

Reliant Kitten Register

NEWSLETTER Forty-Four

January/February 2002



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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The Reliant Kitten Register

MEWSLETTER No. 44

I am eternally grateful to the following individuals:-

Rebel alternative parts

Kitten alternative parts

Fox alternative parts

Our Mutual Aid Spares scheme

Mewsletter pictures

Our electric kitten man is Chris Lowe,

This time our front cover features an interesting picture, 5 of the 7 Lieges that attended the Exeter trial in January 2002. All the more remarkable when you realise that there are currently only 9 of these cars on the road in the whole world! Now I know what range of colours Peter offers ! Well, most of them at any rate. Read all about it on pages 11 & 12. My thanks to Simon Robson for the picture, though full credit to Gari Jones for actually taking it. If you guys can sort out between you who gets the prize, I'll forward it by return.

The Register has a, now fairly old, web page at :- <http://www.uk-classic-cars.com/kitten.htm> which I hope to update this year. Meantime have a look at <http://www.reliantkitten.co.uk>

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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.

Welcome once again - is it too late to wish you a Happy New Year? I hope not. I find myself in somewhat uncharted territory, normally I have the 'next' edition of the magazine well under way by the time the 'current' issue goes to the printers, but it is now the 20th of December, and I am just starting this edition, having mailed No. 43 to you a few days ago.

I was surprised at how quickly the Royal Mail managed to deliver the Christmas edition, I only posted them, second class, on Saturday the 15th, and many of you received them on the Monday, I was well impressed. So much for the talk in the media of low morale at Consignia!

I was also surprised, isn't hindsight wonderful, at just how I had managed to put together a magazine with so little input from our man in Tore, well Muir of Ord actually, Dick Goodall, who is so prolific a writer, that he actually warrants a file of his own, and in my wonderfully ... oh here we go again, the hunt for that elusive adjective that will adequately describe my 'system'. Anyway, I completely forgot to look in Dick's folder for input, just got carried away, sorry Dick, I'll summarise a few of your letters in here this time by way of recompense, "Tales from Tore" is the one to watch for.

As you will be aware, particularly those who have changed car in the last few years, my record keeping is not as up to date as it really wants to be. To this end I have created a few records in the database for homeless vehicles, one for each model, so that in future, when I know that a car has moved on, but not to whom it has moved, it should no longer appear under it's last owner in the Register. Progress I think, more work certainly, but a move in the right direction I believe.

On a different front completely, now don't get excited – the answer's NO! I did wonder, and I know that I am not alone, if the Kitten, and come to that Rebels that are too young to be road tax exempt, might qualify as quadropeds, you know these things that Reliant and others now import. Well, I don't know is the answer, but what I do know is that quadropeds pay just as much in road tax as our Kittens do. Someone had suggested that they paid the same rate as three wheelers, weighing as they do, under 550kg, and so might qualify for the lower rate of tax. But I have checked, and they don't, they pay £105 tax, so it was all a red herring I'm afraid. As a matter of interest to qualify as a quadroped a vehicle has to weigh under 400 Kilos!

Moving on, what's in a name? Well, if your name happens to be Marshall, I guess it must be a clan like relationship, can't be hereditary, because we are not, as far as I know, related, but Tony Marshall (oddly enough I do know an Anthony Marshall, but not this one) has recently taken over the editorialisation (is that a word? Quick check with Dick'n Harry, yes it is! Thank you dear) of RUM Car News – fabulous name that RUM as in Register of Unusual Microcars.

Tony tells his readers that he has failed to follow oft offered advice, like "Never volunteer" and "Don't get involved", but is none the less determined to do his bit to enthral and excite his readers, while at the same time trying to inform and entertain them – and here was me thinking that that was the chosen task of all us editors, or should that be Editors?

All I need do now is find a word which means inform which begins with the letter 'e' and we can have the 4 e's... educate maybe? Oh well, perhaps not. Anyway, congratulations Tony – or should that be condolences? Whatever, the quality of the publication has improved considerably, I dread to think what it has done to the costs mind you, but the glossy paper that it, Rum Car News, is now printed on, is truly excellent.

Tony proceeds to plunge headlong into a medley of miscellaneous microcar matters with marvellous motivation, his only real problem is a detachment from reality in that he seems to seriously believe that he has only taken the job on for a year – we shall see!

Anyway, good luck Tony, certifiable you may be, alone you most certainly are not!!

With those few words I will leave you for now, and simply say thank you to those who were so prompt in renewing their subscriptions for 2002. Your membership card should be enclosed, thanks to Brian and Ian Millar for computer artwork and printing, and Phil Hallam for encapsulating them for us.

On the matters outstanding front, I noticed that Bob Keene was asking me about electric Kittens a while ago, and David Leslie said something too. Someone else pointed out that the web site I had mentioned was not accessible. Anyway, Chris Lowe, who drives an electric Kitten, tells me you might care to have a look at www.avt.uk.com or even try www.reliantkitten.co.uk which has a link to the Lynch motor site.

Oops, I almost forgot – don't you forget about:-

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REBEL ROUND UP

I'm just using this as a notebook, to jog my memory. Dave & Sue Brown, our rebellious friends from Whitley Bay, were amongst the 16 folk whose renewals appeared as if by magic on the kitchen work-top this morning – 22/12/01 – thank you, and, attached to the renewal notice were a pair of photographs. I thought at the time, “Brian lad, you really ought to be able to scan these into the computer and e-mail them to John Pearce to see if they might do for a future front cover” It is after all, a while since our cover was graced by a Rebel. But I don't have a scanner, I suspect that John would need a bigger picture, I could of course write and ask if one was available, but right now, I am busy processing renewals, and trying to move ahead with the next (this) magazine. Not an entirely new conflict of priorities, and, particularly in the case of the renewals, a very welcome task to have to do. There have been a few changes however, and corrections, yes I had a postcode wrong! Even Norwich spelt with an M! Thanks to those who pointed out the mistakes, it really is very easy to correct them, but that can only be done if I am made aware of my failings. So, updating the database took priority, and while I should just have made a note to write to Dave & Sue, I would probably not have got round to doing it by the time you read this! So, an executive decision was made, and this is the result.

