

# *Reliant Kitten Register*

**NEWSLETTER Forty-Eight**

September/October 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. 48

I am eternally grateful to the following individuals -

**Rebel alternative parts contact**

**Kitten alternative parts**

**Fox alternative parts**

**Our Mutual Aid Spares scheme**

**Mewsletter pictures**

Our electric kitten man is Chris Lowe

Our front cover is graced on this occasion by – oops, how did that happen? Andy Morgan must have slipped and dropped it I suspect! Anyway, seems like a good opportunity to test your wit and literary acumen. Suggested captions are invited, answers on a postcard please, or as John our cover man suggested, better yet on a five pound note!

Seriously, I gather body and chassis have been re-united after chassis renovation was completed, and that Andy's plans to emigrate to the Isle of Man have been put on hold just so that he can complete the project. That will be another Rebel back on the road. Please keep us posted Andy.

web page :- <http://www.uk-classic-cars.com/kitten.htm>

or have a look at <http://www.reliantkitten.co.uk>

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It should be noted that opinions and ideas, information and advice printed in this publication are as recommended by our readers and others, and, while believed to be accurate and correct, such information is given in good faith, and it does not necessarily have the approval of the Reliant Kitten Register, and cannot be guaranteed by either the Editor, or 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.

Just a wee reminder about:

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Hello, well, we should know in the next edition who was lucky enough as to enjoy a years free classic cherished car insurance, such excitement!!

Right, while it is in my mind, John Blagburn was telling me, not for the first time, that Kitten wiper spindle seals are in fact identical to the ones used to mount Volvo water pumps on the B18 B20 140's and even the early 240's, would those who should be keeping a note of such things please do so – John has, as I mentioned, told me this before, and I suspect that I have failed to pass the information on. Ahh, another bit of paper off the desk!

Now to the matter of my failing memory. Martin Seymour was travelling through Cornwall and Devon on a recent holiday, when the water pump on his car failed. He rang me up to ask if I could help him out, but I was at a classic car show in the Rebel. Now as it happens I do have a couple of water pumps in stock here, but the call came on a Sunday, and Martin really wanted a solution on the Monday. Sadly I did not have his mobile number, and so had to wait till he called me back in the evening, to learn how many blades his fan had – relevant because that is dictated by the number of securing holes in the fan pulley, which comes with the pump. However this gave me a good excuse to have a chat, albeit briefly, with a number of our subscribers in that neck of the woods. I would like to say thank you to those individuals for their kind offers of help and assistance, it was good to talk to you, even if the reason for the conversation was a problem with a Reliant. At the end of the day it was not a subscriber, but a local dealer, who was able to supply the requisite part on the Monday. However, and this is where the failings of my memory come into play.

During one of my various discussions, the matter of brass sump plugs came up, it was one of our chaps from “down there” who had requested one of them some time ago, but I had lost them. Well, when clearing out the boot of the Citroen the other day, I found, lurking between the boot lining and the actual metal inside wing of the car, a poly bag containing my brass sump plugs – but can I remember who it was that wanted one? – not a chance, so if it was you, please either give me a ring, or drop me a note in the post, and I'll attend to it right away. Do it soon please, as Moira is already complaining about them lying on the display unit, but I'm scared to put them anywhere, lest I lose them again!

While in desk tidying mode I came across a few copies of the Register which I had printed in November 1998, quite what they were doing lurking in that box I am not sure, yes, just once in a while, I do get round to looking in those old boxes I have been known to sweep everything into to

get the desk clear, and this time, I actually cleared most of the desk without using that technique, and was feeling up to the challenge of a box ! Back then, Nov.'98, there were just 8 pages to the Register, now there are 14, this at a density of 62 lines to a page, yes, that about ties up with my current boast that there are more cars on the Register these days than there are cubic centimetres in a small Reliant engine !

It does from time to time occur to me that I do not spend much time working on the Register as such, yes I gather information, faithfully add in new subscribers and cars, update the records every time I despatch a magazine, but I don't check on changes often enough, nor do I chase up lapsed members who have not let me know what has happened to their cars. I did print off a spare set of labels back about June, with the intention of doing some long overdue house keeping. This morning, 4/9/02, one of those sleepless nights, I decided to do something about that shortcoming – well, that was an eye opener! The first page alone brought to light 7 cars that I knew had moved on to new custodians, but I don't know who these new people are, sadly two of the 7 I know have been scrapped, but I had, up till now, left them tagged to their last owner's record. You may recall me saying that I had created a few new records on the database for vehicles known to have been scrapped, or known to have changed hands, but their current whereabouts are unknown to me, well that was all well and good, but if I don't move the cars from their last known custodian to the relevant new 'box', then it doesn't do much good having such records, does it?

Anyway, as I was saying, the first page revealed 7 cars that I should have moved over, and no less than 7 people (not current subscribers, and nothing at all to do with the 7 cars mentioned) to whom I should write, or telephone, to see what has happened to their vehicles. So, what I thought would be a couple of hours work, has turned out to be more like a couple of weeks work. At least, if I see it through, the database will be the more accurate for my efforts. That said, I don't happen to have a spare couple of weeks at the moment, but I'll try to nibble away at it in my 'spare' time. Trouble is that it took me over an hour to go through that first page, and while I have moved the 7 cars to the right place, I have still to contact the 7 people, and there are 14 pages on the label print report, so I have a long way to go.

Funny thing that, statistics, quite meaningless in many cases, this one no exception I'm sure, but the current label print report is 14 pages long, so, quite by chance, is the report of the cars known to the Register, the big difference being that the label report has just the 21 folk on an A4 page, while the cars report has 62! There, won't you sleep the better tonight for knowing that?

Right, enough for now, talk to you again soon. Brian.

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## **REBEL ROUND UP**

As you may remember, I did tell you last time that Rebel No. 00003 was safe and well, see Brian's Diary for details. What I can tell you here is that the car is now on the road again, and attended the Culzean Classic Vehicle show on Sunday August 4th. Congratulations and well done Robert Fairfoull for preserving this very special Reliant Rebel.

