

# Reliant Kitten Register

**NEWSLETTER 53**

July ~ August 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 53

**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 photograph of a rare occurrence, not one, not two, but three Tandy campervans together. Taken at the ROC National Rally in May 2003. My thanks to Kerry Croxton for the picture. They belong to - Left to Right - Ashley Dunn, Bob Dormor and Kerry Croxton. The most striking difference is the windows or lack of in the Luton area. Good to see these rare and wonderful little camper vans being used as intended.

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 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.

Hello and welcome to this late summer edition of the Mewsletter. Shorter than usual for a number of reasons, so I will try and keep my comments brief – believe that and you'll believe anything!

I must make special mention of the colour centre page – again in this issue, thanks to my brother Alan. I do not want you to get used to this, it is not the norm, but a bonus extra, which I did think of keeping till our Christmas edition, but if I tried to keep 400 sheets of printed paper safe in this house for 5 months, they would almost certainly not be found for years, or worse yet, put in the loft, in which case it would most likely be decades before they saw the light of day again! So, thanks again Alan.

As I type away, the sun is shining brightly outside, I know this because I have just been out to collect the Rebel from the MOT testing station – it failed Boo hoo. I guess that's what I get for three years of partial neglect. I have neither greased nor oiled the front trunnions since I got the car, so it came as little surprise to have it failed on one, and a warning on the other one. I decided to bite the bullet, rang Rrimmer Brothers, and for the price of one Kitten lower ball joint, bought a pair of new trunnions complete with bushes, washers and even new nuts and bolts! Well, if I do both sides now, that will be one less thing to worry about next year, won't it?

Now I know that this really ought to be in the technical section, but it is up for general discussion, so I just thought I'd air it here. Clutch release bearings – exactly what is involved, the minimum I mean, in moving away from the carbon pad type of release bearing to a proper bearing, and more specifically, the type of release bearing currently used by Reliant ? I know that the existing release arm can be adapted to carry the new type bearing, but do not know what is involved in that modification, nor do I know if you actually need to change the cover assembly, and if you do, can you get one which avoids having to change the flywheel, (the 'current' type of clutch is metric, and of a slightly different size – possibly Ford fiesta ? ) and even if you do have to change the flywheel, surely you do not have to use the new starter gear ring, which has a different number of teeth, and a different profile, to cope with the current pre-engaged starter motor – discuss, or at least educate me please !

Right, just a couple of lines left on this page, room for me to apologise to Dick Goodall, and everyone else, for the absence of Tore Tales from this edition, not Dick's fault I assure you – I think I should be running a wanted advert for an Editor!

## **Rebel Round up**

Dear Brian,

5 July 2003

After many years of languishing in the garden (hurray for fibreglass bodywork, but the weather still takes its toll on the rest of the car), I have at last started to strip the Rebel down for its restoration. I have started with the front suspension, hopefully restoring and painting the parts as they are removed. The car has 38,000 miles on the clock, and going by the first few parts that I have removed, this could be genuine. If so I may leave the engine alone until I can get hold of an 850cc unit at some later stage.

I know I should be thumbing through my back issues of the Mewsletter, which probably have all the information I need, but it is easier just to contact you who hopefully may have some of the parts or can put me in touch with someone who does.

For my first tentative move in this long awaited restoration I need a bottom trunnion kit (the 4 plastic bushes and seals are OK, but the 4 metal washers are worn, and I presume you have to buy them as part of the kit.) The four snail type brake adjusters, one headlight shell (the black part), the four rubber seals that go round the front wheel cylinders before they are bolted to the back plate, presumably to help keep water out. The track rod ends are OK, but all the rubber boots are perished as are the rubber boots on the top ball joints – is it possible to obtain these separately? I also need a heater unit complete. The last three items could be secondhand if serviceable.

I have some old Rebel brochures which mention fog lights as an accessory. I know I am looking a long way ahead but do you know what make or model these lights are, and whereabouts on the Rebel they fit, as it is not shown on the brochure.

I hope you are able to help me in some way or at least point me in the right direction.

Yours sincerely - Bob Nash - Norfolk

*Well of course I wrote right back to Bob, but I had been surprised to hear of rubber gaskets between the front brake cylinders and the backplates – can you offer any comment here ? Thanks to Adrian Hanwell I should have a stock of new track rod rubber boots – if I can still find them, I've just realised that they are not on the stock list, and should be – along with a location ! One day I will get my act together. Anyway, good to hear of another Rebel being renovated, especially one that has lain dormant for so long. Good luck Bob, and do keep in touch with progress updates please.*

*Brian*

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## **Foxes Den**

It took quite a bit of work to fit the Fiat (FIRE) engine. It is also a bit of a tight fit - to remove it you have to take the head off. I don't know how much room there is in a Kitten but if there is any less than in the Fox, you will have no chance.

