

Reliant Kitten Register

NEWSLETTER Forty-Two

September/October 2001



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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REMEMBER THAT WE ARE HERE ON THE END OF THE TELEPHONE TO OFFER WHATEVER HELP AND ADVICE WE CAN.

The Reliant Kitten Register

MEWSLETTER No. 42

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

Rebel alternative parts

Kitten alternative parts

Fox alternative parts

Our Mutual Aid Spares scheme

Mewsletter pictures

This time our front cover has a rare vehicle, rare in the U.K. at any rate. Thomas Touw from Holland has most of them over there these days! It is of course a CIPHER, it happens to be the 2nd one that Tony Stevens made, and just happens to be for sale right now! So, if you've got a few grand to spare – see the adverts page, and give the man a ring. It currently belongs to one Nick Ray from London, who, unless I am mistaken Nick, has not returned the form to me with the details of the car, which I should have had before running the advert, can you send it on now please Nick?

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

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It should be noted that opinions and ideas printed in this publication are as recommended by our readers, and do not necessarily have the approval of the Reliant Kitten Register. Owners must satisfy themselves as to the suitability of any suggestions made within these pages as no responsibility can be accepted.

Hello again, and welcome. Listen, Help!, oh sorry, I meant Help! It has come to light - during the on-going operation to make all the Mewsletters available on CD, that my use of spaces between brackets and exclamation marks, question marks and the like, is wrong!, and should stop forthwith! Well, I did it that way quite deliberately, because I thought it looked better that way, but individuality must make way for these computers it seems, just who is the master and who the servant I wonder? As I was saying, help, I have recently discovered yet another gap in my records, I am still going to blame that computer failure over two years ago! Mike Webster, not a subscriber, but, and this is where I could use your help, is he the guy who was the W in WMC as in the 4 wheeled Bug? I saw a Mike Webster on television the other day, mid July, and that Mike Webster had a Frisky sport, but he also seemed to have a shed full of interesting looking micro cars! No matter, and not a lot to do with our fine Reliants, but having seen him on TV, it brought him to mind, and I thought I'll just drop him a line, but – no details on file, (presumably lost in the crash of '99) hence this plea for information.

Right, I'm glad I've got that off my chest, but while I'm in help seeking mode, does anyone know who it was that I was talking to on the telephone the other week? 14th July to be precise. I can't remember his name.... The chap who worked on the Cipher with Tony Stevens, he is currently building a special on Reliant running gear, and was looking for information on 13" wheels, I know it was an 01623 telephone code, but I don't have the number, if you have any ideas I'd like to contact him again. I must get better organised when I am talking to people.

O.K., enough of my shortcomings. John Johnstone must, I think, have secretly won the lottery, he has just had his Kitten resprayed, a new headlining made and fitted, new tail lights, new front indicators, new window rubbers (sorry, must be accurate, he could only get the one side window rubber) and I think door seals all round, new numberplates, new wiper blades and arms, seats re-upholstered etc. Yes, you're right, I'm just jealous! It is good to see them being looked after though. Perhaps if more of us do that we will see an increase in values. I can't see John selling that one for a while, but if he did the price must surely be getting on for £ 2,000. Difficult call that, John would probably say more, but if Judith were to realise how much money he spent on it, thin ice Brian lad. But you get the idea.

Closer to home, the wee red car had a problem. I thought it was a gearbox failure, and was really furious with myself for having failed to tie a tag to the gearbox that I took out of that car a few years ago. There had been nothing wrong with its old box, but we were in there changing the clutch anyway, and I had just broken Donald Jack's old car for parts, sadly it was worth a lot more money in bits. It had had a good gearbox, so for some reason I decided to fit it. No sooner done than I discovered that the original one had been the better of the two! So, old box put safely in lock-up – along with a couple of others of unknown parentage. The problem then was that when I came to need to replace the gearbox, I was incredibly frustrated that I had not identified the good one in some way. Then another individual's shortcomings saved the day... when Keith Parrott resprayed that car, about a decade ago now, he did it with the engine and gearbox in the chassis, and he didn't mask the gearbox very well, the tell tale red paint enabled me to easily identify the right gearbox amongst the pile in the lock-up. Aren't emotions wonderful – thanks Keith, next time mask it properly! (And I'll tie on a label!).

Back to my failings, well not just mine this time! Someone, and I have to say that I have unfortunately joined that band of individuals who have a Kitten that does not have its full compliment of heater control knobs – one has vanished from the wee red car, and I know that one of you was looking for a pair, rang me and asked if I had any, and I didn't. What I guess ought to

have happened then is that I should have run a wanted advert, but I didn't. So, whoever you are, give me a ring again, meantime I'll run the ad under my own name, and send one of those mutual aid spares forms to Phil Hallam and see if he can help that way.

I have been forced into emptying the attic of the house recently, in preparation for a complete hot water and central heating replacement, due to happen about now. This brought a lot of things to light, not least some old correspondence, so bear with me while I mention a couple of things, just to get them recorded, and so let me recycle the paperwork. Guy Buntinx, our man in Liege (Belgium), was asking about Kitten front dampers, and telling us that the prefix on Kitten chassis numbers - you know, the 147 or 142 or whatever, well we know that the 14 is the FW14, (Four Wheeler model 14) except that, in left hand drive form, it became an FW15, and so 150 and 157 are left hand drive saloon and estate respectively. Thank you Guy, it only took me 5 and a bit years to get that down in print!

I had an interesting telephone call the other day, from the chap who designed and built the Jimp, so I am once again able to update the blurb I put out from time to time, with more accurate information than it enjoyed in the past. My thanks to Steve Campbell of Tempest Cars for passing my name and number on. More on that another time.

