

Reliant Kitten Register

NEWSLETTER 51

March/April 2003



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 51

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 Peter Lingard

The Register is a member of the FBHVC, which monitors UK & EU legislation and lobbies on our behalf to protect our freedom to use vehicles of all ages on the roads.

Our front cover is graced on this occasion by a pair of vehicles that are indeed orange, Bond Bug orange even, but not Bond bugs. They are Brian Radford's Kittens. The one on the left was clearly owned in the past by one of those people who understands even less than I do about the cooling of Reliant engines in that the, very neat, hole in the bonnet, which should be there to let hot air out, in fact looks more like a scoop to get more air in, quite defeating the objective ! Very nice they are mind you, congratulations on keeping them so well Brian. You can see them, and lots of other Kittens on Brian's web site [reliantkitten.co.uk](http://www.reliantkitten.co.uk)

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, 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.

Phew, am I glad the last one is history! Well, here we are into a new ERA. Oh sorry, I did say we were going to try and keep this Reliant based in future, didn't I?

I was expecting lots of comments, mainly negative, about the size of the print in the last edition. Yes I noticed too that the quality of the paper and the print on the second sheet in was excellent, but that was because of the machine it was done on, in order to accommodate the colour picture, sadly a thing we will not be doing very often, costing as it did, for that one sheet, £150, mind you, had I been better prepared, we could have enjoyed 4 pictures that size for the same money – live and learn. So we can't afford to do that very often, nor indeed have the whole magazine done to such a standard, sadly. Does bring home just how much we owe to John Pearce for our covers, thanks again John.

So, I was surprised that most of the calls I had were about the absence of your membership cards, and not about the size of the print. Well, I thought I had explained the membership card situation fairly fully, so just read Mag 50 pages 8 and 49 and save me repeating myself.

Moving on, having failed miserably to mark the Kitten's 25th anniversary in any appropriate way, perhaps if we started planning something for it's 30th now, we might get organised in time – any volunteers to take that on?

Rebels of course came out 11 years earlier, and the Rebel's 40th anniversary will be upon us before the Kitten's 30th, again, anyone care to organise something – talk to me.

And just so you Foxy folk don't feel neglected, feel free to educate me and volunteer to do something appropriate at the time too.

I was, finally, updating the database with the information from your renewal notice earlier today, 4th of March!, and was interested to note that while a number of vehicles have been scrapped, twice as many have been sold, as runners, to people not on the Register, and I don't, yet, know who those individuals are! Hmm, am I doing something wrong? Some people are very good at letting me know where a car has gone, but sadly, recently at any rate, such individuals are in the minority. (Yes I did, today, finally write to Dave Vosper, who you may recall was the new custodian of Bob Bridger's old car, as mentioned in the last edition, and thank you again Bob for giving me these details.) From the first 50 renewals processed, 4 cars had been scrapped, twice that number had changed hands, but only 2 people told me who they had sold them to. How can I possibly keep track of these wonderful little vehicles if people don't provide me with the relevant information? I am sure that many of them will spring to light in the fullness of time, and yes, it is a lot less work for me, if new custodians contact me, rather than me having to write letters to them, goodness knows I spend enough time chasing up late renewals. Don't feel got at, if you are reading this, and it is April 2003, then either you have renewed your subscription for 2003, or you are a special case, and I am not going to list the special case categories, just believe me, and be thankful that I am not as badly organised as I sometimes feel I am!

47 people did get an envelope from me this morning, but their's did not have a magazine, it had a note telling them what they had missed by not, yet, renewing their subscription, and if it was not for the fact that we signed up more new people than that last year, and indeed have signed up a dozen more so far this year, I might just be worried.

Anyway, please do not feel short-changed, I know this edition is a sheet light, but with the smaller print, you are still getting fully 10,000 words, and the writing of the £462 cheque for the last edition is still fresh in my mind – and that ignores the £120 it cost to post it to everyone – so I'm just being cautious for a couple of months.

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REBEL YELL! - A Brief Recap

To new readers of the Mewsletter, and those that have forgotten, this is the life and times of Mo's Rebel estate. Bright red and one of the last to be made, SRF340L has been with us for about 2½ years. Owned and used by my wife, Maureen, but maintained by yours truly, it continues to keep us on our toes. Affectionately called Bessie or the Red Devil (depending upon who you speak to!), it has previously had an 850cc engine installed, along with an early crash gearbox. Both these items continue to be the bane of my life as you will soon find out...

Part V – Solitary Confinement

Readers may recall that back in Part III, the Red Devil disgraced itself under the watchful eyes of my new employers. It was subsequently sent to jail, without passing Go and collecting £200, and ordered to get itself back into shape before showing its face to the world again.

The prison cell at our new abode is a rather cushy affair, a gabled roof with plenty of cross beams, it's dry, next to the house and has lighting. Above all it has electricity – which means power tools! - a far cry from the previous hovel some had the cheek to call a lock-up garage back in Wales. Prisoners in this day and age just don't realise they have it so good. With home comforts close at hand, the task of sorting out the many mechanical problems was commenced. Typical of many a Reliant - the ability to mark its territory wherever it may wander - the problem of oil leaks had to be addressed. A rusting brake pipe also needed to be replaced before the MoT man singled it out for failure, some water hoses were showing signs of ageing along with the need to cure a noisy and rough running engine.

First job was to get the engine out. Getting it out isn't too difficult. Take off the head, dynamo, flywheel and starter and you've got a metal lump the weight of a large sack of spuds (getting it back in was a little trickier – more of that later...). It's then just a case of reaching in and lifting it out!

With the engine out of the way the rusting brake pipe could be tackled. This one ran from the four way junction to the near-side wheel, going underneath the engine. The other brake pipes were copper, but this was still the original steel one. Just as well, on the attempt to loosen the union nut holding it in place it split open... The consequences cannot be imagined if it hadn't been replaced. Not having the tools or experience of making my own, a ready made kit was purchased from Automec for about £30. Rubber hoses were also obtained from them at about £6 apiece. Installation wasn't difficult, just follow the old pipes, however each run seemed to be between 1 and 4 inches too long, so a little bit of rerouting had to be done to get them to fit. While I was at it, all the cylinder seals and shoes were replaced. It was worth it, later, the MoT examiner remarked the Rebel's brakes were better than most modern cars – not bad for a 29 year old with drums all round.