Now, with my head buried firmly in the past, I was tidying out one of the many boxes that I share my office with, and came across a sheet of paper which claims to be the Rebel 700 Reliant

price list dated 2nd December 1968. So I thought I'd just share the following with you before filing it in the attic.

Rebel 700 Saloon, complete with windscreen washers came in at £494.10.0 plus £153.7.8 purchase tax giving a total of £647.17.8 unless of course you wanted seatbelts for an extra £3.5.0 plus 19 shillings and tenpence tax ( each, fitted ), and a heater for another £15 plus £4 eleven and eight tax !

An estate car on the other hand came in at £531.10.0 plus £164.13.10 purchase tax, giving a total of £696.3.10, but again you had to add the same as the saloon for seat belts and a heater !

Now before you all jump down my throat, that is how the prices were printed, i.e. £4. 11. 8. Not £4. 11/8 as I would have thought, but there we are!

Not as antiquated as it sounds, because I remember quite clearly my first company 'car' was a Morris Minor van, well actually it was after they stopped making Morris Minor vans. It was an Austin Minor van, that was 1972, and the passenger seat and the heater were extras then!

The colour choice was listed as Rebel Red, Golden Brown, Aztec Blue, Honey Beige, Greenstone, or Sunburst Yellow

There were just 8 accessories offered from a set of 4 wheel trims at £4.10 through wing mirrors, an ammeter, twin tone horns, sun visors, a fog lamp, a spot lamp and a night parking kit for a mere seventeen and six. So there we are.

Sharing that box were a number of Popular Science magazines, Volume 1 most numbers, and a number of Railway Modeller magazines from 1987 / 88, if you would care to give them a home, do let me know.

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## **Foxes Den**

Dave Gardiner from Malton had written to me back in February, and I only got round to replying to him last week, August. So, while I may, almost, be keeping things together on the magazine front, other areas do suffer from time to time.

Dave had been asking me about information on the Tandy Campervan, and it dawned on me, not for the first time, that there may be great benefits in me producing a membership list, especially if it gave some indication of the vehicle(s) that each individual owned.

So, yet again, I am almost motivated to do yet more work, or indeed to ask others for help – are you listening Brian Millar? Just thinking out loud, but the ability to produce a membership list for circulation amongst our subscribers would be good. We need to talk about just what information it would contain, e.g. telephone number as well as address, complicated because some folk have given me their numbers, but they are ex-directory, and I have to check before passing them on, so that would be tricky from the database. Also what car details do we include? Just the model type I would suggest, but some subscribers have quite a fleet of vehicles, and so it

would either need to be an incomplete list, or most people would have blanks for the second, third fourth fifth and subsequent cars. More decisions, but feel free to join in the debate.

The intention would be to publish such a list no more than once a year, and indeed in view of the costs involved, there were 273 of us at the last count, and, we have details on over 800 cars. Also, depending on how much information we choose to impart, and the size of the print, it could be a 20 page report quite easily. It may only come out every other year.

If you do not wish ANY or ALL of your details to appear on such a list, please get in touch with the Registrar and advise him accordingly

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Right, this is one of those editions of the mag which has been virtually complete for a few weeks, and other things keep happening which I ought to tell you about, and I think, that could wait till next time... Then I change my mind, and decide a particular matter is too important to leave till next time. So, here we are, it is now the 3rd of October, I had hoped to have had the mags away to the printer last week, but things do not always go to plan. I had been up north early in September – Brian Millar and I had decided that it was high time we up-graded Dick Goodall's computer facilities, and dragged him into the 21st century – so Dick is now using the same software as the rest of us, on slightly newer hardware, and now has internet access too – I just hope he does not send me his telephone bills!

Thanks Brian Millar for all your time effort and equipment to that end. Brian, for those of you who don't know, has almost abandoned us, nothing personal, but he will be working in Moscow, yes the Russian one, for the next year, and while he expects to be able to use e-mail from the office once he settles in, does not expect to have a lot of spare time doing 10 hour days, and six day weeks for the next twelve months. Yes he will be home every three months for a couple of weeks, but I suspect he will have more pressing matters to attend to during those brief visits. Thanks again Brian for giving up one of your last 12 days in Scotland to set up the new system at Dick's. It was also good to see on my trip, Peter & Jennifer Linfield, thanks for the accommodation, and John & Myrtle Stork, as well as that fabulous motor engineer Dick Watson, and Moyra & Les Cruickshank. Sorry Douglas, just too much going on – next time... Moving on, I was then in England a couple of weeks later, collecting things, dropping things off, attending an R.O.C. National Committee meeting, and generally keeping busy. It was particularly good to see Alan and Megan Shaw, and Roy Smith, as well as Brian Ayres, thanks for the bits Brian, sorry I didn't have more time to chat – sadly only 1 of the pictures I took of your special came out – I really will need to read the instructions for Arleen's new digital camera!

Anyway, to the point, IMPORTANT THIS, I had a letter the other day from Les Gill from Liverpool about a Kitten which belonged to a friend of his, which had caught fire under the bonnet recently. No one hurt, but the car destroyed, and he was writing to me to ask if I had ever heard of this happening. Well, most of you I am sure can imagine how I felt.

I find it incredibly frustrating, when, having covered a topic, and covered it in quite some detail, someone falls foul, worse yet another car is destroyed because its owner did not subscribe to the Register, or worse yet, subscribed but chose not to avail themselves of either Dick's indexes, or the back issues. Now neither is compulsory, indeed it would be a lot of work for me if everyone who does not have the back issues suddenly wanted them all, but Dick's indexes are both cheap

and exceptional value for money. I do not want to repeat every warning we have ever printed in every edition – what is the compromise here, will someone please tell me?

It is imperative that you , if you have not already done so, make sure that your car, if it uses an SU carburettor, has an overflow pipe in the float chamber lid, (just below the fuel inlet pipe normally) and that any overflow fuel is either collected or disposed of safely. Further it is also imperative that you check and renew the fuel pipes in the engine bay if this has not already been done. They do not last forever, and the clip which some Reliants have on top of the rocker cover to attach the fuel pipe there, can cause the pipe to crack as the pipe hardens in old age – FOR GOODNESS SAKE CHECK THIS OUT, AND LET'S NOT BE HAVING ANY MORE CARS DESTROYED NEEDLEESLY.