REBEL ROUND UP

Ashley Dunn was on the 'phone the other week asking how many 600cc Rebels were built. This brought me up rather sharply as I don't actually know. So, a quick look at the database brought to light some interesting, not to say confusing facts:- The 4 earliest 700's on the Register are,

| Registration | Chassis | Engine | Registered on |
|--------------|---------|--------|---------------|
| LDB 203F | 100682 | 700016 | 1967 |
| MNW 309F | R100587 | 700020 | 22/11/67 |
| KFC 17G | 100752 | 700308 | 9/8/68 |
| XWU 917G | 100828 | 700520 | 4/12/68 |

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

in the 600's we have just a few :-

| | | | |
|----------|---------|--------|--------|
| BUE 447B | 1000003 | 82395 | 2/9/64 |
| EWB 265C | 100099 | | 1965 |
| KGD 790D | 100173 | 95877R | 1966 |

Now you can see that if we try to relate engine numbers to chassis numbers it all becomes, to me at any rate, more than a little confusing. One method of trying to determine the number of

600's built might be to say that since the 700's appeared to start at number five hundred and something, then the 600's might have ended not long before that. But since the lowest 700 engined Rebel has a considerably higher chassis number than the second lowest, or is the 'R' significant in some way that would exclude it from our calculations? No matter, I am sure that you see my confusion. The engine numbers used are from the chassis plate, though in many cases they still have the original engine fitted. If only I had recorded in an appropriate place the details of that E registered one I used to have, it had the early chassis and steering arrangement, but had a 700 engine. I must have the details somewhere, but that was before I started the Register, and so it is not recorded.

At least the exercise forced me into filling in a few of the gaps on the database, indeed caused me to add three Rebels to the file. Must chase the other folk for the missing details. It is only since last year that I have been recording a "last updated" date on the car details file, so things are improving, albeit slowly.

On a completely different front, but still with Rebels in mind, I have owned so many of them over the years that one tends not only to lose count, but also to forget things that were once common knowledge, and I can't remember whether the different types of hub cap, or knave plate as the parts book refers to them, was known to me. Did I forget? or had I simply never noticed, that there are two different types!?

I sold a set recently to one of our newer subscribers who acquired their first Rebel earlier this year, minus knave plates. I took my box (now that I have them altogether since the forced lock-up move earlier this year) to Yorkshire, and the lovely Alison had a hunt through and dug out a set, only to find that we had two types! The early ones are what you might call plain, while the later ones have a recessed centre, about 3" in diameter, dished in about – oh lets mix our units why don't we? 4mm or so.

So, that set me thinking, looking at pictures, brochures, published material, looking at my car! I was, after all, in the Rebel at the time!

What is the point? Well, not so much a point as a question really – are we correct in coming to the conclusion that the early Rebels, say the 600cc and 700cc ones, had one style of hub cap –oops, sorry, knave plate, and the 750's another? Why don't those of you fortunate enough to own one, have a look and see what yours are like, and let me know?

I am just back from an afternoon with Ian Johnston, he of the three Rebels, Saloon, Estate and van, and he tells me that he is having a new headlining made for the estate car in October. So, if you are interested in having one made for yours, get in touch with Ian right now. He did say that he would have his man keep the pattern, so that more can be easily done in future, but economies of scale and all that, it is quite possible that the cost of having two or more made at the same time, would not double the price. You can contact Ian on 01556 650365, or on the net at ian@orbister.org.uk

Oh, and by the way, the two Rebels I told you about in the supplement last time, - not a knave plate between them! And yes, at the time of writing, they are still looking for a new home, don't be shy about coming forward.

Brian.

Dear Brian,

24th June 2001

I thought it was about time I brought you up to date on the progress (sic) with my unique set of Rebels (am I the only person to own all three body styles at once, I wonder?)

Most of my effort has been on Sally the saloon (ex John Johnstone) She was a real pain to get started, but now runs fairly happily after a complete set of new ignition parts and some serious carburettor work. At some point in the past her accelerator pump diaphragm had been put in backwards, so the pump was inoperative. I sorted that, only to find petrol gushing out of a stripped thread at the bottom. Luckily Speedy Spares were able to sell me a brand new Zenith 301Z for a highly reasonable twenty quid, so I have swapped all the jets round to get – effectively – a new carburettor for the Rebel. The only difference is the lack of a wee triangle shaped thingey with a valve in it on the side of the carb. So I'll wait to see with interest how crucial that was. Meantime if you know anybody with a spare carburettor body I'd be interested.

The next job has to be I think the clutch, the engine slows almost to a stop when I press the clutch down, and it doesn't disengage fully. Not just adjustment I suspect, but a rather worn release bearing. So as soon as I can get the order in, pay day tomorrow, I'll get cracking. I'm hoping that I can do it without taking the engine out; my Regal manual seems hopeful, and there doesn't seem to be any significant difference in the engine mounting. Once that's done I hope to get the car on the road as a back up to the Herald. Then do something about the fourth cylinder.

Vanessa the van is running around quite happily, but only on my driveway. Three main jobs there 1. Repair the floor in front of the driver's seat where the outrigger is visible through a small hole. 2. Sort out rotten brakes, due I think to something funny in the pedal linkage, and 3. A small matter of a repaint. She'll be in the garage as soon as Sally is out (and I've changed the Herald driveshaft, and replaced my campervan's alternator) So I hope to have her done by the end of the summer.

Which leaves Esther the estate. Oh dear, my August predictions were a bit out weren't they? Currently I am trying to locate an 850 engine and gearbox for her.

Ian Johnston – Old Bridge of Urr

FOXES' DEN

Right, listen up you Foxy people, if you are really serious about rear springs which I understand the factory can't supply at this time, we can get a batch of new ones made for £ 100 a pair, subject to a minimum order of 5 pairs. I am prepared to consider carrying a pair in stock, so if just 4 of you care to put up the cash, we can go ahead. Delivery is 6 to 8 weeks, it is cash with order to get that price. That includes the dreaded VAT, but not carriage, which will be another £ 10 per pair. So it's up to you. This is the 5 leaf ones with the same mounting bushes as the Kitten.