Attention was now focused on the engine. Originally from a Rialto, this 850cc powerplant was suffering from a noisy top end, numerous oil leaks, low compression and a dodgy looking spark plug in cylinder 3.

The strip-down revealed it had been apart before – and from previous experience with this car, things did not look good. Oil leaking from the sump was due to the lack of a gasket, bits of hardened valve stem oil seals were lying in the sump, the big end bearing shells were badly scored and worn, the pistons had excessive carbon build up and the exhaust manifold was leaking. No wonder it was poorly. Now I'd got it separated into its component parts, I suppose I've got to make a fatal admission here – I'd never taken an engine to bits before. Gulp.

Don't worry he says – I've got a Haynes manual to help me! B*££*&%\$. They say hindsight is a great thing, but often it is handy to have it before you start. One thing I did learn from this rebuild, Haynes manuals are not the Bible, and they do have mistakes. I wish I could say it was the way I interpreted the manual, something to the effect of position the notch in the distributor shaft to a position of 7 o'clock from the side of the engine. But I got a second opinion on this one and we both came to the same conclusion. The wrong conclusion. That is why I now have to remove the distributor if I need to remove spark plugs one and two. Oh well. When it was being put together, I checked the alignment of the holes between the engine block and cylinder head, using the new head gasket as a template. Yes, there is a discrepancy between the two. Careful use of a needle file now helps to increase the coolant flow around the head. The same principle was also used on the manifolds. The inlet was fine, but the exhaust – oh dear... The overall effect to the gas flow gave the impression it went in as motorway but came out single track road. The misalignment of the exhaust holes meant the engine was being strangled by a good 20%. A more substantial file was used here, taking care not to take too much out of the manifold.

New piston rings were fitted, well, some were. Obtained from the local motor factors, the oil scraper ring wouldn't fit into the piston, so the old ones went back on. New big end bearings were fitted, noting the cleanliness required – something the previous rebuilder hadn't.

So back into the car it was ready to go. However, one slight difference to getting it out. The engine was complete with head, manifold, flywheel and dynamo. Getting it back in wasn't going to be as easy as getting it out. I did try to get the engine hoist from the car club on camp, but it would have been easier to drag the car round there rather than to fetch something obviously designed for replacing the engines out of Phantom fighter aircraft. That thing is big enough to lift the Rebel itself, let alone the engine!

So enter Bodgit and Scarper. Picture the scene – one Rebel halfway into garage, one engine in front, one scaffolding pole secured in the roof joists, and another car behind the Rebel. Take one rope, attach to said engine, up and over the pole and back over the Rebel and attach to the car behind. See where I'm going? Reverse second car, up goes engine. Roll Rebel forward, move car forward and lower engine into position. No probs. Just don't tell the Health and Safety man!

Next :- Flooded With Success - Mark Hayton early 2003

Right, I didn't interrupt once! Mark, I have to say that I would never have dreamt of removing the head, flywheel or indeed anything else from a Rebel engine before removing it from the engine bay. As you say, without such bits and pieces it weighs not a lot more than a sack of

spuds, but even with them all on, it only weighs about 110lbs (50kg to all you youngsters). I know that the Rebel engine bay is far and away the best of any Reliant ever built for engine access, but it is also the best for engine removal, and the engine is much easier to work on on a bench, Ed.

While on about Rebels, this should probably be in the technical section, but Dick's index will pick it up I'm sure, the 'O' ring that lives on the bottom of the early Rebel gearlever, the 600 and 700cc Rebels, the ones with the extension shaft and the neat short dumpy gearlever, comes out of the floor just in front of the handbrake, well the 'O' ring at the bottom of that type of gear lever is an O12, so now you know.

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Dear Brian,

25 January 2003

I'm approaching one of those little milestones in one's life that one has to face, even though it means making some painful decisions. I'm approaching retirement [a year to go!], my two daughters have now left home, qualified, and the financial squeeze has eased a bit. My father has recently given up driving and kindly given my wife his '96 Metro [sorry - Rover 100, mother would not countenance it being called a Metro!!].

We are both most attached to Kittens and have run two of them successively as second cars over the last 15 or more years, but despite the attraction of being virtually indestructable and providing very economical motoring, I find that my inclinations to spend the necessary time to maintain it is slowly but inexorably ebbing away.

The reasons, not too difficult to find, are related to the ageing process, motivation and more critically, energy! If I add together my life-long interest in Morgans, both 3 and 4 wheeled, [my 20 year old restoration of a 1951 + 4 is 2/3 finished [note the eternal optimism - not 'I still have 1/3 of the work to do and it's already taken me 20 years!'], I've started motorcycle race marshalling again [after a 40 year lay-off!], and have a 1957 Velocette Valiant awaiting restoration, I'm about to get 'reborn' into biking [a big Triumph at least or maybe a Ducati [[?]] - well I can dream as well as the next man!] not to mention running a Ceilidh Band with my wife, and an irresistible urge to restart my old interest in player-pianos ['pianolas'] you will understand my desperate need to rationalise. *Yes, alright, I understand it, that does not mean I have to approve of your decision, after all, you'd be much warmer in a Kitten, than standing on some exposed ridge, waiting for the next two wheeled contestant to come by and soak you in mud and spray, wouldn't you? Ed.*

Thus it is that I have recently disposed of our old Scimitar GTE, and I'm selling my Velocette LE to make way for the bigger bike. Now comes the crunch - our Kitten is next on the list, and I wish [hopefully] to pass her and my accumulated bits and pieces on to someone who can use and appreciate them. I therefore enclose an advert, [faxed earlier] for the next issue of the Register magazine. I've also enclosed my subscription for the next year and must say that you have produced a singularly professional club mag. which is a credit to you, as is the Register itself. I wish it and you well.