Lecture over, but do take care.

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### **Brian's Diary** – mid July 2002

John Blagburn was again involved in this operation. Well, he had suggested he might help, I had helped him collect his most recent Reliant acquisition, if you recall.

#### **Rebel 0003, a story**

Once upon a time I didn't know what a Reliant Rebel was. It must have been quite a long time ago, as I remember my father, who loved aircraft, couldn't fly because of airsickness, used to make an annual pilgrimage to Rolls Royce at Derby, he always returned with a copy of the Daily Express Motor Show Catalogue, and the Rebel was always in it in those days, this would be in the late 60's to mid 70's.

Then in the late 1970's I persuaded a friend to buy one, a van, which he ran for about 85,000 miles. He ran it under the registration number SV 29 for most of that time.

In 1981 my own collection of Rebels began. First it was a white estate car, PJJ 697L, bought from a lady near London, junction 8 on the M1, from an advert in exchange and Mart for £125. No tax or test, the gearbox out of the car, I bought it unseen. Well, your not going to take a trailer almost 400 miles, and return with it empty, are you?

The white estate car was a lot of work, the big ends proved to be away, and I ran out of money and energy, just as I was about to start a course at Leatherhead in Surrey. So began 3 months of commuting by Rebel from Renfrew, just outside Glasgow, to Leatherhead. An 840 mile round trip every other weekend.

There followed a succession of saloons and estate cars, many of which had chassis so rusty that they had to be broken for spare parts. At one time I had 7 steering columns with boxes attached lying in the corner of the lock-up. One, a white saloon FYS 32L, had only 22,000 miles on the clock from new. Its owner had died, and I felt sorry for his widow, and so parted with over a hundred pounds for what proved to be the most troublesome Rebel I ever owned! Low mileage is not necessarily a good thing. Which reminds me, what ever became of REO 244L?

Another, a turquoise saloon which I had been invited to have a look at, had a chassis so rusty it should not have been on the road, the body was not bad, the interior really good, and I foolishly told the old chap who owned it that I'd pay £250 for it if it had an M.O.T. Well, he managed to get it through a test, a little welding, lots of underseal, and he made it. The brakes seized on on the way home, what a disaster it was!

Then, just after I got it all sorted, a drunk driver ran his Mitisubishi Colt into the back of that Rebel at over 100 miles an hour. The Rebel can accelerate from 50 to 100 in a couple of feet, crushes the back of the chassis a bit, but I can't, and the resultant damage to the seat was terminal. The thing that really hurt was when my head hit the wee plastic button that you hang the seat belt up on – OUCH!

That was the end of that one. I did get to retain the salvage, it had not a bad engine, and a reasonable gearbox too, not to mention a stainless exhaust I had had fitted to it a couple of weeks before the accident.

Over the late 80's into the 90's my stock of parts gradually depleted helping keep other peoples Rebels on the road, as well as my own. Times change however, and individuals needs and circumstances with them.

I had been running the Reliant Kitten Register for about 6 years before I came into contact with John Bowcott. John was a graduate of Loughborough University and spent all his working life with Joseph Lucas, during which time he came into contact with a certain customer of theirs, Reliant, on a number of occasions.

It was some time after that that John became aware of the Register, and contacted me, providing that wonderful article on snake charming which regular readers will recall, about car wiring systems. John asked me to advertise the car, and we were successful in finding it a new custodian, albeit at a lot less money than John felt the car was worth. John had of course been using his own contacts to try and find an appropriate custodian for the car, and I was really embarrassed when he sent me a cheque for 10% of the eventual sale price as reward for helping to find a new home for the car.

The two most memorable stories John told were the time he was asked by Reliant to supply a stronger starter motor for the wee 700cc engine. John was more than a little puzzled by this request, because he knew that the Reliant used the same starter motor as the Ford Zephyr 4, and the bigger engined Zephyr 6! He asked Reliant for more details, and to cut a long story short, yes really! he discovered, after not inconsiderable research, that Reliant had two suppliers of bearings, and one of them supplied a bearing that was just over top tolerance on size, which, on a frosty morning in the Tamworth factory carpark, made the crankshaft lock up tight!

Another problem he became involved in solving was poor starting. Again cutting a story down a bit, he discovered that the ignition switches were being wired incorrectly at the factory – the ignition was not on when the starter motor was engaged, so the only way an engine could start, was after you let the key go ! Whether the error was caused by ignorance or sabotage John never did get to the bottom of, but a new instruction to the assembly team solved the problem.

So, those who have not yet fallen asleep will be wondering what the dickens all this has to do with Rebel chassis number 00003. Well, it was during John's time spent at the Reliant factory

that he became aware of the factory's development Rebel. He liked the car, and spent a lot of time and effort coaxing and cajoling Reliant into selling it to him.

Having achieved that he then used his contacts to have a special engine made for it, and a brand new chassis. Sadly the new chassis was of the by then ultimate Rebel chassis design after a decade of production and development, and not of the early type, like the car's original one. The original chassis had both corrosion problems, and had been seriously weakened by the many and various suspension mounting mods they experimented with during the Rebel's development.

John carried out a comprehensive overhaul of all the mechanical components on the Rebel, but his hands were becoming a bit arthritic, and did not feel up to tackling the paintwork. The cost of professional resprays being what it is, he decided that it would be better to sell the car to an enthusiast who would be able to complete the work.

The car was eventually sold, but sadly its new owner was not able to carry out the necessary body work repairs, and he sold the car on after a couple of years to Ron Palmer. Ron is a Jaguar enthusiast, having a very nice E type in the garage beside the Rebel. Sadly his life moved on, and plans to build a new house got in the way of doing the work on the Rebel that he had intended. So it came about that I was again asked to find a new custodian for the car.

Before this, sadly, John Bowcott died after what had been thought to be a routine operation in October 1999, and so was never aware that the chap he sold the car to, who was believed to have been a fibreglass specialist, had failed to do up the Rebel's body.