Ed.

Liege Page

We have not enjoyed much on the Liege front recently. I did ring Peter the other week, and he is still forging ahead on full steam, full of ideas, enthusiasm, energy and motivation. (He said somewhat jealously!)

I did have a call last month from the owner of the 9th Liege to be submitted for its SVA test, it had just failed because it did not have self adjusting front brakes – no, you do not have to fit discs to comply, and Peter has since designed and had made a kit which could, as I understand it, be used to give a Kitten self adjusting front brakes. If you are interested, let me know, and if enough of us are, I'll talk to Peter.

I know that a number of Lieges have been used to great effect in a number of competitive events during the year, and I quite appreciate that those active enough to be doing such things seldom have the time to sit down and write about it – I could arrange to take dictation boys and girls...

Also, I notice that not many of the Lieges are the same colour (unlike all those red Tempests!), and so it did occur to me that a group photograph could make for a wonderfully colourful front cover one day. Either in a row, or a circle, or a horse shoe shape, anything really. Well, one has to have dreams and aspirations does one not?

The moral being, please take your cameras along, and see what you can organise in future – just say something like, “Oh, remember Brian asked if we could arrange the cars in front of a suitably impressive / imposing background, perhaps even with us in the picture, for the cover of the Mewsletter, let's get him off our backs, shall we?” And just do it!

It'll look good on Peter's Web page too! (or is that Mike's web page?)

Brian

Tempest update

I was going to tell you that I saw advertised, for a mere £ 1,500, a maroon Tempest (Oh, they are not all red after all then!) MOT till June 2002 advertised in September's Kit car magazine, and so I did, but it was snapped up very quickly at that price. It was in fact I believe the only original John Box built one still with its first owner, (I believe that quite a number of the kits that John supplied are still with their constructors) John Bartholemew of Twickenham was the man, G999 TKN is it's number. It had only covered 36,000 miles, and had never been used in competition which, while in some ways a shame, since that's what they were built for, it is also good that some are kept on lighter duties, where they can provide their owners with just as much pleasure and enjoyment.

I spoke with John B. after the event and he was keen that I should give Ian Foster credit, as he feels that I too often mention John Box, and fail to give Ian Foster the credit which he too deserves – duly rectified.

So much for the history lesson, Steve Campbell, who now owns the rights to the Tempest, has this to say :-

Brian,

28th September 2001

Here is the current news regarding my progress with the Tempest. I have, as you know, owned the project for over a year now – time flies when your having fun!!

Many of the early months were spent agonising over the drawings and jigs in order to decide how best to develop the vehicle. It was decided that the car would be recreated as closely as possible to the original, but taking advantage of the improvements in engineering resources that had taken place over the 10-year gap.

All drawings were put onto Computer using AutoCAD and this has allowed for the laser cutting of all the brackets, bulkhead, sub frames etc. Jigs were produced to manufacture the steel frame used to carry the aluminium and fibreglass panels, and trial production started in April of this year.

All of the changes made to the Tempest have been carried out to make the build process as straightforward as possible and this approach will continue for the foreseeable future.

Lots of effort has also gone into assisting in the refurbishment and tuning of the donor components, enabling builders to obtain everything they need to build a Tempest from the Company. This work could well be of interest to Kitten and Fox owners as another source of components.

One of the spin offs of converting a number of cars now is that we have retained as many useful panels as needed – particularly Fox windscreens, doors etc. so if owners need parts, I will try to help.

The first adverts started in September, and over 7 kits have already been sold. Our adverts are appearing in Which Kit and Kit Car magazine. Perhaps the biggest problem for me in the near future is to help locate donor vehicles, and so I am always scouring “Loot” and the ads at the back of the Mewsletter! If anyone knows of the whereabouts of unwanted Foxes or Kittens I would love to hear from them.

For the future I am looking at developing a new chassis, complete with replacement front suspension, in order to allow the use of Reliant Rialto donors – I’ll keep you posted on this. Anyone who has access to the internet and would like more information on the Tempest can now find us at www.tempestcars.com.

Finally, having bought Dick Harvey’s book ‘Tuning the 750 racer’ – I have started having some fun tuning the humble engine. I know that Peter Davies of Liege has now developed a twin carb set-up, and has even played with fuel injection and supercharging so I have decided to try to find out just how much we can safely extract from the engine and I will keep you posted as to my success - (is 100 bhp too ambitious!!)

Keep up the good work, Steve Campbell

Thanks for bringing us up to date Steve, no, 100 bhp is certainly not too ambitious, but will, I suspect, prove to be unattainable within the budget you are thinking of! - Ed.

Still with Tempests in mind, Dennis is building one – amongst a number of other folk – and he has a problem with wheels and hubs. Well, let me re-phrase that, he has a situation to resolve, and it revolves around wheels and hubs. Our input to this may be limited, but a problem shared and all that....

Dennis bought a set of wheels which he thought really suited his car, now I think they may have been Fox wheels, but I am not certain about that. However, when he went to fit them, they fitted the back O.K., but not the front. The wheels he has have a hole in the middle which is just 2" in diameter. The front hubs on his Kitten, in this case the donor for the Tempest, are 2 ½" diameter, and so will not pass through the 2" holes in his chosen wheels.

