

Reliant Kitten Register

MEWSLETTER Thirty-Two

January/February 2000



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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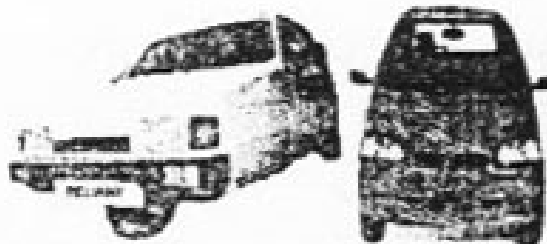
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The Reliant Kitten Register

MEWSLETTER No. 32

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

Rebel alternative parts *contact Brian*

Kitten alternative parts *contact Brian*

Fox alternative parts *contact Brian*

Our Mutual Aid Spares scheme *contact Brian*

Mewsletter pictures *contact Brian*

Our first front cover of 2000 shows us a very rare vehicle indeed. It is one of only a handful of Rebels that have been rebuilt on a factory supplied galvanised chassis ! This particular example has had a mention in these pages before, belonging to Edna Houchin, her husband, Den, did the re-chassis job in his first few months of retirement in 1997.

The Register has a, now fairly old, web page at :- <http://www.uk-classic-cars.com/kitten.htm>

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Welcome to the first edition in 2000, and a Happy New Year to you. It is going to take a while for me to get used to saying 2000 rather than 1999 I can tell you! Still, here we are no more leaded petrol. Oh, I was wrong (Yes, just sometimes that happens!) It seems that my lack of faith in the large oil companies was not entirely correct, as apparently several of them, but not all, have in fact adopted a similar chemical solution to the L.R.P. problem, and so many of their products, though not all, are in fact interchangeable, though there is still no British Standard for it! – This does not alter my previous advice as far as our wee cars are concerned well the Reliant powered ones at any rate!

Purely in passing I can tell you that I have still never bought a lottery ticket, continue to find it very restrictive staying down to 5,000 miles a year in the Kitten (must get the Rebel back into service and so

share the load) and am bemused by the fact that the Citroen BX diesel continues to manage to go further (though only just) on a gallon, oops sorry, a litre of fuel than the Kitten does, in spite of it (the Citroen) doing most of the short runs.

My thanks to those of you who have renewed your subscription for this year, the rest of you should note that this is the last Mewsletter that you will be receiving until you do renew your subscription – in case you missed it the renewal notice was the pale yellow sheet enclosed with the last issue, and if you have not paid since Christmas, then it is time that you did. (Sorry to go on, but I actually had a renewal for last year (1999) arrive on my desk in November – No, there is not a prize for last renewal of the year!)

I am from time to time asked how many of us there are, and while this is the worst time of year to answer that question, I can tell you that renewal notices went out to 265 people, 15 companies and individuals get a complimentary copy of the Mewsletter, and we hold details on 572 vehicles.

Brian Millar has been busy up-grading the database for us, and I now find myself needing a larger monitor to see everything on the one screen! Thanks for your time and effort Brian, it is a great help and is much appreciated. The new improved software does however mean that our membership numbers are all changing. Watch this space!

This year will see the Kitten's 25th anniversary, and it has been suggested to me, and indeed it is quite right and proper that we should, organise some kind of commemorative event. Suggestions and or ideas are welcome, but we will need to be fairly quick if we are to achieve such an event this year. See Notes on Page 22 for more on this important matter.

REBEL ROUND UP

My you Rebel running people have gone quiet, and here I am giving you the benefit of the first front cover of the century (Millenium some would have us believe even) as well!

No matter, I won't take it personally. Oh, if you did send something in, and I have not used it, please do chase me up about it, I have been known to mis-place the occasional article – bear with me please.

My own Rebel estate is needing the chassis building into a complete rolling chassis, and then the body removing from its very rusty chassis, and bolting onto the refurbished one. Oddly enough I was in that lock-up today (24th January) to liberate an old alternator for one of my Rialto owning friends. So I can categorically state that the Rebel chassis is still there, the paint is standing up well to what is now over a year of neglect, and I still trip over the 'U' bolts for the back axle on my way to bed every night – oh blast, another opportunity to drop them off at the lock-up missed !

As you may read elsewhere, Jim Spence is no longer the custodian of the 1600cc Fiat powered Kitten, Sam Stretton has it now, though I understand that it may be a 2 litre by the time it actually goes back on the road – still Fiat power though! It was good to meet you the other day Sam, thanks for waiting. It is always good to be able to put a face to a name.

