

Reliant Kitten Register

MEWSLETTER Thirty

September/October 1999



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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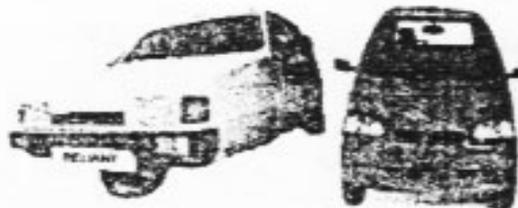
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The Reliant Kitten Register

The following individuals have kindly agreed to give and receive information on the following topics on our behalf :

Rebel alternative parts contact : *contact Brian*

Kitten alternative parts contact : *contact Brian*

Mutual Aid Spares scheme run by : *contact Brian*

Mewsletter pictures : *contact Brian*

We have a vacancy for a Fox parts information coordinator, contact the Registrar if you are interested in filling this position.

Our front cover this time is graced by a very rare vehicle indeed. I understand that it can be found in the Guinness Book of Records no less! The world's smallest ambulance belongs to our man in Bristol, Keith Pillinger, who spent almost two years doing a complete body off refurbishment and modifications to the Kitten estate to make it comply with the relevant legislation.

As mentioned in the last edition, models of the Kitten ambulance will shortly be available. Information about them can be obtained from Keith who can be contacted on :- 0117 9615757

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Summer time, an' the livin' is easy – yes, the wee red car is running well after her head gasket change. Life is good. She starts first twist of the key, often first piston over the top, I'm not actually so keen on that, I prefer the oil to get a chance to get about a bit first, but hey, whose complaining?

She took us, Arleen and me, on a 5 day trip round much of North Yorkshire early in August, I shall save that story for later.

The first A5 magazine is behind me now, and I have loads of confidence about being able to do more of the same, mind you, if my plans work out, you will be treated to more of John Bowcott's technical input in this edition, and that will mean scanning in pictures, well drawings at any rate – always new things to learn!

I have been less than organised with the day to day correspondence recently, June and July mainly, and if there is anything outstanding from your point of view, please don't be shy about letting me now about it. Just too much going on, and me not firing on all cylinders all the time – normal service has now been resumed, but some things may have been overlooked in the meantime.

Now that I know just what the actual weight of the magazine is with its better quality covers, I can in fact include an extra sheet and still get it to you with a second class stamp, so it looks like you may have to suffer even more than last time!

I received a letter, along with two small sample bottles (didn't think that we were allowed to send fluids through the post!) from Holts, who would appear to own the Redex name these days, relating to a fuel additive which they claim will allow "leaded" engines to run on unleaded fuel. They asked how they would obtain an endorsement from the Register for their product – more letters to write! So I wrote back saying that I thought they had missed the boat, and asked them why their product was not amongst those approved by the FHBVC after the tests which we reported on some months ago (I do hope I have not got it wrong and theirs was one that did pass, but I don't remember the name, and I did invite them to correct me before this edition goes to print. They claim that the product has been in use in Europe and the USA for the past 10 years – I await their reply with interest.) Meantime I am too scared to actually put the stuff in the tank as I do not know what chemical solution to the problem they have chosen to adopt, and I don't want to restrict my options later – though in truth I have been running the Kitten on unleaded three tanks out of 4 for some time now, and not using any additive at all!

On the evening of Saturday the 31st of July, Arleen was having half a dozen friends to stay over – no we do not have that much space! So I decided I'd be better off well out of it. Must be old age or something, I can just about remember the days when a house full of teenage girls would have held certain attractions!

The Wee red car and I headed off to deepest Ayrshire, collecting some bits from Grant Coull (Grant is one of the very few teenagers I know who owns more than one Kitten) on the way to Phil Hallam's. Phil had kindly volunteered to do some work on the Kitten for me, namely pull the head down, reset the tappets, fit the new crankcase blanking plate, my home made attempt at filling the hole where the fuel pump used to live was proving ineffective, and a couple of other niggles, including the dim and intermittent fuel / temperature gauge instrument light. That was interesting, the instrument light has an earth which is attached by the same knurled knob that locates the instrument in the dashboard, what turned out to be the problem was a bad earth, the thread to which the knurled knob attaches was stripped at the very place that mattered, so Phil promptly found a suitable diameter bit of metal tube from his garage, cut off a short length, and put it on before the knurled knob, so making it get tight on a different bit of the thread, simple but effective, and cures a problem, which while not at all serious, nor anything an M.O.T. man would ever notice, was none the less very frustrating on dark nights. Thank you Phil.

The head taken care of, in fact only one of the nuts moved at all, I felt able to open her up a bit, and on the way home from Dalgety Bay in Fife the following morning I met up with, well lets be honest here, I was

taking my time and was passed rather briskly by one of those modern tricycles, a Grinaldi Scorpion I think it was, (if that is how you spell it) two wheels at the front, one at the back, and a very sweet sounding motorcycle engine and gearbox pushing its two occupants through the air briskly, I just had to have a closer look – all of a sudden my average speed went up from the low fifties to a speed that I am not prepared to admit to in print, lets just say that Moira's wee red car goes even more briskly than Tom Wardley's, it will pull over 5,500 rpm in top quite easily. The result was an entertaining chase from Bathgate to Glasgow in rather less time than I had allowed for the journey, we passed each other a few times, all great fun T 716, or 617 SNP was its number. As I said, wonderful fun, but it did nothing at all for my fuel consumption, and I just hope there were no speed cameras on that stretch of road. One thing I was reminded of were Al Osborne's words about these engines getting hot when cruising at high speed, I have obviously been lucky in the past, but this engine does run hot if you maintain over 5,000 rpm for mile after mile. It was a very hot day certainly, but she did get too hot – must investigate, sometime, or perhaps I should consider re-fitting the fan!

