

Reliant Kitten Register

NEWSLETTER 54

September ~ October 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.....

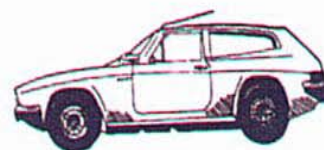
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The Reliant Kitten Register NEWSLETTER 54

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 (he said in an embarrassed manner) by a certain Rebel estate car which you have seen before, and a Reliant Regal Supervan. The estate car belonged to Den and Edna Houchin from Framlingham in Suffolk, till I became its custodian about three years ago. (It gets a mention on page 5 as well!) The Regal belongs to one Bernard Lynch. We were on our way to attend a Reliant Owners Club meeting at Culzean in Ayrshire one sunny summer's day last August.

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

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

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It should be noted that opinions and ideas, information and advice printed in this publication are as recommended by our readers and others, and, while believed to be accurate and correct, such information is given in good faith, and it does not necessarily have the approval of the Reliant Kitten Register, and cannot be guaranteed by either the Editor, or the Reliant Kitten Register. Owners must satisfy themselves as to the suitability of any suggestions made within these pages, as no responsibility can be accepted.

Hello again and welcome, I have been gallivanting a bit more than usual of late, and have decided to keep this page brief this time – sighs of relief can no doubt be heard throughout the land. The fact is that there are even more things than usual that I have meant to do, and failed, so before things get even further behind, I am going to complete this edition this week – 8/10/03 – and hopefully get it in the post before the end of the month. I had it almost complete before we went on holiday at the beginning of September, and then momentum was lost for a huge variety of reasons. Yes the Rebel is still running, and indeed probably for sale, and yes I am sure I have forgotten even more important things than usual, but there it is.

At the time of writing I have still not found the missing flyers from last time, but enclose a different one for your perusal.

Talk to you again in December, till then take care.

~~~~~

## **Rebel Round up**

As regular readers will know, I have been known to take the car to the odd classic car event, and even to participate in the odd driving test. My clutch control is not what it was, and I am quite happy to let others take up the gauntlet these days. However, at the “Callander Classic” event at the end of August this year, Mark Linfield (in Jim Spence’s Kitten estate) and Peter Linfield, also in a Kitten estate were in need of a third vehicle to make up the team, and so I was persuaded to enter the Rebel, yes Edna and Den, I am still using and enjoying your old car. To cut a long story short, we ended up in the semi finals against a team of three beautiful Lotus Elans, and would you believe that we tied with them, they being 7 seconds faster than us on one half of the course, and us being 7 seconds faster than them on the other, my only consolation is that I am quite sure that they find it even more frustrating than I, that they cannot run rings round us, than we find it maddening that we cannot be quicker than them!

Sadly there was insufficient time to have a re-run, and the event organisers asked each team to choose one car for a run off. Well that let me out, as they use a Le-Mans start, and I have enough difficulty trying to walk these days, running to the car and jumping in for a quick get away is just not going to happen, so it came about that Mark Linfield was chosen, and while he did his best, he tried rather too hard on the second half of the course, and he spun off as a result, but we all had a great time, and though I know it irritates Team Lotus intensely to be only just able to beat us, sometimes, it does the Reliant name no harm at all to frequently be in either the semi-finals or the finals with vehicles of such calibre.

Better luck next time chaps.

It has come to my attention that a number of us Rebel drivers have had the need for an exhaust down pipe, and that they are not readily available, and worse than that, some of the specialists who claim to be able to make them are clearly either using a faulty pattern, or their work is simply of a very poor standard.

We have another opportunity to do something about this as yet another specialist company has been in touch to offer their services. The questions therefore are:-

*Who needs a Rebel down pipe?*

*Which type do you need – early or late? i.e. does it run through the passengers side outriggers, and hence over to the outside of the chassis, or does the main pipe run close to the propshaft, and pass through the gearbox cross member, and before you all start ringing me up to ask how on earth you can pass an exhaust pipe through a tube, the early Rebel chassis had a large rectangular gearbox cross member with a hole in it for the exhaust to pass through, so there!*

*Do you want a standard or larger than standard diameter of pipe? and if larger, what size?*

*Do you want this pipe to be made of stainless steel or mild steel?*

*Do you live anywhere near to Egham in Essex, where the Classic Exhaust people operate from, and could they borrow your car to use as a template?*

*Right, I think that about covers it for now, talk to me, Ed.*

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## **Foxes Den**

Dear Brian,

6 August 2003

My 21<sup>st</sup> birthday present was a beautiful 'D' registered Reliant Fox. I had a recon engine fitted, sprayed the bodywork purple, and drove it for over 50,000 miles. However, a few years ago it started 'playing up'. I spent as much time and money as I could, but in the end practicality won the day. I bought a 'more reliable' car, and Foxy was relegated to the garage. I have often dreamt over the last two years of resurrecting my lovely little motor, but something always crops up that takes precedence. Fate has now taken a cruel turn, the garage where Foxy resides is to be converted into a flat, and Foxy faces the prospect of becoming homeless within the next few months – probably few weeks by the time you read this!

To get to the point, I am appealing to all the kind hearted Reliant fans out there to help Foxy and myself. There are a couple of options, but what I **won't** consider is breaking it or turning it into some other car.

If there is someone out there who is looking to buy a Fox **to restore**, then I would consider selling it. Alternatively, if you love messing with these motors but can't afford any more projects, how about we team up? You'll need garage space and skills, together with some spare time, I'll try and find the money! If there is a third alternative, please let me know.

Apart from the fact that these are amazing vehicles, this was my first car, and my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday present, so I have great emotional attachment to it. I hope that someone out there can find it in their heart to help me. If so, please call. I work nights and sleep all day, so leave a message on the answerphone, with your number and the best time for me to ring, and I'll call you back.

Hannah Cave - Liverpool

*What can I say, give Hannah a ring if you can help her and Foxy out, and Hannah, do let me know how things go. Ed.*

~~~~~

Practical Camper?

