

Reliant Kitten

Register

NEWSLETTER - TWENTY ONE

March / April 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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This edition has as the front cover picture the finished article, well one like it at any rate, as found in Dave Price's "I did it my way" story in this edition. It is of course a Tempest. No you won't see many of them on the roads, they are a selective and rare beast indeed. Just about 20 or so exist, having been designed by John Box, about half of them were made by John, the other half being sold as kits - all you needed was a Kitten or a Fox to start with! Read all about it on pages 4 to 6.

Welcome to the 21st edition. Imagine that, 21 already!

Right, to important matters, It does not seem to matter what I do, it is never quite right, the last edition was just away to the printers when I had an additional advert to put in, and then Dave Smith 'phoned to say cancel the advert for the Fox Caravanette! You just can't win!!

Seriously, as I said, important matters, every so often something really important comes along, this time it is insurance - now don't get too excited, as always in life, there is a catch - but read on.

Richardson Hosken of Brentwood in Essex can offer (our quote was dated 16th February 1998) a wonderful classic car policy for the Kitten or Rebel (I must ask about the others sometime!) The catch is that their classic vehicle policy does have a mileage restriction, and does not cover commuting, i.e. you can't take the car to work. However, if you are not doing that journey in your Reliant, then the savings are well worth a 'phone call. Moira was paying £126 for third party only, driver only, on her Kitten, they quoted £62.50 fully comp, on a vehicle value of £1200, owner and spouse driving, even though I am disabled, (though I do still happily enjoy an un-restricted licence form the D.V.L.A.) and this within 10 miles of the centre of Glasgow! (One of the most expensive areas in the land in which to insure a car) I did think that I should invite them to advertise, but at those premiums could they afford to? What I should probably do is to invite those of you who make savings to donate say 10% of the savings to the Register, would that be fair do you think? No more teasing, the number you want to be ringing is 0345 959213, or fax them on 01277 206283. Please tell them where you found out about them, mention my name even!

It gets even better because they specifically include non-competitive rallies, and dismantled vehicles kept in your private locked garage, and you get to retain the salvage - free of charge - if the car is damaged beyond repair. Foreign use within the E.U. is covered, enough said, if you don't need to be using the car to work (they do do policies for that, but not with the features mentioned above).

O.K. back to matters that I get wrong - what! Me make mistakes? Well, let's just say that I am misunderstood sometimes (story of my life!) On the back of the renewal notice for this year, there was a form relating to the new 'First Aid Scheme' which we are now, I am delighted to say, operating, and my heartfelt thanks to those of you who have made this possible. The problem is that half of you did not complete that side of the form, and because you did not mark it at all I do not know whether you simply did not realise that there was anything on the back of the form, or if you did realise it was there, but did not want to be involved. What I should have asked (isn't hindsight wonderful!) is for everyone to complete the form, so that those not wanting involved would simply have crossed out all 5 alternatives, then I would have been sure that you had all seen the questions!

In order to rectify this situation, I will amend the form for the future; also I will have to create a version of it for new subscribers, whom I am happy to be able to tell you are still coming in at the rate of three or four a month. If you haven't a clue what I am talking about, please drop me a line asking for a First Aid form, and I will send you one.

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One thing I did get wrong was the date of the R.O.C. National Rally; it is Sunday the 24th of May, and not the 28th as I said last time.

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One problem I do have is just when to stop, I did get a defence of the Imperial system sent to me in response to Bob Hunt's article two editions ago, and while part of me said 'leave it alone Brian' another part said, 'Well, you did publish the thing in the first place, so why censor the other side of the story?' and since Moira laughed more than once when reading Dick's letter, I have made an executive decision, and decided to include it - next time. (No room this time!)

Oh, and yes yes, didn't you realise that the article on electrical smoke was meant to arrive on your doormat on April 1st?

Right I am determined to try and leave room for more of your stories in this edition. I have been trying hard to fill up any gaps in the Register for a few months now, but in spite of doing so just issued number 467 yesterday. I should perhaps mention in passing that we now enjoy a Bond Bug owner amongst our number, welcome John Towney.

Oh this really is not good enough - I have just finally finished mailing edition 20, it is now 03:45 on the 4th of March, I really need to be getting on with the R.O.C. Thistle Branch magazine which I have promised will be ready for copying by the 7th. But they don't write to me like you do, and I'm really into this just now, I've just spell checked this and it is currently 4547 words long, which means that I am already about half way through it! - Oh the joys of being an Editor!

I had no sooner mailed the magazines to those who were late renewing, (the rest of you got yours first) then two of them came in, both with interesting letters, and lots of pictures, and a big article - oh how I wish I could just type them up now - but I promised Drummond Black that I'd do a mailshot to the Jowett guys this week, and I really must get the Rebellion created by Saturday - what it is to be in demand!!

You remember that bloke, the lawmaker, Mr Sod? Well Dave Pritchard was here yesterday, Monday, in his mobile Aladdin's cave, and he was doing his hard sell on things like speedo cables, "on special offer this month", you know the kind of thing. Well, we had just taxed the Little Red Car from the beginning of the month (March), her first time in active service in something like 15 months, and what happens, I decline Dave's offer of a speedo cable for about four quid, and on Tuesday morning, the speedo stops working - I was not best pleased I can tell you.

