy annals (think I spelt that right). However it appears to have missed the flight, so I guess you'll have to put up with the following drivel, so here it is.

I've just re-read Bob Hunt's letter in the Christmas edition and would like to comment on a few points.

I've worked out that my best fuel consumption on a trip was over 10 miles per litre, but this was a 200 mile cruise, and keeping the speed down below 65, whereas my usual trip, after chugging across the city in the morning rush, is a 3 mile belt down the dual carriageway at full revs (the speedo thinks its 80-plus 1) cos I'm late for work AGAIN!

I measured the relative circumferences of tyres on 12" and 13" wheels; the difference is about 3% so I didn't consider this barely noticeable reduction in engine revs would make the cost of replacing the tyres worthwhile. Also the 12" wheels already foul the front valence. 3% would help towards making the typically optimistic speedo read more true. How many of you have timed your speedos against your oedometer (much more accurate because of direct not magnetic drive)? I bet most will be able to travel 3 minutes at 66 m.p.h. (in the slow lane) and only cover 3 miles.

I don;t care what sort of brakes I have, I just wish they were ever so much better at stopping the thing, and that both sides would occasionally work together. my very understanding M.o.T. tester says that the only Reliants where the brake balance meets the requirements are actually the three wheelers, and then only at the front !

Bob's door hinges interest me, as I once got some hinges off a Mini to use as spares and found that they were not only a different length, but differently shaped for the body. Then when I thought I'd just re-pin them I found that the Fox ones are pinned 'permanently', and I've since had to buy new ones. It would be tricky to drill out my old ones as there is no easy way of judging true vertical, though then I could fit the fatter Mini bushes and pins.

Isn't it amazing what scope for discussion there is from such a humble vehicle? It's a great part of their charm, I suppose, and one reason for sticking with them, long may they run....

I as always await the next edition of the Mewsletter with eager anticipation and a feeling of abject gratitude and great awe of the wonderful job you do. Thanks!

J. L. Duncan Bradford

Before you all start, no I didn't pay him to make all those obsequious remarks at the end, and on the matter of this hinge thing, speaking as one who has never owned a Fox - yet - this hinge thing could be confused for a couple of reasons - 1. that B. M. C., British Leyland, Rover or B. M. - whatever you call them these days, probably used more than one style of Mini door hinge over the decades, and 2. given that the Fox, like all our cars, is hand built, the chances are that hardly any of them are exactly the same anyway!

Thank you just the same Duncan, though this tyre diameter thing must surely be dramatically affected by the profile - were the ones you compared the same profile? Ed.

Mutual Spares Scheme

January '98 Update

Let me congratulate and thank all those who have filled in the sheets as I've received 14 so far. There has been a mixture of people 'needing' and people 'having' parts which is good since it's the only way the service will work. Where possible I have replied, however if you have not heard from me don't despair, you are still on file.

I hope, Brian permitting - But of course Phil! Ed. - that this will be a regular column where I can ask for some things which are proving more difficult to come by - so here goes.

Alloy wheels, Fox rear axle, trim panel for 'C' post on both sides of a Kitten estate in tan (i.e. the panels between the rear window and rear door), April yellow touch up paint, quarter light frames for a Rebel, 850cc engine in good order, Kitten gearbox lay shaft, Kitten back axle and gearbox, and lastly hub caps for a Kitten.

If you have any of the above please drop me a note, you don't need to put in an s.a.e. Remember help keep our cars on the road by sharing parts that you have but are unlikely to use.

Phil Hallam

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Thanks Phil for taking the time and trouble to run this scheme for us. Just a couple of points, and if any one reading this has any similar observations please let us know. Firstly the touch up paint situation, there are I believe a number of companies who will make you up an aerosol of any colour you like. Having said that I know that Alan Marshall had one done only to find that it was too green, and his solution at the end of the day was to have a litre of paint made up (for about £ 20) and he purchased a rechargeable aerosol for about the same cost again, and was in business. There is a company in Hillington who do this service, but no doubt they have a similar thing if not a branch of the same firm in your local area, or try :-

01959 577031

Revenue Products,  
P.O. box 34,  
Westerham,  
Kent TN16 2AW

Who do what is, I understand, one of the best / most reasonably priced rechargeable aerosols on the market.

Hang on a minute, Graeme Shaw from Glossop was the man who was asking the question, and has in fact come up with the answer himself. In fact April yellow, which he tells me came in two varieties, April Yellow 1 and April Yellow 2, which while different, are so close that you would hardly know the difference, and in fact Ford Daytona yellow, available from your local accessory shop is a perfect match for either!!