I first had to make an adapter plate. This is a chunk of 8mm steel plate with the appropriate holes drilled in it. Getting the dimensions off the engine was difficult as the mounting holes seem to be placed wherever the designer thought would be convenient at the time. They seem to bear no relation to each other. If you are foolish enough to have a go I have a pretty accurate drawing of the plate.

*Editor's note, I suspect that the 750 Racing boys have a plate available, as they use this engine in a lot of their cars these days, bolted to a Reliant gearbox casing!*

The gearbox lay shaft had to be shortened by about 3mm and an extension bearing fitted into the end of the crank. The gearbox was also fitted with the new-type release bearing 'nose' to allow me to use a new type clutch. According to the dealer I bought the nose from, it was the first that Reliant had ever sold - they had to remove it from a built up gearbox! With a little judicious trimming of the bell housing to clear the starter the gearbox bolted on with no problems.

I had to remove quite a lot from the front of the sump to clear the front crossmember. This meant a new oil pickup pipe had to be made. The engine mounts are a complicated arrangement of welded brackets that pick up on the alternator mount, the water pump (after

machining a chunk of alloy off the pump) and the bellhousing. They make changing the oil filter a complete nightmare.

The original thermostat projected out the back of the engine so I had to remove it and make up an adapter plate to take a copper pipe. This clears the bulkhead by approx 1/4". A new in-line thermostat housing was made up from two Mini thermostat housings bolted together. The distributor was blanked off and for a short while I ran with a butchered Ford Cortina distributor grafted onto the front of the camshaft. I was not at all happy with this arrangement and in the end built the distributorless ignition system. There aren't many cars around where you can adjust the timing with a laptop while driving! Of course not many people want to be able to adjust the timing on the move but that is beside the point.

As the Fiat engine has a cast iron block it is quite a bit heavier than the Reliant engine. This made the car sit slightly low at the front so I raised the front spring platforms by about 1/2" to compensate. At the same time I had to drop the anti-roll bar by about 1" to clear the sump.

*If I haven't managed to put you off yet I can take some pics of the installation. Yes please Les, Ed.*

The first spigot bearing was made of brass and after about 500 miles started squealing badly. Of course it started squealing when I was 200 miles from home, at a car show. I made a new spigot bearing from steel, with an oilite bush. This has been trouble free. A couple of weeks after replacing the spigot bearing I lunched the gearbox - 3 teeth fell off 3rd, so out came the engine again. I went though a few head gaskets in the beginning!

Was it worth all that work? I think so, though most of my friends think I am completely mad. The engine starts first time every time, has a rock steady idle, pulls far better and uses less fuel. On paper it has only a couple of bhp more than the Reliant unit but it has loads more torque. When I first fitted the engine I tried it out on a local hill with a very steep, tight corner. The Reliant engine would just about chug round it in second. When I tried the Fiat engine I was a little disappointed - it chugged round exactly the same. I then realised I was in third, not second! I think the engine will probably also outlast the car. The engine came out of a car that had done 110K miles and it was in perfect condition - no detectable internal wear at all.

Les

## **Liege page(s)!**

This after what I said last time – you just can't believe a thing I say!

Once upon a time there was an inkling of an idea, a desire to see in the flesh so to speak, a Liege. Bob and Judith Riches made that possible for me in 2002 during their European tour, but that had only served to wet my appetite.

I had been corresponding with and conversing with through Mr. Bell's device, one Peter Davis for a number of years, and have long wanted to meet the man, not to say see over the premises where he constructs the apparatus that those and such as those are then able to use, along with other component parts, to create a Liege.

Well, when the idea of a Liege Car Club was mooted, and a magazine produced, and an inaugural meeting at that hallowed ground at Fladbury – I just had to be there. Arleen, my daughter was not only prepared to accompany her aged and frail father on the trip, but actually

seemed keen to do so. As ever, I was tying a number of things together – I never venture to Englandshire without a number of reasons for so doing, and this trip was no exception.

We had tried to work around 4 days and three nights south of the border, but that really was too difficult, it would have involved over 700 miles on the first day, and my aching bones are not really up to that these days. So we managed to arrange a change of shift for Arleen, and we left on the Thursday. Even then I was apprehensive as this was to take place over the bank holiday weekend, and I was very concerned about possible traffic delays

A leisurly drive to Wensleydale by way of Tesco's at Carlisle, the northerly of that chain's two stores in Carlisle is situated less than quarter of a mile west of the M6 on the A69, and offers superstore priced fuel as well as a cafeteria which sells coffee for 65p a cup, and has toilets, you really can't do better than that for a handy pit stop.

We arrived at the Bentley residence, Preston Springs, where we enjoyed the first class hospitality of Michael and Janet.