Now there is a lot more to wheels than the diameter, whether that diameter be of the whole wheel, or the hole in the middle. Rim width, which while in itself is important, has to be related to the offset, if any. Such matters dramatically affect clearance of suspension components, not to say the bodywork. Anyway, I looked the Kitten wheel sizes up in the owners handbook for John Player as it happens, and no, John isn't building a Tempest, just a long term Kitten owner who happened to give me a ring the other day, well, the handbook describes the Kitten wheel size as, now I may be getting my O's (Ooh's) and my 0's (zeroes) confused, but it looks like 350B by 10. Interestingly enough it reckons that while the saloons and estates have radials, the vans are shod with crossplies! Anyway, the questions were, what size are Kitten wheels? What size are Fox wheels? And are they interchangeable? The only remaining question in my mind is what vehicle did Dennis' wheels come from. Oh, no, hang on a moment, there is another question, or three, what size (diameter at the grease cap) are Kitten hubs? are Fox ones the same? and did they ever fit different diameter hubs to either?

Right, I think that's enough questions for one afternoon. Do please give me a ring or drop me a line if you can help, and I'll collate the information and pass it on to Dennis.

Brian

Competition Corner

I only leave this heading in this edition, because we had nothing on this front in the last edition, and I still harbour hopes and aspirations. Am I really going to have to travel the length and breadth of the land and do my own write ups people?

READERS LETTERS

I did wonder if I should start a new page for Fax messages, after I tried to ring John Blagburn the other day, a fax arrived advising me of JB's 1st law of motion :- "The time taken to go from bath to 'phone is in direct proportion to the distance between caller and bather."

So now you know!

.....

Dear Brian,

28/07/01

I regret that although I have used the Kitten daily for nearly 7 years, during which time she only ever let me down once, I find that even with the replacement Suzuki seats fitted, my dodgy back needs yet further support.

I have invested in the MC Smart car which upholds the tradition of being a fine wee car, unfortunately not British, but then again what is?

We have had a great deal of use from the car at little cost, and hope that it will pass to someone who will derive as much enjoyment from it as we did.

I wish you well, and thank you for the hard work that you put in on behalf of the Register. Also a special thanks to Reliant PartsWorld who have provided the majority of the larger lumps. Theirs is always a good price, and arrive so promptly as to make me wonder if they are telepathic, and have it packed ready to go when I call.

By the way, we have not deserted the marque totally, as a Scimitar is still at home.
Yours sincerely – Tina Cooper - Arundel.

*Thanks Tina for your kind words, and for keeping us up to date – I did advertise Tina's car in the last edition, but I suppose it might not be too late, feel free to try on 01243 551544 of an evening.
Ed.*

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Dear Doctor Brian,

August 2001

Please can you help - It would appear my old problem has flared up again - You know, when you feel the urge to purchase a 4 wheeled Reliant based vehicles. I thought I was cured when I sold my beloved Rebel FOW 578L to Bob Neal of Essex last year. I had previously got rid of a couple of Robins, a Rebel estate and a chassis, plus loads of spares, and was then quite content with the yellow Kitten van, using it for daily transport, and showing it at various car shows which the Surrey branch of the R.O.C. participate in. Then I got a call to rescue a brown Kitten estate. I reluctantly paid the towing fee to get the car home, and thought that the plus side would at least be a source of spares. The car sits at the bottom of the garden looking very sad. It crossed my mind to turn it into a Liege which I really like, a two seater rag top with wire wheels really got the juices flowing. But alas the thought of rebuilding yet another car from scratch plus all the other jobs in the house that need doing, I shelved the idea reluctantly.

At the end of June each year, we have the R.O.C. Southern Area Rally. I attended with other Surrey branch R.O.C. members and came across old pal and fellow Register subscriber, Bruce Emery. He arrived, not in the Moss Encrusted Hut which you sold him Brian, but in a smart Tandy Fox camper. I was very envious of this, as it is exactly what I wanted. I don't need a two seater sports car, I need some comfort, especially at the R.O.C. National Rally where I sleep in the Kitten and end up with cramp.

It's not until you see the advantage of a camper that you want one – Bruce's van is in lovely condition, and he's been doing a lot of work on it; anyhow, the seed was sown. Then I got a call

from Bob Neal, telling me that his son, who drives what was Bob Hunt's Fox, had seen a Fox Camper in the village he lives in, and it's up for sale. Finding the price, I hot-footed it to the bank to obtain the readies, and bought it on the 22nd of August. It needs a lot of work to bring it up to scratch, but when you have this incredible illness, it's hard to stop – the garden is filling up with cars again Brian; what's to be done?

All the best, Bob Dormer – South London

Well Bob, what can I say? I well understand the affliction, having suffered from it for a number of decades now. The big problem is that there is no treatment available, either on the NHS, or privately. You have done the best thing, subscribed to the various support organisations. We can sympathise, and help feed your habit. We secretly maintain the moral high ground in the firm belief that while you and I, and many many others out there suffer, at least the cars we love and cherish benefit! So there is an up-side to it all!

On a more serious note, and it needs all kinds to keep things going, but I firmly believe that it is much better to buy the very best that you can find, it matters not whether we are talking Rebels, Kittens, or Foxes (or any of the others) the fact is that the cost in terms of both money and effort in bringing a poor one up to top condition, will exceed the cost of buying the very best of them several fold.

I know several people, and this is good for the cars, who have spent several thousand pounds on their vehicle, not to mention hundreds of hours of work, only to sell it a few years later for a few hundred. Now, most of them take the view that the few thousand they spent, is a lot less than the many thousands they would have lost in depreciation on a newer more modern vehicle, and that such a vehicle would not have given them the pleasure, economy, and versatility that they have had from their wee Reliant.

You will remember the Kitten estate which was advertised by Donald Jack in the last edition, well, he hadn't actually told (or asked) the lovely Davina that if she were to use the Lotus, (or indeed the other modern vehicle he has recently acquired, which we won't talk about here) it would be instead of the Kitten, not as well! Divorce proceedings have been avoided I understand, but the Kitten is NOT FOR SALE! What a wise woman she is.