(You see, I had, yes again, to resort to the “pile everything into a cardboard box to clear the desk” in mid December, two cardboard boxes in fact, I didn't even take time to count them this time, too depressing!, so to start keeping lists just seemed foolish, well quite unworkable at any rate..)

Still on the clearing the paper, from the renewals, not the backlog. I had to ring Dave Richmond, same reason, if I had left it till I had time to write, it would probably never have happened. Anyway, Dave was pointing out an omission from my list of Reliant based 4 wheelers, a van called a Shetland. Now with a name like that, you'd think I would be the first to know all about it, but I don't. Dave is hoping to have his camera with him next time. A local florist apparently used to run a fleet of them, and still has one or two lying round the back of the shop!

Dave was making a number of points and observations, and asking a few questions. I'll try to cover them in the appropriate sections of the mag. Thanks Dave, it was good to hear your voice again.

Nick Peck, our man in Eastbourne, tells me that, in spite of fitting a propshaft with good hardy spicers, he still gets a vibration, and wondered if this could be down to a worn bearing, the one in the back of the Rebel gearbox tailshaft. I suspect that it could indeed be that, possibly amongst other things, the question is, well, the questions are, where can you obtain these bearings (I think it's in fact a bush) these days? and what else could be causing the vibration? The noise / vibration only occurs under power, not on the overrun. Any ideas? A wee voice in the back of my head is saying “Strap those main bearings”.

Ahh.... An odd corner! That's O.K. though, because I was wanting to mention a note I had the other week from Ian Johnstone, our man from Orbister at Old Bridge of Urr, don't you get some wonderful addresses, Moira's favourite is Cobwebs. I digress, this is relevant here because Ian owns no less than 3 Rebels. Anyway, he recommends the findit website, as he has bought two Reliants there in recent times :- <http://www.findit.co.uk/cars/reliant.htm> is the one. Thanks Ian.

FOXES' DEN

No sooner had I mailed the last edition, or so it seemed, than our Fox alternative parts man was on the 'phone to say, in response to the question about how to remove a Fox engine, that he had taken his out the bottom, after disconnecting and removing the anti-roll bar. Thanks Peter.

There then followed other information, for example, Terry Quelch, our man in Swaffham, removes the bonnet completely, puts the car up on ramps at the front, removes the radiator and positions the pulley hoist above, and takes the engine and gearbox out as a unit, out the top, almost vertically. He had to do this not long after first acquiring his Fox!

Keith Gittus, our man in Cannock, also rang me to say that he had done the job on more than one occasion, and that he had taken the engine and gearbox out the top, after first removing all the accessories, i.e. radiator, alternator / distributor, carburettor (which you can leave the cables attached to if you are careful.). This method was interesting because, in order to avoid having to un-do the awkward nuts and bolts at the front of the propshaft / back of the gearbox, he disconnects the propshaft at the sliding spline – the only thing to be aware of and careful about here, is that you mark it carefully in some way so as to ensure that it goes back on the same spline when you re-assemble it!

So, it would seem to depend on a combination of how you like to approach the job, and what facilities you have at your disposal. I know that I used to just lift Rebel engines out by hand, no lifting gear involved, mind you, I did leave the gearbox in the car. (and I was bit younger then!) And Rebels have large bonnets, and very easily removable radiators, well the 600 & 700cc ones do at any rate! 23 minutes was the record, with help from an able assistant. Yes 23 minutes to remove a Rebel engine, can you match that?

Still on the Foxy front, well the Foxy sides in fact Duncan Bradford tells me that production of the stainless window frames is in hand, proceeding more slowly than he would have liked, but proceeding none the less. Duncan asked me to ask those who want a set at £ 100 plus p&p to please confirm with him right away, even if you have already done so. He thinks that he needs to make 5 sets, but at that price does not want to be left out of pocket. Do, if you were one of the 4 besides Duncan who wanted a pair, or if you weren't, but would like a pair, give the man a ring, NOW, please on 01603 663311, or on his mobile 07775 622159.

Liege Page

I know that Peter has (again!) stopped taking orders, and that he hopes to be up-to-date with the outstanding ones by the end of this year.

Paul Wheatley kindly sent me a sheet of lovely pictures of his Liege (which showed off the alloy rocker cover to great effect) along with his renewal notice, and then replied at length to the questions that I had asked as a result of the pictures. Thank you Paul. I still aspire to being able to reproduce colour pictures in the magazine, but a combination of lack of experience and lack of funds prevents me from doing everything I would like to do. One has to have aspirations mind you, so you never know – one day.... (No no, not the Ivor Novello my heart will awake one, ...).

Paul also sent me a CD with more pictures on it, and tells me, oh, better yet, I'll let Paul tell it in his own words. :-

"I really must make the effort to finish the car this year. The next major step is the wiring and instrumentation. I intend to fit the original speedo (yet to be re-calibrated for the new axle / wheel size) and the combined temp / fuel gauge, but also a rev-counter and an oil pressure gauge.

Perhaps somewhat unusual for a Reliant engine, I also intend to experiment with an air-fuel ratio gauge working with an oxygen sensor in the exhaust down pipe. I don't know if you are familiar with these, they are more common on aircraft than cars, but quite often used these days in the USA. I haven't tried one before, but from my research this seems an excellent way of tuning the carbs and getting the best from the engine. It allows the driver to watch the readings under driving conditions. Another 'worry meter' you mean Paul!. I think that getting the correct SU needles is otherwise rather a hit and miss, especially as I have heard that unleaded fuel gives false (rich) plug colour readings, so cannot be relied on unlike in the old days with 'proper' petrol.