After a good nights sleep, Arleen and I headed off early on the Friday, to Doncaster, well, I always say it is Doncaster, but in fact my pattern maker is on the other side of the A1 at New Edlington, but hardly anyone knows where New Edlington is, and most folk have an idea where Doncaster lies!

So it came about that we arrived at the pattern shop just about 9:00am, the rocker covers I was to collect were not ready, but he was just about to go to the foundry to collect them, hot out of the melting pot so to speak. So we left some lower ball joints with him for blasting prior to refurbishment, and headed off south towards Grantham where we were to meet with an ex-kitten owner who had a number of new spares he needed to find a new home for – oddly enough including a set of new ball joints!

Having collected them we returned to Doncaster where the rocker covers had been drilled and wrapped in bubble wrap, you could still feel that they were warm!

We also collected the freshly cleaned lower ball joints, and headed off for points West, the Manchester direction where we enjoyed lunch with Alan and Megan Shaw before heading east again towards Bridlington, all right, just south of Scarborough to you.

There we met John Metcalfe who was taking delivery of the by now cool rocker covers, and for the second time that day we used a local Little Chef as our rendezvous. I find that usually works well, they are usually easy to find, and you can have a coffee while you wait, although in this case John and I were so well coordinated that he arrived in the car park about 90 seconds before we did!

We then headed off to York to re-fuel, Tesco's again of course, and then by way of the A64 and A1 back to Wensleydale for a second night.

It so happened that Michael and Janet had landed themselves the task of packing the notices for the Wensleydale Railway Association's AGM, and had over 3,000 envelopes to pack, so Arleen and I were kept fairly busy on both evenings. I had heard of singing for one's supper, but this was different, I guess they must have heard my voice!

So far we had been very lucky as regards traffic, only having problems on the A1 when heading back north on the Friday evening . However, not being complacent, we hit the road at the back of 5:00am on the Saturday, and went by way of Hawes and the Ribbleshead viaduct,

to the M6 near Preston, and were south of Birmingham by mid morning. Traffic on the M6 was light, but by the time we reached the M5 while we were still cruising at a shade above the limit, there were three solid lanes of vehicles doing the same thing.

We were heading for Stonehenge, both to let Arleen see the stones, and also to collect a 1920's Rover 9 engine for Phil Hallam, from Amesbury, which we duly did. Just there, where the A303 drops from dual carriage way to a two way road, a few hundred yards before Stonehenge, is a terrible traffic bottle neck, and we were fortunately able to 'run round the block' so to speak, and come past the stones from the north west on the A360, hence avoiding the delays on the A303.

All this good fortune with the traffic saw us waste a lot of time looking for a Tesco's to refuel at, however, in spite of that, and a bite at a Little Chef, (Arleen's student discount card gets you 25% off there, so it makes it fairly competitive) we were still first to arrive at Fladbury, home of the Liege Cars we were intending to visit all along.

It was not too long however before Paul Wheatley and his son Chris arrived, followed by Ginetta specialist Dave Holroyd and his lovely wife Barbara.

The Chequers Inn where we were staying had something of a staff crisis that weekend, they had a booking for a party of 40 for a meal, and less than half of their staff turned up for work. As a result of this the service of our food was very slow, (indeed I had had to use my powers of persuasion to get them to agree to serve us food at all!) but that did not matter as we were all having a good blether anyway, joined by this time by John and Melanie the editors and founders of the Liege Car Club.

The food was fine, the best apple and rhubarb crumble I have ever tasted, and the company excellent, and it seemed all too soon that it was bed time.

On the Sunday morning I had been a bit concerned about the plan. We had a full cooked English breakfast, which I didn't want to miss out on as we were paying for it anyway, but we were to meet everyone else at the Tea rooms beside the factory at 9:30 for a chat over a cream tea !! Could I cope with all these calories? Of course I could!!

We met so many people there, that I can't even remember them all.

Many of whom I have helped source bits for their vehicles, and had corresponded with or talked to on the telephone, or using this e-mail thing, in some cases for years. It was great to meet everyone, and if the chap who came in the Rover 75 with the exhausts, and more to the point, large box full of ball joints for me will remind me who he is I will update my records and offer thanks appropriately.

Peter Davis had very kindly just the week before, in spite of knowing that I would not be coming down in the Rebel, as had been the plan at one time, offered me the use of "Old Number One" for the afternoon. And so it came about that Arleen and I had a great time belting round the south west of England, and the east of Wales, the Forest of Dean in particular, in a Liege. Perhaps sadly, we had the close company of Gari and Do Jones, not only were they both there in their green Liege, passing many of the other Liegists, and very good it was to meet you both too, but with the sense of humour and fun that is associated with these wee cars, Gari and Do are the names given to the solid steel blocks that Peter uses as ballast in "Old Number One", and there was not time to remove them before we set off on our 160 mile jaunt!