The market value of these wee cars continues to disappoint me, but the fact is that they can provide economical fun motoring, and are a very hard act to follow, even with machinery over quarter of a century more modern, never mind that much of it costs 10 times as much to purchase in the first place!

Oh, to answer your question Bob, the "what's to be done?" one, well, that's simple – get a bigger garden!

ABOUT HAVING KITTENS - by John Player

First I must congratulate Brian for doing such a wonderful job producing the "Mews" and apologise for being so slow in participating. My old word processor broke, leaving all the information trapped inside, with my having to start all over again. As a motor club magazine editor myself, I know what a difficult job it can be.

Sorry to interrupt John, and I have to say that I often hesitate to include such remarks, but have been persuaded that I should gratefully accept such encouraging flattery when it is offered. That said I do not do it alone, and John Pearce in particular, and Brian Millar too, are both instrumental in keeping it all together, never mind the other specialist individuals who help out in a variety of ways, including our contributors, thanks guys – believe me you have no idea what has been going on behind the scenes this past year – wait and see what next year brings!

I was always interested in the car from when it was first launched as a vehicle for the then Mrs. P. to drive, she did take a test drive, but found it rather cramped, and no decision was made.

My first Kitten had been owned from new by a former Reliant employee for whom it had been supplied specially in a Scimitar red colour, the name of which I do not know, but it is identical to Vauxhall "Henna". A works high compression engine was fitted at around 75,000 miles, and I acquired it at around 85,000 miles. After three and a half years of use, the 150,000 mark was reached.

You may have gathered that I believe cars are for use, not as street furniture.

The main problem which I had from the start was a driver's door hinge becoming detached from the door, an attempt had been made to glass it back in place, but after numerous attempts by myself at rectification, this finally took it off the road – a good argument for letting the experts do such work, in spite of the expense of doing so – Ed. I have acquired a door from a 3-wheeler owner in Birmingham, but have never got round to fitting it. I have a scheme to provide more reinforcement at this point, but like the man said, "life is what happens while you are making other plans."

Unfortunately once I take a car off the road, I find that it is a full time job keeping the replacement one running, and the poor old Kitten has become neglected.

The next problem was having a flat battery, and attempting to bump start the car down the steep hill where my lady friend lives. When I let the clutch in there was a tremendous lurch, causing the fan to plough into the radiator. It is just possible that I had selected reverse gear, instead of second, by mistake. Anyway I discovered that the engine mounts had rotted away due to an oil leak. Prior to that, my son had questioned the amount of engine rocking at idle, and I had proudly explained that it was due to the soft engine mountings, accounting for the very smooth running!

As oil leaks are a way of life with British cars – Ed prepares for a torrent of defensive letters! – I had not taken them seriously enough. It transpired that only a front crankshaft oil seal was needed, just about the only easy job on the Kitten – there is a moral there somewhere.

Replacing the radiator I found was a niggling job, which I improved as follows :-

Make a short stud, ¼" UNF. This can be done by cutting down a screw, the remainder of the screw can be used for the radiator mounting as they have to be very short and are never obtainable in the right length anyway. The stud is screwed into the mounting frame at the top on one side and secured with loctite or superglue, with another on the opposite side and the radiator hung on them while the remaining screws and the nuts are fitted. Otherwise it is very difficult to

hold the radiator and simultaneously start one of the short screws, particularly the one nearest the ignition coil.

When working on the brakes, inevitably the nasty little adjusters at the front were seized and I had to destroy them. I carried out my own conversion, cutting off the shank, shallow drilling and tapping the eccentric and locking in a short hex screw with a dished spring washer. This provides a substantial hexagon on which a spanner can be used.

When I required replacement wheel cylinders I was provided with ones with an increased bore size which was specified for a while by Reliant. I thought at the time that it was a good idea, to get more braking force, but it results in more travel at the pedal and running out of adjustment sooner, especially if the drums are out of round, which they always seem to be.

By the way, one of your correspondents is wrong, increasing the master cylinder size, REDUCES the braking force, although it needs less pedal travel. To increase the unit pressure on the fluid, you would need a SMALLER bore cylinder, but again, too much stroke, so best leave well alone.

Similar problems arise when fitting larger cylinders at the rear, it can result in interference with the brake drums, and difficulty in fitting the dust seals. The problem can be further aggravated by fitting the wrong width of shoes. Much of this is caused by general suppliers arbitrarily assuming that various "Mini" parts can be used.

I had a Reliant agent fit a front wheel cylinder on one side, and he used one of the previous spec, resulting in me driving round for some time with different ones on either side, strangely the car did not seem to pull over. This could be confusion between Fox and Kitten brake cylinders, Ed.

Incidentally it was, and still may be possible to obtain complete rear adjuster Kits. Needless to say I ALWAYS rebuild EVERYTHING with Coppaslip or similar to prevent seizure.

The car had been fitted with an auxiliary cooling fan which did not work, so I fitted a new motor, and removed the belt driven fan, and switched the fan manually having installed a temperature gauge with probe into the radiator. I have been trying to develop an electronic control mechanism without success so far.

John Player - Coventry

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Dear Brian,

30th August 2001

While at an autojumble recently I came across a company called Transport Source Books that produce books made up of reprints of road tests and articles on various cars. The book on the Reliant Robin, Kitten and Rebel costs £10, and is quite an informative read, especially if you weren't a reader of the motoring press at the time of the cars launch.

I see in the September issue of Which Kit? they have a five page article on the Fisher Flyer, a new Kitten based Kit car. There seems to be quite an interest in the Kitten in the kit car

world at present, probably because using an existing chassis means that they can avoid the quite complicated and expensive single vehicle approval test.

Maybe I should buy myself a good condition standard one before they all disappear!

Gareth Bond - Bristol

Thanks for that Gareth, I suspect that another reason that so many people are turning to the Kitten as a donor car is because, finally, it is being recognised for just how good it is, that and the fact that they are of course all far too cheap.