Oh, by the way Bruce - current custodian of the Moss Encrusted Hut, thanks for the pictures, but it won't stay moss encrusted for long if you wash it you know (I've got the pictures here you see, evidence even - and he has obviously washed, and I suspect T-cut and or polished it!) The whole thing about that car was that it hadn't been washed in over 7 years, and I thought the English were short of water too!

Right, I really must get on with other tasks, it is now 04:05, does it really take me 20 minutes to type half a page, - I guess so.

My feeling of the moment - 05/03/98 - is that I shall press ahead with this 21st edition and try to mail it to you before going on holiday at the beginning of April. Also, seeing it is our 21st, I plan to include an extra A4 sheet, which will mean 2 extra pages!! Lucky you!!! Seriously there are so many letters, don't stop writing please, but I really must get some more of them used up, and at the risk of repeating myself - NO, I AM NOT MAKING IT MONTHLY!!

There is the matter of what, other than an extra couple of pages, might we do to make this edition that bit special, being our 21st, just don't get used to it, as my colourful plans are too expensive to make a regular feature, lest there were three times as many of us as there are at the moment!

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American Pie was of course Don McLean and not Simon & Garfunkel as I incorrectly suggested in the last edition. My thanks to Polly Millar who not only pointed out the error of my ways, but is not ashamed to admit that not only does she remember it, but remembers going out and buying it - and she still has the record to prove it - so there! Also she had heard "Leave my Kitten alone", I am very impressed Polly - if we ever make a film of any of this, please can you be my musical director Polly?

Polly's other claim to fame is that she was actually at the first concert that the Shadows did after changing their name from the Drifters, to avoid confusion with the American group of that name - (how come she can remember such things so clearly when I don't, and I am older than she is? - Oh, that's right, I nearly forgot - I am the one with the bad memory!!)

Till next time (June) bye for now.

Dear Brian, 16/02/98

At long last I am able to send you a package instead of you sending me one. Please find enclosed: -

- a) My membership renewal.
- b) The returned Kitten manual, for which I appreciate your kind thoughts.
- c) The first part of the Tempest build story.

Best wishes and keep up the good work.

*Thanks Dave, (I have severely edited that page of Dave's letter to leave room for the following)*

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I DID IT MY WAY

(Another Tempest is born)

Introduction.

I have for 40 years now, been involved in motor sport. Drag racing to historic sports car racing, marshalling to spectating, and many other sections of the sport that I love and enjoy.

Whilst doing some marshalling at a production car trial that was held in the Malvern hills in 1996 I enjoyed watching an open topped car clear the hill with ease, and remarked to my mate marshalling with me (normally my trials passenger) how nice the car looked.

Come dinner time I took another and closer look, and really took a liking to the car. Talking to Jack Williams, the car driver, I asked what it was. A Tempest came the reply. Tell me more I asked, trying to hide my ignorance. Well, it is built on a Reliant Kitten chassis and running gear, and was built by John Box as a kit. Having got over the surprise, and with a further look, we took our dinner.

Roger, my trialing mate, was already thinking what I was thinking whilst eating our sandwiches, and ventured " How fixed are you to the idea of changing the Hillman Imp for an M.G. Midget?" " I am not ", I replied, " The Tempest would be more interesting. " Roger advised.

Having witnessed more excellent climbs by Jack Williams in the Tempest, we obtained John Box's 'phone number and returned home from an excellent days trialing.

I duly contacted John Box, and asked him if he would do me a Tempest kit. John was hesitant, but did not say no. - *Ha! Another man who has difficulty with the No word! Ed.* - I explained to John that I had to find a Kitten, and that there would be no rush for the kit. John advised me that it would be better to find a Fox, as they have a galvanised chassis, and so I told John that I would contact him again when I had found a Fox.

Unfortunately for John, he had not reckoned on my luck, as the next day, whilst stuck in Oxford waiting for a train home, I started to 'phone Reliant dealers whose numbers I obtained from Exchange and Mart. The very first call to Bournemouth found a Fox which had been in a fire, had had its engine and rear axle removed, but was available for £150.

The body was to be thrown out, a Morris Minor axle fitted, and I wanted a new engine, so this Fox was ideal.

John Box was a little gobsmacked when I rang him the very next day to say that I had found a suitable Fox! He said " The main reason that I suggested you should use a Fox was that I didn't think you'd find one for a while!" Having got over the shock, John agreed to put a kit together, and sent me some info.

The first suitable weekend to collect the Fox was the August bank holiday weekend (1996), so an early start was made by Roger and I to head for Bournemouth with the trailer.

We judged the start just right as we arrived at Bournemouth, 100 miles away, in two and a half hours. With the Fox safely on the trailer after wheel barrowing it on board (remember it had no back axle!) our journey home was no slower, and we arrived home in time for dinner. Neighbours soon came

out to see what was going on, which led to many laughs, particularly as Roger's surname just happens to be Fox!