As we set off the Liege made some of the loudest backfires I have ever heard, and within a few hundred yards we lost power. I stopped in a lay-by, and so did several others to offer help, thank you. However, once I got the engine re-started, it ran just fine for the rest of the day – hmm. We travelled in convoy for a few miles, but some wanted to press on, then some had stopped to visit someone, a potential owner perhaps? So Arleen and I found ourselves running on our own for a while, (a good test of her navigation skills) till we called in briefly at a forest halt where there were lots of cars, and a number of Liege. We chose not to wait, but headed on, and had a lunch halt at a lovely wooded park area with a model yacht in the pond. A glorious afternoon, and I didn't have the tyres squealing once – didn't want to frighten Arleen!

The sun shone for most of the day, but we did run into a heavy shower in the latter part of the journey. We had to give in and stop to erect the hood. The big flaw in the design of most open top cars is that the airflow is such that going faster when it rains simply does not work, you get as much rain on the inside of the windscreen as you do on the outside, and you don't have wipers on the inside !! I just couldn't see where I was going.

By the time we returned, the weather had improved again, Arleen took the car for a spin, and by the time we returned almost everyone had left – was it something I said? That said, we were almost the only ones staying over the Sunday night as well, so most folk had a long drive home to get on with. Many of the hostelrys in the area, our Inn included, do not do meals on a Sunday, and so we had to drive a few miles to find a suitable place. Thankfully John and Mel had done their homework, and while Paul and Chris had headed up the road, we were joined by Mike and Ann Oakins for that meal, and much interesting conversation ensued.

Sadly Arleen and I learnt that Moira's uncle had died on the Saturday night, and so we had a detour to visit Moira's aunt on our way home. She lives in Barlborough, (junction 30 on the M1) which oddly enough is only about 10 miles from Shireoaks where Paul Wheatley stays, so I got to see him and have another hurl in his Liege a week later when Moira and I were down for her uncle's funeral, but that is another story!

All in all we covered almost 1,750 miles in the 5 days, half of it fully laden, and much of it at speeds I am not prepared to admit to in print. Considering the speed and the load, I guess the 61.5 Miles to the gallon that Arleen's Peugeot 106 managed was not too bad, I had hoped for 70, but I guess we will need to keep the speed legal to achieve that! Simon Robson, who had planned the event must surely have been pleased, not to say absolutely delighted to have 14 out of 18 Liege present, and I got to meet Bill the builder of Bob & Judith Riches' Liege who came along on his Vincent. What a day. - You may recall used to associate old song titles with things, well memories are indeed made of this!

Mistakes, well, you probably won't believe it, but we failed to get anyone to take a picture of us with the car, or with Peter come to that. Also, Arleen had forgotten her hat, and was kindly loaned a most suitable one for the day, but we forgot to give it back, and can't remember whose it is – please feel free to educate us.

Also, because we nipped off with the car for half an hour to give Arleen a shot, I didn't actually get the tour of the factory. As it happened that didn't matter as I was there again just two weeks later, and got the full tour then, thank you Peter, but that is another story!!

Would I like one – yes. Can I have one, well, I have asked Peter how much, but he has yet to reply. Oh, and I would need someone to build it for me - That old Jowett adage comes to mind - Wait and See!



The Millar residence, and there are more Reliants in and behind that garage!  
YHK 410S is the one with the fully refurbished chassis & brakes. Yours for £???

Below we have one of Brian's working parties at Robert Fairfoull's "Let's lift an old Body onto a new chassis" operation in Ayr last year. Well done the team!  
(MUST remember to be somewhere else next year!!)





This little beauty belongs to Bob & Judith Riches from Australia. Brian had a hurl in this very car in Fife in 2002. Thanks again Bob for the run. I am embarrassed to tell you that the Liege site carries a picture of this very car with me standing beside it!

This is three of us at an R.O.C. event at Culzean in August 2002  
Odd how the older vehicles outnumber the more recent ones



*On June the 20th I received the following communication :*

Many thanks or your help over the past couple of years. It is with great sadness that I relinquished my kitten ownership and ask you to donate the remainder of my subscription to the spares fund.

When little Alexander came along I knew it would only be a matter of time before a larger car was needed. I took delivery of a battered Mercedes the other week, and the Reliant has gone to a new home. I like to feel that I have done my bit though – the car was abandoned in the woods before I saved it, and the new owner is cock-a-hoop !

Thanks for your invaluable advice and keep up the good work.