Why the digression from Rebels to non-standard Kittens I can hear you wondering, well, it's like this -. Now that Jim has the Rebel on the road, and pretty nearly sorted out, just the steering to do something about, though he is coping with it as it is for now. He really lacks a current project. Now I know that a standard Rebel might not sound like a challenge Jim, but I would consider it with an automatic conversion, possibly even with a non-Reliant engine - getting interested yet? (I'd really rather it was Reliant powered, but could possibly be convinced otherwise!) Well I am allowed to dream aren't I?

Right, perhaps some of you other Rebel folk would like to give me a story for in here next time please nicely?

I know that work is on-going on some of them, even that David Myers is enjoying his with its 850cc engine, that he drives it so much he can't find time to tell us about it!

FOXES' DEN

Dear Brian,

29th December 1999

I'm rebuilding a Fox that had its whiskers, and brush, severely singed in a fire, and I have been keeping a sort of alternative parts list as I have been going along. I've done lots of work to the body, and made a new wooden dashboard, and rewired it. If any of the information that I have is of any use to members, they are more than welcome to give me a ring. I am not an expert on Reliants in general, but I have certainly had my share of experience with the Fox.

My lower front suspension tie bars were rusted to the extent that the nuts sheared off when I tried to undo them – *Yes, I seem to remember J.B. telling us to give them a good soaking in release oil for a few days before trying to undo them, Ed.* - My solution was to drill and tap the ends of the bars in a lathe, and to make studs in En 16 steel, and loctite them in.

I don't like to have sheet metal parts shot blasted more than I can help, as they can be distorted, and I don't trust them not to overdo the job and blow holes in the job. Instead I use a five to one solution of phosphoric acid. This is excellent for de-rusting steel, but must never NEVER, be allowed anywhere near aluminium or zinc alloys. Usual health and safety guff must be observed. Wash and degrease the parts before leaving them for some hours in the acid bath. Exactly how many hours is dependent on the state of your acid bath, and the rustiness of the steel. I use a plastic dustbin as a bath. The only problem I have had is that I once lost a thin spring steel component which seemed to have got itself eaten. I don't understand why, as I'm not much of a chemist. The surface which is left on mild steel is a grey sulphate coating which I rub down and prime in the usual way.

Beware of nationally advertised purveyors of windscreens. Needing a Fiat 127 screen for the Fox, a large national company quoted £140 plus v.a.t., but a smaller outfit did the job for £69 including v.a.t. A second hand dealer would fit a screen for me for £44, but it wasn't laminated, and as I hadn't seen it anyway, I didn't use his service.

Yours sincerely - Jim Lugsden, and a Happy New Year to All

Thank you Jim, for keeping us up to date with Foxy goings on in your neck of the woods (Beckenham in Kent) Thanks also for the excellent use of your last cheque of the last millennium (his 2000 subscription to the Register)

Our other Fox man, well one of them, Simon Chisholm, deserves special mention for all his work on chassis numbers based on a report I gave him a year back. Simon, I will publish details, but not this time – thanks for your time and effort.

READERS LETTERS

I have decided to give most of this section in this edition over to one of our Liege owning subscribers, who obviously has a lot of fun with his car. It does make me realise however, that perhaps we should have a regular competition page (or section even!)

Anyway my thanks to Gari Jones for the following fascinating story – well I found it fascinating, I hope that you do too:-

THE 1999 LIEGE-TARGA-LIEGE ENDURANCE TRIAL FOR SPECIALIST CARS

This Liege thing is getting addictive!

It all started on Saturday 28 December 1996. The entire front page of the Daily Telegraph motoring supplement enthused about Peter Davis' rather neat 50's period two-seater based on Reliant mechanicals. I put the article to one side and some time later visited Evesham for a test drive. Not only was the car beautifully engineered but for an original design it looked so right. To cap it all, the way this lightweight machine (you can actually drive it on a motorbike licence) took off, and the balance of the whole thing as it drifted itself through corners, was more fun than could surely be legal. I wrote a cheque for the deposit there and then.

Now this same Peter Davis was putting together an endurance trial for the coming September for the Guild of Motor Endurance. Starting at Liege in the fashion of the old Liege rallies of the fifties and sixties, it would be a quick run to Agadir and back, some 8,000 kilometres in 12 days. Peter was obviously keen that one of his cars should be on the event, and it crossed my mind that jumping the waiting list for a Liege might be possible if I entered in one. So I did.