STRIP DOWN

The fibreglass Fox body was removed easily enough with all parts, steering column, pedal box, hand brake etc, stored safely away. The body shell was cut up and removed to the local Council rubbish dump O.K. I can hear the gasps of horror, but don't forget it had been on fire. All nuts and bolts, clips etc. were removed from the chassis to enable a complete clean up to begin. The only difficult part to remove was one of the lower wishbone bolts. It really did not want to come off, heat did not help, and for several months this held up progress. I refused to ruin the wishbone, and so I persevered reading the words of wisdom of our Scottish leader in the Mewsletter on the problem without any answers. I even spoke to himself who confirmed that it was a problem not easily overcome.

Eventually I got on my knees, not to pray, but to study the problem, and I reckoned that I could cut through the bolt near the nut end without cutting into the chassis, and by cutting half way through and then turning the bolt about half a turn I could then cut through the second half. The main part of the bolt then came out, and the short part then fiddled out of the trapped nut end. The problem was that the bolt end had splayed out, not allowing it to come through the nut, and so one wishbone was rescued at the cost of one bolt.

The chassis was then thoroughly cleaned off by washing with gunk and wire brushed. Very small areas of rust were cleaned off back to fresh metal and treated, and the whole chassis painted with hammerite smooth. *(There was a time when it was called smootherite! Ed.)* By now it was well into 1997 and we were off to Vietnam for a month. By the time we had returned it was two months since the first coat of paint, and a second coat was applied.

CONVERSION TO TEMPEST

It was now time to think about chassis modifications for the Tempest. I telephoned John Box, who said that he had been thinking that it would be about time that I would be calling, and that it would cause a problem, as his workload, and impending trip to New Zealand for 3 or 4 months in 1998 would prevent him from doing the body when I needed it. I offered to wait until he returned, but John suggested that I collected the body jig and moulds to enable me to make the frame and body myself. As the whole idea of the Tempest was because I wanted to make my own car myself, this made very good sense.

John explained the chassis mods (the reason for my telephone call in the first place), and we arranged for me to call up to discuss the jig etc.

The chassis modifications were easy enough, the front two outriggers were cut off, as was the hooped cross-member. Paint was applied to the cut areas to maintain protection.

A trip North to John Box country provided the two new cross members and various other chassis / body parts necessary to complete the modifications. John kindly explained the jig to me and I was happy that, with a lot of questions along the way, I could build a Tempest body. Arrangements were made for me to return in a few weeks time with my trailer to collect the jig and moulds.

Sorry to interrupt here but I have been restrained so far! Just to let everyone understand more clearly what it is we are talking about here, the jig referred to, is in fact a complete, new, galvanised Fox chassis with some extra (now rusty) bits welded on to support things during assembly! Sorry that I missed you at the time Dave, I arrived the following day! Ed.

The new cross members were now fitted to the chassis and painted, and it was ready for the rebuild.

A few weeks later, Chris and I returned to John Box country with the trailer in tow. John and his wife Jackie, kindly offered for us to stay the weekend to avoid us having to make the 500 mile round trip in the same day. We duly arrived mid-dayish and after lunch Chris and Jackie went off to explore the countryside whilst John and I loaded the trailer, having run through various parts of the body frame construction. The jig and large fibreglass moulds were secured on the trailer, and the smaller moulds went into the M.G. Maestro. John kindly saved me the search for a wiring loom and Morris Minor rear axle which were also loaded on to the trailer.

After dinner on the Saturday evening and a good nights sleep, a few measurements at the frame, and a good look at the 90% complete Tempest in John's garage, we set off for the return journey home, which we completed without any problems.

The next few weeks saw a hive of activity with 1" square tubing being cut and welded in place until eventually a frame resembling the shape of a Tempest appeared. The moulds went off to a friend's workshop who is an expert in things fibreglass.

The next big step was to see if the aluminium body panels (provided by John Box) would fit my frame. With a great deal of pleasure I stepped back to admire the rapidly forming Tempest.

A few 'phone calls to John to check the location of the door pillars and the fitting of the grill mould, confirmed that the frame was about right. All the body panels were removed and stored away again whilst the welding was completed and the brackets for engine components (coil, ignition system, washer bottle etc.) were fitted to the frame.

An intrusion in the form of a burnt out valve on the M.G. was dealt with before the frame was completed.

The next stage is to fit all the body panels to the frame, and when all brackets are completed and all bolt holes drilled, the frame is going to be sent away to be powder coated.

That just about brings me up to date. Whilst the frame is away the chassis will be rebuilt with all its mechanical components ready for the body shell to be fitted to the chassis.

It is getting near the time to sell the Hillman Imp, if anybody out there is looking for a cheap trialing car I would be pleased to hear from you. A winner ready to go.