Well, the short answer is “Yes”, the Tandy Fox Camper is a practical proposition - just... Just what? Read on:-

Brian, our Registrar, rings me up one evening and says “Have you got the “no” word handy, Duncan?” “No?” I reply. OK, that’ll do, - someone has a camper needing a good home, and I just know you don’t want yet another Fox...”

So the next day I trek south to St Albans, only to go back the next weekend with a trailer.

Amazingly it passed the MOT test with only the traditional leaking wheel cylinders & dead rear fog lamp tricks thrown up to put me off. The drive to the test station was my initiation into the “handling” characteristics, and I turned back after half a mile, convinced something was terminally wrong somewhere - loose steering, broken antiroll bar, wheel missing? No, that’s apparently what it’s meant to be like: piloting a prototype hovercraft over a rough sea of semi-set jelly.

I didn’t drive it far or often over the next few weeks, but I did safe things like wash the curtains, change the oil, guess the tyre pressures [anybody know what they’re meant to be?] and scrub the carpeted ceiling free of years of stalactites comprising cobwebs and cooking grease in a combination the makers of Evostik would be envious of. It was this job which gave me confidence: a lot of cooking and, therefore, camping, had been done in this thing, so it must be feasible to drive it somewhere and live in it, at least for a day or two. On the face of it, there’s actually quite a lot of space inside to put things, or do things like cook, or lie on the bed, or just sit and plan the next holiday [which will probably involve a hotel, caravan or tent]. But combining more than one of these activities at a time was going to test my ingenuity.

Now there lives in Wales a certain John Davies, Fox owner, with whom I’d swapped Fox info and stories over the years, but never met. He’d blithely offered to weld up a leaking fuel tank for me, knowing I lived 200 miles away and didn’t speak Welsh. He didn’t know I was due to go to near Birmingham for the Scimitar-Club Camping Weekend, though, and intrepidly brave [?] enough to not only take the Tandy but also my 20-year-old lodger. The latter was a fine balance between his ability to help push, against sharing a very confined space with his feet & socks, but he came along anyway, in spite of my warning that I was probably going to get very stressed at times and not be easy company. [Nothing new there].

We set off, and got as far as Ludlow, in easy reach of John’s the next day.

We had the bright idea of going into a pub, thinking to ask the locals about any nearby campsites. Although the barman’s experience of camping lay in a totally different sphere, and no-one else could agree on directions, we drove around to find 3 campsites, all closed for the day, and all on steep slopes. Difficult to level up a campervan, we settled on a layby, where we completed the jigsaw bed, transferring everything we might need from the lockers beneath to the locker where the bed components had been, then lay awake most of the night listening to the rain drumming on the roof and waiting for a drumming on the door from the local constabulary. We survived until dawn and set off to look for “facilities” on the way to Wales.

It was great to meet John, who duly fixed my tank while we explored the countryside. Lots of

steep bits and twisty bits, often together, taxed the camper's ingenuity. Welsh bends have the word "SLOW!" painted on the road. Also the word "ARAF" which apparently stands for "not advisable in a Tandy at above walking speed". Now this is OK uphill, cos walking speed is all you get, but the steeper bends are always downhill, and doing two things at once, like steer and brake, seems to confuse the Tandy. I was on a learning curve however, and not to be defeated.

Well-fed by John and Mary, we passed the evening putting the world to rights and catching up on Foxy things. John even taught Stu how to weld, so there's now a very useful tool added to the kit, a bit like those screwdrivers Meccano used to include in their sets, but with the handle welded firmly into place! Retiring to the camper, night two was better, as we were in the middle of John's workshop. [Strange sleeping indoors in a camper, a bit like sitting in your car on the train under the channel.] And by now we were old hands at stowing things in the best places.

Day three saw us at Drayton Manor Park for the day with the Scimitar club. [Yes I always get ribbed for not actually taking the Scimitar.] And after a thorough soaking on all the park's water rides we returned home Sunday evening much the wiser, with a longish to-do list [mainly front suspension-related], but looking forward to the next excursion.

Average fuel consumption over the 500 miles was 43 mpg, and it's the first Fox I've driven that has needed NO coolant topping up in over 700 miles! This confirms my recent hunch that the other 6 engines I've experienced have all had head-gasket leaks, and in fact though most Reliants do need topping up rather often, they really shouldn't.

The Tandy cruised quite happily at over 60 on "A" roads, and once the suspension is rebushed will, I'm sure, handle quite well enough for everyday use. My neighbours find it useful for fetching long worktops from B & Q, and love driving it "because of all the smiles you get from people"!