I was wanting back to watch the German Grand Prix, and then to dive off to Greenock to see the tall ships, and the red arrows for the second time in 5 weeks. All wonderful fun, but it does not get the paperwork done!!

One thing I should probably mention, do you watch that television program "Wheel Nuts"? I was involved in putting the program makers in touch with a few of the people they used in the recent series. It is an odd feeling to see so many people one knows on the T.V. in episode after episode. That ex Avengers and James Bond girl, Honour Blackman does some of the interviews. Perhaps we should talk to her, after all it was Pussy Galore that she played in Goldfinger! Anyway, to the point, they did a bit on Colonel DeChair, Ben's dad, and while they were interested in his special, and his fire engine and pedal cars, they did show a Reliant engine lurking under his bench in the opening shots of his workshop up in Roy Bridge (just a few miles north of Fort William). Now the only reason that engine was there was because I declined to buy him a couple of pints last year (and because I really do not have the space!) but for anyone who is interested it is a full race tuned 750, and he does have in his attic a 4 branch manifold, no use to you or me because it would go where the passengers seat sits, it was made for a single seater, but if you are interested, perhaps we could help clear a space in his workshop. Anyway, what they failed to show us was Ben's special bodied Kitten, which was a shame, but there we are.

REBEL ROUND UP

I have been involved in helping, well I hope I have been helping to solve some Rebel brake problems that Robert Hall, our man in the Shetlands has been having with his car this year. Firstly it was a master cylinder, then seized brake adjusters on the front. This brought home to me just how confused I tend to be getting these days. I am really not sure whether it is an age thing or something to do with the M.S. or perhaps it is just too long since I worked on a Rebel in earnest. I perhaps get confused with Kittens and Kitten parts these days. Anyway, what we all need to know, are you listening now? The MOPROD repair kit for the Rebel front brake adjusters is MPK 3. The MPK 1 being the one for the Kitten. This is in fact not so much a Rebel / Kitten thing as a Girling (now owned by Lucas) and Lockheed thing. My thanks to Fred Heath for helping me out with the research. Yes Adrian, I too am sure that your notes covered it as well, but I was talking to Fred, and your notes were not to hand – Yes David, I know I promised you a copy of Adrian's notes, one day!

FOXES DEN

There was I am told, a Fox which went through a car auction in Leighton Buzzard last week (July) it had an M.O.T., and ran, but failed to sell.

Also there is an interesting one for sale, along with a pair of Rebels, as advertised in the last edition. It has a neatly done conversion in that it has a Rebel estate rear end grafted on.

The Fox windscreen, we have covered this before, however I think there may have been some confusion. Windscreen Services tell us that it is the same as a Fiat 127, my thanks to Johns Coates and Blagburn for the information.

I must mention a telephone call that I had the other day from the factory, thank you Mick Hilton, for letting us know that wishbones are in fact still in existence, if not actually available at the moment. Let me explain. There are some crates in the yard which contain Kitten and Fox wishbones, the Fox lower ones are handed, and different from the Kitten one. The Fox ones had a reinforcing plate spot welded to the front of the wishbone at the point where the infamous track control arm locates to it, this doubling the contact thickness for the securing bolt. Now rumour has it that a batch existed, indeed may even still exist, where the reinforcing plate was in fact added to both sides of the wishbone, and so they would once again do either side. As I understand it the plate was only on the bottom, not the top as well, and I would think it might be a sound idea to fit the Fox ones if we were ever to be replacing them – though I do have reservations about the corrosion resistance of two bits of plate spot welded together, but that is another story.

The fact seems to be that the wishbones do exist, are getting rusty, and have no bushes in them, and so some decisions need to be made, and work carried out, before they are fit for sale / use.

In my opinion, and in view of the fact that they are rusty, and have not even been on a vehicle, they should be shot blasted and galvanised, that would also alleviate my concerns about the spot welding leaving room for moisture and hence corrosion, but it might well make fitting the bushes, and indeed the bolt to the track control arm difficult, if the galvanising process adds too much material, and so reduces the diameter of the holes.

Given that the current annual demand for these items is in single figures, it hardly warrants major investment by the company. Perhaps we could do a deal and invite interested parties to become financially involved, and so motivate the company with the guarantee of a specific number of sales in an agreed timescale – for a sensible price of course! I do know of a number of individuals who have manufactured their own wishbones in the past few years, more often bottom than top, but both, (converting to cheaper alternative ball joints in some cases), so any alternative to doing that has to be cost effective.

Still on the topic of front suspension, the following letter has just arrived, and seems to be relevant for a number of reasons:-

Dear Brian,

17/08/99

Re. "Track control arm" (strut assembly, part of item 14 on the workshop manual drawing)

The success of a bolted joint "in shear" does not depend on the shear strength of the bolt, although the final stage of catastrophe may be bolt shear.

It depends upon there being enough friction between the joint surfaces, and this means that they must be pulled together firmly enough.