Dave Price - Moerton in Marsh

Many thanks Dave; I have to say that I was more than a little jealous when I heard that John Box was giving the jig and moulds to Dave to let him make his own Tempest. I have this feeling that John wanted the space, and really does not think that he will ever build any more of these fine vehicles. I was even more sad / jealous when I discovered that that pilot chappy had bought the last Tempest that John had for sale last year - before I won the lottery! (Well, one can have one's dreams can one not?) - Perhaps Dave could undertake to produce them under licence? Yes I know we can't get chassis at the moment, and that there are other problems, not the least of which is that there are a finite number of Kittens and Foxes out there, and there could come a time when destroying one of them to build a Tempest might be construed as unacceptable to those of us who love our Kittens just the way they are

thank you very much. Enough of this dreaming - mind you I did wonder if Dave had realised the possibility of fitting that Coventry Climax like engine from his old Imp into the Fox chassis existed!

Rebel round up

Dear Brian, 1/3/98

Please find enclosed my membership renewal for 1998. Thanks for an excellent magazine and I look forward to the coming year's publications.

The "Moss Encrusted Hut" you will be pleased to know passed its M.O.T. last year. I had to fit new top swivels, renew three of the ball joints on the steering linkage, and sort out the handbrake. It is still in regular service and has now covered 4143 miles since leaving Renfrew last June.

I now own two more Rebel estates, one I bought in August from Ron Mallet who is a member of our local R.O.C. branch, he also has a Bond Bug, a Supervan III and a Robin. The Rebel is white and has sliding side windows, and a tow bar fitted, but it doesn't have an engine: - reg no. SGU 672L, chassis no. E94 1516 it is a '73 model.

The other estate car is blue, and I bought it in October after you put me in touch with Bill Logan from Peterhead. As you know it has a new galvanised chassis and there is a second chassis plate fitted under the bonnet, are there any more on the Register like this? Does anyone know who carried out the work? Registration number URC 68G originally chassis number E150280 replacement chassis no. SABTURO384931213. I have enclosed some photographs which you can have.

Regards

Bruce Emery - Leigh on Sea.

Thanks Bruce for keeping us up to date, I will, one year, remember to send you the front badge for that Rebel, the one that I promised to send to Bill Logan many months ago, and then forgot!

On this new chassis thing, clearly there are things going on out there that I am not aware of, I say this because Brian Midgley has a re-chassied Kitten with the chassis number SABTUR03377248068, well it gets even more complicated because Brian was building a special, using some Tempest bits, see letter on page 12.

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### **Readers Letters**

Dear Brian, Feb.'98

Enclosed subscription form and cheque. Looking forward to receiving this year's Mewsletters. New Year resolution (one of them) is to try and read it before my husband. Also to write in about my Kitten - yes please Ed. - which I am only the chauffeur of to 4 dogs. So in fact the Kitten is a "Dogmobile".

Best wishes, Ann (chauffeur), Ruff, Ben, Sam, Charlie (co-owners), and John (mechanic & husband)

*Thank you Ann, dogs and John, for keeping us up to date. I was just saying to John Pearce, our front cover man, about using the Kitten as a dogmobile, he is into huskies, and they have just had puppies, yes, at the time of writing there are three left needing good homes, anyway, the point is he says they moult too much, his Kitten has the cloth upholstery!*

*The following three letters will show you just how quickly things can (and usually do) happen. Don't let this impression of organisation keep you back from nagging at me if you think I might have forgotten something that I should have done! Ed.*

Dear Brian, 14/02/98

Thank you for your prompt reply regarding the Register and the information you enclosed. I must admit that I only stumbled on the Register having purchased my Kittens, I found you through the club list, which came enclosed with one of the Classic vehicle papers that I take.

In 1995 I built a Berkeley T60 which is Mini powered on a new space frame chassis and is now up for sale (*Andy Argyll strikes again? Ed.*) I decided to look round for a replacement vehicle and liked the Liege (Will someone please remind me to get a decent colour picture of a Liege for the front cover, thank you Ed.) I purchased the Kitten estate as a donor, having been stored for 8 years; the body is crazed in several places with a scruffy interior but with a set of natty alloys.

The chassis is sound but rusty, but in general the vehicle is complete. With the intention of possibly building a Liege I was not over concerned about the condition, however after contacting Liege, I have found that the price to complete a satisfactory vehicle is too expensive for me.

Another Kitten then turned up in the form of a saloon, off the road for three years and in much better all round condition than the estate. I then thought that perhaps I would bring one of the Kittens back to life, and decided, as you suggested, using the estate. Although the estate is the scruffier of the two, and I prefer the appearance of the saloon, the estate has had a replacement engine at some time, and two hours work had it running again, sounding as sweet as can be. The saloon will now become a donor of parts, another problem now because the saloon body is almost perfect without a mark on it. I was going to cut the front off and store it as a repair panel, but I have decided to try and sell it for £50 complete with glass and doors and some interior.

I may however try and build a special using the existing chassis and am at present doing a feasibility study on this. If on the other hand I restore the estate, I shall not be doing a body off job as I do not think it is necessary, to prevent any further chassis deterioration it will get a good dose of waxoil and oil injection throughout. The main aim will be an M.O.T. pass, and then a restore as I use it.

In your Mewsletter I noticed an article on master cylinder repair kits, I used one on the Berkeley, and after three years every day use have had no problems, providing the cylinder bores are not pitted, and one is extra clean overhauling it, I can see no problems. I have also noticed looking at the vehicles that many parts are BL Mini and other BL models with a sprinkling of Rootes here and there. Apart from the engine, gearbox and axle it would appear that many parts could be obtained from Motor Factors by cross reference to other maker's vehicles; I expect that you are well aware of this also.