What better accolade? Dunc

Thanks for that Duncan, Dunc has once again done the business, and we are reliably informed that the total number of Foxes on the road at the end of 2002 was just 161. That number includes the 19 campervans that are still running out there. The figures for Rebels and Kittens are 78 and 420 respectively, made up of in the case of Rebels of 30 Saloons, 8 Estate cars and 40 Vans, that said I am in no doubt whatever that the majority of these vans were converted to estate cars a long time ago, but the DVLA were not advised. On the Kitten front the figures are 140 Saloons, 240 Estates and 40 Vans, which I find really amusing because at one time we were led to believe that they built exactly 4000 Kittens, a suspiciously round number, and here quarter of a century later we have very round numbers again !

There are also some 60, yes another round number, "Unspecified Reliants" but in case you are interested that 60 is made up of 2, 3, 44, 1 and 10, so if we assume that the 10 are Tempests, (unlikely as it happens, as they – the 10 - are classed as estates) the 3 possibly Vantiques, oh it all gets too difficult, because I am quite sure that while Peter Davis has supplied about 40 to 50 chassis for the Liege, I am equally certain that there are only about 20 of them on the road at this time, so they can't possibly be the 44, can they? Mind you, that 10 was the last item on that page which included 19 types of Scimitar 2 types of Sabre and the Metrocabs (of which by the way there were 382 still running then) Oh, and it was interesting to see that all of the "unspecified Reliants" have really big engines – 9999cc's if you believe the report! Anyway, as I was saying, the 10 was the last item on the page, I wonder what the first item on the next page is?

Purely in passing the number of three wheeled Reliants out there at Dec.'02 was 16803, so there are still a goodly number of potential spare engines and gearboxes out there!

Duncan, thanks again for collating that information for us. Those details are of course copyright, and while we believe it is O.K. to publish extracts in the magazine, it is most certainly not permissible to put them out on the internet, so Brian R, would you, or whoever takes care of such matters for us, please make sure the above details are removed before this edition finds its way 'out there', thank you.

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Plans for the future! Don't forget that Dave Price has kindly offered his services as regards the matter of planning something for the Kitten's 30th anniversary, so, Dave is keen to know your views, would even like to set up a small committee to help organise something, so, Dave is the man, talk to him.

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Liege Page

I see in the 3rd edition of "Liege News" that Peter Davis has been doing some calculating and experimenting with the car in relation to engine revolutions and road speed, not indicated speed, but speed calculated on engine speed and the size of the Avon tyres and the known Bedford / Suzuki 5.1 to 1 axle ratio.

Peter noted that the Liege will go faster with the hood up and side screens in place, a phenomenon I noticed on Jowett Jupiters back in the late 60's and early 70's, but the really interesting thing is that, in spite of the Liege weighing a lot less than the Kitten, and the overall gearing being very similar, the car is no faster! The following chart gives Liege speed in top gear for a variety of engine speeds, and given that a Kitten will top the ton at 6000rpm (if you can get it to rev that high in top, which few of them will – 4500 to 4800 being the norm) I find it a little surprising that the Liege, on its current gearing, is not capable of three figure speeds with ease. I guess it could be an aerodynamic thing, and with the wind in your hair the Liege feels a lot faster than a Kitten, and is much more fun, but why is it so slow? (Especially given that many of them have tuned engines).

As to the 850 engine's maximum revs, well Reliant put the red line at 6000, but I know for a fact that the crankshafts were originally designed to be capable of coping with up to 10,000, yes, you heard me correctly, ten thousand, and many of the 750 racing chaps engines will rev to 8000 or 8500, Just you ask Piper or Kent for a fast cam and see what they have to offer in relation to power at given engine speeds ! Which has to beg the question, just how fast could a Liege go?

John Swale's supercharger may help answer that question, but the fact is that the more stress we put these engines under, the sooner they will inevitably fail, and pottering along at 4000 to 4500 will ensure a long life, not to say give much better fuel consumption! Not nearly so much fun I will freely admit!

Reliant powered Liege engine speed to vehicle velocity in top gear:-

4000	62.5	4250	66.5	4500	70.5	4750	74
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5800 90.5 6000 93.5 6200 96.5 6400 99.5

For details about the Liege Car Club contact John Swale and Melanie Brown :-

Liege Car Club
Beacon Cottage Farm
St. Agnes
Cornwall
TR5 0NH

melbrown@ukonline.co.uk

Tel 01872 553932

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All about Jimps, well, almost all!

It is now Mid August, way back in May I received a letter dated the 16th of May, which had been re-dated from 19th December 2002, it's good to know that I am not the only one who starts things and then takes a wee while to complete them! The letter reads as follows :-

Dear Brian, I thought it would be nice to accompany this year's subscription with a letter and some obligatory praise for an interesting read every couple of months, and for helping each time I ring. I promised to write an article for the Mewsletter, and that follows. Maybe one year I will get the subscription money to you on time!

Yours Edd Kippax

This is my first contribution to the Mewsletter so bear with me. I am a 16, yes 16 year old Jimp owner. Boy is it difficult to explain to people that simple fact! I sold a perfectly good Daihatsu Charade turbo to make room for the Jimp!

For those who don't know what a Jimp is, it's a small utility vehicle built in Sandbach England between 1981 and 1984 by PK Manufacturing Limited. You can see my Jimp and more at www.geocities.com/pkjimp

May I make a few things crystal? I am Jimp mad, so if anyone ever sees one please contact me with details. Also, any Jimp that looks unrestorable is, so please inform me as I will make space for it, right, here's my story.

It took me three years to find one, but eventually, just before Christmas 2001, I received a phone call from a man in Norwich who Brian had put in touch, and he sold me his.