Jeremy Gibbons, Pontrug, Caernarfon

Jeremy, I understand all too well, in spite of my interruption earlier, just what you mean. Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts with us, and every good wish with your plans for the future. Oh, and the car is still for sale £500 o.n.o.

Dear Brian,

18-2-03

Firstly please excuse my tardiness in replying to your letter of June 11th 2002.

My wanted advert for a 4 wheeled Reliant generated an amazing response. I was offered several cars and vans in all states of disintegration, and a lot of advice and information, all gratefully received.

Anyway, I agreed to buy a Rebel, unseen, for £50, or £70 delivered. This may seem stupid, but the time and fuel wasted in looking soon exceeds £50 worth.

When it arrived I hid it in the garage because I hadn't mentioned anything to my wife. We moved to this address last April with the firm intention of renovating the bungalow for resale – and any 'spare' time with my 'toys' has to be justified. However, work on the house has gone well, so I am allowed Sundays to 'play'.

The Rebel is a '73 Estate. It was badly cracked in the front panel, and the rear side windows had been vandalised, the interior was tatty or missing, and the nearside door came off in your hand if you dared to open it.

But it was quite pretty, and I was tempted to bodge it up as a runabout – but as we have a Clio and a Renault 5 for this purpose, I gritted my teeth and removed the body. It transpired to be worse than it looked, so I don't feel too much of a vandal.

My first impression was "Aren't they well made" – it must have taken me 20 hours with grinder and jigsaw to reduce the pieces of body small enough to go to the tip. During the process it looked quite good as a pick-up but less so as a Moke / Buggy.

The chassis was pretty good – the previous (as expected) remedial welding was well done, and the rust in the outriggers will be 'disappeared' as it falls outwith the projected body sides.

I sent off to Steve Campbell for a Tempest brochure and parts list. They were revealing. Working as I have in engineering and fabrication, I can produce the parts for my special myself.

As I mentioned to you I have built two J.C. Midge on Herald chassis. A quick run around with a tape measure reveals that the Rebel wheel base is as near as dammit the same as the Herald, the Standard 10 front end is similar (possibly interchangeable) so the Midge body would sit quite well on the Rebel chassis. My idea has always been to build a cheap simple traditional open car that will keep up with the traffic and be cheap to run and insure. I don't like the Herald back end, they're all rusty, and hop about everywhere. Rebel cart springs are cheap, cheerful and less of a problem.

To date I have manufactured a set of Midge scuttle, floorpan, and front body tub, panels in ½" marine ply, and will skin with 0.9mm alloy sheet. The rear end will be similar to the Tempest in appearance, which deals neatly with the rear spring hangers.

Mechanically I intend to use Rebel running gear 'as – is' because I hope to register the vehicle as a 'radically altered Reliant' and avoid the need for S.V.A. – although this is only commonsense and safety orientated. Later I wish to go to 850 & twin carb. The engine and box will be moved back in the chassis. I intend to fit the Herald rack and pinion as initial measurement seems to indicate that is simple and possible with appropriate modifications to the suspension tower.

The only unresolved problem is the pedals. It would be useful to simply move the whole cross-shaft and cylinder arrangement back, but the angle of the chassis rails may preclude this approach, in which case a pendant pedal box (Herald or Mini) may have to be adopted, as per Midge. Wheels will eventually be 13" wires, but not until the existing 12" tyres have worn out.

At present the project has cost me the original £70 for the delivered car, £50 for a set of wheels bought earlier, and precious little else. The timber and aluminium all came from work, (legally, honest) as offcuts. We make aerospace and railway equipment, and the waste is appalling because of the nature and scale of the work. I have lights and gauges and other hardware from past toys and mistakes, and would envisage the finished vehicle costing less than £1,000 if it ever gets to the tarmac. In the interest of lightness and simplicity I shall fit nothing unnecessary – lights, indicators, wipers, speedo, seatbelts and that's your lot.

I apologise for the length and rambling nature of this letter, and enclose the application form and cheque. If the fee has gone up in the past year please tell me. May I also congratulate you on the content and sheer size of the sample Mewsletter you sent me.

Yours sincerely M. J. Plummer - Sidmouth.

Dear Brian,

20/3/03

Many thanks for your letter (8/11/02) and the very interesting newsletter.... I wish I knew about it before! I am one of those who had an under bonnet fire having just turned the engine off. There was an unexpected WHOOMP and I saw smoke appearing around the edges of the bonnet. On lifting it I saw 12 inch flames playing on my new rubber petrol pipe. Luckily I had a water bottle in the back. After the fire was out, I removed the asbestos petrol catcher from under the carb, serviced the latter, and bought a small multi-shot extinguisher, which was always kept accessible!

I enclose details of my Kitten estate which I need to sell. It has 5 good tyres, a new unfitted lower steering column (cost £55), a good chassis (Waxoylied) recon engine in 1997, unused since Dec.'99. I am asking £150 and hope that you can include an advert for it in your April issue.

Now that I own another car I do really miss some of the Kitten features, e.g. low tyre noise, generous door pockets, sensibly placed interior door openers / locks, easily accessible spare wheel, opening the window does not allow water to gush in from the roof – one does wonder what his 'new' car is – Ed ! Manoeuvrability, and sheer character.

Wishing you every success with the Register. - Dave Nyman

Membership matters

On the 10th of March this year I received a telephone call, and, unless I heard the name incorrectly, I thought that call was from one John Forbes, and he asked me to treat a previous overpayment as his 2003 subscription. Well, I finally went to update his record accordingly on the 19th of March, only to discover that we do not have a John Forbes on the database! Gulp, what to do? Well of course I searched on surnames beginning "For", in case I had spelt his name incorrectly, and went on to search Christian names of John, of which we have more than a few I can tell you, but none of them had a surname anything close to Forbes. Oh well, I have now shared the problem with you, and so that is another bit of paper confined to the recycling bin with a relatively clear conscience. Perhaps he will call again, or, if you know him, pleased get in touch

Quiz, the answers!