I assume that the Kitten gearbox lay shaft means the gear cluster rather than the shaft, or do I assume incorrectly?

The Rebel quarter light frames were never available as a separate part, the frame for the quarter light is in fact part and parcel of the complete window frame. I do have a brand new one for the passengers door which could be used as a pattern, and would guess that any metal worker worth his salt could produce one of the 'other hand' from the pattern. Quite how a metal worker would fit the quarter light glass is quite another matter! Do please talk to me if you have any ideas on this one as it has long been a Rebel problem.

Brian

### Readers Letters

The following Fax arrived on my machine from Dr. W. Feige recently, Register No. 274. Thank you Wieland for keeping us up to date.

Dear Brian, 4/01/98

First, thanks for another very interesting Mewsletter arriving here some days ago.

During the last weeks there was a big change in our garage. Coming home after the long time working in the East Germany (4 years and 1 month) I sold my all day car, a Rover 827 Vitesse, and bought a Rover 623 Lux. Gerlinde was so fascinated of the new car generation that she decided to buy another new car for herself, a Rover 214Si Silverstone. So we discussed which car we can or should sell - to make it short - the Kitten must go.

Fortunately we know that Gottfried Burckhardt, our engineer of the RSOCG was looking for a Kitten for a long time. So during the Christmas time he bought the car (for 3,500DM @ £1,170), in respect of all the time and nice things we invest into the Kitten, too cheap of course.

He intend to join the Register, so I gave him all the Mewsletters I collected, and the new notice for 1998. I hope he will have the same fun with the Kitten as we had in the last two years.

Thank you for your support and help to us and the enthusiasm keeping of "Katzchen" on the road. I think we will see again at one of the meetings or events of the RSOCG.

Wieland - Uнденheim, Germany

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Dear Brian, Jan.'98

Herewith my cheque for the 1988 "Mewsletters" to which I will once again look forward to receiving, and thank you for your good work.

The latest Kitten jobs have been relined front brakes and one wheel cylinder, all carried out by my Reliant expert, and a new radiator, John Box water pump and all hoses replaced, which I did myself.

The new Reliant radiator was very slightly wider so I had to remove the support brackets in order to slide them apart a fraction. Another reason, quite apart from the saving in cost, that we should all be fitting Mini radiators to our Kittens these days Ed! The mounting holes in the body were just sufficiently oversize to do this. The bracket bolts were so corroded however that I had to grind and hacksaw them off. I then refitted the brackets with new bolts, and new large diameter "penny" washers.

Two points emerge. First ensure that the 4 bracket fixing bolts are kept well greased to avoid having to resort to hacksaws - Too late for most of us I should think, but a job for a spare summers afternoon, Ed - The second point concerns the stainless steel hose clips. You may recall that I advised using these whenever possible, but I would like to warn that not all manufacturers use stainless for the threaded adjusting barrels. I had used cheaper ones on the Kitten than I normally use on the Scimitar. The barrels however turned out not to be stainless, and consequentially were just as difficult to remove as ordinary hose clips.

I use Canadian "Tridon" which are excellent quality, all stainless, on the Scimitar, and I can now recommend lighter "Norma" ones for the Kitten. I was not happy with French or British ones! They might be marked "Stainless steel", but that may only apply to the strap, and not the part that matters just as much.

One bonus of doing the plumbing myself was discovering the clutch cable had frayed down to just two strands! I also the front brakes had no further adjustment which is why I had my local Reliant expert collect the car and do the brakes and fit a new clutch cable. When he got home he found only one strand left.

Now I am waiting for a new handbrake cable as the old one is stretched and rusty - to be urgently done before the M.O.T. this month. How I wish I had room to do a body off rebuild! It is all very well using the Scimitar, but not for short local shopping trips.

Happy and healthy New Year,

Peter Heming - Newquay

Thank you Peter for keeping us up to date with things, Brian.

Dear Sir, Nov.'97

Please find enclosed a cheque for £8.00 to join your register, I have not long acquired a Kitten Saloon in champagne registration number DTE 355W, it's tatty (body and interior) but seems mechanically sound. It's done nearly 93,000 miles and I intend to commence a rolling restoration of this fairly rare vehicle.

It was originally purchased from McIntyres garage in Bury Road, Bolton for the sum of £3268 (including V.A.T.) on the 9th of August 1980.

I am a keen photographer of cars and I have a photo of a Kitten estate that I have seen tootling about in Scunthorpe - it's bright yellow, and looks to be in good condition, Reg. FVY 719W - the lady owner was surprised I wished to photograph the car and was kind enough to allow me to do so; I do not know where in Scunthorpe she lives, what I do know is that she won't part with it!