Kindest regards Eddie Kemp - Dorking No. 451

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*Back in edition 50 there was a letter from Ian Evans who made mention of the fact that his daughter sold her non running kitten to a Colonel in the tank regiment, and went on to suggest that it would not have been a sufficiently robust vehicle for such a gentleman. Well, I am assuming things here, never a good thing to do I know, and I will ask Dudley the next time I am talking to him, but I know a retired Colonel from the tank regiment, he lives north of Fort William these days, and he used a kitten to teach his daughters to drive in, and his son then converted it to a pick-up, so it would seem that they do stand the test of time, even when attached to a tank regiment. Dudley told me that he delegated the task of teaching at least one of his daughters to drive, to one of his Sergeants!*

*Stranger yet, I discovered just this month, June 2003, that The Colonel and Peter Davis of Liege are old friends, small world indeed!*

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*A quick tip from Andrew Norman, as brake adjustment features regularly, I recommend taking the drums off, and using molegrips between the shoes and the backplate to make sure the adjusters move, as it saves rounding off the squares on the other side of the backplate.*

Dear Brian,

10 July 2003

Just a quick note to thank you for sending the brake adjuster repair kit so promptly. I think they arrived last Thursday. I got cracking last Saturday and did one wheel which was really bad. The instructions were a bit alarming, expecting me to saw through about an inch of steel in an awkward position. However, I applied a bit of brute force to the washers on the outside of the backplate, and using a big screwdriver, the washers wilted and fell off in about two minutes. So it turned out to be an easy job after all.

I had been having trouble with my idling lately, and was thinking that some fiddling with the carburettor would be needed. Then I noticed that the rubber tube to the rocker cover had split. Replacing that with a bit of plastic tube from the scrap box has worked wonders. I don't know how long it will last, but it will be worth keeping an eye on.

Best wishes, Les Richmond - Looe, Cornwall

*Thanks for keeping us up to date Les. Your timely letter reminds me that we really ought to repeat some things from time to time, as I know that those who have requested Dick Goodall's index and cross reference guide are in the minority, as are those who have had all the back issues, and as a result, I am asked for information both over the telephone ,and by letter, that we have covered in the past. What with my memory being less than perfect, it can be frustrating.*

*Obviously your back plates must be in reasonable condition, or they would not have taken the abuse to which you subjected them. I am led to believe, and it sounds perfectly feasible, that one of those Dremmel type tools with the appropriate cutter attached is ideal for removing the old brake adjuster. I know that I did it the hard way some years back ! Back plate corrosion is not a matter we have dwelt on a lot, but it is becoming a cause for concern, given that new ones are no longer available, and there is some machining involved in adapting Mini ones to fit. Brian Millar, can you fill us in here before your memory starts to get like mine please ? (Brian fitted a full set of Mini drums and backplates to the Kitten which Dick Goodall now owns.)*

Dear Mr. Marshall,

21 July 2003

I enclose completed application form together with cheque for £15.

One Kitten is in Australia and the other is about to be shipped. You will note I have inserted my brother's details and his Australian address as he is the owner, enthusiast, and is involved in classic car clubs.

It may interest you to know that Kitten RAU 120R (Aussie Kitkat) was found last year in a partially collapsed wooden garage in Lincoln, and covered with vegetation. It had been put there in 1990, but within two days we had it running and the brakes freed off. It was in excellent condition and is used daily now, as well as to attend many shows in W. A. where it attracts tremendous interest. The other Kitten ODO 790R was in a garden in Conningsby, Lincs, and had been off the road for more than two years. It needs cosmetic work, but functions well. It will be fully restored when it arrives in Australia.

Yours sincerely – T. G. Parker - Newark

### **Getting Technical** - Technical Tweaks 11th May. 03

Al Osborn

Not too much happening from the membership of late so I've got to use last Mewsletter (No. 51) as a starter this time, and again I must ask questions and perhaps answer our friend Paul Wheatley. So what is this inlet manifold modification that produces gobs of horse power then? I did notice that last issue was the April issue of course!

Yes there are a lot of tidy little gains to be made by getting the two manifolds tidied up but 95 MPH! with no other mods!!?? and as for Brian's tuned speedo, well that appears to be tuned the wrong way if you look at page 17 of 51. Now more on the 850 Vacuum advance (that I once had) Yes one is supposed to disconnect the thing when doing the ignition timing (at tickover with a strobe) but I never found that it made the slightest scrap of difference to the ignition point whether it was on or off. Then having not found any difference whether the vacuum pipe was connected or not when running, I put a vacuum gauge on the carb. takeoff and the only time there was any real vacuum that could have moved the plate with the points

on, was at a medium cruise speed (50MPH) with the very minimum of throttle ie in the ultimate economy mode. It would appear that Reliants wanted to give the ignition those couple extra degrees to squeeze the last few Miles per galleon out. Types like me who are usually 'clodding' it every where never appreciate the device so it was long ago removed and a 750 distributor of the correct rotation installed this gave 34 degrees of advance instead of the standard 850 of 30 degrees plus 12 degrees vacuum. This seems quite a lot but is based on a letter I got from the factory in 1985. Has any one any further info. on this one?