The 5/16" U.N.F. bolt (17) is adequate, but the spacer (16) is not, and needs to be replaced with one of a larger diameter – 5/8" minimum, 3/4" is better. A substantial washer, top and bottom, also helps to spread the load.

Replacement U.N.F. bolts – or setscrews, should still be readily available. If not, 8mm fine thread will do.

Yours sincerely A. Shaw - Stalybridge, Cheshire.

Thank you Alan, for the benefit of your obvious technical expertise. I will, as ever, make a few passing comments. I quite agree with the above, I hope that my personal solution of having the tube spacers made up in brass will not cause consternation, it is so much easier to machine than stainless! Also, while I realise that they are not nearly as strong, I use stainless bolts, even on suspension components such as this, and of course they are referred to in the manual as Struts, so I guess I really should stop calling them track control arms, even though they do serve that purpose.

The one thing that did strike me was my failure to explain where they fail, or do they in fact fail in different places? I have seen the hole on the lower wishbone to which this arm attaches be a great oval – though not as badly worn as the hole to which the anti roll bar link assembly attaches – they wear really badly, but unless you dismantle them you will not see it.

Anyway, back to the strut failures that a number of us have had experience of – tell me boys and girls, do they all fail because of corrosion where the bush attaches them to the chassis just beside the front numberplate? Or do they fail at the end where they attach to the lower wishbone? I know of one that broke because it was very rusty, and someone attached a tow rope to it to move a broken down Kitten, and the arm gave way just about the middle.

In truth knowing where they fail is only part of the story, the important thing is some effective preventative maintenance! So, like I said before, a clean and lick of paint / Waxiol / Dinitrol, grease or whatever will help prolong the life of this rather vital component.

It really is worth doing, not only from a safety point of view, but also to preserve the cars for the future. Yes yes, we will get new ones made if they really can't be found at the factory and there is a demand. The fact is that by the time you replace them, both sides remember, and the lower wishbones, you might end up doing a ball joint or 4, and just how good are your front dampers, and what about the top wishbones? Suddenly the bill for parts alone is in the region of £450 to £500! And are you really going to do all that and not fit new brake drums and cylinders and pipes? add another £100!

You will read about it in a future edition but a proper back axle overhaul using new parts will cost you about £300, makes our little cars look really undervalued doesn't it?

Now don't despair, not all of them are that bad, just like chassis corrosion, some are in excellent condition, remember John Blagburn telling us he had always been lucky that way? Well you might be too. So some of you will have a look and wonder what all the fuss is about, lucky you. Others sadly will have a look and be scared to enter a corner briskly ever again, or brake hard until you have done something about it.

What we must not do is start a panic, they are wonderful little cars, but we must remember that they are now in their 20's, and probably in need of a little care. If you have had yours for a couple of years or more, think back to what you paid for it, then what you have actually spent on it since, and what that comes to a year. Then realise that a modern car would have cost you 5 or ten times as much in depreciation alone, never mind maintenance and repairs. You have a bargain, but if that bargain is to continue to give you reliable service it will need a bit of T.L.C. over the next few years. Give it that attention, and it will continue to serve you for many years. Do not, and it will end up as spare parts keeping someone else's pride and joy alive – or worse yet, simply scrapped. I wish we could organise a home for abandoned Kittens (and Rebels and Foxes too)

Right Alan, see what you started, got me on my high horse! Never mind, I've got that out of my system for now. It is now the 23rd of August, a busy week as it happens with our holiday, and Doune only a few days away, and John's (Johnstone) Rebel to get through its M.O.T. on Wednesday, and the stand to collect from Phil (Hallam) tonight, and deliver to Doune on Friday – that's a thing, should we have a stand, and attend events as the Kitten Register? I'd love to, but really could not be involved, bags of enthusiasm, but no energy or storage space. And I should think we could only manage one stand, so, how would it get transported round the country? Let me know your views.

Dear Brian,

10/08/1999

I like the new Mag format – *thank you Duncan, I have had a number of favourable comments* – I decided to try and make a habit of reading it with a pen in hand, circling the things I intend to answer – *what! pen, defacing the good word, surely a pencil that you could rub out later would be more appropriate, Ed!!* or find out more about etc. but like your numbering system, reached the end and forgot what half the thoughts were, *Yes, not one of my better ideas, Ed.* so next time I'll make notes. Ha ha. That organised? Me? At least it'll be a shorter letter..... (Ye gods, I've just finished it & it's not!)

Yes I've got me cheap tax, a month early with allowance for applying any time in June, but it didn't stop them sending me a renewal reminder a month afterwards. Now if I don't reply, does that mean that one half of my Fox will cease to exist as it's neither taxed nor SORN registered while the other half is taxed cheaply, or are there two entries for the truck on the database? It could mess up the "on the road" statistics I think.

I know that a couple of us have had that experience, but I think, correct me if I am mistaken, that so far it is only those whose vehicles had their tax expire in June that had the double reminder situation, and in fairness it wasn't even that as the first one was just the one giving us the option to pay at the new reduced rate. So I think we are o.k. – better than the poor passport folk at any rate!