All the best Brian, and thanks for the effort you put in on behalf of the Register."
Paul Wheatley - Shireoaks

Thanks for keeping us up to date Paul, the air-fuel ratio gauge is indeed a new one to me, but I have to agree with your comments about unleaded fuel, making some things seem rich (black), the exhaust pipes on both the Rebel and the Kitten have never been a whiter shade of grey since! Though I have to say that the Kitten's plugs looked o.k. when we had them out recently.

Ed.

How did the 6 Lieges get on at their trial on the weekend of the 4th / 5th January? Well 6 started the event, and 6 finished, in some 'interesting' weather conditions. Two of the entrants had never taken part in such an event before. There is not a lot of point on me going on about it, because I am well aware that it takes a better man than me to begin to try and convey the emotions of such an experience through the written word – I guess it's a bit like the first time you jump out of a flying aeroplane – no, in case you were wondering, I haven't done that myself, but I have taken part in some hair raising motoring events, and the adrenaline rush has to be experienced to be comprehended. I am just delighted that through the efforts of Peter, and others, some more mere mortals have now (I'll avoid the enjoyed adjective) experienced the feelings concerned.

Keep up the good work everybody. Oh, and what about those pictures? Oops, be patient Marshall :- Hi Brian, Herewith picture as promised, (Yes, the one on the front cover, we really are bang up-to-date this issue, Ed!) credit must go to Gari Jones for taking it. The location was Fingle Bridge, just South West of Exeter which is a beautiful valley to visit and walk through, but also has the most glorious winding hill to climb. Not too difficult but lots of hairpin bends "on the loose" and a huge amount of fun.

We had 6 cars on the event, 2 teams of 3. The "Liege Levitators" comprising Peter Davis (Red) Gari Jones (Green) Keith Nicholls (Blue), The "Liege Landau's" being Simon Robson (Yellow) John Jones (Grey) and Howard Blackwell (also Red). Howard is not in the picture as he decided to take the start from the West country and was therefore running at the back of the field.

The rest of us started from Cirencester and travelled through most of the event more or less running in convoy!

David Bates came down in his White Liege to spectate, and Mike Oakins came to spectate also, but not in his Liege.

So all in all an excellent showing, can't give you the results yet as we are still waiting for them to arrive, other than to say nobody got a medal but everybody got a finishers certificate which is reward in itself, and nobody had any major problems. Not a bad turnout though! Oh, hang on a moment – Stop Press - RESULTS FOLLOW From: Simon Robson - Subject: Exeter Trial Results. Date: 20 January 2002

Well Brian, they've arrived, the MCC's Exeter Trial results that is, 250 miles of route, 14 Hills to climb, 2 timed Special Tests to resolve any draws: and the "Scores on the Doors" are:-

"Liege Levitators"

Fails	Sp Test	
Peter Davis	4	32.5 secs
Gari Jones	5	31.3 secs
Keith Nicholls	3	30.7 secs

total 12

"Liege Landau's"

Simon Robson	3	29.5 secs
John Jones	4	47.1 secs
Howard Blackwell	4	35.0 secs

total 11

So there you have it, a win for the "Liege Landau's" obviously??Well..... errrr..... ummmmm..... actually NOT!!!

You see these are Classic Reliability Trials, the reliability referring not only to "does the car continue to run", but also "have the crew followed the correct route and kept to the laid down time schedule".

This in turn requires "signing in" and "out" on time, at various points along the route, and one of us forgot to "Sign Off" at the end of the Trial, didn't he Howard? Penalty? You are deemed to have retired before the finish!

Ho Hum, many congrats to the "Levitators" then, and see you for a repeat match on the "Lands End" trial at Easter.

It was still an excellent event, made even better by the presence of so many Liege cars. The Regulations for the Lands End trial, (run Good Friday to Easter Saturday) are just out and I'm trying to ensure we get the same level of support on that.

Best regards, Simon

Tempest update

Steve is keeping busy, still on the lookout for homeless Foxes, and tells me that 2002 will see the completion of at least 1 of the S.C. Tempests – better watch out you Liege guys.

Competition Corner

Now you might think that after so much in here in the last issue, that I would be content to give you a break for a while, but then again I could have put Derek Argyle's letter in here, as it begins :- "Dear Brian, I am delighted to have won the Anagram competition", but, as regular readers will know, though I have been keen to encourage a "Competition Corner" in the magazine for some time now, that was not the kind of competition I had in mind!

I will, as you will be aware if you have faithfully read the whole magazine to this point, go on at length, well, let's tell it like it is, allowed Simon Robson to go on at length, about the wonderful day some people had at Exeter in their Lieges early this year, under the "Liege Page". It's a bit like archiving the old family photographs, I try to do it by category, you know, birthdays pictures, holiday pictures, car pictures, pictures of our daughter, etc., but in which of these categories do I file the picture of Arleen in the car on holiday on her birthday? Heellpp... No, still no men in white coats - Yet!

Oh, and will someone please remind me nearer the time that the Edinburgh trial is in October, I might actually get over this year – thank you.

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READERS LETTERS

Dear Brian,

20/12/01

Enclosed is my new years subscription, the cheque was kindly written by my grandad who remembers a Kitten estate being parked next to him at work in the mid 70's. A piece of local Reliant history relates to a former Reliant dealer known as Eric Williams Ltd. Of Peir Point Street. When the business which until recently operated from the premises moved, they took their sign with them, and its removal revealed the original "Reliant Eric Williams Ltd. Reliant" sign beneath. I have been trying to find out as much as possible about them because there weren't any other Reliant dealers in Worcester, or were there? Can any of your readers help with further details?

Daniel Rodd - Fernhill Heath, Worcester

Dear Brian,

22.12.01

I am delighted to have won the Anagram competition, and thank you for the year's free subscription.

I joined the Register after meeting Bob Keene with his immaculate 2 litre DOHC Sierra engine'd Kitten. This car is quite fascinating and offers exceptionally effortless performance. I

thought I would buy a Kitten and do something similar, but, as a member of the Scimitar O.C. also, I decided I would sell my boring MX5 and get a car that I had always admired, and driven when it first came out, an SE5a.