Peter had already embarked on establishing a pedigree for the Liege through the rough and tumble of competition and had completed a number of tough endurance events and classic trials in the Liege prototype, including a win in the 2000cc class in the 1986 Le Jog so we knew the car was good for it (Yes, I know it was, I was marshalling one of the special stages when Peter came through in the Liege, I was only sorry that there is no time to chat at a time control in the middle of the Scottish Highlands ! Ed.) and Peter was certainly enthusiastic about our entry. And for sure I felt good, a bit like Hannibal Smith when my plan came together. But only a bit. I eventually got my Liege kit in December 1997, about three months after the Liege-Agadir-Liege event had finished. So much for jumping the waiting list ! Fortunately Peter offered up his prototype car for us to use on the event, a brave move considering he hardly knew me and this was the only Liege then in existence. I remember with absolute clarity Peter turning to me just before setting off and telling me in all seriousness this was an endurance event, and the sole objective for his car was to finish, no matter what. If I was to hit a wall or a tree or something, then I was to remember that a car can often go a surprisingly long way on three wheels. Above all I was to push on and get it fixed enough to get to the finish. Returning from the toilet I really wasn't at all sure if I wanted to go on with this. As it turned out, the Gold Award earned by the Liege on the event brought an ecstatic smile to Peter's face. Bringing the car back, in one piece, was just a bonus apparently!

That 1997 event was a classic for me but I don't think anyone entered will forget those experiences. Starting on the Spa Grand Prix circuit, we got the opportunity to drive Eau Rouge on closed roads (ok, but even taken at 75 mph - without lifting! - in a little Liege, it's still a mighty challenge for the likes of me). Within a few days we'd gone from Belgium through France and crossed the Pyrenees on back roads. Down the length of Spain, we crossed the Med and drove on up into the Rif mountains. I've bragged enough elsewhere about the Liege's versatility as the only car on the event to drive over a major landslide on the route, literally from boulder to boulder. Avoiding the hashish on offer from innocent looking kids by the roadside and constantly getting pelted with rocks by them were minor hazards compared with a late charge round the sheer drops on the Atlas mountains to arrive at the vital midday control at Agadir

Junction. After covering some 4000 kilometers we had barely 6 minutes in hand. Shrugging off the heat of the Sahara desert where the glue bonding the rubber silencing block to the timing chain tensioner melted (as did the red paint on the car all over our arms and legs) our engine tinkled its way back up through Morocco, Spain, and then through snow in Andorra and freezing fog high on the Cols in France, to eventually finish back at Spa in Belgium. The superb little car and its amazing Reliant 850 mechanicals had been driven hard through every sort of condition imaginable, and it never missed a beat. The crew on the other hand were totally knackered. In eight days we'd covered 5,000 miles and averaged a remarkable 46 mpg.

Now apart from traversing the deep muddy pools and rutted lanes and being hurled at the rocks and boulders on classic trials, the Liege is an absolute hoot on tarmac, where it corners at some fairly unlikely drift angles, while remaining so stable that it becomes second nature to let it all hang out, even to a supremely dull 50 year old accountant like me. So we couldn't resist entering the Guild's 6 hour event at Mallory Park in 1998 even though circuit driving was another new experience - and a brilliant one it was too! The lure of track days since then has proved expensive though, compared with the Guild's entry fee of £95 for a full 6 hour competition. Liege addiction can be costly! Then, in April this year, (1999) we entered the MCC Land's End Trial - another totally knackered and eye opening experience where we got the chance to witness at quite close quarters the awesome antics of the motor cycle combinations and to watch in horror as some beautiful (and highly valuable) MG J2s, Morgans and Austin Sevens, were literally thrown at the hills, the bits scooped up, shovelled back in and then on to the next section. Had I lived my whole life in a bubble?

In July we entered the MCC Testing Trial, best likened to a Production Car Trial run against the clock. Again, more brilliant fun and the Liege was ultra competitive. Owning a Liege seems to have knocked about thirty years off me but the grey hairs are sprouting a wee bit (like that bit of Gaelic Brian?) faster. Have I got shares in the company? No. Can anybody get me some?

At the end of November we entered the Allen Classic Trial, a one day event near Bath. More good fun, and although the Liege again proved it has the off-road climbing ability of a mountain goat, I was a thorough disgrace on the more slippery restarts. Bottom of the class Jones, and practice those hill starts.

On a better note literally (you should hear it), Peter has just fitted his supercharger on my car. This is early December 1999 and up till now, the engine has been absolutely standard. The only mod now is the bolt-on supercharger, a bigger radiator and an extra thick head gasket. I'll write more of this again (if Brian lets me) Yes please, Ed. but for now, just two words. B-I-o-o-o-dy hell! Sorry if this offends, but these were the very first two words I uttered, after changing up to third the very first time out with the blower. It is impressive! Whenever I'm out in the Liege it invariably attracts a lot of interest. When people ask what's underneath and I explain it's a 39bhp (40 on a good day) Robin engine those who don't know the engine often seem a little disappointed and without having driven the Liege, that's understandable enough. It's completely different when I mention the blower. Ok, I suppose I do like to pose a bit, but don't we all?