A personal aside this time comes from a dive into the cellar in the garage (pit used for storage only!) for a part, to find that wellies were needed i.e. we had 8" of water to deal with!! now as there is a small pile of those bits 'we must NOT throw away' this means we've had to do some bailing out this weekend. A couple radiators have been chucked out as fitting them ready primed with water didn't seem the right thing to do, luckily the spare doors and wind screens can't come to too much grief, nor can a couple of old brake drums, they are mostly rust anyway.

One thing I must get rid of is a Ford Escort front seat that has been fitted to a kitten. It is grey cloth and in good order, will any one come and take it away or shall I throw it? (This one didn't get wet!) M. Plummer, Sidmouth was putting together a runabout based on a Rebel chassis then he says 'later he wishes to go 850 and twin carbs' why the twin carbs I ask? Even in racing trim the 750 racer boys admitted the single carb was adequate, provided it is the right size. While the insurance companies always have a field day with you once you say 'twin carbs' Some years ago I questioned these things with them and they'd allow a larger carb. to be fitted without penalty but twins! oh No. So I stayed with the humble 1 1/4 and found out how to gas flow it as good as a 1 1/2. So it's still 'standard' Mr Insurance man! I've heard it said before that people want to have 'bolt on goodies' to make it go faster. You'd be better advised to get them manifolds and the head sorted, maybe electronic ignition and electric fans, the insurance companies won't punish you then. Brian is champing at the bit again, so we'll keep it short this month.

Al.

*Still on the technical front, Brian Radford had been looking for a new heater trunk for his Kittens, Dick Goodall had suggested that the Morris Minor uses a similar thing, and it might fit, but then Mick Penistone, one of our newest subscribers from Goole in Yorkshire pointed out that Dennis at Michaels of Selby has the right thing in stock for about a fiver. By the time I got organised enough to give Brian Radford a ring to tell him all this, he had been to a car show since returning to Cornwall from his Land's End to John O'Groats trip, and had met a Morris Minor owner, who promptly removed his to check, and they are very similar. The only difference is that on the Morris the hose is held in place with clips, and in fact the one on a Morris Minor is exactly the same length as 2 Kitten ones!*

*So now you know. Alternative parts man take note – oh, that's right, I've yet to decide who is doing that job now! Bill Callahan, if you are still up for that, please give me a ring.*

Remaining technical for a moment. Wheels, tyres, or more specifically rolling circumference of same. James Freer tells me he has a Pirelli document which lists all this stuff. I was both interested and somewhat surprised, who says you can't teach an old dog new tricks? Anyway, James, besides a Scimitar, has a very early Rebel, and was a bit shocked at the noise at 60 MPH, and was asking me what to do about it, to which I suggested 13 or even 14" wheels. He was not impressed, but I have driven a Rebel with Morris Minor 14" wheels on the back, not a lot of clearance, but it can be done. Anyway, to the point, I have it on good authority that the following is true :- 145 \* 12" tyres have a diameter of 540cm and a rolling circumference of 1638, while 155 \* 12's have a diameter of 552 and a rolling circumference of

1675. 145 \* 13"s have a diameter of 566 and a rolling circumference of 1718, while 155 \* 13's have a diameter of 578 and a rolling circumference of 1754, so now we know.

Also, on a similar vein, James tells me that this is a very useful formula. He has tried it on several cars and found it spot on. Useful for his Scimitar as the Speedo is broken!

$$\text{mph} = [\text{rpm} \times \text{rolling circumference}(\text{inches})] / [\text{overall gear ratio} \times 1050]$$

Which of course assumes that we know the final gear ratio, the engine speed, and I have been wracking my brains to understand the significance of the 1050 figure, there must be a formula for that too! Ed.

Anyway, if you would like any further info on tyre sizes and the likes, James is your man.

Still on the technical front, you may recall from the first page of my waffle, that the Rebel failed it's MOT recently, so too did John Blagburn's old Kitten. I had become involved in re-homing it when John's new job urgently demanded a 4 door car. Arleen and I ended up diving down to England to give it a temporary home with John Johnstone, and when George Reader agreed to buy it, I offered to put it through an MOT as it's old one had only a month to run. It had not occurred to me that it might fail, not only that, but fail on a part I did not have in stock – the steering rack no less!