However, just before Christmas 2000, I bought a Classic Car Weekly magazine, and this featured a Magazine tested rebuilt 260Z Datsun that was incredibly cheap. As it was also immaculate, I bought it, with loving memories of a past owned 240Z, and have since fine tuned it with twin SU's that make the car really fly.

The rest of my stable (Editor wonders if such digressions from Reliants ought to be permitted within these pages, but why spoil a good story by wearing blinkers?) consists of a Jaguar "E" type replica that took three years to build totally from scratch. (Space frame chassis and f/glass body Rover V8 engine) and the everyday faithful, a 1.8 J reg Cavalier. At the moment I have little room for Kitten special building, but who knows....

I'm glad to see that you have published details of some of the Motoring tours run by Continental Car Tours. I have used them a lot over the past 5 years or so, and they can be truly recommended for value. I will be going, a second time, in 2002, to the Festival Historique De Laon, as it was such a great trip last year. Are there any takers from the Register? If so, ring me on 01276 12078. I am trying to get a small group together from several car clubs that I am in, and it would be nice to see even more than the 150 or so Brits who joined with 300 continentals in cars of all ages in 2001, at the 2002 event.

Incidentally, the Nurburgring Old Timers Grand Prix C.C. Tours outing was a really great trip, the one I went on being three or four years ago with other "wildcat" "E" type replica friends. A blast round the tortuous 13 mile track with motorcyclists passing either side and the presence of buses on the track will never be forgotten.

With every good wish for 2002, and happy motoring.

Derek Argyle - Camberley

Thanks for that Derek, anyone interested in going along with Derek should contact him on 01276 651470 or e-mail him on :- cableman@btinternet.com

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Where are they now ?

Michael Bentley was good enough to give me some details on no less than 17 Kittens along with his renewal notice, thank you Michael. Of those 17 cars, only 1 was already on the Register, and it was only there because I had been asked to advertise it last year! Most of the cars that Michael told me about were press cars, and various special event and advertising vehicles. The Monte Carlo Rally car for example, which the factory loaned to Graham Newby. Entry number 258 it was, which year was that again, anybody remember? HOM 455W was the car, and I seem to remember talk of it having one of the twin overhead cam engines fitted for the event. This memory is frustrating at times, either the car, or the engine did crop up a few years ago in the south of England I think. Anyway, not that I am short of material, but a regular 'Where are they now?' page might jog a few memories, and possibly fill in some of the gaps in my

records. I do not have chassis numbers for 16 of the 17 vehicles on Michael's list, nor dates of first registration, indeed not even the colour of many of them. Then there is the matter of the remaining twin cam engine(s)? Watch this space... Or better yet, fill me in if you know anything.

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Looking for a Partner !

I have recently become the proud owner of a complete Reliant Kitten, and also a Kitten chassis. I am designing a sports car which will be based on a slightly modified Kitten chassis. I am seeking a partner for this project, we will end up with a car each. This partner should have the technical competence to assemble the two rolling chassis, and somewhere to do it, preferable in the south east of England.

My favorite kit car is the Liege, however it does not quite fit my purpose. I want a two seater sports car, light, economical, sitting up high and comfortable, all of which the Liege is, but in addition I want lots of luggage space. My first choice would be to put my own body on a Liege chassis, but I can quite understand why Peter Davis is not keen on that idea.

Next best option is a Kitten. I believe it is a very good chassis. I propose to bring the engine 4 inches back, and perhaps lower it. The door pillars have to come back also. I can then design a pretty little fibreglass body with contemporary styling. I am not interested in a replica genuine this that or the other, rather I wish to find out how well I can handle this contemporary art form of car design. With any luck I may get the car which I want, and also give birth to a new kit car.

This project has been simmering at the back of my mind for some years, it suddenly seems to want to happen, with a life of its own.

People are being very helpful. At the moment the car and chassis are nearby in a muddy farm yard, convenient to take measurements, but no good to work on. Is there someone out there with a place to work in?

Yours sincerely Michael Kerr -- Somerset

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Still on the subject of looking for things, Kim Peter Leachman tells me that www.eyewonder.plus.com should be able to help classic car enthusiasts find a particular old vehicle. It is a free message board, no doubt those who are into such things will understand what that means. Just thought I'd share that with you – and fill the page with a similar topic.

Tales From Tore

Rather than include in this section several lines that include the words "Dear Brian", with a variety of dates in the latter quarter of 2001, I will try to summarise Dick's comments in here. Thanks Dick, sorry for the delay / editing.

Dick was pointing out some errors and omissions from my RKR the cars document, in particular by providing details relating to the horsepower of the early Rebel engines, and suggesting that Fox production numbers might not have been as high as we thought. Of the 93 Foxes on the Register at this time, the highest chassis no. is 575. But then again one of the Tandy camper vans is chassis 849, (or is that 8 a badly written 5 I wonder?) so the 1,000 figure is probably close after all. (I know that Bob Neal told me years ago that there were over 1,000 Foxes built, but I have to wonder if that included ones built outside the U.K.?) Jimps are no help at all in the chassis number front, Peter Kulka, the man who built them, can't remember if they were Kitten or Fox chassis, though they were galvanised we believe, which suggests the latter, but they were all given "J" chassis numbers, starting at J001 and ending at J057. Also I had for some strange reason omitted the word "University" after the word "Salford" in connection with the Salamander project. I knew that, can't think how I came to omit it, but there we are, it was Salford University who in conjunction with Manchester Social Services, got together to design the Salamander. To answer your question about numbers Dick, there are only 4 (Salamanders) on the Register, two others that we know of, and none of them on the road as far as we know!