I've always stuck to my previous insurers because they allowed me a whole £200 of windscreen cover on a third party only policy, and I'd been told many years ago by a windscreen company that a replacement would have to be made to order & thus pricey. The insurers were taken over by the great Norwich Union this year and the premium went up nearly £200 – and no windscreen cover! So I rang the local windscreen company who said "Oh yea, that's the same as a Fiat 127 or early bodied Florina van - £40 fitted" I rang two others to check with the same reply. My broker then found me a better policy for £95 saying "You could have fully comp for £115, so why not go for it?" Now I've always understood from somewhere that on having an accident with a fully comp policy the vehicle becomes the property of the insurer, and if new parts are unavailable for repair they can write it off and offer you a paltry sum with no chance of redress. I enquired of my insurers and they are one of the companies who undertake to offer you the vehicle provided the damage would not require a write off by the DVLA. So I took up the comprehensive option. Check with your insurers as some do not offer this option especially if any item (e.g. trim?) is not still available, and you could lose your cherished friend. If you do ring, you will probably get one of those press-button-option menus answering you. Did you know that if you don't press anything, someone eventually has to pick up the phone and actually speak to you? There's a novelty!

I was sorry to hear that Robert Nash has had to relinquish the role of Fox alternative parts man (though I'd have more sympathy if it were due to him buying a Scimitar rather than a Manta!) *Now now, people's needs change in this life, let's not get uncharitable Ed.* I sincerely wish he didn't have to find a caring owner for the Fox, and I wonder if you would pass on my telephone number, Robert, to the new guardian if they are at all local. We have a sort of informal Norfolk Network, which due to the few problems that Foxes have, is pretty dormant, but on the odd occasion it's been good to know that there are several other owners within the area.

By the way, yes wheels are from the LATER (post '75) HA vans, nothing else seems to fit. I thought the steering rack was Triumph Herald / Spitfire, but the brackets / rubber bushes attaching it to the chassis are from the Vauxhall Chevette. Mine failed an M.O.T. due to an oil leak making one of the mountings soggy, and so the rack could move slightly. The one that went was of course the one that is no longer available, but good old Brian, the Liverpool one, came up trumps. As with most Fox parts he has a few left somewhere *Yes Duncan, I must chase him up, he has been threatening to either subscribe to or advertise in the Register / Mewsletter for quite some time, and I believe that he is planning moving to your neck of the woods in the near future – more letters to write!*

The track control arm problem, while different on the Fox from the Kitten still exists. While the Fox arm is less prone to corrosion than the Kitten one, the threaded end (different from the Kitten's one which uses a bush and nut and bolt to secure it at the front), which often shears off when you try to remove it. Reliant must have realised this weakness, as the later ones have a thicker threaded end. Start a week before you intend to remove the arm with daily squirts of magic spray.

I put a Kitten stainless exhaust on the Fox at least ten years ago, and it's been fine. Do check the mountings though regularly every year or two, as the rear ones rot through and I've twice had the system crack at the manifold due to the extra strain that a rear mounting bracket failure causes. Fortunately there is a bike engineer nearby who knows about welding stainless. I agree with George Stamford's comment on the brakes (*even though George was talking Kittens! Ed*) – what brakes – as I've moaned before, and so has everyone who has borrowed the truck, in spite of new cylinders, shoes and skimmed drums last year, they are still awful, especially at motorway speeds. The adjusters still rust solid! and after freeing them off they become too loose, and drop back the first time you brake. I have just obtained a pack of 4 Moprod brake adjusters repair kits (Mini) Part No. [MS-MPK1](#) which should do the job, but it does say on the pack that you need a hammer, chisel and hacksaw to fit them (*I thought you needed a drill as well! Ed*) so they'll probably have to wait for ever. Did someone say a few issues back that the best brake shoes were the green ones from Halfords? *I don't know, did they? Ed*. I must confess that I've always used Quinton Hazell ones, and they do take ages to show any wear, so perhaps they are too hard. Perhaps most linings do not take account of the vastly increased pressure from a servo, and we without, therefore require something much softer to cause enough friction to be effective – *Well possibly, but I suspect that discs go hand in hand with most servos Ed*. Worth investigating I should think, as I've had serious doubts about my ability to stop this side of an incident twice recently, and even when the Fox was new, I was never very confident.

One last thought on the annoying little effect of radiator top tanks without an expansion bottle. Where the top tank capacity is just too small to cope with the volume of coolant when the engine warms up, and then cools back to just below the radiator core level (visible level) I spoke with a long term Robin owner a couple of years ago. His only grumble was the amount he spent topping up his coolant. It only took a quarter of a pint a time, but he checked it more than once a week because it was always below the tubes. I suggested he check it once a month and if it would still take the same amount to top it up, then to experiment leaving it even longer between checks. (In the end I chickened out and topped mine up after months of not being able to see the coolant, and it still took quarter of a pint!) However I saw the same chap yesterday, and he said "That was a good tip you gave me about topping up my radiator – I haven't put anything in for a year now, and I still can't see any coolant!" I wasn't quite sure of the logic or wisdom of this, and felt like Patricia Routledge's Kitty act, saying something like "Oh, jolly good, I think we shall have rain by teatime " and departing with a polite wave.

Bye for now- Duncan Bradford – Norwich

Well thank you Duncan, I think I've interrupted just about enough, other than to show my ignorance by asking who Patricia Routledge is? Ed.

READERS LETTERS

Dear Brian,

3rd June 1999

Thank you for your letter and comments.

In a recent motoring journal I came across an entry about Reliant, suggesting they were ahead of the times. The article went on to say that the company are now established in their new premises close to both the A5 and M6 and that production was in full swing. One of Britain's largest motor manufacturers!