Les Smith - Ashford

*Yes thanks you Les, but having said that, your comments remind me that I have still done very little work on that front - one day (that will be my epitaph at this rate!) Les went on to suggest something to do with hypnotists - (Moirra thinks a psychiatrist would be better!) in connection with helping solve my too many cars situation, thank you for the ideas Les. Anyway, I sent off a letter of welcome to the Register, and got this: - (note the date)*

Dear Brian, 18/02/98

As you keep pushing editions 1 - 18 of the magazine, please find enclosed a cheque for the £ 12.50 for a set.

Will I also receive issue 20, the one I have just missed?

All the best, Les Smith - Ashford, Kent

*Les, I never meant to give the impression of being pushy. Edition 20 is still at the printers (19/02/98), but yes of course you will get one. Thanks also for your letter and advert.*

Then, on the 24th, this arrived: -

Dear Brian, 22/02/98

Once again I find it hard to believe the speed at which I received your reply enclosing the back issues of the Mewsletter, a quick scan has revealed many points of interest and will no doubt reveal many more as I read through them at leisure.

I note that my estate has a Robin engine found through your article on engine numbers, both cars have white numerals dials with no tenth's on the odometers, pointers towards prone rust areas had me inspecting the estate car as it is now up on 4 ramps, I am pleased to say that all appears fine on a quick inspection, this is probably due to it being garaged for eight years. The white saloon is suffering justifiable homicide progressing daily by the removal of its organs.

A request by someone wanting the Mini type of hub caps and trims prompts me to say that I have four that can be purchased for £5.00 the set of four - plus postage - if anyone is still looking for them. A quick note also on the Kitten lettering on the back of the car, is it possible to have the lettering laser cut by computer. I had some done for my Berkeley and found the cost very reasonable, if a sample is given to them of the font, its size and spacing it is a very quick job to reproduce and as with most things the more you have the cheaper it gets (except children that is), mine ran to 29 letters with a scanned in logo in yellow, duplicated for each side of the vehicle for £25, repeats offered at £15, I think that if originals are not available this might be the way to go.

Well time now to read to the cat from past mewsletters.

Yours sincerely

Les Smith - Ashford, Kent.

*Thanks again Les, I should make a number of points, firstly, while I do normally respond quickly to letters, Les was particularly fortunate in that I had just that very day received the magazine reprints that I had been waiting for, and I do believe that one individual has been waiting for some time for a set of back numbers, the reason for the delay was that I did not have them all available at the time, and*

*rather than send some, thought I'd wait till I had a full set available, by which time I had forgotten who it was that they were for. I believe that things get even worse as the individual concerned did write to me again, politely pointing out the error of my ways, and unless I find that letter before you read this, will he or she please give me a ring to remind me yet again, third time lucky, I promise! Hang on; I have just tried, again! To tidy my desk and came across the letter from David Cater that you will find further on in the mag - sorry David, they are in the post.*

Also, on the matter of Kitten logo's for the back of the car, I did have a batch made last year, and promptly mislaid them, after giving Phil one, and fitting one to the little red car, and my man has the source in his computer, I think they came in at £3.50 including postage.

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Dear Mr. Marshall, October '97

Many thanks for your prompt reply to my recent query. Please find enclosed my application and payment for joining the Register.

After reading through the No. 17 Mewsletter, I was prompted to dig out my old Reliant records, collected over the last 19 years since I bought my Kitten Estate. A couple of items I found may be of interest.

Kitten variants:

No mention is made in the Mewsletter or elsewhere in your documentation of the Sienna, a Kitten based Morgan lookalike first made by Tony Steven and reported in Hot Car, July 1977, copy enclosed.

I also have details of a motorhome conversion based on a Fox, made by Tandy Conversions of the Isle of Wight, and again copy enclosed, this time of an exhibition brochure from late 1984. Thirdly there is the WMC Bug, a four-wheeled version of the Bond Bug. My information came directly from WMC in the early nineties, about 1992 / 93? I would guess, but I do not know how many were made or whether WMC are still in business. It really is a kit car based on the Robin / Rialto, but also uses a Mini front sub-frame together with the Webster chassis. The engine is the standard Reliant 850cc unit, so the completed vehicle should qualify for inclusion in the Kitten Register as a sub-1 Litre Reliant based four wheeler!

You mention in Mewsletter that you are looking for a Logo for the Register, and I wonder if something based on the early nineties Reliant corporate logo would be appropriate. They used a standardised style on all their publications, newsletters, parts packaging, letterheads and advertising, comprising "RELIANT" always in capitals, but either solid or outline, and either in-line or rotated 90° counter clockwise. The style also included a single line box with small radius corners. The style is very widespread - I have even a dealer's sticker from 1992 (Brook Garage, Redhill, Surrey), which conforms to it, and it seems to me appropriate to carry on this style for the Register's logo. Reliant may have used a proprietary typeface, which I have been unable to match from my own stock, but if anyone else knows the precise font they used I'd be interested to hear. The closest I can get is Compacta Lt BT Light, though the R is not correct. I daresay some computer / word processor buffs elsewhere in the Register will now prove me wrong!! Anyway, using Compacta I have devised the following, mimicking the "R-part" label;



This is just a quick effort, and it really needs tidying up and making the box a bit tighter, but it illustrates the idea. I guess it also needs permission from Reliant - Yes indeed, I have a letter from Jonathan Heynes making that very point clear - Ed. to avoid any infringement of copyright and registered designs.