What you had to do was fill in the answers just like this! :-

Number	Clue	Letters	Answer / Make
1	A Caribbean Bay	7	Montego / Austin
2	Rural Dance	6	Morris / Morris / BMC
3	Bus name (anagram)	7	Sunbeam / Rootes
4	Looted (anagram)	6	Toledo / Triumph
5	007	4	Bond / Bond
6	South African seaman	4	Saab / Saab
7	Sprightly movement	7	Allegro / Austin
8	Spanish rugged heights	6	Sierra / Ford
9	Continental Carnival	6	Fiesta / Ford
10	Boat park	6	Marina / Morris
11	Expensive spectre	6 & 5	Silver Ghost / Rolls Royce
12	Fairway drive	4	Golf / VW
13	Ladies companion	6	Escort / Ford
14	Wandering one	5	Gipsy / Austin
15	Senior pupil	7	Prefect / Ford
16	Eskimo dog	5	Husky / Hillman
17	Building Society	6	Anglia / Ford
18	Lean differently	4	Elan / Lotus
19	Channel	7	Bristol / Bristol
20	Old mother of drag	5	Riley / BMC
21	Resign upset (anagram)	6	Singer / Rootes
22	Men only party	4	Stag / Triumph
23	Small person	6	Midget / MG
24	Barrel maker	6	Cooper / Cooper
25	Graces Island	5	Capri / Ford
26	Eminent conductor	7	Maestro / Austin
27	In a gondola	7	Lagonda / Lagonda
28	Agreement	6	Accord / Honda
29	Pilgrim vessel	9	Mayflower / Triumph
30	Fencing weapon	6	Rapier / Sunbeam

I should say that almost everyone, myself included, thought that the answer to question 3 would have been Sunbeam / Talbot. Derek must be younger than some of us, he had it down, as you will see above, as Sunbeam / Rootes! Also a couple of goodies, were, for no. 7 a 7 letter one, Quickly, by NSU! and No. 29 Discovery, fascinating to see how some minds work! Thanks again Derek, in spite of some frustration, wonderful stuff, Ed.

Tales from tore

Hi Brian

March2003

Yesterday was yet again sunny and dry so I decided to do a couple of awkward Kitten jobs. First the preparation, run the back wheels onto the car ramps, then jack up the front and support the front wheels on wooden blocks the same height as the car ramps. This means that the car is level just as when on the road. Some people use concrete blocks or bricks but I don't like that idea as they can split or crumble with potentially fatal results. The ideal way would be to use a second pair of car ramps. One day perhaps. If only I had an inspection pit!

Then it was wriggle underneath and top up both the gearbox and back axle oil. Both jobs require the car to be level. Use Hypoid oil only please! I find that while the gearbox definitely needs a yearly oil boost while the back axle rarely does. Now to grease the propshaft. Having filled the grease gun with moly grease from the can (a messy job, when will I get round to buying one that uses a cartridge?) I started at the two front nipples. The one for the sliding joint is not too difficult but the one for the front Hardy Spicer is quite 'Shy Mary Ellen, I'm shy' and hides away. I have to turn the propshaft until the grease gun can just be squeezed in. The rear nipple is easy after that.

While the car was aloft the clutch cable was inspected and greased then the clutch clearance was adjusted, for which both a 7/16" and a 1/2" AF spanner were needed. Having slackened off the 7/16" nut a couple of turns, turning the 1/2" one only turned the threaded rod and cable! So I used Mole grips to hold stationary the front end of the threaded rod while turning the 1/2" nut. There needs to be a free movement of the cable before the clutch arm starts to move. By pulling the arm against the exterior spring (Is the spring present on your car, they do snap and drop off) and moving the arm, I could tell if free movement was present. About 1/8" seems to suit my car.

Yes I did remember to tighten the locknut again.

By now I was feeling quite pleased with my efforts, until I caught sight of the clip which holds the exhaust pipe to the bell housing bracket. It has corroded almost through and split on one side. I'll have to make a new one.

Ah there's always a 'wee job' needed on an old car.

Dick Goodall - Tore, Muir of Ord

Hello again Brian, below are a couple of wee bits about Kitty (and possibly Robin etc.?) related things.

Wee Spanners for a Wee Car

As those of you who DIY on your Reliant will know, some of the nuts & bolts are in quite confined spaces, which I find can lead to problems in using a spanner. Can I get smaller ones?

A while ago I was browsing in my local Branch of Wickes building supplies and came across a blister pack containing no less than five Imperial size combination spanners of a small overall size for the price of £3-99. They were 5/16", 3/8", 7/16", 1/2" and 9/16". Then I noticed the bonus, there were also 5 metric combination spanners in the pack. Now 10 for that price can't be bad, only 40p each. So I bought a pack.

Before you ask, yes the quality is good, I have used them for 6 months and am quite happy. Perhaps I ought to buy a second set?

Hinge & Brackett?

Just a bracket actually. As I mentioned earlier, the Kitten's exhaust pipe clip at the bell housing was in a state of diminishing structural integrity.

Beware, car details can change with development as I shall now tell.

Orlando has an L shaped bracket coming horizontally from a bell-housing bolt and the short end of the L runs alongside the exhaust. An easily acquired Jubilee hose clip easily secures this type.

The Ghost too has an L shaped bracket, but this one is fixed to a higher bell-housing bolt and drops down with the short end running alongside the pipe. A flat, steel clip surrounds the pipe and is bolted to the L bracket. It was of course the Ghost that needed attention,

After a spot of measurement I looked out a bit of sheet steel and started work. Before anyone thinks 'Oh yes, another guy who has all the facilities' let me say that my workbench is a very home made affair which stands outside the back wall of the house. Country style? I cut a piece of sheet 1" wide by 7" long. OK only 6" is needed but the extra bit allows for any errors. The former used for bending was an old box spanner and the ends of the strip were clenched together with the bench vice. A large Mole grip would also have worked. To drill the bolt hole a battery powered electric drill was used. I consider that wearing goggles is essential to keep steel swarf away from my eyes. I could have used my antique hand powered drill to make a pilot hole and opened it up with a round file. The bolt is 5/16" diameter but a 3/8" hole allows easier assembly at arms' length. Then I trimmed the flat ends to length and removed the burrs. It would have looked better painted, but I think the exhaust heat would soon burn the paint off.