A company spokesman was quoted as saying that they were un-moved about the fact that we will soon be unable to purchase leaded 4 star petrol. He stated that all Reliant engines built since 1989, including some of the last Kitten 4 wheelers, left the factory well able to cope with the fuel change. Furthermore he claimed that Reliant had been operating a head exchange service converting leaded to unleaded.

So were you aware of that, and is it true? When was the change in engine number, what was done, and how much is an exchange head?

Brian Midgley – Dore, Sheffield

Right, listen up folks, Brian and Pat (his wife) are nice people, they even have an interest in narrow gauge steam locomotives, I must contact you about that sometime, but life is a bit too demanding at the moment. This unleaded thing, we really do not have a serious problem with this. At the risk of being controversial I will state that I doubt very much if Reliant built any Kittens with what they now describe as unleaded heads, if they did, they would have had green rocker covers, but as they were not introduced to my knowledge till around 1990, that was about the end of Fox production, never mind Kittens – perhaps some late Foxes had green rocker covers, does any one know? Maybe the Reliant spokesperson was getting their Kittens and Foxes confused! Having an alloy head, the Reliant engine enjoys hardened valve seats, and they can cope with unleaded fuel. How long for is another matter, and the answer to that depends on a number of factors, temperature, load, how hard the valve seats really are etc etc, but it is my firm belief, having run the wee red car on unleaded for a few thousand miles, since removing the unleaded engine ! (The engine in the wee red car was built in 1976!) it will be fine for a while. but the fact is that they would have us believe that something has changed. In fairness I believe that some, possibly even quite considerable, research was carried out, (probably not for the first time either, sadly I think that a lot of research / data has been lost during the various changes in company ownership during the last decade) but my understanding is that the supplier of valve seats has not changed the part number, and so presumably not the spec for years. It's all a question of how hard is a hard bit of stainless anyway? Really, once any metal thing is harder / stronger than it needs to be, then any additional strength / hardness is really superfluous, and so a waste of time, effort and money really. Well, that's my opinion.

Just reading that last bit over, my past comments, and I am talking a decade or more ago now, springs up to haunt me, one of the things that attracted me to Reliants in the first place, was the fact that they were either over- engineered or very well made!

As a matter of interest I do run my Reliants hot, good for the economy you know, both the car's fuel economy, and my running costs, and while I would be the first to question the wisdom of doing away with 4 star, I firmly believe that Reliant owners (small ones at any rate) are in a better position in this regard than perhaps any other vehicle owner in the U.K today. Well, perhaps that Buick engine that Rover used in the V8 P5 and P6 and even the SD1 Rovers might fare as well as ours.

As to the unleaded head matter, I have only been advertising them within these pages for about a year now. Both Reliant, and others do offer this service on an exchange basis, for as little as £125.00 plus v.a.t and carriage from Rossefield Motors, 0101274 544009 / 542826 or £199.75 from Reliant PartsWorld, and in fairness I must mention that that Reliant price is v.a.t. inclusive, we get our 15% off the ex-v.a.t. price, and from the factory it includes all the gaskets that you need to do the job. In both cases it is an exchange service, so you will need to dig up an old head first. But, as I have also said before, by all means take up any of these offers now, but don't be in a rush to fit the thing. Keep it till you need it. The only damage that is likely to occur as a result of them stopping adding lead to petrol, is that the valve seats will, in time, erode away, and so you will have your tappet clearances close up, and eventually lose compression, but in our engines, that is not likely to occur for many thousands of miles because our engines were all built with hardened valve seats. Aluminium never was any use as a valve seat material, so all Reliant engines have hardened steel ones as standard. I firmly believe that it will be years from now

before you have a problem caused by the lack of lead in your petrol, unless you regularly tow a heavy trailer at illegal speeds for hundreds of miles every week, or race the car regularly. Unless of course your engine is on its last legs already!

As I have probably said before, get one in whenever you like, and get a pair of manifolds properly matched to it, together with an appropriately modified gasket (with matching holes in it) and you will be ready to fit it – with the new thicker head gasket – when the time comes. I mention the thicker head gasket because many if not all of the converted heads have been skimmed to make certain that they are flat, as part of the conversion process, and in recognition of this fact, the factory now offer two head gaskets, the original, thin one, and the new, thick one. There is only a few thou of a difference, and even with both types sitting side by side I can't tell the difference, perhaps a pile of a dozen or so of each and it might show up. But you would need a micrometer to tell the difference on an individual basis, and then you would need to be very careful not to compress it – I will now sit back and wait for someone knowledgeable from the factory to tell us how to tell the difference at a glance ! By the way, thank you Mick Hilton for the telephone call about wishbones after my comments in here about them in the last edition. See foxes Den for details.

Dear Brian,

18/8/99

Thought you would like to know I have sold my Kitten. I had a 'phone call late one evening enquiring about it, the chap asked to come and see it the next day. It was the day of the eclipse, at 11:00am when he arrived and nearly dark! However within ¼ of an hour "Kitt" was on his trailer and was whizzing along to its new home in the West Midlands would you believe! I felt sad to see her go, but its new owner, Jim Jones, seemed very enthusiastic and told me that it was his 3rd Kitten, so I guess I did the right thing. I have had several other calls since.

Thank you for your help enabling me to sell it. Keep up your good work with the Reliants.