A further error was with the date of Tempest production where I said that the prototype was launched in 1987 with the last one being built in 1984. Of course I got the dates reversed, and that referred to the ones that were supplied as complete cars, there were a similar number of kits sold right up till ???, and then the two that were built by Dave Price & Dave Smith in 1999, well, I say 1999, Dave Smith as regular readers finished his last year, and Dave Price assures me that his will be complete very soon now! I also know that Steve Campbell is always telling me that the Tempest is now back in production, (only as I understand it as a kit for owners to complete themselves) and I keep winding him up by pointing out that no one has yet got one of 'his' Tempests finished and on the road, hopefully he will soon be able to put me right there!

Moving on, or more to the point, as Dick was saying, this starts in October 2001 by the way :-

Ah bliss! Mewsletter 42 is providing good reading, my thanks to all who helped produce it. Here I sit tapping away at this old 'pooters keys, while 'LTL Radio' churns out 'Die Grossen Oldies' on their 'Zoooper Oldie Klub' from 8 – 10pm as usual. Quite a good way of passing the dark evenings we now have. Though the books from the travelling library are starting to extract a certain pull on me. Will I succumb?

I was given an inkjet printer for my PC, and hoped to get better prints. AARRRGHH!! It needs a CD drive for the installation, and this relic I use has none. Typical!

PYB has recently (October 2001) had both rear axle oil seals / bearings / backplates / brake linings / cylinders / brake pipes, etc renewed at my local garage. This extensive job has been bugging me for a while, and I am glad that it is done. I feel more confident about stopping, and the handbrake has an improved effect.

An erratic tickover afflicted PYB. Following a suggestion from Brian Millar I replaced the pipe from the oil filler to the carburettor and secured the ends with jubilee clips. A worthwhile improvement has resulted. Thanks Brian. And then I found!

Mewsletter 16 Page 7 – Fox engine problems "Worth noting is that every two or three years a poor idling / starting problem arises which is due to pin hole perishing of the rubber pipe between the rocker cover and the carb, and fuel overflow, and it always takes a while to

recognize! (And don't cover the tiny hole on the inlet tube to the overflow by pushing the new pipe too far on!) Duncan Bradford.

Mewsletter 42 Page 6 Kitten Heater control knobs. Should there really be plastic knobs on the ends of these levers? I am flabbergasted, there's none on PYB. Were the levers not specially designed with metal ends to freeze ones fingers when fumbling for them on freezing cold mornings? The wonders of technology....

Kitten Chassis numbers Mewsletter 42 Page 6

Another bit of info, Great! Adding this to Les Cruickshank's notes in Mewsletter 10 Page 9, we now know that the 4th 5th and 6th digits of the chassis number denote..... Hang on just a moment here, it really is a worry when ones past writings are cast up in evidence, Dick has done a wonderful job of indexing every paragraph in all of the Mewsletters, and I have not taken the time to study it properly. But just at the moment, I must leap out of my seat (would that I could leap anywhere these days!) This is another of those instances that I thought was common knowledge, the 14, or 15, digits 4 and 5 respectively, indicate the model number, the right hand drive Kitten being Reliants 14th model of 4 wheeler, i.e. an FW14, the 6th digit, indicating the body type and spec, i.e, 1 for a saloon, 2 for an estate 7 for a saloon DL 9 for a van etc, with the FW15 being the Left hand drive Kitten. Just please don't ask what the previous 13 4 wheeler models were, we will get there one day, Ed. Oh, while I'm interrupting anyway, the S, V and E suffixes on Rebel chassis numbers would appear to indicate body type, i.e Saloon, Van or Estate

Rebel body styles - Mewsletter 42 page 8 & 9.

My congratulations to Ian Johnston on owning a most interesting trio of a saloon, an estate and a van. But is this a complete set? In the last 5 years I have seen two Rebel pick-ups. Were they specials or factory made? Specials I suspect, Ed. The factory have never admitted producing a Rebel Pick-up to my knowledge.

Mewsletter 42 Page 18 – front Crankshaft Oil Seal

I quote "A front crankshaft oil seal was needed, just about the only easy job on a Kitten". Opinions from other sources are very different. How did J.P. do it? Yes Dick, I noticed that one too, good question - Ed

Mewsletter 42 page 24 – rear Springs

This bit about rear springs – "APPENDIX 7" – is of course just part of the INFO sheets' file of nearly 40 pages (Mentioned in my last note).

I have decided how best to identify my assemblage of automobiles,. PYB is orange, and marmalade is made form oranges, so it must be named Orlando. Remember Orlando the marmalade cat? The white Kitten is definitely the Ghost. So we have at present a quartet of Orlando, the ghost, rusty Freda Favorit, and Granny Bradford, who doesn't get about these days in the manner of aged persons. Now could I write a successful kid's book using them as characters?

Yesterday I decided to fit a new fan belt to Orlando. This has to be of 700 length to avoid the alternator pulley fouling the bottom radiator hose. As an aside, the Ghost has plenty of room for a 713 belt, these cars are definitely hand made. After the usual struggles, on it went, but the alternator swivelled suspiciously easily. So up on the ramps went Orlando's front wheels, and under I struggled, must be a touch AD? (Anno Domini). Sure enough, the swivel bolts were loose.

Here I must congratulate the designer on successfully tucking these bolts away so inaccessibly, surely it can't have been done by accident? It was just possible to wedge a ring spanner on one end of each bolt, and turn the other with an open ender, and the other from the front (round the rack) with a socket, bendy joint and a long extension bar. Little did I think that the 3/8" drive socket accessories I bought many years ago to change a Chevette exhaust (another 'interesting' job!) would be used on a Kitten. It must be yet another application of 'the 20 year rule' i.e. if you keep something for 20 years it WILL come in useful again. Only snag is, how does one find space to keep all the stuff – Never mind that Dick, how on earth do you find it again 20 years later! Ed.? And if you know someone who needs assorted bits for an Austin A40 Farina, I still have some here from 25 years ago.....

I must be afflicted with a strange virus. Today I washed the cars for the second time in a month. This is quite unprecedented. It was not without incident however, as one of the Ghost's wiper blades fell apart when I moved it. Luckily there was another in Orlando's door pocket, not quite the correct fitting for the arm, but good enough pro tem.