1 year later!

Christmas brought me some means of finishing the engine rebuild – namely money ! Did I say I was short of the stuff? When I finished rebuilding the head and fine tuning the ignition timing, the Jimp was running fine, though it did have a hole in the exhaust. Four weeks later it wouldn't start, so the wiring was replaced – and coil – and condenser – and high tension leads and.... You get the picture? I also fitted a full stainless steel exhaust system. Then I just had to wait for a new set of points and some exhaust manifold studs and a gasket. The engine is leaking oil – bottom end (brass sump plugs are how much?) Must get that

sorted soon. Next £150 was spent re-wiring the back of the car. Everything was replaced wire, connectors, clips, light clusters. The only thing left to do is the fuel tank sender, because the terminal on the actual unit snapped off, so I need a new one. Now the floor is getting re-done. I've got to renovate the rear frame (over the loading area), the windscreen section (which I need help with) then the rest of the mechanicals, ball joints etc – oh, and bring the bodywork back to life. That'll require a skilled panel beater, someone who can weld aluminium (the alternative to that is new panels: Jimp sills anyone? – didn't think so), and an expensive paint job – British racing Jimp, too much money to even think about until I have a full time job. Not much to do then! Final catch is the Jimp has to be roadworthy within the year.

Insurance. What's the stupidest quote you've had for Kitten, anyone who beats £1,600 gets the prize (*Ed, I can assure you that as a new male driver £1,600 is very cheap indeed, even third party only with "Pass Plus", Ed.!*) Well, it could be worse, I was quoted £6,000ish to insure my Daihatsu Charade 1.0, so it promptly went!

Anyway I'll stop moaning and get back to the windscreen section problem: My windscreen seals flex and buckle at the corners. I have heard of some solutions, cutting wedges out of the corners, building one seal from many and using superglue. I want to simply fit my windscreens into some perfect seals and sit back thinking "That was easy".

"That's not going to happen Edd, so shut up" My seals are of unknown origin along with the rest of the frame which is one thing that is not standard to any other Jimp I have seen. Anyone got any ideas like miracle rubber that will fit round a 90 degree bend without buckling? I want the job done properly. Making some from scratch is too expensive! I have been told to try a Land Rover, but I don't know which one is the same?

I've learnt a few things from owning my Jimp, firstly it's NEVER as simple as it looks, and secondly, when it is simple, it's never obvious. Now I will actually shut up, bye for now!

Edd Kippax

Ahh, how refreshing, the enthusiasm of youth. I have to say that when people talk about "rebuilding an engine", I am often left wondering just what they mean? What was actually done? What parts were replaced, what machining work carried out. Just how well was it cleaned?

I know that I 'rebuilt' a good engine last year (with a lot of help) and we only spent a couple of hundred pounds on new bits, bearings, seals and gaskets, oil and fuel pumps, a new sump, we got away with just fitting a new timing chain and tensioner, the gears looked just fine. All the compressions had been good and equal, so we decided not to disturb the head, but did overhaul the oil pressure release valve. With new pistons and liners and a full gasket set coming in at the better part of £200 these days I was glad not to have to had to get that involved! Lucky too that I had been able to drive the car the engine came out of for 40 miles or so before removing the engine from it, so I knew that it ran well, but we don't always have the opportunity to do such checks.

Anyway, what Edd didn't tell us was that the Jimp is built on a Kitten / Fox chassis, and uses the Reliant running gear, i.e. engine gearbox, suspension steering etc, with the unique body mounted on it. Sadly Peter Kulka, the PK of PK Manufacturing Limited cannot remember clearly, he was adamant that the chassis used were Kitten rather than Fox, but equally adamant that they were galvanised, and that in my opinion would have been unlikely, anyway he did use the Register to locate what turned out to be the last Jimp he built, and

bought it for his now teenage children a couple of years ago, but chose not to subscribe to the Register in spite of using our services – should you be reading this Peter, do get in touch and let us know how your project is coming along. Ed

~*~*~*~*~*~

Letter From America

Frank regularly writes to me, and the reason that you have not heard a lot about him in the past is that his letters are big, and not all Reliant related. That, along with my own editorial shortcomings – it is simpler to type or scan in a whole document rather than try and edit one – so, I have decided to try and rectify some of my shortcomings of the past. Frank plans to visit the U.K. later this year – probably about now by the time you read this, and he is keen to acquire a left hand drive Kitten, so if you can help, please get in touch right away.

Dear Brian,

17-07-03

Many thanks for your letter, it really is incredible how you always find time to reply to all your faithful R.K.R. 'cognoscenti'. *(Moirá asked me what that was, and while I had a good idea, I thought you would all be as lazy as I am, so, for Moirá's benefit, and those too lazy to look it up, the Collins Concise definition is "people with informed appreciation of a particular field, esp. in the fine arts; "connoisseurs" so Frank used exactly the right word, though Collins spells it cognoscenti.)* I only hope that the Rebel and Kitten keep going for a good many years to come, it breaks my heart whenever I read of a Kitten or Rebel being hacked to bits and turned into a Liege, Tempest or such like.

I had thought that you and I were perhaps about the same vintage, then I saw a photo of you in one of the back numbers, *(Don't forget Frank, that I have been running the Register for over a decade now, and some of the pictures were not taken yesterday!)* where I think you are younger, about mid forties (I am a 1948 model, just turned 55) so whilst your mother is in her early 70's mine is in her early 80's and they all suffer the various ailments relating to old age – hell, even we do!