Pam Kerley - Salsbury

I am traditionally a bit slow to react to changes, but it does seem as though we have more people looking for cars than there are cars for sale, which surely has to be good for prices. Tthis was a case of an individual, not a subscriber, getting in touch with me solely with the purpose of selling her car, and what I do in those circumstances is agree to a free advert in the Mewsletter in exchange for the car's details, so that at least we have a record of it, and hopefully the new owner will be, or will become a subscriber. Having said that I am not sure, there are so many of you these days! but I don't seem to have a Jim Jones from the West Midlands on file, though I assume from what Pam tells us that it was through the advert in the Mewsletter that she sold the car !

Dear Brian,

12th July 1999

I am sorry that it has taken so long to reply but much has happened in the Churcher household recently.

Sadly I have at last succumbed to my wife's long term yearning to own an SS1 Scimitar for everyday use, so at last the Kitten has been retired.

This is unfortunate as she was running better each day after the fitting of a re-ringed bottom end bought locally, and a factory replacement unleaded head.

This means alas that I will not be renewing my subscription to your fine Register after enjoying many Mewsletters. I would be grateful however if a new owner could be found for the little car through the

pages of the Mewsletter as she is such a waste just sitting there. She is a 1977 estate in good fettle with much done to her. The only real problem at the moment is an oil leak the cause of which is not known to me. If there is anyone you know of in this, or any other part of the world who is interested, please give me a ring

Wishing you and all members of the Register all the best for the future.

Peter Churcher – Kent OML 952R

As regular readers will no doubt have noticed, I did advertise Peters' car in edition 29, and was about to file his letter but thought you might as well be kept informed – imagine wanting to drive an SS1 every day when you could have a Kitten, there's no accounting for taste is there ? Ed.

One thing I sometimes wonder about is what happens to the cars that we lose touch with, not very often do they turn up again, it does happen, but in less than 10% of cases I would guess, so I was delighted when the following letter arrived the other day:-

Dear Brian,

18/8/99

I now own a Reliant Kitten estate which was given to me by my boyfriend's father after I passed my driving test so that I could sell my Reliant Rialto, and with the Kitten I got a folder full of your mags. *(I often wonder what happens to them as well! Ed)* I found the enclosed Kitten Register renewal form (for 1998) on which I include the information about my new / old Kitten. I haven't enclosed any money, as I'm not sure if the Club is still running but I will send you my fee as soon as I hear from you. I notice in issue 15 March / April '97 a fella called Andrew mentions he sold his orange Kitten PAP 807R, I'd love to hear some history on this car from him. Yes she's still alive! Tell him for me please, she's a lovely little car engine's still good but a bit noisy from underneath, maybe worn propshaft? I'm not sure yet; Anyway I hope I can join your club, I'm after parts for the poor old girl.

Hope to hear from you soon,

Julie Bevan - Chatham, Kent

Dear Brian,

September 1999

This is really just to congratulate you on the appearance of the A5 Mewsletter both inside and outside. John Pearce is doing a great job on the cover front, and I am sure you find Brian Millar's template a very welcome aid. Also I think the type is just right. At the same time I must also thank you for all your unpaid hours of editorship!

Glancing at this latest Mewsletter while writing now makes me realise that my reading methodology needs revising. When the Mewsletter drops through my letterbox I usually grab it and read it from cover to cover at one sitting. On looking at it again I am now aware that on my first (over keen?) rapid reading I too frequently fail to properly register many important technical details that I need to remember for future use. I bet I'm not the only one to suffer similarly! *I am sure that you are not alone Peter, but the Editor is really to blame, if only he would index the thing properly!*

When I get 'Slice' I do make a note of such details, otherwise it means hours of re-reading countless issues just to check on one item. I've already spent hours looking through past Mewsletters and often only to find it was something relevant to a Rebel and not a Kitten!

I find that the longer one is retired the more domestic chores seem to dominate, and I've not had time to devote to the Kitten this year other than to have a new petrol pipe (pump to carb) fitted. The one on

the car had split at the rocker cover mounting bracket, and was hosing petrol everywhere. Fortunately it was on a local shopping trip and my nose warned me at our first stop. It also just happened to be just 25 yards from my local garage repair place, so I let them fit a new one. I hate to think what would have happened if we had been on a long trip out of town. The sharp bend to the rocker cover bracket is a very poor design. A now retired Reliant director friend once told me that the Kitten was heavily engineered, that may have contributed to the cars longevity, but, as we all know the works included some silly ideas too.

I have managed to find time to fit a tow bar and electrics to the Scimitar, but have yet to fit the panel carrying several relays to uprate the front wiring, nor fit the replacement halogen headlights, and the darker evenings are not too far away. My sympathy goes out to all other retirees with no time to do what they really want to do! *Yes Peter, perhaps we could start a support group – count me in! I was going to get a dig in here about whether we really need to know about your Scimitar, but I'll say nothing because :-*

Note Brian, Kitten and Scimitar – not divided loyalty at all, but allegiance to British made products. (are you listening Messrs Leech / Halstead et al) How many Leyland workers bought foreign cars while being subsidised by our public funds and where is Leyland now? Reliant have been passed from pillar to post but their survival deserves some praise though now even they are handling imports. Lets hope their success will help our loyal band of 850cc pilots.

Keep up the good work.

Sincerely yours – Peter R. Hemming – Newquay.

Thank you Peter for your comments, and yes, I guess I can't find fault with your argument / criticism re my past comments about Scimitars – but how often does Geoff Eldridge mention Kittens these days? (I have not seen a copy of Slice for over a year, so I really do not know, perhaps he does still give the odd mention – he does write to me occasionally, and I do owe him a letter – more work, oh stop moaning Marshall, and get on with it!)