And so it was, that a couple of years after ordering our Liege a letter from Brian (of Kitten Register fame) dropped into the post box, asking if I could write, however briefly, about our entry in this year's Liege-Targa-Liege event. I wasn't sure if the "however briefly" was a hint or a plea. *Just a bit of encouragement actually - Ed.*

One of the first things people ask about these longer events is always cost. The Liege-Agadir-Liege event in 1997 cost £595 per person including hotels and Channel Tunnel crossing. We spent around £400 on fuel, and about the same on beer and a bit of food here and there. A fair bit of money, but deduct the cost of a twelve day holiday, and it's fantastic value. Certainly the best holiday of my life.

At £750 per person including hotels this year's 13 day 7,000 kilometer Liege-Targa-Liege event wasn't to be missed. Saving our pennies we did without a holiday last year and looked forward to the highlights of this year's event - the Alpine roads used on the Monte and the other classic rallies, the 45 mile

Targa Florio circuito Delle Madone, part of the 1938 Mille Miglia route, the old Pegusa GP circuit, the Coppa Bruno hillclimb, the Schlumpf museum, the Monaco GP circuit, Pisa, Venice, Mount Etna and so on. Just as you do on holiday.

Last minute preparation does add more flavour to the endurance theme, *(Thereby hangs a tale or three I may tell you, I know a number of folk who put themselves through such nightmares "just for the fun of it", and let me tell you it can be very stressful indeed! – having said that, the sense of achievement at the end of the event, especially when you do as well as Gari & Do did, makes it all worth while - Ed* and after two sleepless nights we eventually arrived at Liege in Belgium late Friday afternoon, just in time for scrutineering. A good late night at the bar ensured we were totally knackered before the event had even started. It was quite a struggle to make the 8am start on Saturday morning.

The first three days of the event passed in a blur of exhaustion. Countries flashed in front of the windscreen and were gone (Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, France, Switzerland, back into France, Monaco and then through into Italy); mountain pass after pass as high, narrow steep and with drops sheer as you like; the constant checking of speeds and times and route book instructions and making for controls (start at 8am each day, two morning passage controls, midday control, two afternoon passage controls and the final evening control). Always another gigantic mountain range ahead, thinking there's no way over that but then the twisty climb and the incredible views from the top. And oh yes, the lowlights like getting lost round the Monaco GP circuit (!) and of still being up in the mountains as it went dark which was bad news but best of all, climbing between the sheets at the end of the day and happily foregoing the call of the bar to grab some sleep before the alarm went off again at 6am. By the third day we were somehow still on for a gold award having cleared all the controls as far as we knew. Then that evening one of the organisers came over. We'd missed a control. We couldn't have. Yes we had. Passage controls were a nightmare, being anywhere along the route the organisers chose and open for just one hour. If you ran to speed they were no problem but if you were early or late and outside the one hour window then the control wasn't there and you didn't know you'd missed it. We'd been running late that afternoon but still within the hour so as far as we knew the controls must have been open at the time we went through. Maybe we'd miscalculated. Bewildered and bitterly disappointed we got to bed early and crashed out. Next day we woke feeling better and decided to put everything into going for a silver award - or bust. From then on we just thrashed the engine for all it was worth - and the more we thrashed it the better it went.

There are wonderful roads in the Italian mountains. The Italians seem to be enthusiasts to a man and given half a chance they'll race you with whatever they're in. We had to push hard to overtake one particular artic up a mountain pass - the youthful Gianni was having the time of his life. So were we. Another time up in the mountains in the dark with mist swirling, ice and bits of snow towards the top we were struggling to even see where the road finished and the unguarded drop started. Down to about 20 mph, probably less if I'm honest, a couple of head lamps were closing fast in the mirror. Easing up even more to wait so we could follow him down, a white Renault Traffic van shot past. But no chance. After three corners I was history and we were back on our own again as we watched his tail lights disappear into the mist. If the mountain roads are good, so are the people. Charging on through villages in the middle of nowhere, they'd come out to watch and wave the cars on! Imagine that over here? In one place up in the mountains they had a brass band out playing and crowds everywhere. Really impressed with this we pushed on feeling pretty cool - until we met a big cycle race coming towards us just down the road.