Gareth was also pointing out to me in his letter, that Transport Source Books can be contacted at, wait for it now, Gareth, you listening? Trevor Alder, the book's compiler, tells me, today, 14th of September 2001, that they have moved and are now at :- ,P.O. Box 56, Ipswich Suffolk IP2 0JY, tel :- 01473 212912 or on the net at e-mail tsb@easynet.co.uk the website being at - www.tsbooks.co.uk

Trevor further tells me that the retail price of £ 9.99 will be reviewed at the end of this year, so now would be a good time to do something about it, if you are interested. (Don't blame me if they decide to reduce the price!) He has further agreed that he will do them for Kitten Register subscribers, free of postage and packing charges till the end of this year. Do you know someone who would like one for Christmas? So, give him a ring, mention my name, and the Register, and you can have one, or indeed more than one, at £ 9.99 a time, delivered within 14 days (usually a lot less he tells me). This offer applies to the U.K only I am afraid, he will quote you a price for delivery abroad I am sure.

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Update on the AA Scheme

As those of you who opted to save a few pounds through the AA Motor Club Scheme with which the Register is now affiliated will be aware, I got it all wrong.

The scheme operates in two completely different ways depending on whether or not you are already with the AA. I had not understood that, and as a result sent the wrong information to some people.

So, just to keep me right in future, it works like this :-

AA Motor Club discount scheme

Existing AA Members :-

You can only transfer to this scheme when your existing membership is due for renewal.

You do it all over the telephone by ringing them on 08705 444444, and quote the Point of Sales number 777496. I am further told that it might help if you also quote what they call the Affinity Group Number, which is, I am told, 423. You will need to have to hand your AA membership card or renewal notice when you ring them.

People joining the AA, who are not current AA members, need to contact me for one of the yellow AA Motor Club Application forms, as they can only apply to join the scheme by post, using that form.

In either case it is my understanding that your subscription must be paid through the bank.

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FROM THE IN TRAY

Events we are invited to this time include :-

The Friends of the National Motor Museum have their interesting autumn evening lecture programme planned as follows :-

Friday 5th October “Vintage Speedway Magazine Evening”

Saturday 20th October “The Caterham 7 – Past, present and Future”

Saturday 24th November “TT Riders Evening “Norton versus Triumph”

Saturday 8th December “Peter Duke’s Film Evening”

For further details and tickets contact Theresa Godwin at the National Motor Museum, Beaulieu, Hampshire SO42 7NZ or tel :- 01590 614654 on her direct line.

I received a copy of Don Pither’s most recent book the other day, “Reliant Regal & Robin” which is as it happens, about as well named as the Reliant Kitten Register! Because it has no less than 17 pages devoted to the Rebel, Kitten and Fox, with lots of pictures, mostly publicity pictures from the time, and quite a lot of information as well. None of it new, and some of it inaccurate, and certainly incomplete, but there we are. The book is published by Sutton Publishing ISBN 0-7509-2521-3 and retails at £12.99. If you remember from earlier this year however, our friends at Haynes Publishing will provide you with a copy at a discounted rate if you buy it through them and quote your membership number.

Our very own Simon Chisholm and Bob Neal even get a mention in the acknowledgements.

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Following on from Dick Goodall’s “Meetings” last time, Gareth Bond was telling me the following :-

I don’t need a physical training programme, I get plenty of exercise at the office, jumping to conclusions, Flying off the handle, flogging dead horses, And stabbing colleagues in the back.

I’m only glad I don’t work in your office Gareth! Ed.

GETTING TECHNICAL

Just using this as a note pad really. I was asked to find out what it was that Phil Hallam used to such great effect to insulate the noise from the transmission on his Kitten after its rebuild a number of years ago; as one of our number, oh, make that 2, because Moira's wee red car does not have any either. Anyway, where Reliant crudely filled a plastic or polyethylene bag packed with fibreglass, Phil used a much more appropriate and effective material, called Cooltek, it, or something very like it, is available from the likes of Demon Tweaks. O.K., I'll dig out their number for you :- 01978 664466

I should have known better! By Al Osborn

Being as I earn a small living from British Motorcycle Electrics you would think my car's electrics would be well ahead of the game. But let me tell you a story; Symptoms; - Slight loss of low rev stomp (being as the present engine had been so good, where had it gone?) Indifferent starting, that load of churning where you think the float bowl is out of petrol. Then you get the fire once – spit out the starter syndrome. You keep on churning in the hope the next one will catch, still it spits out. Eventually we develop a sticky bendix, so this adds to the frustration. Then we get a cough at low revs, but only the single one, so not an easy one to find, above 2,000 RPM all is sweetness and light, bats along nicely. We strip and clean the carb., yes a bit of rubbish, yes, a bit better, but still coughs when hot. Eventually we fiddle under the bonnet at night – hello, there is Blackpool illuminations between the coil output and one of the LT connections (3 connectors on here) so we remake all that. Better? No, still coughs at roundabouts, still indifferent starting sometimes.

Then my pal comes round as I'm changing the starter, after muttering about the coughing and coil connections, he points out that both the LT coil connections are just that bit loose, and yes, with the engine running, if you wiggle it just right, it stops!

Cure? New coil, don't be silly, that's one of the few parts that's done the 230,000 miles, it's only the rivets that are loose, clean up the brass double lucar connectors, why don't they make micro wire brushes? You can't really get in there with wet and dry, so a careful scratch / file with a needle file gets it all clean, the rivet heads as well. Then carefully flatten the rivet head to stop the movement, then you solder it, so that the whole centre area is nicely tinned with solder.