Now here's a question. Under the wiper spindle nut outside the car, is a thick rubber washer. Can these still be got? Both cars need one. I suppose it might just be possible to cobble something up out of thick walled heater hose, but the proper part would be much better.

Mewsletter 42 Page 17 J.P. took a Kitten door off because of door hinge problems? A repair could have been tried using the method described in Mewsletter 15 page 7, though I hear door removal can be tricky

It's amazing how much useful information is contained in back numbers.

Right, thanks Dick, sorry for the severity of the editing – Dick was saying in a recent letter that according to his 'pooter' he had written me 62 letters last year, and that excluded the ones done on the old machine! Dick has done a power of work on the cross index, and the index itself of all the magazines I have produced over the past decade, both documents cover some 30 odd A4 sides, and so with copying costs and postage we reckon a fiver is good value, so if you would like a copy, send that value in first class stamps, or a cheque, to Dick in a large self addressed envelope.

An Observation

Just in passing, and no, I can't actually claim to have spotted it myself, and yes I do intend to communicate with the relevant powers that be, but Sandy Riddoch was pointing out to me that the recent Don Pither book "Reliant Regal & Robin" (Sandy got a copy from Santa) which gives more than a passing mention to our beloved 4 wheelers has, on page 75, a picture, the one at the top of the page, which shows the fascia of a left hand drive Kitten, which, the writer claims, shows the major improvements in cabin design incorporated by Ogle. It says that the formerly intrusive engine compartment has been absorbed into the fascia, and that the gear lever now sprouts more modestly from under the dashboard. Now we all know, those of us who run Kittens at any rate, that this is all perfectly true, (something to do with there being no wheel in front of the engine I suspect!) however, in the book, the writer is mistakenly gracing the Robin with these attributes. The caption actually refers to the picture as being an example of the Robin, when in fact the vehicle featured in the picture is a Kitten. Unlike information on the Internet that is incorrect, I

suspect that it will be easier to ensure that this particular error is easily rectified in any future editions of the book. More letters to write!

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From the In Tray

Events we are invited to this time include :-

Friends of the National Motor Museum evening talks we are invited to include a railway event, just for me, but it will be history by the time this gets to you I am afraid, on the 22nd of February however, they are having an evening with Tom Walkinshaw, need I say more?

Saturday 23rd of March, Lord Montague along with Michael Ware, and Graham Robson will spend the evening looking back at 50 years of Palace House being opened to the public, and 30 years since the formation of the National Motor Museum.

For those interested in two wheeled sport, Saturday April 13th is one not to miss with Ron Langston, Nick Jefferies and Sammy Miller hosting the sixth Off Road evening. Between them this talented trio have won top honours in every form of two wheeled motor cycle sport. Some wonderful insights into three remarkable careers are promised.

Tickets for all of these events can be booked through Theresa Godwin who can be contacted on 01590 614654.

Adrian's Great Eastern Rally, with the D.L.O.C. (Daimler and Lanchester Owners Club) plenty of notice for your diaries this year, thank you Adrian, will take place on Sunday the 21st of July 2002, pencil it in now, more details later. (Thanks for the flyer Adrian, I'll see about reducing it and possibly enclosing it with the next edition – might even use it to fill a page!)