Dear Brian,

..

12/06/99

I have not sent you anything for some time, and must plead various mitigating circumstances. – *It is quite alright John, I know all too well just how this thing called life keeps getting in the way of what we think we would like to be doing with our time, your efforts are much appreciated, Ed*

It was interesting to read of your fuse box problems and it has prompted me to start a new epistle on wiring instead of finishing a marathon piece on the factors to take into account when fitting an engine with different characteristics to an existing car. I have put out some questions to my Indian friends re the Diesel Dolphin but am yet to receive a reply.

Wiring harnesses and where all the odd wire sticking out go to, where they come from and what they do cause most people to go bananas. It is really very simple if you apply the "Divide and Conquer" philosophy.

I have produced an apprentices guide to provide a complete understanding of what you have in the black snake that winds its way round your car, and how you might approach repairing it, replacing bits, and understanding odd phenomena (like things being ON all the time, or not working) right through to having the knowledge to rewire the car completely and making up your own harness.

If you are not able to get coloured wire you can simply obtain numbered sleeves from an electrical contractor, use a different number for each end of each wire, and given a good set of terminations and a crimping tool, you are all set and ready to charm the snake.

Each circuit can be considered as an entity which is daisy chained onto something else, *but I am afraid that you will all need to wait till the Christmas bumper edition, oops, now I've gone and committed myself in print! Ed.*

Paws, or The Bobcat awakens

Bobcat :- 1996.....zzzzz.....1997.....zzzzz.....1998.....zzzzzz (Yawn)

“Hello, what’s going on here? I was just having a nice doze! I can hear the double doors of my home being pushed open. Cor, there’s a right draught up me rear shackles! What’s that? Oh, I remember – daylight! Who’s this stood near my air intake? (sniff, sniff) Ooh, that I like, this is a good sign, I can smell a real mechanics overalls at 100 yards; certainly better than my owners smelly feet I can tell you (Oh I do miss Thornleigh Stables where I was born.....sob sob)

Now then, things are looking up, curtains and waterproof covers off, bonnet off: wow, that’s better than Viagra, my battery has been connected, my harness is warming up nicely, (Joe’s feet have arrived) Good Grief, he’s taking my headlights out of their holders and putting them in place. I can see ... I can see !!.... Oh, hello, who are you?

Tempest- “Kitty”

Bobcat:- “Kitty, Kitty , what a daft name! (teeters loudly).

Tempest:- “don’t give cheek to your elders!”

Bobcat?:- “What do you mean elders, you’re ‘P’ reg. the same as me.” “anyway, why are you called Kitty when it says Tempest on your nose ?”

Tempest:- “Well I used to be a Kitten in a previous life “

Bobcat:- “Wow, so was I; how come you’re a Tempest now ?”

Tempest:- “To cut a long story short for the moment, I caught fire and had a body transplant.” “Why are you no longer a Kitten?”

Bobcat :- “ I was in a fight with a Mini in Cumbria, it pushed me into a field, I rolled over and my body could not be repaired!”

Tempest:- “Well, you’re obviously no longer a Kitten, and you look like nothing else I have ever seen, in fact having at last seen what was under these covers, I think you look cool.”

Bobcat :- “Thanks, I am the Bobcat.”

Tempest:- You said the Bobcat, are you an only child?”

Bobcat:- “Yes, are you?”

Tempest:- no, I have 27 brothers and sisters as well as some Vantiques.”

“Did you say something about Thornleigh Stables? “

Bobcat:- “Yes, I was built there by Uncle John and his son Robert”

Tempest:- “Really, I was built by Uncle John as well.”

To be continued....

Thanks Joe for the eavesdropping – Ed.

I should probably put the following comments in the notes page, but there are drawbacks to the new software if I do, as I have done on this occasion, pull the document into the template too soon, adding bits in the right place is not so easy after that step – I’ll get there. Anyway, I suspect it is one of you that I have to thank for the Newsletter that I get from the Friends of the National Motor Museum, and yes if there are sufficient funds left at the end of the year, and if they will accept the Register as a subscriber, I might sign us up. The interesting thing – the need for time, and money, once again rears its ugly head – but they are running a very interesting, well I think they sound very interesting, season of evenings, and I thought it

would be appropriate to let you know. Obviously some of you may be "Friends" already, and so be in possession of the information, but for the benefit of the rest of us, here is a brief

summary:-

24/09/99 "Southampton Speedway Remembered"

23/10/99 "Stirling Moss talks to Doug Nye"

13/11/99 "50 Years of BRM"

27/11/99 "Racing for Norton"

10/12/99 "Nigel Mansell talks to Murray Walker"

The cost of tickets for these fascinating sounding evenings are £6.00 for 'Friends' and £8.00 for guests, only one guest per 'Friend'

Application forms to join the "Friends" can be obtained from:-

Membership Secretary, National Motor Museum Trust
John Montague building, Beaulieu
Hampshire SO42 7ZN

I believe that subscription costs £18.50 per year, and that they offer a five year deal for £74.00. So now you know.

Once again I would like to say thank you to the unknown individual who has caused the Register to be on their mailing list this year. (I sometimes think it is better not to know things mind you, it just adds to the frustration when you know that something interesting is going on that you know you would really enjoy immensely, but equally you know there is no chance whatever of you being able to manage along – So I just thought I'd share the frustration!!)