My mother, though born here of British parents, like so many of her friends, patriotically went over to the U.K. for the duration of the war, and was in the WAAF, first at training school near Bath, then stationed near Epping and later, in 1958, was runner up in Chile's amateur golf championship, she now still manages to play 'half' a round two or three times a week. Regarding the trip to see yon two laddies, one the Tales of Tannochbrae sorry, Tore, teller (sounds like a very tall story teller) on how to keep your little Kittens clipping along. How sad Brian you must feel to have had to part with two of your Kittens only to find them years later surrounded by Ladas, Moscovitchies, Tattras, Yugos, Zastavas, Polskis and even the odd ring a ding Trabant, with engines like the old 2 stroke DKW's or those stamped sheet metal Ariel Arrow's. It's amazing just how attached one gets to these old cars and bikes – *hang on a minute here, I know Dick has owned the odd eastern European vehicle in the past, but not all those surely ? also was the Leader bigger or smaller than the Arrow, I seem to recall needle roller bearing crankshafts. and Bill Dick has a DKW motorbike with a single rotor Wankel engine, so there ! Ed. – As Frank was saying before I interrupted –*

I am glad that Brian's old white Kitten went to Dick to keep 'the ghost' and Dante / Scarlet the red 'un company. He will surely take good care of it.

I vaguely recall that neck of the woods from a rather hurried trip in 1981 with a girlfriend via the Edinburgh Tattoo, up to golfers mecca St. Andrews, then Dundee, and on to Aberdeen

and Elgin, then down through Inverness, Fort William, as far as Oban (where my brother Charles after college worked for a Laird for a season which was great fun) Then the girlfriend and I came back down again through Glasgow, though alas time did not permit my looking up and visiting Mount Vernon (for some reason even today it does not figure in my AA Easy Road Britain 2.4 miles to the inch Atlas) from whence my maternal grandmother hailed, so perhaps it has become part of greater Glasgow. Grandfather was from Newton le Willow in Lancashire.

That trip in 1981 took in about 4,000 miles in one week that also included North Wales and Cornwall and along the south coast. The car hire company in London who had agreed to a fixed rate with unlimited mileage, almost had a fit when I returned the car!

Some of that trip was driven through the lovely highland countryside, totally unlike our dry, parched and rocky Andes, hence the North Americans calling them Rockies instead of "Cordillera de los Andes" (or Andes Mountain chain) down here in South America.

Thanks very much for the offer of transport up to Brian Millar's and Dick's places. At present my good friend Tom McLean, who lives near Dusseldorf, has offered me the use of a VW GTI with a tow ball, lest I find a likely Kitten candidate for exile to South America.

If I was just travelling from London to Glasgow I would have ventured up on Easy Jet or Ryanair, but since a stop in Yorkshire as well as Newcastle is also on the cards going up, and Manchester on the way down, alas I must travel by road. As we get closer to the date we can plan things better.

So far my attempts to contact Wouter Van Oploo have been unsuccessful, but I will persevere. If Wouter could find a LHD kitten, for me, Amsterdam is only 200km from Dusseldorf, and Tom could fetch it for me if Wouter knew of a sound one available. Thomas Touw's at 1,200 euro is a bit pricey, I can make do with a barn case with no MOT as long as it is sound, rebuildable, but not too good cosmetically so the customs fellows here don't pounce on me too heavily. It will be hard enough persuading them that the car actually cost less than the freight! I am planning keeping it indefinitely, though I'll bet they all say that

Best wishes from Chile, Frank

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Dear Brian,

August 2003

My book about the history of Reliant is finally out, and, as we discussed, I can offer a limited number of copies to your readers at £29.50 + £3.70 P&P for the first six orders. People must tell me that they saw the book advertised in the Mewsletter to take advantage of this offer. The contact details, etc are :- Cheques/postal orders payable to:

D. Lockton,
Woodlands,
Exeter Road,
Dawlish,
Devon.
EX70NZ

I ought to make it clear that the book only covers Reliant up to the early-mid 1970s so

does not include the Kitten or Fox, but it does have a long chapter on the Rebel. It is available from bookshops (ISBN 1870519647) but naturally is more expensive than I'm offering it to Register Mewsletter readers. If the limited edition of 500 hardback copies sell quickly then a cheaper (I hope!) softback version will be produced. But the hardbacks have to sell first!

Daniel's book "Rebel Without Applause Reliant from Inception to Zenith" is now available after years of research by Daniel himself. This first volume covers the company's history from girder fork vans through 8 models of the Regal right up to the Rebel including all the sports cars till that time. With over 250 pages I am sure it will be an interesting read – make someone you know a good birthday or Christmas present ? Ed. Do take care with the title, there is a book of poems of the name Rebel without applause out there, it has nothing to do with Reliants!

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Dear Brian,

13th August 2003

Thanks for the back issues and Kitten owners handbook. Well, SNA 877X is finally on the road, MOT passed with flying colours, the maiden voyage was to see Dennis and Fred at Michaels garage, followed by a trip to Bridlington. (46 miles each way) When we set off the brake pedal travel was about 1", by the time we came back it was about 2 ½"! Yes, the dreaded front adjusters had de-adjusted themselves. (all 4). I have asked my friend Brian (*no relation, Ed.*) who is going to the Newark Autojumble to keep an eye out for an adjuster kit, in the meantime I have adjusted the brakes and put a smear of silicone sealant around the adjusters and on to the back plate. Left it overnight to set. Next morning went to work, no problem with the brakes at all. The have stayed in perfect adjustment. Incidentally, to adjust the brakes just cut through the silicone with a Stanley knife, peel it off, adjust and re-apply. Works till the proper kit turns up. Hope this helps a few readers if they have the same problem.