Italian drivers are wonderful too but you have to understand their highway code. It's different. You tailgate the car in front or the one behind overtakes and you move slowly backwards through the queue. You ignore red lights or get rear-ended. You hoot a lot, especially at the zillions of beautiful women who flash such enticing smiles back that you must just keep on hooting. Their whole way of life suggests we're missing something. They seem to have time to enjoy, time for siestas, no need to rush. But it's not a good thing to want fuel after midday, everything's closed. And watch those lay-bys. Here we have tea vans. There they have scantily clad hookers.

And so we charged on down through Italy, playing up in the mountains during the day and dropping down to the coast at night to stay in comfortable seaside hotels. A short ferry to Sicily and even more fun as we played on some slippery cobbled hairpins. Reaching our hotel at the half way point in Cefalu we swapped stories in the bar about breakdowns and accidents, of the streams of gleaming white but unmarked "Mafia" artics constantly moving loads (of what?) in and out of Sicily, and of unbelievable Italian enthusiasm for broken down crews whose cars were hastily despatched after being repaired and payment often refused. For us, the car was going like a dream and the engine seemed to revel in being screamed for hours on end. What more could we want? A reliable car, a luxury hotel, Italian food and good company. Ah yes, tomorrow at 11, the Targa Florio. We slept well that night.

The old pits and grandstand are still there. Before coming we'd watched a video of the 1965 Targa Florio and as we waited to set off at one minute intervals, we could see again the crowds and the cars, hear the noise and sense the danger of the great races there. The place is steeped in atmosphere and as we drove through the same villages we'd seen in the video we could see again the people standing or sitting on chairs outside their front doors as the cars screamed past inches from their toes. Up in the mountains we drove those same corners for all we were worth, imagining again the Ferraris and Porsches on this or that very bit of road in the video. One lap took the best part of an hour and as the pits and grandstand hove into view again we pulled in for a driver change. The crowds weren't there now but we felt like the winners as the first car round on that first lap, helped more than a little by starting at number 9. Do (rhymes with go) now took the driver's seat and off we set again. Tentatively at first because this was the first time I'd let her drive since leaving home (pure selfishness) she soon got into the rhythm of the mountain roads. Then she was going for it, tyres squealing and drifting through the bends. It just gets to you. It even got to Do, who until that point would far rather have been knitting by the fire with the cat on her lap. Absolutely wonderful!

Next day we were at Pergusa, the old GP circuit now looking a bit sad but again full of atmosphere. The track condition was good and when it came to Do's turn to drive she was off like a scalded cat and so thoroughly enjoyed circuit driving that I now have problems about ownership of my Liege.

Thinking that the rest of the event must now be an anti-climax we crossed back into Italy. How wrong we were. Up the Amalfi coast (remember the Italian Job?) we made such a pigs ear of the route book that we had to drive some of it twice. We couldn't have chosen anywhere better to get lost. Playing up in the mountains by day again we drove back up Italy, following the 1938 Mille Miglia route down to the Adriatic coast, and after Venice we pushed on for Cortina some 9,000 feet up amongst the most spectacular jagged mountain peaks imaginable. Then it was across yet more mountain ranges in Northern Italy, up the tight hairpins of the Stelvio pass and through snow and ice over the top before driving down the other side into Switzerland, then France to Mulhouse where we had a fascinating private viewing of the Schlumpf collection. Next day we got back to the finish and that was it really. Well, I suppose we have to cough to getting hopelessly lost about 10 miles from the finish and taking the best part of 50 minutes to get ourselves back on route. 13 days, 7,000 kilometres and we nearly blew it all within sight of the finish.

That evening at the presentation dinner we were called out for a Gold Award. Unsure if this was a particularly cruel trick of the red wine over there, we stumbled forward. But it was true! It turned out that most of the field had missed the same control as us, for the simple reason that a helpful Italian policeman hid the control board as he stood in front of it to direct traffic past. Force majeure was called in to play and that was that. Lucky or not? We'll never really know because neither of us can recall seeing the policeman directing traffic that afternoon. . . .

As for the Liege, it couldn't have done more. Once we'd decided to throw caution to the winds the car seemed a match for almost anything coming downhill (white Renault vans excluded) and on many an occasion going up as well. Now if only we'd had the supercharger . . .

Next day we were back in England. On a quick reckoning we'd spent around £350 on petrol and another £300 or so on food and beer. As I write this a thousand vivid memories come flooding back of the

never ending twists and turns of the mountain roads, of Monaco, the Targa Florio, Pergusa, Mount Etna, Pisa, Monte Casino, civic receptions and cavalcades, the 15km Coppa Bruno Carotti hill climb course, and the characters and the camaraderie. And the cars of course, V8 Cobras to Caterhams, D-types to Lomaxes, Marlins to Ginettas, some amazing home-builts. And oh yes, Cornelius from Germany whose Buckland let go on the first day. Back home he went, picked up his 750 Honda, and did the entire event solo on two wheels! All sorts of everything and everybody all having exactly the same fun and all far, far, too much to write about. You have to be there. Next time?