To access the bracket the front of the car was put up on ramps and the back wheels chocked in case the handbrake felt tired. By reaching under the front bumper I reached the bracket with a pair of 1/2" AF spanners and undid the nut. Luckily it came off easily, it could have been a hacksaw job. When I opened up the clip for removal from the pipe it broke in two places, definitely past its sell-by date. Fitting the new bracket means opening it up to get over the pipe and then squashing it together again, then passing the bolt through both clip & bracket. A spring washer and nut were fitted to the bolt and tightened. At which point I decided to fit a second nut as a lock nut 'just in case'.

There's a feeling of satisfaction about putting something right, and there's another slight reward. For some time I have noticed a slight 'ping' as the car starts from rest, now that sound has gone. It must have been caused by the old, broken clip.

And for my next trick? #157

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Performance Enhancement?

Early this year, or was it late last year? I really can't remember, and in truth it matters not a lot, but I was talking on the telephone with Steve Campbell of Tempest fame, and the subject of Rebel Racing and Hans Kirimaa's inlet manifold mod came up.

Great claims were being made about the improvement in engine performance as the result of a pretty simple machining modification to the standard Reliant inlet manifold.

Then when I was talking to Paul Wheatley, the same mod was again mentioned, only this time Paul took a picture and sent it to me. He also put wheels in motion, and when I was talking to Hans a month later, I brought the subject up, and asked if it was O.K. to broadcast the idea to a wider audience. Hans kindly agreed to this, providing of course that I gave credit where it was due, duly done, thank you Hans.

Then, in March, the following arrived :-

Hi Brian,

22/03/03

I have just received email from Bob Marshall of Daventry to say that he recently machined a 700 manifold and one for an 850 as per Rebel Racer spec to my description. A friend of his has just tried both and he can't believe how much it has improved both engines, especially the 850. His Kitten just did an indicated 95 mph with no other mods, he says it never did before (with his 18 st ballast in the vehicle).

Something for nothing at long last? Paul Wheatley

Now Paul I know is a man of the world, and not given to accepting claims at face value. That said, our old Kitten would do 95 any day of the week, but John Blagburn had taken great care to match the manifolds to the head for me, so perhaps it was not a typical example. Also, its speedo was suspect, mind you, suspect in that when I was being followed in the Citroen, and I was doing the low 70's in the Kitten, the Citroen was doing over 80 to keep up!

Anyway, the mod is pretty cheap to copy, and if you have a spare inlet manifold, and the inclination, drop me an s.a.e. and I'll send you a copy of the picture and you can either get your Dremel out, or take your spare manifold along to your local machine shop, and let us know if you detect a difference once it is fitted. Ed.

Fox [or Kitten] Front Suspension - Part Three of Three

By Duncan Bradford - Norwich

So now all that remains is stripping, examining and deciding what needs replacing.

I know nothing of replacing ball-joints, says he smugly, as mine were fine, but I guess heat might help part them from the vertical link if necessary. It's got to be good sense to replace all the bushes, although I left the upper wishbone bushes as they seemed good, likewise wheel bearings.

I took the opportunity of renewing flexible brake hoses as well as the pipes to the cylinders, and all the cylinders as 2 were leaking on inspection. Brake adjusters were all replaced as 2 had previously seized and, on freeing off, had become too loose to hold adjustment. The originals are only held in place by a spring clip which had worn / rusted nearly away. Moprod do a kit of 4 adjusters, which are not as difficult to fit as you think on first reading the instructions, and are superior to the originals. NOTE: stripping off the backplate may reveal how badly it has rusted. The rim is only spot-welded on, and water gets in between, so the rim 'blows' away from the backplate. At least clean it up as best possible and fill gaps with Waxoyl.

Getting at the inner end of the flexible hose is a pig, so I used the chance to cut away the inner body panel: Start level with the top of the chassis tower and cut backwards horizontally to an inch away from the bulkhead. Then cut a line following the angle of the bulkhead down towards the main chassis member. Bond or fix 2 tabs to the resulting removable flap at top and rear, so it will fix back in place with 2 self-tappers to the remaining panel, just like on the Scimitar. Now you can get at the brake hose as well as the exhaust mountings, and even changing the alternator can be done without tears!

Front suspension refitting:

Lower wishbone: Make sure the new bush is fitted with equal amounts sticking out either side. This is critical for correct geometry setup. Any good garage should have the right press. The hole for the anti-roll bar assembly will probably have worn oval, due to a flawed design in positioning the bar. A washer can be welded in, but remove the old metal to end up with the correct thickness, although welding the washer above the old hole is a better position than the original, as the bar is actually mounted too high [see later]. Fox wishbones only differ from Kitten ones in having a tab welded on the front edge to strengthen the tie-bar mount. This was because some Fox chassis were used for heavier Vantique bodies. I have checked with designer John Box, and they are not necessary for the Fox, indeed not all Foxes have them, so Kitten wishbones can be used for Foxes, and Handed Fox ones can be used on the 'other' side. BUT in these cases the tie-bar mounting holes will need to be drilled / filed out to take the correct bolts. [In fact I think they all need this anyway!]

Inner wishbone mounts: Check you didn't distort the chassis cutaway on removal, but in fact I did, resulting in another panic phone call to Mr. Box: He said that the rear side of the cutaway was designed to be stronger than the front, so that tightening the bolt will bring it back into place. It did! -but watch it anyway. I couldn't source the original 1/2nut-on-a-plate thingy, but an ordinary nut can be held in your modified wrench, bearing in mind a nyloc nut may be safer -

but a future removal problem? Ah well, you're going to look after it all so carefully in future that you'll never need to do this again, no?