Going now from events to services, a business called Seat Belt Restorations boast that they have over a decade of experience in this line of work, and can offer the restoration of old seatbelts in a range of colours from £ 32.50 for refurbished front belts plus p&p. They can be reached on 01228 402286, and are based in Carlisle. Stephen Armstrong is the man to talk to. If you use them, and find their service to be good, let me know and they may graduate to the next section....

~~~~~

## **Recommended services / Suppliers**

*Dave Richmond, see, I did get at least another part of your letter covered in this edition Dave! As I was saying, Dave has recommended the services of the following firm for the manufacture of small batches of cables, they are a firm who specialise in motorcycle cables on the vintage bike scene :-*

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Tel 01926 651470 or e-mail [cableman@btinternet.com](mailto:cableman@btinternet.com)

*See "Readers Letters" for Derek Argyle's comments and question relating to Continental Car tours as mentioned in here last time. And don't forget to give Derek a ring on 01276 23078 if you are interested in going along.*

*Ho hum, another odd corner, funny that, I never used to have bother with them, just a feature of this edition I guess, I could go changing font sizes and or line spacing to pad it out, but I really can't be bothered. O.K., that's me there now, phew !!!!!*

## **GETTING TECHNICAL**

Well, not so much technical this bit, an appeal for information really, I was asked the other day for new kitten steering rack mounting rubbers and brackets, and I don't know where to get them – can you help? I assume that the rubbers are a Ford part, but don't know the part numbers, nor do I know if the retaining brackets are Ford or not, and again, obviously, don't know the part numbers. If you can help, please get in touch. Oh, in case I forget, it was Peter Swan who was asking (so I'll know who to pass the information on to when you let me know!). Ed.

Technical Tweaks from Thetford

No major story this time, but a few points for us to muse on. During a chat to George Burdett, the subject of valves came up. Can anyone enlighten me as to the reason for the following phenomenon?

We've heard about valve seat recession, but what about exhaust valve recession? The area of the valve that we have to grind in. This I have seen badly 'grooved' by the valve seat that it is touching, which is in ok order. The inlets have been fine, and this is after a couple of years, about 20,000 miles of normal driving. Prior to stripping such a head there are no symptoms of loss of performance (at least due to valves). But of course one would put such a fault right during a head job, and to get the groove out the valve really needs a regrind!

Now the way I do this will have a lot of you engineers cringing, so don't read any more! This is what 'we' do, put the valve in the chuck of the trusty Black and Decker, and then approach the bench grinder! Ensure that the bench grinder is turning the reverse way to your B & D, and by feel and eye retain the angle of the seat and 'do it'! You real engineers can open your eyes now – phew.

So, why do we get this groove in the first place? I notice in passing that all the worries about valve seat recession seem to have evaporated along with the 4 star we loved, 'keep pinking'.

While on about valves, a modest improvement can be achieved with the standard item by machining towards the 'penny on a stick' shape as shown in the tuning book 750 Racer, by Herbert and Harvey. The valve metal is of course very hard, so get out your tungsten carbide tipped tool for the Lathe. Some years ago I found a set of valves in a head that were made as 'penny on a stick' type. Their stamped part number was 23273EC (The EC seems to be the significant part) Has anyone any more clue as to what they were? And more to the point, where can we get another set? Or even another one to copy from.

Going to the other end of the engine, a tip told to me by a crankshaft re-grinder a while back apparently Reliant regrind sizes only go up to – 40. The Mini with the same nominal sized shells goes up to – 60, but there is a slight oil hole mis-alignment, and slightly greater width, nothing that any self-respecting Engineer shouldn't be able to get over. P.S. I was TOLD about this one, so I can't vouch that it works. But I did trust the re-grinder, who knew his engines.

There doesn't seem to be much in the last Mewsletter to answer, except someone asking for tuning information, so perhaps it's time to remind you about the '50 Tweeks' notes that I have put together some time back now, but I still copy and send out when I receive a large s.a.e.

Talking of said notes, someone from Peterborough popped round a few months ago to see some of my tuning bits, he said he's fitted an electric fuel pump to help reduce 'boiled carb' syndrome, fine, but he'd left the mechanical one still in the circuit, so when you think about it, the real advantage of the electric pump is to supply cool fuel, but by passing it through the mechanical one (firmly attached to the - hot – crankcase) you are still heating up the fuel. Also, should the diaphragm in the mechanical pump fail, you would still fill the sump with petrol. Methinks it would be better to use the electric one only.

That's it this time, Alan.

*Thanks Al, two points spring to mind, both failings of mine. On the electric fuel pump front, I have one on the wee red car, does not go near the original pump, indeed it was removed and a blanking plate fitted to the crankcase, why waste energy driving a pump you don't need? So, what's the failing there I hear you ask? Well, what I didn't do was follow the manufacturers instructions, one of these "done in a hurry jobs", and "I'll get back to it later", which you seldom do, and I haven't, yet. That is that it should be wired so that the power supply, once the engine has started, relies on oil pressure, i.e. when you crash the car, stall the engine, and are probably lying on your side, or upside down, the pump does not keep pumping fuel everywhere from a probably damaged pipe. Must do that sometime, as indeed I must also get round to modifying the float chamber lid to overflow somewhere other than all over the engine. The smell of fuel when re-starting when hot, has been getting worse lately. Having spent several articles in the past telling you all to do it, I have yet to take my own advice, and yes since then we have lost at least one other Kitten to an under bonnet fire after refuelling at a garage because that simple mod had not been carried out.*

*As we have said in the past, you can either fit a later float chamber lid, or modify your existing one. Dick Goodall's index will tell us where and in which edition to look for more details. Ed.*

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Right folks, here's one I should have been able to answer, but can't! Can you help our man in Colchester out please? Martin Seymour was asking me how you get at the windscreen washer nozzle to change it? The one on his Kitten is in need of replacement, and he can't see how to get at it. If you know the answer, please let Martin know, either ring him on 01206 751646 or e-mail him at [martin@colmusic.keme.co.uk](mailto:martin@colmusic.keme.co.uk)

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## A Wheely good story

O.K., listen-up everyone, well all the Kitten owners at any rate. I had a visit this week from our long lost correspondent from North Shields, John Blagburn no less, and we got to talking about 12" wheels and things over a bottle of Claret. Gosh that sounds terribly decadent, imagine me leading the innocent lad from the straight and narrow, as if he needed leading!

To the point, as we were chatting, I remarked that we really ought to put some of his knowledge down on paper, however I didn't have a small post-it note lying handy, and it was after 11:00pm, - well after my normal bedtime! Indeed we nattered on till after midnight, and I was far too comfortable to move to the office. However, tomorrow is indeed another day:-