Gari Jones - Llanynys

Well, Gari, what can I say, "edit it" you said, no way could I possibly have taken out a single word. I even managed not to put too many of my own in! Don't get me wrong, I do know how difficult it can be trying to convey the exhilarating experience of taking part in such an event through the typewritten page, but you have treated us to what I consider to be a very, very good try indeed, to share those marvellous experiences with us - dare I say you exceeded the greatest hopes I had when I wrote to you suggesting the idea of a report of your adventures (is this the time for a dig about wishing I could motivate John Box to rise to my biographical challenge I wonder?) Anyway, thanks again Gari, and good luck with your adventures in the Liege for the new century – you will of course keep us posted please!

Oh, just a thought, but if Do is that keen, I am sure that Peter & Geoff would sell you another one!

Now a few words, and a plea for help, from our man in Bideford.

Oh, by the way, just in case you were thinking of keeping up with the Joneses, Peter Davis will not be able to cope if we all order one at once, besides, I don't have enough steering rack bearings !

Dear Brian,

December 1999

Herewith my renewal for another year together with my heartfelt thanks for all your efforts on our behalf.

You may recall that I enlisted your help in locating a rear bumper and door for my Kitten estate after finding an Escort embedded therein. *(Morris Vauxhall, oh sorry Maurice Chevalier 195? Ah yes, I remember it well, Ed)* At the end of the day a member from Hull came to my rescue with the necessary bits, and all is again well.

Regarding Kitten headlamps, some years ago I bought some Allegro ones which are identical except that they do not have provision for sidelights. I fitted them together with a pair of flasher sidelights from (I think) an M.G.B.

I wonder if anyone can help me with my search for a copy of the September 1994 copy of Practical Motorist? Apparently it contained an article headed "Reliant contactless distributor" and I would be very interested to see what it contains.

Once again best wishes and a Happy New Year. Ron Dark - Bideford

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### **A FORTUNATE JOURNEY**

Having just completed open heart surgery on our motorhome, I found that it needed a thermostat unit! I located one at a local Peugeot dealer in Barnsley (about 5 miles away), so I headed off a couple of days later I fired up old "No.524" (Kitten); to go and collect said spare part.

But, as it was Easter Monday, my optimism was unfounded – they were CLOSED!

Undaunted I went through my mental reference book and found another possible supplier. To get to this one I have to venture into the TWILIGHT ZONE of an area called CUDWOTH. As I was negotiating a SHORT CUT and travelling down a leafy lane, something caught the corner of my eye, “Could it be?” No, it was an illusion, a trick of the light. No, again I had a brief glimpse, so, slowing down old “524”, I crawled along the lane trying to “X” ray through the hedgerow until I came upon the leaf shrouded entrance to a driveway,,,, I stopped, looked, and “OH JOY,,,,GLORY BE,,,,ELDORADO !!!”

It was FOX! Hardly able to contain myself, I left old “524” at the top of the drive and slowly walked down, suddenly I thought to myself, “What if it’s not for sale?” “What if it’s already a project?” or was it just a basket case fit for a few spares??

But, although it had a broken headlight, although its tyres are flat,, although it has rotten window frames, on both doors, although it has a lawn growing on the drivers side carpet, although its filthy, although it is full of builder’s rubbish, and has no van top on, and the rear brakes are seized solid,,, although the dash is broken and in disarray,,. I thought to myself, “MY WORD, YOU DO LOOK WELL! “

To cut a long story short, my wife, Hazel bless her cotton socks, bought the car for me as an early birthday prezziie (July). (When I could stop her laughing that is!) after the first time she saw it, the first thing she said I am sure was “WHAT A LOAD OF RUBBISH“ But still “BEAUTY IS IN THE EYES OF THE BEHOLDER“.

P.S. I did get my thermostat (from the dealers) it cost an arm and leg (£17 + VAT would you believe?).

P.P.S. By the way FOX’Y cost £45! not bad eh? When I got her home and had a good rummage round I came up with a short motor, 3 carbs, 1 pair of mud flaps, half a set of new brake shoes, a new throttle cable, a new headlamp, and last but not least a full set of Reliant go faster stripes.

At this moment FOX’Y is residing inside a very large plastic bag, to keep the weather off. I’ll try to keep you informed as to the progress of FOX’Y and old 524.

P.P.P.S. (Sorry about this) but I got the van top too....