Result; - Well would you believe it, it starts well (well summer cold) like a hot engine!! And when hot you hardly have turned the key and it's off. The bottom end stomp is back, 10 MPH in third gear, perhaps even 20 in top if you want to. Makes one lazy at roundabouts though, you tend to plonk around in the high gear, and then get embarrassed when other road users appear and you get in the way. There must be a moral here somewhere, but again it proves the old addage, when you think of petrol it it's always electric, and vice versa of course. Give those coil connections a good looking at!

Alan Osborn 18th July 2001

Dick Goodall has, as ever, been keeping my in-tray from depleting too much, and I had laid aside (in fact a very bad idea, as I seldom seem to find the laid aside things till years later!) a report which Simon Chisholm had compiled from his extensive collection of Reliants both three and four wheeled, and for the purposes of this exercise excluding his 3 Rebels!

Rear Road Springs are the topic, or at any rate the size they ought to be, and the distance between mounting centres on a number of chassis.

It makes very – oh dear, the adjective decision again! I was going to say worrying, but that is not really appropriate, certainly sadly not surprising, perhaps just interesting? See what you think :-

One paragraph of Dick's letter was :-

Kitten / Fox rear spring conundrum. This is quite a fascinating one. Enclosed is a sheet of info from cars owned by Simon Chisholm. By Murphy's law it will probably confuse rather than simplify matters? I really must measure up PYB's chassis as well.

APPENDIX 7 – REAR ROAD SPRINGS - S. Chisholm July 2001

The sizes below were measured on vehicles in my possession

3 wheelers – Early Robin & Rialto

Chassis spring hanger centres - 34 3/16"

The Robin has a single leaf spring tapered in thickness plus a small assister spring under it.

The rialto has a single leaf with no assister.

Later Robin - No information at present

Kitten

Series 1 Aug.'75 to July '76

Chassis spring hanger centres - 35 1/4"

2 spring leaves plus a short assister under them.

Series 2 Aug.'76 to Jan '78 (Feb.'78 to Oct.'79 – no cars in the Register) - No information at present. Probably only about 20 to 40 cars made?

Series 3 "SCD3" Nos. - Nov.'79 - Aug.'83

Chassis spring centres - 34 1/8"

3 spring leaves all 1/8" thick plus a short assister lead under them.

Kitten Van - No information at present.

Fox

The Fox is a commercial vehicle, with a heavier fibreglass body than the other models, and heavier springs to suit. 5 spring leaves

Rear spring bushes

I have Metalastik bushes for both the Robin and Kitten

Robin bush marked 13 / 1519 / 914

Kitten bush marked 13 / 1519 / 316(?)

The question now is should I say anything at all? We (Moir and I) did purchase a brand new Robin in 1975 from Havelocks in Glasgow. It was a 750, and had single leaf rear springs –

no assister leaf at all. One of them bent just out of warranty, and a few months later the other one broke. Hence the fact that Robin rear springs are firmly implanted in this memory of mine! I noticed that by then the Robin 850 had two leafs to its back springs, the second one being what you would describe as a small assister leaf.

So, a question Simon, when you refer to early Robins, do you mean 750 ones? or pre-Rialto 850's?

Anyway, thank you Simon for taking the time to record the information, and for sharing it with us.

Ed.

Also from Dick's letter (it was dated July 10th by the way)

Disc Brakes. Several members have asked for possibilities – the Minispares catalogue offers disc conversions for Minis with 10" wheels.

Anyone want to sort out the engineering and costs involved?

Kitten rear brake cylinders. It has been said that the pattern cylinders can be a wee bit too big. The Minispares catalogue lists cylinders with both 5/8" and 3/4" bores. I wonder if this affects the outside diameter of the cylinders?

Dick Goodall – No. 157

Now, just as I was saying earlier about tidying up here, and old correspondence in need of recording prior to re-cycling, and with Dick still in mind, he was good enough to share the following with me a while back – June 1997 to be precise, thanks for dating your letters Dick!

Just found a program for the BBC Master which can be used to help make anagrams of words (now he's got me thinking, what else would you make an anagram of?) So, my unfortunate friend, here are a few appalling examples which might interest you. In each case the letters can (I hope) be rearranged to make a name of a car make, maker or model, or both. Oh, the use of upper case letters is not significant.

Dion Vacchi
BMW Aukherm
Cave Liar
Tadbuk Seer
Lil Dacca
Rai Valda
Baracco
Dr. Avelorn
Dorset FIFA
Jettas crow
Shock Vim
Lura Net
Bum hit, Isis !
Prove weird
Rons Total Mire
Clio Lorrys

Mire Lad
GB bound
But Sam bet loan
Ada Long
Dad';s tarn
AFC velega

Now here's an odd one, not a car or a car maker - Werm Settle – should be easy for you Brian!

Tell you what, just to make life less dull, and a bit competitive, Dick excepted, the first set of correct answers I receive through the post will qualify for a free subscription to the Register for 2002 – don't ever say I'm not good to you!

Ed.

Oh, and in case you were wondering, no that does not mean that I can't re-cycle that bit of paper now, if just means that I will move on to the next edition, and type the answers in there now! – Ahh, more progress!!

Sales and Wants

For Sale :- 1969 Rebel saloon. This road tax exempt example can be yours for £ 400. Contact Roger Chant.

For Sale :- 1978 Kitten DL Estate. No tax or test, but in running order. Contact W. Robinson

For Sale :- Cipher No. 2, the second Stevens built Cipher is on the market. In excellent condition, contact Nick Ray

For Sale :- A rare opportunity to obtain a 1 owner Kitten estate. Contact John Hart

Wanted :- Tempest Cars urgently require Reliant Fox(s). Preferably MOT failures, condition unimportant. Buyer will collect. Tel 07989 963050 or 0151 666 1648.

Wanted :- Kitten heater control knobs, the wee black plastic bit (with a small metal spring steel retaining clip inside!) that goes over the end of the metal operating lever. Please give Brian a ring if you have any that you don't need. 0141 8866117.