Incidentally the engine in my Kitten is comprised of a Rialto 2 yellow top bottom end, a kitten head with kitten carb and distributor, so it's a bit of a hybrid. It pulls well in the lower gears, but also runs well at the legal limit and above, and MPL is pretty good too. All in all as you say, a "fine little car" and hopefully I shall be keeping it for many years to come.

All the best for now. Mick - Goole

Thanks for keeping us up to date Mick, of course I should point out that the brake adjuster repair kits are readily available from a number of suppliers, Mini specialists in particular, the only thing is that finding a supplier of them for under £20 a time is now a problem. MPK 1 is the one for the Kitten.

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Dear Brian,

July 2003

Looking at the Europa spares catalogue earlier today I noticed that they stock the badge (according to their catalogue p17 No:CS441 £19.21+vat Tel: 01283-815609). May be worth a mention in the magazine if someone is disappointed that they didn't get the one that was on eBay recently! [A new one came with my car but it is nice to know they can still be obtained.]

I was just giving the page a casual glance in case there was one for the rear. If you know where one can be obtained please let me know. You may have some - or if there's enough interest Europa will do a special order, but at a price.

Also found some decent wheel nuts - I was told they were Mini 3/8" but they are 7/16" £1 each from Superlite (very reasonable others wanted £1.3-1.50), my car had quite an assortment in poor condition. I wanted domed ones as I am going to fit centre caps for everyday use and save the chrome hub caps for shows.

Any ideas for seats for my Rebel? Mine are OK but I want to put some more modern and more comfortable seats in for everyday use so I save the originals (which don't seem that robust to me).

Yours James Freer

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More from Daniel Lockton :-

August 2003

On a sadder note, as I was saying before, the red Kitten (TNH 341W) had a lot of trouble recently (after the business with the steering rack, and the wind taking the driver's door off, the nearside back leaf springs broke, then the car was broken into for someone to steal a £5 radio I'd bought from a car boot sale, and the window smashed, and then the oil pump/distributor drive teeth on the camshaft sheared off). I was in south London at the time and not having any way of transporting the car back down to Devon, I was quoted £600 by MAC Motorcycles (the only Reliant dealer left in the area) to put another engine in and the condition the car was in by that time made it not worth it. So they paid me £100 for her and are doing the engine and tidying up a bit and reckon they'll get £1,000 on the forecourt! Apparently the Kitten is now in great demand as a lot of people are now driving them on the B1 licence as a more spacious alternative to the Ligier/Aixam/Microcar.

I put a Kitten Register advert in the car before I sold it.

I still have the other Kitten (NJY 671S) but may try and sell this soon because the parts are no use to me now - I'll let you know. I'll still remain a subscriber - it's a very interesting magazine and I'm sure I'll get another Kitten again one day... Thanks and Best wishes Daniel Lockton

And now a story from Michael Hughes

15 August 2003

An unusual encounter

Wednesday last I was waiting for a return Seacat (which reminded me of the Robert E Lee 'that was never there on time') and I spotted what I thought was a Reliant Robin Pick up. Having introduced myself to the owner I found out that under the tonneau there lay an Austin Cooper Mini engine driving the rear wheels and a vestigial boot. A look under the bonnet revealed the fuel tank, battery etc but no front engine. The driver was slightly disabled so maybe the initial reason for the conversion was more leg room. The engine mounted immediately above the rear axle, or maybe that should read where the rear axle would have been since it had a mini subframe. Before you ask it was not three wheel steer. Among his

other vehicles was a Lomax in which he had done 98,000 miles since its conversion - including a trip to the Arctic Circle.”

Michael (not a subscriber, but a friend of Adrian Hanwell's)

So you see, it is not just Rebels, Kittens and Foxes that get different propulsion units fitted! Ed.

Economy

Dear Brian,

August 2003

Can any of your readers advise me where I am going wrong?

On deciding to check the fuel consumption on an 850 Kitten, and being a follower of the old ways, in goes a pint of fuel and I travelled :- 3 miles 7 furlongs 9 chains 3 poles 5 yards 1 foot 7 inches times 2 to get back, then divide by two to check.

The table I used was 12" = 1 foot; 3 feet = 1 yard; 5½ yards = 1 Pole; 4 Poles = 1 chain; 10 chains = 1 furlong; 8 furlongs = 1 mile.

Or should I drag myself into the metric age?

Yours 657 (Thomas Davidson,) Dalbettie

I am a bit tired at the moment, so won't offer comment other than to say that I do not know of a garage that sells fuel in gallons these days, so I always try to use an even number of litres, but being lazy these days I let the computer do the work, the formula it uses (because I told it to) is it takes the mileage when I last filled the tank away from the mileage at the most recent top up, that gives me a total distance in miles, I then divide that figure by the number of litres put in, and multiply that figure by 4.54609, well it's easy to use the Customs and Excise figure when the computer is doing the calculation for me ! (I used to work for a paint and ink manufacturer, and had to complete tied oil returns every month – they hardly ever balanced – evaporation?) Still, if you are getting about 30 to the gallon (8 times just under 4 miles,) then it is time you serviced the car, or developed a lighter right foot! Ed.