About Christmas 2001, the advert was duly run, and indeed one man, who in fact had known John Bowcott, and had been in the frame to buy the car the first time it came on the market, still wanted to buy it, sadly his wife had other ideas!

Phil Hallam and I took a run down to see the car at Easter, tying the trip in with a visit to John Box, who I have wanted to introduce to Phil for some time, as they both share an interest in pre-war cars.

So the car was re-advertised, but Ron had made it clear that his timescale meant the car had to have a new home before he went on holiday in June. Well aware of the deadline, things were getting desperate, I had even collected a carload of the spares that went with the car on a return journey from England in June on my way home from collecting John Blagburn's new Rebel, and I didn't have room for them! Then, with less than 24 hours to go, a lad who shall remain nameless, came to my door, handed me £300, and asked me if I thought that would be enough to buy the car. Well, it probably would, close at any rate, but that would not include the cost of collection by trailer, and delivery, but I was keen to ensure that the car found a new home. Then, that same evening, Brian Millar, who already owns 6 Reliants, rang to see if I had found the car a home yet, so my options were growing, though we both felt that with 6 already, he probably had enough on his plate. Later still that night, Robert Fairfoull from Ayr, rang me to see if he could have it. Well, at Robert's place there was the chance of covered storage, which was not on offer at either of the other options, not only that, but Robert only had two Reliants, both Rebels, at that time, and a third to keep them company, seemed like a reasonable idea to me! So the £300 was duly returned with thanks, and I collected Mike Cowie's trailer from Killearn, and arranged for John Blagburn to meet up with us to help with the loading the following afternoon.

I had arranged to be at Ayr at 10:00am on the Friday morning with the trailer, and was only 5 minutes late in arriving. We didn't in fact get on the road much before midday, and arrived at 3:00pm. The loading was not quite as simple as I had hoped it would be, and we did not get on the road till tea time, right into the Carlisle rush hour traffic! We had a bite to eat at Tescos on the A69, and said goodbye to John there.

Robert and I did not get back to Ayr till after 10:00pm, and I was too tired to begin unloading the trailer. Declining Robert's kind offer of a bed for the night, I came home and returned, with Phil, the following morning to unload and return the trailer to Killearn. Thanks Mike and Barbara for the use of the trailer, and Phil for your help unloading it.

Sadly the car no longer has the special engine that John had had made for it, and attempts to trace it have, to date, come to nought. Robert is keen to re-unite the special engine with this rare car with such an interesting history.

Robert then did an excellent job by getting the Rebel through an M.O.T. within a couple of weeks of getting it home, and it made an appearance on the Reliant Owners Club's stand at the Culzean Classic Vehicle show at the beginning of August, well done Robert. I can tell you that he is still struggling to come to terms with the fact that this car does not have a traditional indicator stalk switch, it has two long levers coming out of the dashboard either side of the steering column for that purpose! Also the Regal instrumentation makes the dash look very different from the later Rebels. Better finished mind you!

Good luck with your search for the engine Robert, and thanks for saving a unique Rebel from a very uncertain future.

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Dear Brian,

15-3-2002

In a recent Mewsletter (well it was recent when this letter was written!) you were saying something about a part number for the carb float lid in connection with the overflow pipe modification, which Reliant did themselves introduce, albeit after Kitten production ceased, that perhaps Burlen Fuel Systems could help.

I have now bought their catalogue for the S.U. carb (over 200 pages!) and there is a page of lids listed. It also has all parts, service and rebuild kits for our carbs, so, if you would like, I could send you a copy of any of the items you are interested in. For the benefit of the Register subscribers in general I could sort out all the relevant pages, and send them to you, alternatively you may put my name in a future Mewsletter and I could send out such copies as are needed directly to your readers, and save you a job. You put enough effort into the Register, if we all do our bit it must be to everybody's benefit.

All the best- Malcolm Rush

*Thanks for that Malcolm, and on the basis that these are new parts rather than alternative parts, (the overflow pipe lid excepted), I am happy, nae delighted to take up your kind offer to distribute the information for us, thank you. Ed.*

## **ABOUT HAVING KITTENS (AGAIN)** by John Player – Coventry July 2002

Thanks to Brian for another excellent MEWS, in particular I concur with the points raised by Dick Goodall. Regarding the need for shimming when there appears to be a spring to control the loading on the steering damper pad, the reason is that the spring has by its nature to be very short and extremely stiff - so shimming is needed to obtain the correct force bearing on the rack which is obviously very critical, and can seriously affect the handling of the vehicle. To achieve by shimming alone without a spring would be too critical and damping would be sensitive to the slightest wear or temperature change. Incidentally I am not too happy about using just any plastic for shimming.

A similar situation exists in the case of the spring loaded thrust pads at either end of the rack for the track rod ball joints. But in this case the springs take up any play automatically and no shimming should be needed. Unfortunately if you have an MOT tester who employs gorillas, they will shake the roadwheels so vigorously that they overcome the preload on the springs, and incorrectly interpret this as worn ball joints. In this case I have made up steel shims by grinding down washers, placing them under the heads of the plastic buttons to take up NEARLY all the play so as not to trap the joint, but still allowing the spring to operate correctly. I hope no-one is shimming these any other way, the whole assembly could go tight, and damage of the thrust pad could occur.

Finding MOT testers who have ever seen a Kitten is becoming increasingly difficult, another error they make is they turn the steering at the road wheels rapidly to and fro, and feel the inertia of the steering wheel spinning round feeding back irregularly through the two acute angled U.J.'s in the steering column, interpreting these as "tight spots" in the rack. Hawking the vehicle around to different testers has become too expensive.

Regarding my previous diatribe in a previous MEWS. I was disappointed that my tip on hanging the radiator in place to facilitate refitting was not taken in the spirit it was given i.e. was based on actual experience and not arbitrarily peering under the wheel arch as suggested by Al Osborn. So unless you are a three armed masochistic limbo dancer, trust me, my way is easier. The short fine thread screws need to be started with the fingers anyway, unless you want them cross threaded.