I also have a photo of a Kitten saloon in pale yellow which I took 7 years ago in Grimsby, Reg. KJV 136P, and a Rebel saloon in pale blue reg. NEE 533M that I photographed about 10 years ago I haven't seen either of them for at least 5 years.

I enjoyed your newsletter you sent me - keep up the good work - But I have never seen let alone photographed the following - Rebel estate, Fox, Tempest, Salamander, Cipher, Jimps Asquith etc etc. Most of which I didn't know existed. Is there a reliant meet next year that I could attend so I could see and photograph these vehicles?

I have read recently with interest - and concern - about the governments intention to virtually eliminate leaded petrol from our forecourts, how will this affect owners of classic cars, and in particular our Reliants - can any of them run on unleaded, or do they have to be modified, and if so, what could the cost be? I fear many owners of 'lesser' classics may just give up their cars as the possible cost of conversion may prove to be prohibitive.

There is talk of using 'additives' that you squirt into the tank after refuelling - but what i have heard of them it seems they aren't particularly good, and would using additives affect performance, reliability what have you?

Much as I applaud the efforts to make the world a 'greener' place to live in, doesn't unleaded fuel, and diesel pose their own environmental hazards?

I feel that it is important that owners are aware of the governments proposals, what is the reaction of club members?

I also understand that cars that do not have to be taxed (25 year exempt) must still display a valid tax disc and that from February '98 D.V.L.C must be informed if a car is 'laid up' for restoration etc (tax exempt or not) am I correct?

So many questions! and I haven't started yet, I mean why is an orange orange?

Darrow Towle - Scunthorpe

Right Darrow, I'll start at the end, yes you are quite vehicles over 25 years old fall into a 25 years exempt taxation class, you get issued with a disc just as normal on production on your insurance and M.O.T., it runs for 12 months, and looks just like any other tax disc, except that the taxation class is 25 year exempt instead of p.l.g., or Disabled, or whatever it might otherwise have been.

The SORN legislation is now in effect Statutory Off Road Notification, what this effectively means is that you can no longer ignore a tax disc renewal notice, you have to tell them if you are not re-taxing the car. This does not in any way affect old cars that are, or have been for some time, off the road, just currently taxed cars whose road fund licence expires after February 1998.

On the unleaded fuel situation, I am not going to spend a lot of time on this, many millions of words have been written on this subject elsewhere. suffice to say that we are relatively lucky here as the Reliant engine has separate valve seats already, and changing them, while fairly specialised, is no big deal. The real expense comes if you decide, having the head off and the valves removed to do the conversion anyway, that you might feel it a good idea to replace the valves as well, and while you are in there why not fit phosphor bronze valve guides too ?, Then you might as well just fit new valve springs - and you rapidly run up a bill for two or three hundred pounds or so, which might sound a lot in terms of Kitten values, but when you consider the cost of a new engine, and take into account that many Kittens will soon be tax exempt, and so be saving you almost £200 a year that way, not to mention the lower cost of unleaded fuel, it all comes into perspective. Truth to be told there is nothing stopping you running your Kitten on unleaded now, especially if you fill up with leaded every third or fourth tank, the worst you will do is damage the valve seats, and the chances are that it will take many thousands of miles to do any serious damage, and just how long do we think an engine lasts anyway?

On the subject of additives, there must be answers out there, Australia, New Zealand and Canada to mention but three, have not had leaded petrol available for years, and there are old car clubs in those countries whose members get by, so there is an answer. I do not doubt that Shell and or B.P. will resolve the matter in good time.

On the Reliant meeting front, there is this Lands End to John O' Groats run in May which ends at the Reliant Owners' Club rally at Shughbrough Hall on Sunday the 28th of May, and there will be a selection of vehicles there, but not I would not imagine any Salamanders, Tempests, unless Joe, you can bring yours (Joe lives quite near Scunthorpe, perhaps you could see his Tempest) Thomas Touw was talking of coming over and doing the run in one of his Ciphers, but I don't know

Cars and things for Sale or Wanted

Webasto sliding roof, fitted to the roof of a Kitten saloon. Also an aluminium tail gate for a saloon, professionally built. Buyer collects from Harry Darby

Harry also is able to offer a ported cylinder head, complete with valves and rocker assembly for £60.00 plus carriage. Also with matching manifolds if required, ask for price of matched manifolds.

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Alan has a saloon rear hatch glass, black plastic headlamp surround, rubber bumpers and a Robin steering box.