As always seems to be the case in such situations it was all last minute stuff. I was meant to be leaving to go to the first trains weekend at Wensleydale, yes, we are finally actually running passenger trains there again, after a break of almost half a century. I had planned to be there on the first day, but mum had been taken ill, and I couldn't get away till the Saturday. The Kitten was only put in for test on the Thursday afternoon, and so I had to find another rack on Thursday evening, get it reconditioned on Friday morning, get the racks changed on the car on Friday early afternoon so that a re-test could be carried out before the testing station closed, I did managed to organise all that, no mean task I can assure you, then the car failed the re-test !!! They had not noticed, because the rack had been so bad, that there was movement between the strut and the lower wishbone, so that had to be undone and a new nut and bolt fitted as well. What a rush. Fortunately the garage I had used to fit the rack had some initiative, and just did it, but it was tight for time. Then, to cut a very long story short, I covered 600 miles in the Kitten between Saturday morning, and delivering it to Newport on Sunday afternoon, and Arleen, who met me on the Sunday morning at Forton Services on the M6 – I see it is not actually called that any more ! ended up covering 1031.9 miles in her Peugeot 106 in 21 hours – we had planned to spend the Sunday night in England, thank you Tom and Patience for your hospitality, but a failure in the clutch disengagement department on the Peugeot – oddly enough within a few miles of the Liege factory at Fladbury, my third time in that neck of the woods in less than 8 weeks ! - that the RAC could not put right for us, caused us to decide to be masters of our own destiny, and drive home overnight to avoid traffic, and so we got home at the back of 4:00am on Monday, some 12 hours ahead of schedule.

Those of you who are attentive will recall that at the beginning of this article, I said "Still on the technical front" and then, as ever, allowed myself to be sidetracked. The point was, steering racks. I can still get them reconditioned, though from time to time my man needs to build one rack from two, once one from three. So, we need to retain the rack from every Kitten and Fox that we can. If a vehicle is being scrapped, sad as that is, in order to secure the future of the rest of our wonderful little cars, there are certain bits that are going to become difficult. I was exceptionally lucky, as well as well organised, to have been able to organise one so quickly, and at a total cost of just under £100 including fitting, ( but excluding my time, phone

calls, and 80 miles of motoring to organise it all ) I did it very cheaply too. I doubt if I will be so lucky again, and Moira has threatened divorce if I even try!

Front dampers is another area of future concern. I did have had five of these in stock, the complete unit with spring, all ready to bolt on. These 5 had been in stock for over 18 months, I had 6 till then, and I was beginning to wonder if I had tied up too much of our spares fund in the one item, then I sold them all to three different people in the space of three weeks last month! All I have left now are a pair of Girling inserts.

## **Sales & Wants**

For sale: A rare opportunity to acquire a piece of Reliant history. Tempest No 2 as used in all the advertising, and the ex company demonstrator is on market again. Contact Dave Smith. This unique vehicle could be yours for just £2,850.

For sale: 1997 Kitten DL. MOT'd March 2004, regularly serviced, new exhaust, tidy unmolested yellow saloon. Must go, reduced to £495 o.n.o.

For sale: 1977 Kitten Saloon DL 86,000 miles, Mot till June '04 on 12" Mini wheels £400 o.n.o. Ring Steve - Birmingham area

For sale: Reliant Kitten Saloon DL (Racing green) Tax & test till Nov.'03 £300 contact Les Gill

For sale: Two Kittens, one complete, the other almost so, also a spare engine and new exhaust £30 contact Ralph Erwin for details

For sale: sets of 316 stainless cylinderhead studs. £30 a set plus carriage. Contact Tom Wardley

For Sale: Rebel wiper blade rubber inserts 4 for a fiver, ring 0141 8866117

For Sale: in fact free to an appropriate custodian, provided they collect it. Jim Musty has a very early Reliant axle – I can e-mail you a picture of it, looks very narrow.

For sale: Fox Tandy camper van MOT till May 03 taxed April '04, tidy example with new tyres yours for £ 1200 ovno.

For sale: One lightly toasted Reliant Fox ! All parts available including a good hard top, doors and tailgate. Contact Keith Gittus

For sale: Keith Gittus also has some surplus Kitten parts including a front bumper, center consul, inner and outer mouldings, assorted glass and the mouldings that go between the rear door and the glass on the estate car. Also two front suspension tie4 rods that are serviceable and could help someone out.

Wanted: James Rudd is looking for a pair of Rebel Bonnet Hinges – chromed for his Lanchester LD10 boot.

Wanted: A Kitten Estate, preferably a runner price around £200 somewhere in the north east. Ring Red Skelton

Wanted: Kitten van drivers door panel complete with handles, and the metal top part, ring Stuart Hale

Wanted: A Fox, any condition considered. Ring Gordon Gillespie

Wanted: A set of 13" wire wheels, preferably 5, to fit a Reliant Kitten axle. Ring Donald Nicholson

Wanted: Old unit lower ball joints and steering racks for reconditioning. Ball joints are small and light, and I have that situation well in hand, the racks on the other hand cost quite a bit to post about the country, and the men who do them are in Paisley and Staleybridge, not exactly close together. Anyway, the point is we need old units. If you can help please get in touch. Brian 0141 8866117

Wanted: a left hand side Kitten sun visor (are they handed?) Paul Elmy is the man

Wanted: anyone within a 50 mile radius of Litchfield (Staffs) who has a Fox or Kitten propshaft for sale, please give Keith a ring

## Notes

Well, yet another rushed job this one I'm afraid. I say I'm afraid, perhaps it just means that I am getting better at it! That is two editions in a row, both of which are unique in that they have taken me less than 100 hours to do. (Not since the first few editions has it been so quick to put a Mewsletter together) I know they have both cheated a bit in that we have enjoyed a colour centre page, which saves me about 800 words of typing, but I have to print the text on the back of the colour page here, so while there is a saving in time spent typing, there is more work to do on the printing front. Another of life's compromises!