Tie-bars: Fit these in a horizontal position, front first. so as to compress the new bushes evenly. If you're replacing thin-stud ones with new, you will need washers with the 1/2inch hole in. The castellated nuts I couldn't source, which made it difficult to gauge exactly how far to tighten / compress the foam bushes.

NOTE: a couple of turns too far or putting them in at an angle means they will break up in a few hundred miles. Too slack and they will not hold the steering geometry correct.

A digression: The blue Fox is one of those with very little clearance between the tyre and front valance, to the extent that new tyres rub, and some profiles bind on the body [but you only find this out on turning out of the tyre-fitters']. Putting an extra washer on the tie-bar aft of the bushes has the effect of moving the wheel about 1/4inch back. You do have to compensate for that by adjusting the shims at the top wishbone mount, but hopefully you'll get the camber and castor angles adjusted properly anyway, as the overhaul will have changed them.

Anti-roll bar: On Foxes a mod was introduced whereby the anti-roll bar was lowered by using a block between the bracket and the chassis. This is not as good as Alan Shaw's excellent mod in Mewsletter 45, but a start. New anti-roll bar bushes didn't satisfy my MOT man, as he could still see daylight through, but it was because the bar was worn, not the bushes. The same is true on 4 Foxes I've checked. However, Good old Ford [!] come to the rescue again: Part no. 7044204 is the bush for the rear anti-roll bar of a Mondeo. It has a 16mm hole which fits beautifully, and the outside profile is the same as ours -except that it sits a few mm higher. You can either cut off the surplus or mount the bracket on spacers to suit, which brings the bar lower still, and nearer to Alan's optimum position. The links are only available as a unit, not the cupwashers separately, and not cheap but there you go...

Everything else is pretty straightforward I think. It should go without saying that reassembly should involve coating everything possible with copper grease, vaseline, and Waxoyl according to material, and while for initial testing the original settings and adjustments should be retained, it's a must to get everything set up from scratch as soon as it's settled in.

Overhauling the suspension bushes and fixings is the main sweat, but getting the geometry set up properly makes an incredible handling difference, and it's something which the original assembly-line build could only approximate to. If anything is slightly out though it can feel skittish, sluggish, wooden-wheeled or just plain ugly. A properly set-up Fox feels glued to the road and ready for anything.

I have spares of most of the nuts and bolts, and can point you in the right direction for the rest. So, nice to again end on a positive note! Good luck.

Duncan Bradford, member no. 46, November 2002

Brian,

February 2003

Thanks for the excellent 50th Mewsletter, read most of it already due to a late start at work today.

I was intrigued to see that my question about ignition advance has provoked more than a little discussion.

Something occurred to me shortly after I had asked the question. I understand that the earlier engines used a distributor that didn't have a vacuum advance device. This of course operates when there is high vacuum (low pressure) in the manifold, such as at idle or on the over-run.

When we set the "static" ignition timing on an 850, we are required to disconnect the vacuum advance pipe first. Having set the timing to TDC, connecting the vacuum pipe again will cause the timing to advance under vacuum, i.e. it will perhaps move to a similar setting to that for the older 750 engines without a vacuum advance device. Is this the very simple answer?

Regarding the ability to apply a bit more advance than the recommended setting, is it possible that Reliant were just being conservative because they thought performance was of secondary importance to the prevention of pinking?

By the way, I have now fitted the "Rebel Racer" 4 into 1 exhaust manifold to my Liege, and had a stainless pipe and muffler made and fitted to it, strangely it has not produced much of an increase in top end revs yet, but there is a noticeable improvement in mid range torque. Perhaps there is still more to come, although to be honest I did put mid-range performance before top end speed when I originally thought out the tune of the engine.

I am fitting an Aldon Igniter next as I've had some reliability trouble with the points set up. Then the Liege will go on a rolling road to get the mixture and ignition settings properly set up.

Look forward to seeing you in May. Best regards, Paul Wheatley

Thanks for keeping us informed Paul, I too am very much looking forward to the May trip (The Liege car Club are having their first official meeting as a Car Club on the May bank holiday Sunday, and my presence, along with Arleen's, is being tolerated, we are very much looking forward to seeing you all, Brian)

Dear Brian,

18/03/03

My apology for not making contact earlier, however Bill Hansen has reminded me (more than once) of your request for a few words, and has recently forwarded a copy of Mewsletter 50 which displays the attractive, brightly painted, Liege on the cover. Within the pages you mention Bill's dedication to the building of our Liege, and that has given me the clue to a subject for this letter. Some build statistics.

We, Bill and I, kept careful track of the cost of the kit and other parts needed for the build, but I shall not discuss that detail because it would clearly differ with owner preference, and we do not wish to scare off potential builders do we?

From date of order of the kit to onroad completion, saw the elapse of two years and nine months. But there were extenuating circumstances. The gestation period of the kit was much longer than anticipated, and approximately one hundred hours of work had to be written off after fruitless effort with unsuitable donor vehicles.

Both Bill and I are from engineering backgrounds, Bill being a particularly good craftsman and a quick worker, and I think we worked well as a team, but (at the beginning) neither of us knew any thing about the Reliant or the permutations to be found inside an apparently suitable donor vehicle. Looking back, our advice would be, use only a donor the mechanical parts of which have been tested in operation.

We spent two periods of one month (a year apart) working together on the project, during which no times were recorded, because Bill considered it antisocial ! But when I was not around he toiled away for a further four hundred hours, and endured the stress of SVA and other bureaucratic nonsense. What is more, to ensure that none of the detail was misconstrued, over the construction period we exchanged in the order of 750, yes seven hundred and more ,email letters.