Best regards,

Christopher Bartlett -

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*Thank you Chris, as you will all realise that letter was written some time ago, and was given up by my " for use in the mag one day " file recently. It is topical because I have yet to finalise the logo, and so its inclusion now will hopefully help to keep the momentum, such as it is, going on that front. Thanks again Chris for the other enclosures that you were good enough to include, and for pointing out the omissions from my blurb, of the Sienna and the WMC Bug*

The next letter is probably even older (it was written by one of our number who does not date their letters!) At any rate, as you will see, I was a bit embarrassed, but Moira keeps telling me, that since they are real, and not solicited, I should not be, and so, in order to reduce the " must use " pile, and reduce the backlog a bit, here are a few observations from David Cater of Thetford.

Brian, 1997

The, The, The, "Mewsletter". What can I say! I don't know if it's me, but you seem to be embarrassed about the name and the contents in one or two editions.

It's excellent!!! Well put together, funny and full of useful tips, you have done yourself and us Kitty owners proud, give yourself a good pat on the back, as we say down here, you are Top Man.

Anyway I took some photos the other day as a hope of getting there on the front cover and look what happened DISASTER - blooming English weather, it seemed a good day at the start, honest. So I'll get some more done when the sun shines again and the Kitt's had a 'hairwash'.

So, down to business, Aaarrrgh, I hear you cry, only 60 - 70 MPG - 6 weeks per tankful, my average journey is only 10 - 20 miles but a rough workout shows 35ish to the gallon unleaded (*or was that unloaded? Ed*) why mine I ask? Why can't I get Mini alloys to fit, and why when I reverse off the low part of a kerb do I hear a clunk? What worries me is that it does not sound like a suspension leg. Help! Why can't I think of a good name for Kitty - if you or your lady wife help me out here I promise the new name will stay? Why after buying the car for the Princely sum of £99 (with 4 months M.O.T. and 3 months tax) this from a garage as well, was I expecting extreme leg pulling from my mates who drive cars like 2.8 Granadas, GTI's, GTE's, only to find they like Kitty! Why at 5' 7" tall with cramped driving position, fuel gauge covered by the steering wheel (No I have not run out of petrol yet!) and the wind rushing through a small gap in the passenger's door do I so enjoy driving the little B..... so much. But at the end of the day it moves all my guitars, P.S. and stands around Norfolk, (60's to 90's band member) she sometimes struggles, but she hasn't let me down yet!

So, now I've bored you with this long boring drab letter I'll let you get back to more important things like Eastenders, Coronation Street etc. and if I don't write to you again before it have a happy Christmas and a very un-sober New Year.

Dave Cater - Norfolk

*Thank you Dave - Dave did make mention of a lack of mustard cutting in relation to certain other car club like organisations, but I will refrain from passing comment - see the Editorial pen does occasionally omit some bits! Yes please though Dave, pictures are most welcome - please don't tell me that you sent some and I have either lost them or forgotten all about them? Ed.*

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Dear Brian, 06/03/98

Please find enclosed my subscription together with a photo of the car detailed on the form. Rather than just subs alone, I thought I would give you some background on us both; otherwise I would be just a number, bit like that old T.V. series The Prisoner. The fact that I remember watching that gives you the first bit of info.

Really, what Prisoner was that?

Only kidding, Ed!!!

My involvement with Reliants started in 1989 when I purchased a rather decrepit GTE which I still own, and last year I added two more to the stable after firstly swapping a Ford Mondeo (nice car, shame about the personality) for my Ultimate Scimitar, the G.T.C., and then in September a trip to Milton Keynes produced the Kitten which you see in the photo. Apart from a couple of chats on the phone with yourself and a local dealership I knew little about the Marque, though I had seen a few at Scimitar Club do's, mostly scruffy I might add, and I was therefore pleased to find this one in fairly bright condition.

She is used by my wife daily for work, about 18 miles each way, and returns about 45 to the gal. This is a welcome improvement on the low 20's with the auto G.T.E. though not as good as some reports in the Mewsletter. *Those figures in the Mewsletter were on a long run, with a stainless exhaust, Mobil 1 oil, and a ceramic magnet on the fuel line, combined with my light right foot, Ed!* So far I have, apart from the general sorting that one does when first acquiring a motor, replaced all the slave cylinders bar one which was fairly new, re-rubbered the master cylinder, all of which have greatly improved things

in the stopping department though the pedal does travel too far down except for a while just after adjusting the front brakes. I have also changed the heater box and matrix with a second hand one I acquired from the afore mentioned local dealer as only cold air was coming through, and everything including hotter thermostat and back flushing had failed to restore heat to my wife's feet. It is better now in that hot air is blown into the foot wells; well maybe the term hot is being kind.