That just reminds me, I have a crate full of empty milk bottles from the 1950/60's, with a variety of dairy's names printed on them, if there are any collectors out there, I could do with the space, make me an offer, Ed.

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Dear Brian,

5th September 2003

I am writing to inform you that I have now, somewhat regretfully, parted company with my Reliant Fox, and in fact severed my links with Reliant after 25 years of continuous use of both Kitten and Fox. I need a car that can be used daily without forever presenting a fresh problem! This time it was a failed cylinder head gasket, which I may have contemplated doing on a Kitten, but the Fox was a bridge too far.

I found a new home for the Fox with Rossefield Motors at Bradford. They are expecting a visit from the man in Switzerland who already has a Kitten saloon, and my original 1978 estate restored to excellence. He may well be interested in the Fox.

I would like to thank you for all your considerable efforts on behalf of the register, and am truly sad that I have not the time and space to be able to enjoy a restoration project.

Thank you and best regards - John Wardle, Huddersfield.

What can I say? It is obviously good to be kept informed, but sad that an enthusiast of quarter of a century is moving on to other means of transport. I know from John's letter that he is replacing the Reliants with a Daihatsu Charade SL which he tells me has a great turning circle, is fun to drive, has all the modern bells and whistles does over 50 to the gallon, does 99 MPH, and he just prays that it proves to be supremely reliable ! Good luck with it John, many thanks for keeping us informed, and all good wishes for the future, Ed.

I must make a note to check and see if the Swiss gentleman mentioned is the same one who subscribes to the Register, if you are reading this, and live in Switzerland, please let me know, Ed.

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Dear Brian,

6/9/03

Sorry I am a bit long in answering your letter and returning the Kitten Register application form. I have only recently acquired a Reliant Kitten, although I have a Robin for sale and a Rialto estate. I am 82 but still drive, have driven Reliants since way back when they were coach built and had the old side valve engines. I mention this because I have still a set of gaskets for that engine. As you will know they are copper, and if you know of anyone who has one of these engines, and has difficulty getting gaskets, these I have are surplus to my requirements.

Yours sincerely L. Shipley - Doncaster

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Dear Brian,

Sept 9th 03

I was in the dentist's waiting room the other day, idly looking through the magazines, when I came across a copy of "Auto Express", the June 2003 edition, and in it there was an article on Cars with Funny Names, and lo and behold, there you were, in front of a Kitten, extolling its many virtues! If you do not have this I will gladly send it to you.

There was an ad in a recent Free Ad paper, for a Kitten one owner, 36,000 miles on the clock, 1982 with all its MOT's for sale in deepest Cornwall. I did not find out about it till a few days after the paper came out, and when I rang of course it had gone. I believe it fetched £1,500. I would happily have paid well over £1,000 for one like that, must have been one of the best Kittens in existence.

Regards, Ron Dark - Bideford

Tales from Tore

On Page 17 of Issue 53 you talk about repeating information which has been covered in past Mewsletters for the benefit of new Register members and those who don't have all the back issues.

Well I have for my own benefit compiled a 'Compendium' of all the technical stuff from past Issues (up to Issue 50 so far, hope to catch up when the dark evenings arrive) that has interested me. It's a bit big to print as there's about 150 A4 pages (May be worth putting it on the Register CD-ROM when it gets produced? What's happening on that front now by the way?). I could e-mail it to anyone who is interested, or send a file to you to help answer queries.

You might like to point out again to readers that Brian Radford's website contains most of the Mewsletter back issues.

I was wrestling with stuck bolts this afternoon when I became aware of something dropping from the nearby beech tree and this kept being repeated. After a while I had to take a look. At first nothing was evident, then I caught sight of a red squirrel busily cracking nuts, eating the kernels and dropping the cases. Wee litter lout! It's nice to see one about again, haven't caught sight of one here for a couple of years.

Best Wishes, Dick Goodall.

Ref. Reliant workshop manual section "D". Haynes manual chapter 11.

Accidents apart, the assemblies fail through loss of oil and ingress of water. Of four recently dealt with, two were almost dry, one had an emulsion of oil and water, and one about half a teacupful of oily sediment.

The workshop manuals are unhelpful. None advise checking, Haynes section 31 appears to offer a way of topping up, but is not clear about how to make oil stay inside the orifice from which it has just been allowed to drain.

The following procedure works well.

- 1) Jack up the front end. With the road wheels straight ahead, lower them onto suitable blocks so as to bring the track rods horizontal, or nearly so. Leave the jack in position.
- 2) Remove the rack damper flange, that is the one you can easily see from under the bonnet, the one bolt is easily accessible from the engine bay, and the front one is best got at from under the car. So, you remove it, along with the gasket and shims. Do not worry if the gasket disintegrates, just make sure that all the bits are cleared away. The gasket may have some effect in respect of the metal faces with which it is in contact, the remaining faces, the shims, are avenues for seepage, and it is probably time the damper was closed up a bit, i.e put back one less shim than you find in there, if that is too much, it will be apparent, and you can put it back.
- 3) Remove the damper spring (part 13 in the Reliant manual's exploded drawing, section D page 4). Jiggle the drivers side track rod, when the nylon damper (part 12) will start to emerge. Ease it out, using the point of a penknife blade or a scriber.