As an addendum, I note your remarks about the Fiat "Fire" engine to be adopted for 750MC formula racing. I know as much about it as I once did about Reliant, neither is to be found in Australia, but I note from photos in the 750MC Bulletin that the "Fire" appears to have a camshaft driven distributor and may not be as short, overall, as people suggest. It would not fit a Liege unless you wish to wear the distributor in the cockpit a la Bugatti .

With our regards, Bob and Judith Riches - NSW Australia

Al Osborn

Technical Tweaks. 15th Mar. 03

Before I go on about "The Life of your engine" as promised last issue, I have a couple of points left over from Nov/Dec 2002, Paul Wheatley on pg 27 says '... it isn't practical to put metal back onto a thinner needle' but it is! We have done this several times with the tickover mixture which always ended up too rich, hence you need a fatter needle at the top. Solder! is the answer, ordinary lead/tin electronic solder applied with a 25W soldering iron goes straight on. You will most likely have to file/pare it down to get the final diameter you need, the good 'ol pocket knife was fine for this, when we did it. Just a fraction too much solder would have the needle, hence slide, sticking at tickover, a bit of patience sorted it, and the solder seems well petrol proof for several years now.

Still on Nov/Dec Pg 12 Dave Price was wiring up an Ammeter, but despite his having got his electrical man to sort him out, the words in the Mewsletter don't quite add up. I wonder did Marshall mix something up here? To recap the fitting of Ammeter. There are three 'circuits' at an ammeter, from that I do not mean three wires, there might be three or less 'wires', but three circuits. There is the discharge circuit-lights, ignition etc. There is the charge circuit-this is the output directly from the alternator. These two connect together to one side of the ammeter. The third circuit is the battery live terminal.(Not the earth of the battery though as mention pg 12 Nov/Dec). BUT you must not pass the starter current through the ammeter, so the battery point

will probably be connected at the starter solenoid, taking care to avoid that starter current. The battery connection being connected on its own to the other side of the Ammeter. There is no positive or negative at the Ammeter with reference to battery potential, the plus and minus on the ammeter always refer to charge and discharge, the thing just reads back to front if its wrong. Take care also if you fit any accessories, i.e. auxiliary lamps perhaps via a relay with supply direct from the battery, you could easily find that these don't register on the ammeter! If you must fit said ammeter and are having trouble please get in touch. (I deal with British Bike electrics for a living) It is in fact much easier to fit a Volt meter, just earth and live ignition. I do actually sell a voltage sensitive charge indicator LED if you only want to have a 1/2" hole in the dash or switch blank. (As the last is a blatant advert for a product, I promise to pay £1 to the spares scheme for every one sold through these pages!)

In the mean time... The life of your engine.

It is so often assumed that the low mileage engine is the one to go for, 'it's only done X thousand miles!' where X is some small figure considering the age of the vehicle. And the converse assumes that a high mileage is to be avoided. So taking several of my experiences to heart, this is what I've found. A Kitten Saloon having only done 44,000 miles mostly short trips to get the kids from school and doing the shopping. Servicing - pretty nominal. The engine ran OK but sounded slightly odd from the top end, rocker cover off shows a high degree of very black oily slime over rockers and shaft etc. This could have done with removing with perhaps flushing oil but then who knows what else would have started to rattle. Ho Hum better leave as is. Another time a Fox with 66.000 on the dial changed hands but in the run back home, 150 miles, the new owner opened her up, 60etc but soon things began to rattle and oil pressure rapidly disappeared. New owner got home but engine was in its death rattles. Stripping didn't show anything at all amiss until the oil pump and sump were investigated, the pump was virtually blocked with sludge. I am pretty much assured that in these cases short journeys, in town, with failure to change oil and filter at proper intervals is the prime cause of these engine demises. There's nothing to beat a good bit of proper distance running and regular oil and filter changes.

My very first Kitten engine was a bit low on real speed, it struggled to get over 60MPH (this was at 28,000 miles) eventually it nipped up, broken rings and scored bores. But there wasn't any real reason for it that I could see. Some time later I spoke to the previous owner who'd only used it to go to work and admitted it had NEVER been run above 60MPH! In other words, it wasn't really run in! All my subsequent rebuilds though have been well trained!

Al.

Sales & Wants

For Sale :- Now this is an advert you will not see very often – one of the Reliant BRM overhead cam engines that was not destroyed, as used in the Kitten that did the Monte Carlo Rally, only this one has never been run ! Talk to Hans on 01283 821040 if you are seriously interested and have about £1,200 to spare. Now I could easily argue that this engine should be in a museum, it does after all represent part of our motoring heritage which many people I am sure don't actually believe happened at all – but it did, and here is the proof!

For Sale :- RAC 587R a blue Kitten Estate. New back spring last year, in need of some T.L.C. Reluctantly have to re-Home this car. Yours for just £50 if you are quick. Ring Will George

For Sale :- Kitten Van with spares. M.O.T. till July ,

For Sale :- 1976 Kitten Estate PLX 23R. Recon engine in 1997, 5 good tyres. £ 150. Contact Dave

For Sale :- Rebel 600 M.O.T'd till August, (yes it is a saloon, they never made estates with the 600 engine) comes with a spare 600 engine, the one in the car was fully reconditioned just 8,000 miles ago with a new crank and new pistons and liners. Many new spares included. Yours for best offer over £500. Ring Anthony Pearson

Looking for a new home is a Reliant Kitten PUR 1W no less, it has been lying in a garden in Middlesex for some years past, and is in need of TLC. Contact Tony Mouat

For Sale :- a set of 4 Weller 8 spoke steel wide mini wheels, contact Grant

For Sale :- Kitten estate. Complete, offers when seen. Ring Bob Langford

For Sale :- For some reason that is quite beyond me, no one snapped up Jeremy Gibbon's Kitten estate, so it is still available

Free to a home :- Lance Peak of Silsden has green estate and a 'special' Both are intact, but will be scrapped if no one takes them by May / June

Free to a good home :- 1977 Kitten DL, unused for 4 years, good engine and box, used regularly till 1999, contact Keith Smart

Wanted :- Set of alloy wheels for a Kitten with nuts and or long studs as required to fit, ring Graham

Wanted :- Reliant Kitten Estate, must be in sound and tidy condition with MOT. Top price paid for correct vehicle. Terry Dixon

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Notes

Ah well. As I type we are almost into March, John Johnstone was down this morning, the last day of February, trying to distract me with talk of his Reliant Owners Club magazine, and I have been known to contribute both to it, and other car club publications in the past, and look like having to do more of that kind of thing in the future with my new involvement with the S.W.T.V.C. All of which has, over the past months, brought home to me the need to be tidy and organised if one is to avoid chaos and confusion, not to mention frustration (when you can't find the bit of paper you know someone sent you, but you just can't lay your hands on it). So, where is this going? Well, as I said last time, still no sign of the men in white coats, so I'll just keep my head down and hope for the best.