Well this only leaves sorting out the fuel gauge, and then everything works. I was told that as I have a tow bar fitted, I'd like to see what was towed mind, the easiest way to access the tank sender was by cutting a hole through the rear load deck floor! What say you or the readers to that Brian? And while I have you in question answering mode, I've a mind to fit some decent alloy wheels, preferably slightly wider, similar to what I see on some Mini's, do any spring to mind, or if they fit a Mini will they be O.K.?

Also I have seen some cars advertised with different front seats - I suffer from lower back pain from time to time, are there any known that go in without a lot of modification from production cars that may be found in local scrap yards?

In the main I am well pleased with the car and have much respect for that busy little engine which I think is a gusty little performer, it's not the car's original engine, but it just keeps on going and going. Despite knocking the guy down £100 on his asking price I think we probably paid over the odds for her, though we would have found it difficult to find a decent modern runaround for similar money that was as clean, and she did come with two boxes of spares as well as some larger items such as a gearbox, propshaft and steering rack, albeit the latter in need of reconditioning.

Well, that's all I have to say at the moment other than please keep up the good work with the mag which I thoroughly enjoy reading as not only is it informative but you also have the knack of putting it over as if we were down the local pub together having a pint, instead of several hundred miles apart.

All the best

Peter Churcher - Romney Marsh

Thank you Peter. To try and answer your points:

Replacement front seats - the answer is yes, but I can't remember what, Subaru Justy perhaps, help guys, wait a minute, Chris Bartlett's index could help here -

Yes, I guess the frequent adjusting of front brakes is down to us all having worn drums these days, and might lend weight to the front disc conversion argument!

Heaters, yes well, I remember thinking what a wonderful heater this has, the first time I drove a Kitten, and I guess, like the worn brake drums that we all enjoy these days, the clogged heater matrix is another area that is always totally neglected. They are all over 20 years old now, your car has probably had at least one or two new radiators in that time, but no one ever thinks to fit a new, or re-cored, heater matrix - is it that we are all too lazy, or mean? I can't talk; I have not done it yet. Reason, well I always find that when putting the dash back together again I never get everything to fit as neatly as it did, and what with my standards being so high (don't all laugh at once please) I simply avoid the job, rather than risk making a mess of it!

As to what the car was used to tow, well if it was anything like the one my brother Alan used to own, you really don't want to know. What I will say is that provided the tow bar is of good quality and correctly fitted a Kitten will pull several times its own weight without any bother at all, yes we are talking tons here, Tonnes even, but we shan't go into that.

Regarding the hole-in-the-floor-to-do-the-sender-unit, well, I can't say too much, that's how I do it!

While I am of course delighted to learn that you are well pleased with the car, what is surely of much greater concern is the answer to the question, what does your wife think of it? After all she is the one who is driving it most of the time from what you tell me.
Ed.

Dear Brian. Feb.'98

Hope you and your family had a good Christmas and New Year. Now that all the over eating and drinking is over I thought I'd just write and say WHERE'S MY FIRST 12 EDITIONS OF THE MEWSLETTER? I'm bored. O.K. Dave, no need to shout, they're in the post today 10/03/98, honest Ed. All I've got to read are tabloid newspapers who seem more interested in what the President of the U.S.A. gets up to in his spare time than anything important.

Anyway, I enclose cheque for this year's membership, I know its Jan. 28th, but I'm a slow writer (and I hate parting with money!)

The Kitty is still going strong(ish) and hope yours and everyone else's are too. Though I don't see many around my neck of the woods. Do you know if I'm the only one who's a member down here in Norfolk? No, not at all Ed. There is 1 that's always parked up (Thetford).

Before I go, I bought myself a camera for Christmas, and hopefully got some good pictures of the car. When the film's developed I'll send you a couple of pickies. Keep up the good work, and I hope everything goes according to plan for '98

Cheers

David Cater - Thetford

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*You will have to bear with me here, I was trying to tidy my desk and came across a number of letters which I had read before, but cannot remember if you have seen them yet! I normally write the magazine number on any letter that I do use, and then file it, but since these have no mag. No. on them, and are not filed, I can only assume that they were left out to use in an earlier edition, and I just did not have room.*

Dear Brian, 14/12/97

To show there is no hard feeling because you put the picture and article I sent you last time in different editions I am writing to you again. Actually I think the little errors that creep into the Mewsletter from time to time, annoying though they may be to you, help add to its charm. You do a fine job.

*Honestly, my head won't be able to get through the door! But I get really annoyed sometimes, I do try to make sure everything is O.K., but as soon as I get the 250 of them back I always find mistakes,*

*even careless things like not pressing the shift key hard enough 1! see Mag. 20 page 6 column 1, yes 1 instead of ! In the "the speedo thinks it's 80-plus!" not 1, I know it all conspires to make me seem more human (or do I mean more frail?). It's bad enough that I am hard pressed to even change a spark plug these days, but when it gets to the stage that I can't even push buttons on a keyboard properly, well I ask you - yes I know the song title here must be 'What a swell party this is' and so it is with you all to help me through, - right enough interruptions, as John was saying -*

My last letter was based on the fact that a good sense of humour is an essential requirement for the Kitten owner. My experiences to date have done nothing to change my mind.