- 4) Prepare to catch oil. Lift the road wheels clear of their blocks using the jack, release the steering lock, and swing the wheels to the extreme left hand turn position. Quickly, but not too roughly, there's no need to meet the extremity with a bang. If no oil comes out of the damper hole, there wasn't enough in.
- 5) With the wheels straight ahead again, top up through the damper hole, which, being half way up, overflows when it has had enough. Take your time, the oil spills slowly into the drivers side bellows. The recommended third of a pint might not go in because of undrainable residue. If you would like to dilute the old oil still further, pump out by swinging the road wheels to full lock again, return to centre, and refill.
- 6) Clean the parts, reassemble, and lower the car.

If you were to carry out that procedure every other year, or at least once every five years, or 25,000 miles, you would save Brian and I a lot of work, not to mention yourself a lot of expense and inconvenience !

Alan Shaw August 2003

I agree entirely with what Alan says, though I have to say that I have had two through my hands where the main tube has been so badly corroded as to be scrap – so there is an up side to an engine that leaks a little oil – if that oil gets on the rack and protects it! Much better that you look after it with a little paint, or even spray grease once a year ! Ed

Sales & Wants

For Sale:- Reliant Kitten saloon. Dec.'75 P reg, bright red, galvanized chassis and stainless steel exhaust. Great engine which has had a full service. Fantastic condition inside and out and very original looking. MOT till May 25th 2004 and taxed. £1200 o.n.o. Call Douglas to find out more about this great car. Loads of history also included. Also at the same number a white 1978 Kitten estate, no engine radiator petrol tank rear lights wiper rack or door panels or mirrors, free to a good home buyer collects Peterhead area.

For Sale:- Reliant Rebel 600 saloon, Tax exempt, and M.O.T.'d till Aug 2004. A great wee car, yours for just £500 ask Tony Pearson for details, Yorkshire.

For Sale:- A very rare opportunity to acquire something different. Jim Spence is selling his red Rebel saloon, this is the one with the Vauxhaull Carlton 1.8 engine and five speed gearbox. It is MOT'd till July 2004, and is tax exempt. Give Jim a ring if you are seriously interested in becoming the new custodian of this rare and brisk Rebel.

For Sale:- 1976 Turquoise Kitten saloon. 106,000 miles. Much time and money spent over the last 8 years. Now a presentable and reliable little car. £475 or nearest offer. Ring Stan Cheadle

Looking for a new home is a one owner turquoise Kitten with 5 original Reliant alloy wheels. This car needs a set of brake pipes and an anti-roll bar bush and bracket to get through an M.O.T. The money is not important, but the car's future is. All you have to do is convince me that you will offer it a good home, will not under any circumstances break it, but return it to active service. Ring John in North Shields

For Sale:- APRIL 86 Reg Reliant Rialto GLS Estate. 848cc yellow-top engine (6D/85/79070E). Approx 46,000 mileage. One lady owner from new until Jan 03. Reg No. C752 RUF. Colour : Red (recently resprayed to original). Very good condition.

For sale at £750 Contact : Nick Peck

Urgently For Sale : Rebel estate chassis, all painted, some welding done, some more needed. It is sitting on a trailer, and so can be delivered. Ring Brian on 0141 8866117.

Epilogue

Well it's that time once again! Already we are getting prepared to put the clocks back, another season of events and shows draws to a close, and I am left trying to get this edition to the printers before my latest trip south of the border.

So what have I been doing, well Moira and I managed to get away for 10 days in September, I only mention the fact because it is the first holiday we have had on our own in over 18 years, a weekend in the Lake District on our Silver wedding anniversary in 2000 excepted. Also it's my excuse for this being a little later than I had intended !

We did manage to tie in a visit to see Harry Darby during that trip, thanks again for the meal Harry, on our way to Pembroke to catch the ferry. We passed signs for many place names which seem familiar to me from the magazine mailing list both on our way south to Oxford, Beaconsfield and Eton, before heading for Wales, and on our return journey through Wales (we came up the coast to Cardigan, and then cut diagonally across country to catch the M53 before rejoining the M6). So, that's it, we've done the south of Ireland tour, not a Reliant in sight !

Dick Goodall was asking what was happening on the CD rom front, and I have to confess that I have been very neglectful of that plan. Regular readers will remember the document I produced a couple or three yeas ago (actually it was begun in 1999!) giving a history of all the under 1 litre 4 wheeled Reliants and their derivatives. I was planning to add pictures and offer it as either a booklet, like this magazine, though the cost of producing such a thing with lots of colour would be high, or making it available on CD, which while cost effective, would only be of use to those with a suitable computer, less than half of our readers. Various other things could be included on such a CD, and I had been left with plenty of food for thought. Anyway, I have made little or no progress on that front for a couple of years now. I will need to talk to some of our talented friends and ask for help (I think the word I am looking for is delegate). Watch this space. Words like dog, tricks and old spring to mind.

The bottom ball joint reconditioning operation is going well, though I understand that Reliant will soon be able to supply new ones again. However, thanks to Alan Shaw we have a stock of refurbished / improved ones available, so that is one worry less, thank you Alan, and all who helped make it possible by providing the old units needed to get the operation up and running.

Right, that's about it for now. I still have aspirations about uncovering the mislaid flyers, don't hold your breath. Do keep lubricating things, talk to you again nearer the festive season – how many shopping days was that till Christmas dear?

Brian

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