No, that really is not good enough. I have here a number of box and lever arch files of old Kitten Register correspondence, not to say every renewal notice you ever sent me, and I really do not want to put anything else in the attic - I am having some difficulty getting up there these days,

and that situation is not likely to get any better as time goes on, so, feel free to volunteer to give them a home, or I may consider destroying them, which would go against the grain, but there are limits, and I am there now !

Sometimes I feel that the flavour of a particular article is diluted by typing, while some of the letters I receive are difficult to de-cipher, others are beautifully written, and I feel it would be wrong to destroy them, easy to say in a land where new paper is plentiful and cheap, I guess I ought to just recycle the lot and be done with it. Let me know if you feel otherwise.

Enough about paperwork, my worries and failings, what about the cars? Well, silent as though you were, the Rebel people out there of course know that I was quite wrong to mention Rebel trunnions and grease in the same sentence. They of course should be oiled in traditional Triumph manner.

For the benefit of those who do not lubricate such parts, I am assured that Partsworld have placed an order for more lower Kitten / Fox ball joints, and they should be available from that source before the Register's stock of these runs out. Top ones are already back in stock, though they shot up in price last year. Yes, the Register has them in stock also.

Oh, I have just realised that thanks to the smaller font, we are at about 10,000 words in this edition, in spite of it being an A4 sheet – 4 pages, shorter than 'usual' and I am struggling to fill the thing – Oops, what kind of monster have I created ?

Well, one answer to that is "a more efficient one", if we can get 10,000 words on to one less sheet of paper, then we can produce the magazine more cheaply, not only that but there then exists the – remote – possibility of getting the standard package that enquirers receive, in an envelope with just a first class stamp on it, and not the 41p it costs at the moment. Well, I can dream can't I ?

That said, I am still reeling from the bills for the last two editions. With making the Christmas edition, as usual, a bumper one, followed by our 50th these two together cost what I usually spend on 4 editions, so some economising is needed if I don't want to be running out of funds before the end of the year.

It is a decade since the Register's bank balance was as low as it is just now at this time of year. That said I have recently invested heavily in second class stamps ahead of the proposed price hike due soon. I just hope the house does not burn down, who would believe that I have over 1,500 self adhesive stamps here?

Re kitten seats, the second paragraph of the first reader's letter page 20 of the last edition, the writer was looking for a rear seat for a kitten, and your wonderful editor didn't mention who it was that was needing it, anyway, Gordon Gillespie from Doncaster was just on the telephone, 21/3/03, and he has one, a black one, in excellent condition, free to a good home, either you collect it, or pay the postage, 01302 840672.

On the ball joint front, we may be able to offer a reconditioning / upgrade service, so I am looking for old unit ball joints, lower ones in particular. Now there are as I see it two ways we can go about this – either you donate one (or some), and so secure yourself a place at the top of the queue should you ever need one, or I will buy them from you, for say a fiver a time, in which case

you have no priority at all, unless you are a spares fund contributor – sounds complicated – sure does to me, just donate an old one or two please, and we will see how (if) we go.

Emotions are wonderful things at times, the quiz was a case in point, at first I was frustrated by my difficulties in getting it in the mag, due to other problems at the time, then at how few folk returned them, why had I bothered in the first place? Then, as more and more began to arrive, I began to wish we hadn't bothered at all– I was going to have to check them all – more work – then, some of the answers gave me a good laugh, not getting at anyone, I barely managed half of them when first the Quiz arrived, it came without the answers to let me have a shot without the opportunity of cheating, and I really do believe that some of the answers could have been different, though I quite accept that the definition of the number of letters tied it down pretty conclusively. I was very busy at that time, and a bit tired too – plenty of excuses.

Anyway, so impressed was I with the caliber of answers generally that I am only sorry there can only be one winner. I was tempted to send them all to Derek Argyle, who set the thing in the first place – and let him tell me who won, and at this point in time, with the need / desire to keep not just my desk in order, but the 'office' too, I am seriously considering sending all the replies to Derek on the basis that he probably has more space than I do – hard to have much less! And, besides, then he can decide just what to do with them – perhaps you have a real fire Derek?

So, who won? Well, I couldn't actually tell you, as it is only the 29th of March as I type. Right, I'll stop wittering and finish this on April 1st. as promised, when the last eligible entry will have arrived – Daa daa, big drum roll....The day has arrived And.... Wait for it.... In third place, our old friend the Tempestuous Dave Smith, then, in the – joint - runner up position, Mike and Ann Oakins (Liege people), and Jim Harvey, who deserves special mention on two counts, one because he listed the dates the various Makes existed from till, and gave the full company names, and secondly because his entry just made it, arriving on April the 1st! But the clear winner, only recently joined our ranks, was the Rebellious Mark Plowright from Long Eaton (who also has a Kitten), congratulations Mark, the cheque, as they say, is in the post!

The one that caught most folk out was the wandering one, Gipsy, not Rover!

Till next time take care, and remember – ball joints need grease and trunnions need oil, so what's keeping you? The clocks went forward the other night, so you have plenty of daylight of an evening now – no more excuses, get out there and do it NOW, and the propshaft while you are at it!

Brian

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