Yours in Renovation - David Eyre (524) + 1

Dear Brian,

29/12/99

I have recently bought a Kitten DL saloon (HVY 344S). It failed its M.O.T. on corroded lower wishbones where the anti roll bar link goes through.

Overall it is in much better condition than my estate (original carpets, back seats never sat on etc. etc) So I think I will have to break JDK for spares. I think I have just about every receipt for the saloon, including one from 1998 for two track control arms which are box section!?! In 21 years the car has had all of £4135 spent on it (parts and labour) mainly at Michaels. A rebuilt unleaded motor sits in my garage waiting for better weather before fitting. I used the thick head gasket and also removed material from around the valves to reduce compression as the head was skimmed during the engineering – might get 6000 + RPM out of it now!

Yours, Gary Coates - Brough

P.S. do you know of any original alloys or replacement wheels that will take 145\*10 tyres?

*Right Gary, thanks for keeping us up to date, I've had a quick look, and I don't see HVY 344S on the database, can I have its details please? Ed.*

Dear Brian,

9/1/00

I will not be renewing my membership this year because I have sold the Kitten. Sadly it had to go, with two Scimitars and a Kitten I was beginning to look like the Carlisle branch of the Reliant owners club. As you know, better than most, it is the space that all these cars take up that becomes the problem. The car has gone to another Carlisle chap who got all the Mewsletters, so I expect your membership numbers will remain the same. I spoke to the new owner the other day, and he informs me that the Kitten is now in Wales! It appears that mother-in-laws Euro box has let her down, and as in rural Wales your own transport is vital, the Kitten was offered to her as emergency transport. Apparently she was less than thrilled to have to resort to what she described as a four wheeled Robin, but needs must. However Derek tells me that she soon changed her tune after driving the Kitten for a few days. Perhaps your next owner will come from Wales rather than Carlisle!

Finally let me take this opportunity to thank you for all the work you do on behalf of Kitten owners for no reward (*unless you get it in heaven – need to be admitted first! Ed*) it is much appreciated. If you, or someone like you did not make the effort, the Register would not exist.

Regards and a Happy New Year, John (King) - Carlisle

*Thank you John for keeping us informed, though I have to say John, that parting with a Scimitar would have given you more space, cut your fuel bills, and I daresay reduced your overdraft further than selling the Kitten did! It is folk like you, not renewing, but good enough to keep me posted anyway, that help make it all worth the effort. Ed.*

## **GETTING TECHNICAL** - The Ultimate stud!

Good, I'm glad that the title got your attention, but it's nothing to do with sex – much more interesting are the cylinder head studs (poor souls). Many people move away from high strength steel to stainless to avoid the difficulties of head removal at a later date, only to find that the head is just as difficult to remove, so here goes.

Firstly let's look at what a cylinder head stud does, well by torquing the nut on the end of the stud you are really stretching the stud in its elastic region. As you put a load onto the stud, the stud stretches, and when the load is removed it returns to its original length, i.e elastic region. When a larger load is placed on the stud (when you overtighten the nut) it stretches the stud such that when the load is removed, the stud is longer, that is to say you have exceed its elastic region. By stretching the stud the head gasket is compressed, and should still be compressed even when the engine is heats up and the stud expands. If you have understood things so far, you will have no difficulty with the rest.

We now must choose a material, say a 300 series stainless steel, the type knives and forks are made from, 18% chromium 8% nickel is a basic composition. Unfortunately this is a low strength material which has a thermal expansion rate considerably greater than steel or cast iron. A 400 series stainless steel is much stronger and is the type used for stainless steel fastening, so go for a 403 grade which has the same thermal expansion rate as mild steel.

Now let's look at design. One reason that the head can be difficult to remove is the large contact area between the o/d of the stud and the hole in the head. This is made worse with a steel stud where corrosion takes place, but can even be a problem with stainless where the aluminium head can corrode. Between the two threaded ends of the stud, modern design dictates that the stud diameter does not

exceed the root diameter of the thread, so that if you have a break, the stud will always fail in the middle, and you will have enough material left to help remove it from the block. Also, back to where we started, a smaller diameter stud will stretch more for a given load, and so will maintain the compressive load on the gasket much better, so there should be less chance of the gasket failing ( gasket failure being presumed to be the most common cause of head removal ) With a necked stud the gap between the stud o/d and the head is greater, and so the head should be easier to remove.