Perhaps it is the case that by doing things the hard way one is able to demonstrate one's skill. If this means I am unskillful, I plead guilty. I am reminded of the young lad who changed the world by inventing valve gear in the early days of reciprocating engines. He became tired of operating the valves manually so attached pieces of string and connected them with the piston rods, so he could go to sleep on the job! Maybe the saying should be "idleness is the mother of invention".

A case in point is bleeding of brakes, everyone has their pet method. Some make it incredibly complicated, buy expensive kits or one way valves and knocking over messy jars of fluid. I've tried them all. Trying to employ spouse to hold down the pedal and pump at the right time can contribute to divorce proceedings.

Now I just attach a length of windscreen washer tubing to each nipple in turn, taking it vertically to a point above the roof level of the car, keeping it clear of the paintwork. Slacken off the nipple, sit in the driving seat and pump the pedal, watching the bubbles and dirt clear

themselves up the tube. Retighten the nipple, place ringer over top end of tube whilst removing it to stop the old fluid running out then it can be discarded. Easy!

I have used this method for many years on all types of systems, so easy it is a positive incentive to change the fluid periodically, which we should. OK so you thought of it first- but you did not write it in did you!

Discussions on various axle ratios, tyre sizes etc. reminds me of an article I wrote for a club magazine, which I have also sent to Brian. One of my jobs in the industry was calculating speedo gear ratios, in accordance with the regulations, including the years when our cars were in production.

My remark about front crankshaft oil seal being easy to replace (particularly compared with the rear one!) was partly based on the fact that it can be inserted from the outside (most applications have a machined retaining lip) so I presumed that the old one can be prised out, and the new one fitted in situ I did remove the timing cover as it happens, boiled the cover, froze the seal, and pushed it in flush.

Coming now to my driver's door, it was already unreparable when I acquired the vehicle thanks to efforts by "experts" (twice). I am ashamed to say I have still not fitted the new door, but I intend to "get my retaliation in first" by strengthening it at the time. Strange thing, have been fibreglassing for 44 years having owned two boats, one caravan, one trailer tent, and of course the old days when we used to "repair" metal cars with fibreglass. (It used to be an amusing sight, seeing carefully shaped lumps of car drop off in the road—actually it was mostly china clay) now I am reinforcing plastic cars with metal - its a funny old world.

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## **Tales From Tore** 29th August 2002

The Music goes round and round... yet another song!

And so do Kitten problems. Brian Millar was recently asked by a KitReg member if he could help with a problem involving changing the filters in a petrol pump. It turned out the car would go fine at first but quickly started losing power. Brian eventually persuaded the enquirer look for the filter in the fuel line just above the rear axle and replace it. After some persuasion, the guy eventually did, and the car now runs very well. Now if you look in Mewsletter No. 2, Spring / Summer 1993 this very problem is covered. Hey, ho! Oh for an Index?

Index ES! (And there's more! - Jimmy Cricket) Thanks for consistently mentioning the Indexes. Perhaps you would also like to point out that for a fiver, one currently receives BOTH the Contents of Mewsletters list AND the Cross Index to Mewsletters. Demand at present is only one or two Indexes between Mewsletter issues, so it's not worth photocopying lots of volumes to gather dust, after all, they need updating every time a new edition comes out, so I just print out the odd copy as required.

Mewsletter 47 brought lots of interesting stuff to my attention as usual. Yes the glossier covers are much nicer, my thanks to John Pearce.

Can't help shouting a special HI! to Ray Wilson. After checking in an old notebook, I saw your Rebel pickup at Carlton Precinct in Nottingham in December 1998 but never managed to find the driver. URC 979M was indeed one of the two Rebel pickups I have seen in the last 5 years.

Mewsletter 47 Page 8 So future Tempests may use a modified Reliant three wheeler chassis. Here's an intriguing thought, might these new chassis be used to fit Kittens, by any chance? Could our Editor ask Steve Campbell? I could Dick, but I am pretty certain from past conversations with him that he is thinking about using a Mini subframe and the bits that go with it to get away from the Reliant steering and front suspension, rather in the manner of the WMC 4 wheeled Bug, Ed.

The Video of Anadol and other Reliant stuff is still available from Bob Neal, I am expecting a copy this week. Now If I can work this first VCR we have bought, I might be able to watch it?

Mewsletter 47 - Page 14 - Alternative front seats for Kittens.

From my Cross Index, I have located the following info buried in the depths of Mewsletter back numbers.

Mewsletter 5 P7 - 'do you know what alternative seats could be fitted? I have looked at a Renault 5 two door....'

Mewsletter 7 P7 - ' Front seats from a Talbot Samba Sport fit, if your Kitty has the elasticated door pockets.'

Mewsletter 12 P8 - '.... a modestly easy fit is the Escort or Fiesta. .. it was a bit of a squeeze.... I had to remove one corner of the plastic door pocket.'

Mewsletter 13 P12 - '.. Suzuki Swift seats fit straight in...'

Mewsletter 29 P13 - 'I've taken some seats from a Fiat X-19 sports car...' (did you get to fit them, George Sampford?)

Mewsletter 47, Page 13 - Kitten front brake adjuster repair.

When Orlando had this problem, I found that, once the road wheels were removed, by careful work with a flat file it was possible to file a new 1/4" square on the adjuster heads while still on the car. Turning the steering gave better access. The adjuster itself was freed by removing both brake drum and linings, then turning the round disc with a Stilson after soaking the shank in WD40 or similar.

Replacing the brake linings can be tricky, my way was simply to remove the whole hub, then the lining & spring refitting is easy. The wheel bearings were adjusted as per book after replacing the hub, this method gave me a chance to grease the hub bearings too.

Mewsletter 47, Page 23 - SU Carb matters So, 354 different needles could be fitted, is this a junkies paradise? I imagine this large number covered a vast range of car engines and the Kitten used a very few. Perhaps a good starting point might be to renew both needle and jet with the makers' original type, they are surely worn after over 20 years service?