Wanted :- 850 engine and or gearbox. Zenith 301Z carburettor body. Rebel quarterlights. Fair prices paid. Contact Ian Johnston

Wanted :- Kitten bumper end caps. I am from time to time asked for these, and the three that I have are all damaged, if you can help, please give me a ring – Brian 0141 8866117.

Wanted :- Kitten saloon side window rubber for the drivers side, will take a pair if OK. Contact Al Osborn

Wanted :- Reliant Kitten Van or estate car, must be on the road, preferably in Scotland, but not essential

Wanted :- Reliant Kitten estate, any colour, must be in good condition and a runner. Contact Brian Radford

Wanted :- Kitten heater mounting rubbers. The wee round feet that come with the mounting bolt bonded onto them. If you can help, please contact Charles Barker

NOTES

Once again I find myself on the last page (or two!) of a Mewsletter and there are lots of things to say! I can't remember who it was that was asking about electric Kittens recently, and, at the time that he was in touch, I couldn't remember who it was that had one. Chris Lowe, you listening Chris? I'm now sure that is was you who had an electric one. Is it still in use? And if whoever it was that was wanting to know more gets in touch, I'll put you in touch – ah, another bit of paper off my desk!

To go back, briefly, to my soapbox on vehicle values, Richard Plaxton, yes I'll name names, recently sold a fairly scruffy looking estate car to John Blagburn, for a sum which I will not mention in print as I believe that such matters are between the individuals involved, suffice to say that it was at the top end of prices you will see asked. Within less than 48 hours Richard, and I am sure he will forgive me for saying this, was wondering why he had sold such an excellent wee car at all. Yes he has another one, but it doesn't have such a good engine, nor good suspension, nor good steering nor good brakes, nor did it have the fancy Lumenition electronic ignition which helps cause the engine to start first time every time, it did have the 12" wheels with the low profile tyres which improve what is already good grip – I could go on, but I saw some of the text messages that John received from Richard over the first weekend after the sale, and I have no wish to feel that I might be party to a suicide! Now any one of these shortcomings on his current car could be resolved for somewhere between £100 to £1,000 (just you ask Dick Harvey what he takes to do an engine these days if you don't believe me!) So, what at first may have sounded like a good price for the car, in fact represents about a tenth of what it is going to cost to bring another one up to that standard – never mind the work involved!

Which just adds weight to what I was saying earlier about the wisdom of buying the very best you can find. That said, you have to take care not to buy a whole lot of trouble, we can all be taken in by a nice respray, mechanical and chassis condition is vastly more important. So too is documentation. Richard hadn't realised that the car had been fitted with a fast road cam, nor did John, till he reset the tappets, and the engine would not run, lack of compression. He was almost in tears, you know the situation, you spend a couple of hours tinkering in an effort to improve things, only to make them much worse. Anyway, John had all but given up, gone in for a wash and cuppa, and was looking through the documentation, trying to avoid his tears getting onto the paperwork, when he discovered the information on the fast cam, which needs much wider tappit clearances, he did that, and hey presto, compression returned!

John does feel deprived however. He has never before owned a Reliant that does not use oil. He is so used to topping it up, it makes him feel that he is looking after it properly! He has now covered over 1,000 miles in the Kitten, and not a drop of oil has it consumed. It will soon mind you, he checks it so often that the quantity he wipes off the dip-stick three times a day (because he can't believe it) will mount up!

Update on that. BT were offering I think for the one weekend only, a deal that you could ring anywhere in the UK for up to an hour and it would not cost more than 20p, so I gave John a ring to see how things were, and he has done an oil change, and in 2,000 miles it has only used a few hundred ml, or is that ML, or even MI, anyway, not a lot of oil – and I still maintain that he wipes most of that off on his cloth when he checks it!

On the “best” front, I don’t suppose that many potential Kitten owners would consider for a moment an AA or RAC inspection, given that the current cost of such an inspection is over £100, and therefore a substantial part of the potential purchase price of the vehicle, yet more proof, if proof were needed, that Kittens, and Rebels and Foxes are far too cheap.

Right, I know I’ve wittered on a bit, A bit! A bit? I’ve just had to proof-read all this wittering, and it’s taken me 1 ¾ hours! Mrs Registrar! but you do have one more A4 sheet in this edition than usual, and by the time I realised that was going to be the case, it seemed as easy to witter on a bit, rather than deprive you of any of the more interesting articles! Just over the 10,000 words this time if you were wondering.

Oh dear, after Moira’s corrections and editing, I now find that the last page is less than half full! So, I’ll take the time to apologise to Bob Hunt and John Player in particular for changes to their letters, just had to get things to fit in chaps. I don’t think we have altered the meaning of either article in any significant way.

This does give me a chance to mention John Blagburn’s very recent comment about Kitten front flexible brake hoses. The pretty new ones on his car were in fact too long. The observant John noticed, when he was under there greasing the ball joints like a good lad, that one of the pipes was almost worn through where, because it was too long, it was fouling the inside rim of the wheel on full lock. Now you might think that an observant MOT man would have spotted that, and so he should have, but they too are human, and in my experience can be all too easily impressed when they step under an older vehicle, and see that it is obviously well cared for. So, especially if you have recently become the custodian of a Kitten, do, when you are under there greasing the ball joints and the propshaft too, this weekend, like you were going to do just before this magazine fell through your letterbox and distracted you, right? Seriously, I sometimes wonder how many of us actually have a grease gun * these days, and do take the time to look after these ball joints properly. At almost £200 for a full set, it really is worthwhile looking after them properly, never mind the safety aspect!

I don’t any more, and Phil only gets to do mine once a year, which I can live with, given that we cover less than 5,000 miles a year in the Kitten these days, is not really often enough!

Talk to you again nearer Christmas, yes it will soon be that time again – have you started your cards yet?

Brian

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