Also they have both been a page shorter than usual, but I can live with that, given that we still manage to cram in about 10,000 words. Feel free to comment, or contribute even!

I put over £200 worth of fuel in the "new" Citroen BX in June, and that involved only two of our four trips south in the past two months.

The Rebel is running again, thanks to Jim Spence and Phil Hallam, also John Johnstone and Grant Coull. The fact is that I do struggle a bit with clutches these days, and so even its days with us may be numbered. Mike / Phil, if you are still interested, give me ring.

I need, well, lets tell it like it is, you need, Kitten front brake adjuster repair kits, and I have none left. MPK 1 is the kit number, if you are out and about at an autojumble or wherever, and come across any of these, we seem to be looking at the wrong side of £10 a kit these days, and that is buying them in bulk, so if you can get one for under say £12 - £15, snap it up. And if you can get five or more for under a tenner, the Register will happily buy them from you for stock – assuming they are in mint condition!

Steering racks raised their head again recently. I think I need to get 1, sometimes 2 of these done a year, and I do not have one in stock at the moment. however, recently I was involved in finding a new home for John Blagburn's Kitten, and I foolishly offered to have it put through an MOT, as it's existing test only had a few weeks left to run. Well, it failed on the rack, and I had left it till the last minute, so ~ I had less than 24 hours to sort things. Fortunately I was able to borrow a rack, which had to be overhauled, but I got that done, and

then had to pay to have it fitted for the test. Phew, except that it wasn't phew at all, the car failed its re-test. Reason, the strut, remember we used to call them track control arms? Well, it was loose on the lower wishbone. They hadn't spotted that because the rack had been so bad. So that had to be dismantled and a new bolt fitted before the test certificate was granted. Moira tells me I am never again to get so involved! Thanks to John Johnstone for the loan of the rack, and Alan for his help in removing it from John's car, also Phil Hallam for his work replacing an engine mounting, and making and fitting an exhaust clamp the previous week.

Anyway, for once that was a Kitten liberated from England, via Scotland, to Wales! It now lives in Newport, where I suspect it will no longer be doing upwards of 20,000 miles a year. While that car has just 63,000 miles or so indicated, it is I understand on its third time round the clock!

I'll save you from the long story, (for now!) but Arleen's wee Peugeot did over 1,031 miles in 21 hours that day, following me to Newport and bringing me home. Story for another time I think!

Oh fiddlesticks, I've gone and done it again, forgotten my four times table, and or got confused by the new advert page. Not only that but I've just realised I have made two similar references to the John Blagburn Kitten on its way to Wales – is he losing the plot? (and if so, just what are you going to do about it?)

On top of that I have just discovered, I think, why the printers are not prepared to print on the back of the colour picture paper, I am now getting a smudge on most prints since running off the printing on the back of the center page 350 times for this edition, and now, as well, it tells me I am needing a new toner cartridge, and the folk I got the printer from do not have one in stock.....

On top of that I have to get on with preparing our room for the painter on Wednesday, mum is getting her new central heating on Friday – I know it's just life, but it gets a bit demanding at times!!

The Rebel did take me to Ingliston last Sunday, and then to the borders to meet the Reliant people on their run to Scotland, (Great to have Robert Fairfoull along in his Rebel saloon, we would have made it three, but Phil could not make it, still, Fred Heath was there in his one, and yes we did take a couple of pictures – it's not often these days that you get to see three running Rebels together!) then it would not go the next day, when John Pearce called in, good to see you again John, and Tom too. I did get the throttle cable replaced yesterday, thanks Grant – my Rebel now uses a Kitten throttle cable to operate its SU carb, but it had been routed too close to the exhaust manifold, and the plastic had melted, fusing the outer and inner cables together – never a dull moment, is there.

Jeff and Sue Sharrock, I was thinking of you last week, when hearing on the news about bad flooding in Wrexham, I do hope the new place is safe from such conditions.

Right, rather than waffle on to the very end of the page, I'll end now – Oh, I gather that Dick Harvey was home for a few hours yesterday, (25/7/03) but it is a slow recovery, I am sure that we all wish him the very best.

**Brian**

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