Similarly, the float valve is often worn and replacement might be worthwhile. Mini Spares can provide a complete assembly of float chamber lid, float and needle, which might be the best solution.

Mewsletter 46, Page 24 Air / Fuel Ratio Meters. This sounds an interesting field of research, what is the address of 'Westach'? As for the 'SU Needle' PC program, this sounds quite intriguing, but sadly not all of us are on the Internet

It would be interesting to learn if Paul had to modify the type of SU needle fitted to his Liege by a great deal from the standard Reliant spec, and by how much he benefitted. *Watch this space – Ed.*

I often wonder if the best way forward would be to get a professionally rebuilt carb, they must surely be all well worn by now. If I can ever afford it!

Mewsletter 47 page 25 - Ball Joint Blues.

A warning to all of us. Now Al, can you tell us the best way to check for wear in ball joints? It has been hinted to me that there is both a right and a wrong way.

Mewsletter 47 page 20 -The Decline in 4 wheeler numbers on the road.

We possibly have 2 sorts of owners at present, those who use them as cheap transport then discard them when heavy expense is needed, and those who will do their darndest to keep the wee beastly going, hopefully most of these latter enthusiasts are now in the Register. There are those disgustingly capable souls who can tackle anything and others, (like me?), who can DIY up to a point only then get stuck physically & financially. C'est la vie.

Perhaps our cars are at the stage and age of Jowetts in the early 1970s, and I wonder what the state of play concerning numbers on the road is with that marque, which might give us a clue where the Reliants are going? Perhaps our all well informed Editor is acquainted with the Jowett situation?

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For details of the planned Lands End to John O'Groats run for Reliants contact Brian Radford through [brian@northmead-online.co.uk](mailto:brian@northmead-online.co.uk)

## **GETTING TECHNICAL**

### **SPEEDY GONZALES or FIRST PAST THE POST**

Not a lot of people know this, but speedometers are allowed to read as much as 13.3% fast. This is a big error and means that someone insisting on driving in the outside lane at what he

thinks is 70 mph might be doing only 61 and is being an even greater nuisance than he intends. In practice speedos are rarely this bad, however.

The situation comes about because, under no circumstances, must speedometers read slow. They must in fact read at least 1% fast. This is to ensure that drivers do not unwittingly exceed a given speed limit. This can have serious consequences. Cases have occurred where drivers have been prosecuted due to someone having fitted incorrect speedo drive gears for that vehicle spec.

The remainder of the allowance is for: cases where the exact theoretical speedo gear ratios are not technically feasible, manufacturing errors in the unit and tyre variations (incorrect tyre pressures cause negligible errors).

You may wish to check the accuracy of your speedo (particularly if you have fitted non-standard wheels or tyres or have carried out a conversion using the transmission from another vehicle whose correct tyre size you do not know). This can be done simply as follows :- Choose a convenient length of motorway when it is quiet (if ever!). Ideally, you need a helper and you certainly will if you do not have a stopwatch with you. Alongside the road there are posts, 10 to the kilometer, or almost exactly 16 to the mile. Drive as steadily as you can at an indicated speed. Start timing at a post. Start counting at the next post. Stop timing at the 16th post. If you take exactly one minute then the speed is 60 mph; this is the most convenient speed to check. It is advisable to check at several different speeds above and below 60 mph. The results can be worked out on a calculator, but I have listed some useful figures below. (n.b. Time x Speed = 3600).

Another method is to count the number of posts passed in 3 mins 45 seconds. This number of posts equates to the speed in mph. This method requires more patience, but no calculation and is a good way to occupy the family on a long journey.

If you are really keen you can re-calibrate the speedometer and then make a new transparent overlay.

After you have done this check you will be able to drive up to the prevailing limits with confidence, perhaps allowing yourself just a little more for 'human error', but don't quote me when your case comes up!

You can also easily check the accuracy of the odometer (mileage recorder) by similar means, preferably over a good number of miles using the trip meter. The kilometer posts are numbered in km and tenths. There should be far less error than the sort of figures I mentioned at the beginning of this article. The telephone point spacing is not a reliable measure to use when carrying out these checks.

time secs	120	109	100	90	84	80	72	69	64	60	58	56	53	50	48	45
speed mph	30	33	36	40	43	45	50	52	56	60	62	64	68	72	75	80

John Player.

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Technical Tweaks from Thetford 23rd August 02

A Osborn

No major happenings this time around but lots of observations re last newsletter. First, I now open the Mewsletter with some trepidation, as two issues ago there was an item on the positioning of antiroll bar bushes / fitting to the suspension etc. That was the week I had replaced said bushes. Last issue there was a re-furbish of the steering rack - yes you guessed it, a week later my steering rack needed replacing!! I did have a spare that needed its ends servicing then new gaiters and fresh oil. But the old one when removed turned out to contain more water than oil! Moral perhaps take this item off the car occasionally and change its water for oil! No its not that hard, ring for details. Now back to the latest Mewsletter, there seems to be a severe shortage of front seats, well for goodness sake fit some decent seats like those from the first front wheel drive Escort, the MK III. Again ring me for the details of how to do it.

Now we need some help on front door refitting. There is as most of you see a number of shims on the car body side of the hinge, just poke a few more in! I have plenty spares if you want some more. The other good screw up with these doors is if they ever catch in the wind so that the hinges are bent backward, you end up with door edge at the front chewing into the body. (and making a creaking noise) Quick fix number 234! Take a hammer! but use the 'handle' to poke deep into the hinge mechanism, then carefully try to close the door onto the hammer handle. If you've done this properly then you will tend to bend the hinge back to a better position. You should be putting the back end of the hammer handle right onto the interior light switch.

Now wheel balancing, our Teller of Tore Tales seems to have a problem but I think he has missed one fine point. How about rebalancing the brake drums? After taking off the wheels and brake drums you will see that there is a ring on one wheel stud that lines up with the drum to retain the drum balancing, but of course this was correct when new, now with all that rust and wear and even changing of drums it is well worth a rebalance. This is what you do:- Adjust the shoes inwards (or even take them off) so that you can replace drum and wheel so that you can spin them without any chance of brake drag. But first take off the ring and move it round one stud, marking or taking note where it was. What is the balance situation now? Remember to fit all four nuts when you fit the wheel (only opposite two need be tight). If not then remove wheel and drum and move the stud ring around again. Obviously you only start this exercise AFTER you have had the wheels balanced. The easy way out of ALL this is to have the wheels computer balanced on the car, but A) this costs MONEY and B) you then can't move the wheels around.