Sales and Wants

Wanted, information about a Rapido folding caravan. Does anyone know anything about them and in particular if you can tow one with a Rebel? If you can help with any information please tell David Myers

For Sale:- We now have a number of RELIANT and kitten DL transfers available £3.50 each or £5.50 for the pair delivered. These are the ones for the back of your Kitten, don't worry if yours is not a DL, a pair of scissors will soon remedy that! Contact Brian on 0141 8866117

A Kitten chassis is looking for a good home, could be yours for the cost of collecting it plus a small donation. Contact Joe

Dave Snafell has 2 750cc engines for sale £50 the pair,

Andrew Norman has a blue Kitten saloon which is for sale for spares, or he could use a hand to break it, give him a ring if you can help or are interested in this East Sussex car.

There are two Kittens one saloon and an estate car, looking for a new custodian in the Glossop area, Darren Jones from Hollingworth is the man to talk to

For Sale:- Reliant Kitten, 1 owner, 51,000 miles. Original Reliant parts & Service books (blue folder) Key to service book, Owners handbook no accident damage (but could do with respray) Open to offers,

Make your Kitten even more distinctive with a set of Wolfrace wheels. Four wheels complete with tyres and all parts necessary to fit £100.

Wanted:- Heater motor, complete with fan, for a Kitten Estate. Contact Julie if you can help please.

Wanted:- Kitten Saloon or estate car contact David Asselbrough.

For Sale:- an abandoned Kitten project in Bristol is still looking for a home, so if you were really interested David, give the man a ring again, or anyone else talk to Richard Gibbens

For Sale:- a Yellow Kitten Estate car.. Recent respray but no engine. Contact Mike Cowie

Yours for a donation are two quite different Fox seats. One is an original passengers seat in brown, reclining in excellent condition, the other is a special high backed seat with adapted mountings to enable it to fit a Fox, for the drivers side, it too is reclining, for further details contact Joe

John Blagburn would seem to be in the position of being able to offer his services on a part time basis to service and repair Rebels, Kittens and Foxes, and possibly even to be able to offer a telephone help line

Wanted:- A Kitten estate in good condition overall, especially the chassis !! The money is waiting for the right car. The nearer to Oxfordshire the better, but will travel. Contact Mike Thomas

Wanted:- A Kitten project for the winter, preferably in the Berkshire area, contact Don Flight

NOTES

Well, as you will have noticed, my attempts at encouraging some advertising are beginning to bear fruit. The main benefit of this from our point of view, apart from making us more aware of certain businesses services, is that it will secure our subscription at the current level for the foreseeable future.

I should like to thank John Pearce, who had the RELIANT and kitten DL transfers made up for us, the 'RELIANT', and 'DL' part of these transfers have white letters with a black border, while the 'kitten' part is all black lettering. So if your Kitten has either missing from the back, or if you would just like a pair for stock, give me a ring or drop me a line – see sales and wants page for details.

Once again I am going to take a chance and say something in here that really ought to have had some letters or telephone calls made about the subject first, so if you just skip to the next paragraph, and the powers that be carry on reading this, it will save me some time and effort. We will not be offended whatever the answer is, but I have been asked about the possibility of a tour of the factory, so if any of you gentlemen could let me know "A" if such a possibility exists, and "B" whom I should talk to about it, I would be happy to hear from you.

I will let our readers you know more about that situation when I find out what the position is.

Well, I can hardly believe that that is another year almost over, I have just begun the next edition, thanks to John Bowcott I have 12 pages already! and it will be the Christmas one, and hopefully, a bumper edition, so I will talk to you again nearer the festive season – oh jings, it will be the end of the millennium as well !! John Pearce, perhaps a picture of your newly re-sprayed Kitten for the cover? Are there any Holly trees in Milton Keynes I wonder – just thinking out loud of appropriate background ideas!

The next batch of alloy rocker covers will, all being well, be produced next month. We have had the names TEMPEST and LIEGE added to our list of off the shelf options, so place your order now if you want one. Those who have not already done so should send a cheque for £20 payable to the "Reliant Kitten Register Spares A/C" along with a note of what yours wants to say on top.

There have been, as ever, a number of companies writing to me offering their wares / services, and indeed our insurance advertisers have hinted they may do us a piece of interest. There are a couple that I should probably do something about, one on car alarm systems, and the other on a battery additive, which uses the neat marketing trick that they would rather give the product away to enthusiastic club members than spend vast sums of money advertising it in the motoring press, though oddly, or perhaps I should more correctly say cleverly enough, they just happened to enclose a motoring press article about the product --I shall keep you in suspense no longer, and go and find the relevant bits of paper!

The product – see that took me less than two minutes to find that particular bit of paper, well two bits as it happens! as I was saying, the product is called EDTA + battery reviver, and Brian (yes, another one) Cox, of Practical Classics, who reported on the product in their June 1999 edition, seemed to feel that it was worth a recommendation. Better than that he describes it as Viagra for batteries – sounds pretty shocking to me!

Terry Pruce is the man you want if you wish to seek more details. He makes the claim that the product will help reduce battery costs whatever that means – I can only assume that it must mean prolongs battery life, as that is the only way I can think that battery costs could be reduced from an owners point of view.

His novel approach is to offer the product free to any of our subscribers who are "technically inclined" and promise to write to him with their results!

Anyway, have a safe and enjoyable time till then.

Brian.

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