Alan also has copies of the book "750 Racer" by Herber & Harvey, The what happens and how to do it book on 750 racing, includes lots of tips on tuning the Reliant engine. £19.00 incl p&p.

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Dave Smith has for sale a Fox camper slight accident damage on rear M.O.T. till May too good to break up, many new parts fitted. £375 o.n.o.

Also, breaking Kitten saloon and estate car for spares. plus loads of other spares, including a good rolling chassis, sensible offers for anything.

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1977 DL Estate, fair condition. (too good to scrap) Laid up for 8 months. reasonable offers considered.

Mark Wilson still has those cords piston rings, believed to be for an early Reliant engine, he also has a host of Reliant spares now, we will get a list in the fullness of time, but give him a ring if you want brake cylinders or dampers

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Wanted : Tow bar for Reliant Kitten, also Jimp handbook, parts list, drivers handbook or any other technical information, also source of spares such as windscreen rubber surrounds and windscreen wiper arms and blades.

Also WANTED a LHD Kitten estate, contact Mark

19/01/98

For Sale:- "P" registered Kitten estate, white with a black roof, excellent runner, new clutch just fitted, and loads of spares. M.O.T. till March 1998 £375, contact Paul Grellier



Getting more Technical

An accessory that I am hoping not to use

How do you tow a sick Kitten? Have a look beneath the front bumper and you will discover a distinct lack of anything to which you can attach your rope. You could tie it to a suspension arm, but that is not good practice, and the rope could easily snag the front valence and start making nasty crunching noises. In which case you will have more than just a broken down Kitten to worry about.

I decided to be prepared, and fit a towing eye to the front cross member. First stop was the local scrap yard, which is in danger of sinking into a sea of mud. I explained my need to the owner, and together we waded through the mire. You have to keep moving or you sink in to the arm-pits. He led me to a smashed f.w.d. Escort, which has a wonderful bracket bolted to the block to enable you to easily lift out the engine. I decided that I could adapt it for use as a towing eye, paid 50 pence and struggled out before the battle with the bog became too much for me. Plenty of other cars have suitable engine lifting eyes, but do not bother with Astras. They are fitted with a nasty flimsy little item, hardly strong enough for lifting out a distributor.

I then had to cut and drill the bracket to fit, and drill two holes in the cross-member. you will need a couple of high tensile bolts and some big plate washers, the kind of thing that might well be hiding at the bottom of your junk-box.

When I described my towing eye to Brian he remarked "You've fitted it to the wrong end!" "You'll hardly ever need to have your Kitten towed, but you will often need to tow other cars, which break down far more often." So perhaps I should go back to the scrap yard for another bracket. But I think I'll wait for a while, I've only just finished scraping the muck off my boots.

David Heywood - Norham

Thank you David for the article and sketch, though you don't make it clear whether the bracket mounts on the centre, or offset to one side! Ed.

Oh sorry, update on that, David was good enough to become a temporary foster parent to Les and Moyra's 'new' Kitten estate for a week or so while I organised getting it up to Rora (near Peterhead) the bracket of course gets mounted to the drivers side of centre - just look at any modern car, except of course that four letter F word's vehicles, and I'm not talking Fiat here! but the thing is that if the towing vehicle gives you a jerk for any reason, then the force will tend to pull your car towards the kerb, not into the path of on-coming traffic !

NOTES

Thanks to my filling up so many odd corners throughout this edition I am not sure what to put in here!

Shona Thomas's suggestion of "Leave my Kitten Alone" as our signature tune stands out in my mind.

Also the factory's offer of 15% discount on parts bought direct from the factory, at what I have to say are much better list prices than their predecessors used to offer.

John Box, who many of you have only just got to know, and who has recently retired, assures me that he will still talk to us, indeed to anyone who gives him a ring. Though he has passed the parts business on to Lightweight Powertrains, his own vast experience will not be lost to us. He should be back from his trip to the antipodes by May.

If you really do want your spare cylinder head converted to run happily on unleaded petrol then Mike Cowie on 01360 550492 or Blane Precision Engineering as he calls himself can help, but not very quickly (unless we get organised and have him do a batch) Mike has a well equipped workshop, but is in great demand. Cost? well, as I said somewhere else it all depends what you want, but for arguments sake (I just rang the man and asked!) if you remove the valves and send him the bare head, then to have just the unleaded seats fitted will be in the region of £85 including the dreaded V.A.T.

Obviously if you want new valves, and guides, and springs, and want them all fitted, that is a different thing all together, but even with phosphor bronze valve guides the whole lot should be under £250, though if you are going to spend that much on a second hand head would you not be wanting to have it surfaced and perhaps even crack tested before you started?

Brian