Next item for comment, nice item on the fuel/air meter from Paul Wheatley, of which I have been in touch directly on this very subject. The meter is easy enough to fit and not that costly and tuning the carb is 'straight forward' but what will take a little effort is getting the Oxygen sensor fitted into the exhaust pipe, we need to purchase a 3/4" dia boss and get it welded / brazed into the exhaust pipe in the correct place, i.e. to maintain the sender at 600°f. If and when I crack this one I'll let you know as I will also be tuning the SU carb, finely!

Now another little area to add my pennyworth, there appears to be a dicotomy (my word of the week now I've found out how to spell it!) with regard to mutual spares scheme and out of date information. Surely the system should be run as a dated list? The man (or woman!) who runs the scheme either just copies lists with dates and/or puts it onto computer for listing with dates then

when people want bits they send in an SAE with a few stamps to cover copying costs to get a list. If the list is out of date that just becomes a fact of life and we accept it. Yes perhaps after two years (or even yearly) you send a reminder or even a return copy to the person who sent in the list saying these will be deleted from the list unless you recontact appropriately. It's after all more a duty of the person trying to run the scheme than a duty of us proletariat to update these things. A yearly reminder/return copy of original list? Further to this I just might have a bit of spare space to stock some of these 'not wanted' spares as long as they aren't too big, no old cars; I await with bated breath! PS Brian, when there is a request for information in a letter wouldn't it be a good idea to print an address, or better still a phone number so that those of us with some answers can get in contact straight away? The two month turn round with Mewsletter could be too late..... That's it.

AI

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*O.K AI, I take your point about contact details. That said, everyone is well aware of the magazine frequency, and can ask, if it is urgent, to be contacted by telephone, indeed if they took the time to write rather than ring, I assume that the situation is not that urgent, and I do publish your number in every edition these days AI. On the front seat situation however, don't forget that most people only own 1 small 4 wheeled Reliant, and usually assume that all the others are just like theirs. Quite wrong of course, but perfectly understandable. So almost everyone with the rigid door pockets will never have met the elasticated type that are essential if fitting the Ford seats. I say essential, there are, as always, other solutions, but far and away the simplest is to have the elasticated door pockets. Another part we should be rescuing from any Kitten being scrapped.*

*Once again, I know we have covered this before, but folk keep asking, so :-*

*Oh, and while we are in the technical bit, would those who need to know about such things please make note of the fact that the Rebel L/H threaded track rod end is a QR1120 LHT available from Partco as per Robert Fairfoull 15/08/02, they retail at about £15 I believe, Ed.*

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## **Sales and Wants**

For Sale :- Fox custom B44 ECF Red, fitted with a factory sunroof, MG Metro seats, the originals are available if required. Excellent runner good engine and gearbox, factory unleaded head, brand new clutch, waterpump, radiator, proper Fox exhaust, window frames, loads of spares including engine, gearbox, front and rear suspension units, kitten exhaust, brake drums, all windows, wheels and much more. All yours for just £395 o.n.o.

For Sale :- 1976 Kitten DL saloon, good chassis but needs restoration, £50. (buyer collects, Perthshire). Reconditioned, re-bored engine and gearbox from above car, £300.

For Sale :- A rare opportunity to purchase a Jimp. Regrettably Andrew Hudson no longer feels that he can cope with his fleet of 4 Reliants, and something has to go. While he loves driving the Jimp, he feels that it has to be the one with which he parts.

For Sale :- Reliant Kitten chassis, serviceable condition. Also Rebel estate chassis and body, no doors. Make an offer to Rob Ellis

For Sale :- Robert MacNeilage's late Kitten estate. M.O.T. just expired. Offers over £300.

For Sale :- Trailer tent complete with all accessories. Contact John Johnstone

For Sale : Two Kittens, a saloon and an Estate, together with a lot of spares. Contact Robin Ellis

For Sale :- Various Kitten spares available in Essex. Ring Martin Seymour for details. On 01206 751646 or e-mail martin.seymour@ntlworld.com

For Sale :- R registered Kitten estate complete with many spares. £200 Also a Rialto estate with a good engine.

For Sale :- Kitten ball joints, upper & lower, secondhand but serviceable, £40 the set of 4. Contact Keith White

For sale:- Fox tandy camper van. 1986 white taxed 11/02 mot till end May '03. Fridge, cooker, and sink with pump. £1500.

For sale :- Kitten Estate complete, lying a few years, spares or repair free to a good home ( you will need to bring tyres that hold air ! ) contact Bob Langford

For Sale :- Rebel 700 long M.O.T. Yours for just £650.

Wanted :- Kitten front seats. Ring Paul Orkney

Wanted :- Kitten front seats – Ring Bruce Harding

Wanted :- Good 850 engine. Contact Carl Langridge

Wanted :- For a Fox, the following parts. A set of 4 or 5 hubcaps (chrome type – were they not in fact all aluminum, Ed?) Rocker switch, for fitting 2 spotlights. A battery indicator gauge (Voltmeter) optional with some models. Rear bulkhead, as fitted to the pick-up with the canvas cover, the one with the rear window in it. Contact Roger White

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## **NOTES**

In the absence of a “from the in-tray” page, I can obviously cover any urgent things in here, and while perhaps not urgent, the Register of Unusual Micro Cars were kind enough to include us on the mailing list of their August press release to tell us about their web site at [www.rumcars.org](http://www.rumcars.org) (the press release had it all in upper case and underlined) do feel free to have a look if you have the facilities. They tell me that it is specially designed to be of interest to anyone who has, or has an interest in the rarer microcars.