So, that's the theory, now who out there is going to try it out? – we will await your results with interest. By the way, make sure that the transition in diameters is smooth and that there are no machining marks. If you want to know the practical details of how to machine a necked stud, just give me a 'phone

Phil (Hallam) - Stevenston - 01294 462089

*Thank you Phil, and sorry Tom that we had not had this information to hand when you had yours made.*

*I should mention a telephone call that I had from Phil last month, he was complaining about the fact that his Kitten can read ! It failed one of those struts that we have been known to refer to as track control arms, and he was putting the blame on me for putting ideas into his Kitten's head – well, naturally I felt that it was all Phil's fault for leaving his Mewsletters where the car could see them!*

## **SALES & WANTS**

For sale:- 1975 Kitten saloon Garaged for past year, no M.O.T or tax

For Sale:- 5 matching Mini style 10" alloys with 4 new Dunlop tyres 165\*70\*10" and one odd tyre. All special nuts, caps and wheel centers included. £100 the lot, buyer collects from John Pearce

For Sale:- 1986 Fox custom Pick-up with brand new exhaust to fit. John Coates

For Sale:- Tempest 850. Body Jig (Includes new Fox chassis) Wing and body moulds (GRP) Parts and assembly drawings. £500 John Box

For Sale:- For spares or repair, could be yours for as little as £50, and he will even help you break it where it sits if you like. Andrew Norman still has the blue Kitten saloon for sale.

For Sale:- 1976 Kitten Saloon seeks new home, unleaded head, new steering rack, set of original alloy wheels, new radiator. M.O.T till June 2000, Tax till May 2000.

For Sale:- 1976 Kitten estate. One owner this past 16 years. He is 77 and giving up motoring, many new parts, a clutch in Feb.'99. M.O.T. till May, Alloys, new back springs in '95. Offers to Mr. Holland

Wanted:- Reliant Rebel Estate. Please contact John Unwin

Wanted:- Kitten estate good condition M.O.T a must, contact Peter Swan

Wanted, still!:- A Scottish resident road tax exempt Rebel estate car. Contact Roger Brodie,

Wanted:- A good 850 engine. Contact Paul

Wanted:- Francis Healy, our man in N.I. (well, one of them), is still planning to retire this year. He has yet to find a Fox Camper van. So if you hear of one, please let him know about it, thank you

Wanted:- One (or Two) Dunlop or similar 10" alloy wheels. - I have four and punctures are a bind with a steel spare! Tyres not needed, but wheel nuts desirable. Contact Jeremy Gibbins

Wanted:- Kitten front uprights / stub axles, hubs and steering arms (plus optionally, backplates and drums) as removed for refurbishment or pristine, but not damaged! Contact John Theophilus

## NOTES

Well, what to do? Do get in touch with your ideas, suggestions / offers of help. Or indeed offers to take on the whole thing – as far as our Silver Anniversary event / celebrations are concerned. Something really ought to be done to mark the occasion, but with my other commitments in the first half of this year, I will not have time to do anything about it before July, and that really is too late to start – so HELP, PLEASE, SOMEBODY ! I do know that at the time of writing (24th January) The National Motor Museum would be able to accommodate us, and they do have excellent facilities, not to mention a Motor Museum! But is that too far south for most folk.....?

Bob Hunt, yes Bob, you! Thanks for your letter. I will try and find the time to reply personally, but one thing I see is that you have a different understanding from me about, and that is the road tax exemption rules. If I understand you correctly Bob, you seem to be of the impression that all Rebels and some early Kittens are road tax exempt – THIS IS NOT THE CASE! The 25 year tax exemption class was abolished a year or so back, and replaced with a 'Historic Vehicle' class, which does not roll forward, and only vehicles built in 1972 or before, qualify. Sadly for us, almost 600 Rebels were built in 1973 / 74, and so only the 1123 built before the end of 1972 qualify, (maddening how they built 1123 in 8 years, and another 600 in the last fifteen months of production, isn't it?) and, until they change the rules again, none of the Kittens or Foxes ever will! Sorry Bob, I don't make the rules. I do take your point however about Reliant and the Kitten's Silver Jubilee. Moves are 300mm, well afoot at any rate.

Bob Sayers tells me that he has had Peter Davis' blessing to set up a Liege Car Club, and has asked if we might formally recognise each other. So it looks as though the R.K.R. and the L.C.C. hope to enjoy a long and fruitful relationship. Bob has set up a web site at :-

[http://www.onelist.com/community/Liege\\_Car\\_Club](http://www.onelist.com/community/Liege_Car_Club) So now you know.

One point I should make is that if we expect to continue to enjoy the support of our advertisers, then we must not only use their services now and again, but, even more importantly, we must not be shy about mentioning the Register when we are talking to them! so that they realise that we are taking advantage of the services they advertise within these pages, thank you.

Right, that's it for this edition, take care, look after the car(s), and yourselves, and I will talk to you again in April –

**Brian**

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