When fitting 12" wheels to a Kitten, as a rule of thumb you need to fit  $\frac{3}{4}$ " spacers to the back, and  $\frac{3}{8}$ " ones to the front of the car. The front wheel studs you can just get away with, provided you are using the correct wheel nuts to suit the wheels, but the back definitely needs you to fit longer wheel studs. There is no harm in fitting longer ones to the front as well. (John used 55mm ones, standard being 36mm) Such studs can be had from most of the numerous Mini specialists around the country. They can supply them in any number of different lengths, the standard length being 36mm, (Mini and Kitten standard) so take that and work out what length you need, before ringing up to order them from your local Mini specialist.

If you are going to use standard (Mini)  $4\frac{1}{2}$ " by 12" steel wheels, with 145/70 by 12" tyres, a minimal amount of cutting will be required to the front wheel arches and the lower edge of the front valence. You will need to fit the wheels and see just what is involved, remember these cars were hand made, and no two ever seem to be exactly the same.

Richard (Plaxton) who built and supplied the current Blagburn Kitten, has  $5\frac{1}{2}$  by 12" alloy wheels with 165/60 by 12" tyres on his own Kitten, and he tells us that these tyres require slightly more cutting of the front wheel arch lips.

Rest assured whither you fit 145 or 165 section tyres you will feel an improvement in steering response and roadholding when compared to standard  $3\frac{1}{2}$  " by 10" wheels with 145 by 10 tyres.

Here endeth today's lesson from John's word on Kitten wheels.

*I can tell you, having covered about 170 miles behind the wheel of John's Kitten that weekend, that the 12" wheels do make a noticeable improvement to the car, mind you I'm not sure what that much rubber on the road does for the rolling resistance, and hence fuel economy! Also there is the matter of speedo re-calibration to be addressed, I was never over an indicated 70, but I was passing everything on the motorway, and not passing it slowly either I may tell you! Ed.*

## Sales and Wants

For Sale :- 1977 Kitten DL Estate, laid up for a few years, but with many new and reconditioned parts including engine, gearbox, steering rack, carburettor, clutch, radiator. Complete with much early documentation, only 4 owners from new.

For Sale :- R registered blue Kitten saloon, free to a good home, contact Steve Carter on

For Sale :- Fox, engine and gearbox removed, but available, with new clutch.

For Sale :- 1977 Kitten Estate. No MOT, engine runs fine. Mechanical parts and body not bad, but interior a mess. Ideal donor for kit car. Comes with the following new parts – coil, alternator, gasket set and alloy rocker cover (not fitted) also second hand spares including 750 engine, 850 head, and a couple of boxes of parts stripped from a robin. £80 for everything (that's less than the cost of the alternator and rocker cover)

For Sale :- P reg. black Kitten estate, electronic ignition, drivers door lock needs attention. Yours for £250,

For Sale :- Salamander, Kitten based Ford engined automatic, yours for just £200. Runs well.

For Sale :- In case they are still available, John Calthorpe had (Jan,'02) 4 new Kitten drivers side Hubs, complete with uprights, steering arms and wheel bearings, £40 each. Also excellent condition secondhand Kitten rear backplates, both sides available, £ 10 each.

For Sale :- 1975 Kitten saloon, orange, in daily use till May 2001. Needs a front damper for M.O.T. Dodgy gearbox (2nd noisy) Excellent engine and tyres. Cheap to a good home

For Sale :- Reliant Kitten Pick-up, converted from van with extended chassis and wooden buck with tailboard. 1981 model, maroon. No tax or test, needs tidying and bottom ball joints (supplied) as featured on the cover of Mewsletter Workshop manual and parts list included, plus many spares. Photo available. Fixed price of £400, no offers for this unique vehicle.

For Sale :- Jimp 2 seater aluminum bodied pick-up, galvanised chassis 1982 model, No. 14 of this rare vehicle. No tax or test, needs tidying and bottom ball joints (supplied) as featured on the cover of Mewsltetter Workshop manual and parts list included, plus many spares. Photo available. Lots of history on the firm who made them, and original sales brochures. Fixed price of £400, no offers for this unique vehicle.

For Sale :- Kitten estate, chassis completely refurbished in 1998, on the road taxed MOT etc, Kind owner needed. Contact Frank Morgan

For Sale :- Reliant Kitten saloon. 1 owner from new, regularly Waxoiled, and well maintained. Laid up this past 5 years. Engine last run Dec 2001. This well looked after family friend is looking for a good home. Contact Martin

For Sale :- Bond Bug, M reg, in need of restoration, most parts included plus recon engine, secondhand gearbox & axle,

For Sale :- Well free to a good home in fact, a Kitten estate less engine,

For Sale :- 1964 'B' Reliant Rebel – factory development car No. 3. (John Bowcott's old car) Full history file and truckload of spares, many new. Huge potential, ring for the full story,

For Sale :- Reliant Kitten workshop manual and parts list , and Fox parts list, all genuine in blue binders £ 10 each plus pp.

For Sale : A pair of new Kitten gas filled front dampers. £75.

For Sale :- Well free to a good home in fact, a yellow Rebel saloon. Slight vandalism damage, no tax or test – not road tax exempt. Contact D. Ostler

For Sale :- Reliant Kitten 1976, was a van, now an estate. V. Good condition, No M.O.T. 1 months tax. Unleaded, many new parts plus spares £350 good runner

Wanted :- Foxes, M.O.T. not needed. Contact Steve Campbell

Wanted :- Left hand drive Kitten, preferably an estate, contact Mike

Wanted :- Reliant Kitten in good condition, saloon or estate model fair price or swap for my Reliant Rialto + extras. Must be taxed and M.O.T.'d.

Wanted :- Kitten steering rack mounting rubbers and retaining brackets – new preferably, and old unit racks for reconditioning, contact Brian on 0141 8866117.

Wanted :- Old unit steering racks and lower ball joints – don't throw these parts away, I might even pay you for them. Brian 0141 8866117

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## **NOTES**

Right, determined to get my page counting right this time, Can you believe that though, almost half a century on this earth, and he doesn't know his 4 times table – I don't know! Fire the man, that's what I say. I am off to the printers, confident in the belief that the number of pages divides exactly by four this time!

Regrets, well, yes, I've got a Few – Oh no, not old blue eyes! No, no I'll mention them – too few they are not! I wish I could share some of the many pictures I have received from subscribers with you – one day! New Year resolutions? Well, I'm going to get a scanner this year, so that I can store these pictures on the computer, and hopefully take up the offer of help to improve the web page. And of course to keep the Rebel and the Kitten running. On that front I must thank John Blagburn, Phil Hallam and Jim Spence for help recently.

I did honestly intend to summarise the bundle of Dick Goodall's letters for you under the "Tales from Tore" heading, but I have only made it through about a quarter of them. More next time, I promise Dick.

I did say to our most recent advertiser that I didn't think that many of our people would be likely to use their products, then I realised that in fact quite a number of you should, I know at least a dozen folk whose Rebels or Kittens don't turn a wheel from one year's end till the next, and the dehumidifying facilities that Enginewise offer would help preserve your engines, and fuel tanks as well if you'd let them. My problem is that I alternate between the Rebel and the Kitten, and couldn't be bothered changing plugs every time I wanted to change cars – what's your excuse?

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who has made the Mewsletter possible over the past year, believe me, I couldn't do it without a lot of help, support and encouragement. I know from many of the comments that I receive, that it is not just me who appreciates all your efforts. Please don't be offended if you wrote a note with your renewal notice, and I have not responded, (if your note required a response, many did not, and I thank you for them) thankfully I have been too busy to do many personal letters, though I did manage a few, honest! Oh, Mike (Copland) to answer your Portuguese question, Yes, remind me to give you the details.

It only remains for me to wish you all the very best for 2002, and of course to ask a slippery question about ball joints!

**Brian**

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