Then, just as I had made my mind up to drop the in tray page, the same organization sent out a circular with the request that it be published in as many magazines as possible, and since I happen to sympathise, and had a spare page in this edition, here is the main reason that this Register is called a Register, not a Car Club, and why I don't organise events for us all to enjoy! :-

Dear Editors,

Several years ago Mike Shepherd and I tried to put together a folder to help future National Rally organisers, containing information on past mistakes and how to get over them, list of useful suppliers and other such stuff. At the time it seemed to be felt that we were trying to say what form the Rally should take, that was not the intention. I still feel that such a folder would be helpful and I wonder if you would publish the following letter in your magazine before the post Rally meeting in order to stimulate comments that could be aired at that meeting.

"I feel we all owe the Isetta Club and Lee Turner in particular a big thank you for a very successful weekend. It saddened me that there were a number of moans and groans even before the Rally was over. Long grass, bumpy fields, not enough toilets, a brewery that ran out of doughnuts, etc. Most of the complaints arose because the Rally was so well attended. Many more people attended this year than for the last four or five years. The organisers can only plan for numbers that have been experienced in the recent past: it is very difficult to guesstimate. I know I didn't camp so I can't speak from experience, but hey, aren't we expecting too much? There is a great problem in finding the ideal site; many of us have been trying since the late 70's. Now more of you come in camper vans, and with trailers so one can assume that other participants to events do too, this in itself can cause havoc to a field after a drop of rain. We were lucky in our weather but were probably suffering from what happened on

Bank Holiday Monday. Also an organiser cannot expect to be responsible for long grass when it is cut as a favour by local farmers who, as I know from my own experience last week, were working flat out to get their crops in before the next downpour. Those of you who came in caravans in the main had your own facilities and the port-a-loos were there for the benefit of those under canvas. Toilet blocks, showers and loos are very expensive to hire and I am sure the organisers would have been equally criticized had they over spent in this area. The whole point of this letter is that, as someone who has been deeply involved in the organisation of past rallies and is now a signatory to the Rally Fund Account, I feel it is important that a Rally folder should be kept, to be updated each year and passed to the next organisers as they take over. It should include all the details of expenses, companies used, problems that arose and means of avoiding them as well as list of prizewinners and recipients of returnable trophies. This would not be a document to tell how the Rally was to be run but to help anyone who has not had great experience in organising such an event before with guidelines, which they could ignore if they wished.

Therefore, I would suggest that anyone that has a genuine criticism, and I accept there will be some, report them to their own Club or direct to the Isetta Club in time for the post rally meeting so that the problems may be addressed and recorded for the benefit of future organisers. Also tips such as "on a road run the front runner knows the way, and everyone makes sure that the car behind them is always the following." This may be obvious to anyone who has experience of arranging a road run involving over ten cars but not so obvious when there are only two or three. Let us make the Post Rally Meeting produce some practical support to those brave people who are prepared to undertake such a massive commitment for our enjoyment. Each Club should

send a representative with practical suggestions rather than blank criticism or worse still no comments at all, so that the future of the National is safe guarded.

Jean Hammond"

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While it is in my mind, Darron, yes you Darron Farlow, listen up, what I forgot to say to you when I wrote was, that if the chassis on your recently acquired Kitten is as bad as you made it sound in your letter, a change of chassis may be the best / easiest / most practical solution. Talk to us through these pages if you think that would be of any help. Otherwise give me a ring.

Listen, I know that I am always on about spares, then every so often I realise that some of you have not been with us for many years, and I come across the odd bit, like the transfers for the back of the Kitten, the ones that say "RELIANT" and "kitten DL" , you do know that I have them in stock, don't you?

I have taken the plunge on your behalf, and signed us up with the FBHVC (Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs). That was something of an eye opener – as our National bard Robert Burns was once heard to remark – "Oh tae be able tae see ourselves as ithers see us " Anyway, their rules allow for a wide range of member Club sizes, now I have never thought of us as anything other than a small organisation, if indeed the very term organisation were not a bit grand. So, when I read that there was a minimum subscription of £25, I thought, yes, the Register can afford that. After all, over half of our cars now qualify, being 25 years old or more, and it will only be a few more years till they all do. So, rather than wait, I thought I would register our support sooner rather than later – then I read the small print, £25 or 27p per member, which ever is greater – do you know I ended up sending them a cheque for £75.60, so we are not quite a small as I had imagined!!

Anyway, the point is, or indeed the points are, that you can now enjoy specialist products from Britannia Rescue recovery services who you can contact on 0800 591563 and MST discounted travel services who you can contact on 01295 278748. Please do not forget to mention the Register if you are talking to them.

It would not be fair of me to fail to thank Alan Osborn, our regular contributor of technical tips from Thetford, for his assistance in putting me in touch with the right people in regard to our new association with the FBHVC, thanks Al.

Moving on, I see that we should all dash out and avail ourselves a copy of November's Practical Classics and look at page 63. Well done Bruce Harding for finally getting something about Kittens into that publication – I must admit I sometimes wonder if I am wasting my time and our money by having them (Practical Classics) on the Mewsletter mailing list!

Oh, Stop Press, Duncan Bradford tells me that he is having to cut up one of his Foxes, the one with front end damage, so, if you need any body or chassis bits, catch him quick

Oh, and before you start, yes I know that is the third time in four editions we have had a Rebel on the front cover, but I don't choose the pictures, and if you don't send suitable ones to John Pearce, it's your own fault!

Right, that's it, yes really, I'll close now, not a word about ball joints, honest, time perhaps for a winter service mind you! Take care, talk to you again about Christmas. Oh, and if you were thinking about putting pen to paper, or finger to keyboard, please do so, and so save everyone from so much waffle from me, who knows, perhaps the Christmas edition may be shorter than usual if I don't hear from you soon!

Oh, just one final final piece of news, just in today 16th October, just as I was about to take this to the printer, Paul Wheatley has just got his Liege through its SVA test, first time, well done Paul, read all about it in the next edition – a 70 mile trip in the pouring rain to get to the inspection centre, I've heard of a baptism of fire, Paul obviously likes to be different! Congratulations.

**Brian**

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