One amusing incident I think is worthy of note! We had just had a new kitchen fitted at home, and I was taking a load of rubbish to the municipal dump one Saturday morning. I was quite impressed at the amount you can load into a Kitten, though because mine is not an estate, loading and un-loading isn't that easy. However I managed, and was just packing the last of the old kitchen units into a skip when this broad West Cumbrian voice was heard to cry "Hi Marra yer arse end likt three wheeler's".

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the Cumbrian dialect let me give you a brief translation. Hi Marra, is a traditional West Cumbrian greeting, meaning "Hello friend" Hi Marra is used in much the same way as we Scots use the term "Hello pal". The second part of the statement "yer arse end likt" can be translated thus "your posterior resembles", three-wheeler needs, I am sure, no translation.

Now while I admit to not being as slim as I was in my teens, I felt that this comment from a complete stranger to be a bit much! I need not have worried however for the gentleman's remarks were not referring to my rear, but to the Kittens rear end. In short he had recognised that the Kitten can trace its ancestry to the much more famous Robin. It transpired that having never seen or heard of the Kitten before, he thought I had made it out of two Robins. Presumably having discarded two wheels or it would have been a six wheeler!

He was quite impressed to learn that there were almost 4,000 Kittens made between 1975 and 1982.

What other car, which costs so little can provide the versatility of these little vehicles and attract such attention from complete strangers?

Regards and seasonal greetings

John W. King - Carlisle

*Yes John, I take your point; we are of course in the main, preaching to the converted. It is a fact though, that there is a unique place in our motoring heritage for the Kitten, which brings me neatly onto the fact that I always choose to spell it Kitten, not as Reliant did, and one or two of those writing to me have, quite correctly done, kitten. I have long been of the belief that they are much too important to be addressed in lower case!*

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Cars and things for Sale or Wanted

March 1998

Larry Ferris has a pair of new Kitten / Fox bottom ball joints for sale at £60 + postage.

For Sale: - 1976 Kitten saloon body in very good condition with windscreen, rear hatch, side windows, bonnet, doors, some trim and V5 £50,.

March 1998

For Sale: - one owner Kitten saloon, new clutch just fitted, full years M.O.T. just covered 100,000 miles, and if the owner had subscribed to this organisation I might have been able to find the telephone number! The car lives in Dumbarton on the North side of the Clyde, and I do have an address on file, so just give Brian a ring on 0141 8866117 if you are interested. The asking price is in the £300 region; they want it to go to a good home.

Alan Osborn 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. Also Basic Technical notes on Kittens soon available: - I have the correct colour cables for you wiring loom available, in whatever length you require and a good selection of connectors. ALSO: -

Kitten estate £400, with Ford front seats. Advice given on electrical faults and or modifications.

February 1998

Dave Smith still lives in Bedfordshire, and is, as usual, able to offer a wide variety of parts ranging from complete cars down.

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

For Sale: - Kitten Saloon and Estate for sale £ 200 the pair contact Bill Rouillier

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

February 1998

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

March 1998

For Sale: - Rebel estate car, E150113, very interesting history and full Scimitar type interior fitted with 850cc engine from new!!

Kitten complete with a new galvanised chassis, built up complete except for fitting a new back brake adjuster and fuel filler.

£??? NO M.O.T.

NOTES

Virgo Chemicals of Ramsgate wrote to me regarding Morey Lubricating Systems which they tell me could both help improve economy and solve the unleaded fuel problems for us by using their U.C.L. To try and summarise the 8 A4 pages of information that he sent to me in here would be too difficult. Suffice to say that the makers claim to have been supplying the Australian and New Zealand market for a decade, with 100's of thousands of units fitted. There are two options here basically, that is 1: pour the stuff into your fuel tank when you put in petrol, or 2: use a "Power booster System" which they claim meters the additive more accurately, and helps fuel economy. They can be contacted on 01843 596295

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In the last edition I made reference to Kitten headlights, I also suggested that you should " see notes page " and promptly made no further comment about them! Well, wrong again Marshall, they are in fact available, new, from Lightweight Powertrains. Be sure to specify that you need the ones with the sidelight included as they also stock the Rialto ones, which do not incorporate a sidelight. I believe that they are in the £20 odd price range though that does not include V.A.T., bulbs or postage.

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Right, Alan has his bigger margins; we have all suffered a 1% reduction in font size in an effort not to have a reduction in content because of the bigger margins. We have all enjoyed - I hope - an extra page, yes two A4 sides, in this edition, which is out almost a month early because of impending holidays and a certain trip the length of the land in May, and I have this feeling that I have missed out an advert, just phone and moan at me if it was yours.

I am still in the market for sponsorship for this run, don't be shy, and thank you Mike.

Sorry about you Foxy folk, just wait till you see the next front cover and you'll forgive me I am sure!

Brian