

Reliant Kitten Register

NEWSLETTER 56

January – February 2004



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.....

Edited and distributed by Brian W Marshall,
16 Glendee Gardens, Renfrew, PA4 0AL

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I am 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. Readers are invited to show their own support of this worthy cause by becoming members in their own right. Contact the editor for details.

Our front cover is graced on this occasion by the Bobcat now owned by James Butlin a friend of John Pearce's who lives in Higham Ferrers in Northamptonshire. The story of this remarkable vehicle built by John & Robert Box is reported in detail in a previous Mewsletter

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 and welcome to a new year with the Reliant Kitten Register - Well, I hope that will be that case. In my generosity I have elected to treat all those who were on the mailing list at the end of 2003 to this edition regardless of whether or not you have renewed your subs. This will however be the last edition that you see until your 2004 subscription is received (our select five year folk of course excepted). If I am aware that you have renewed, your membership card will be enclosed, so, if there is no membership card, you know what to do!

Right, don't shout at me, the last edition was put together in a rush at the end of the day, the black and white pictures on page 13 were only put in to fill a gap which had been left for an article about the Tempest which did not arrive in time, hopefully you will be able to read it in this edition. The top picture was of course a Tempest (I think the lowest mileage Tempest in the world) one of only two built with the bigger engine John Box offered, Guy Stanley having the other one. (It was known as the Tempest 95, the Reliant powered version being the Tempest 85). The second picture was Thomas Touw's Fox, the lovely Linda was actually in the front seat, with Thomas in his shorts and yours truly the one with the tie.

On the centre pages, the bridge, and yes it is a bridge, (not Nessie!) is of course the Forth Rail bridge, the car being Bob and Judith Riches' Liege, and the red Kitten was our old car which I obviously sold to Douglas too cheaply, as he made a small profit on it when he sold it last year (mind you, he did a lot of work on it) still not quite the magic £1,000 mind you, but getting very close indeed. (I sold it for a pound per cc back in 2001).

Sadly the printing on the back of the colour pages, which the printer (company as distinct from machine) will not do, has damaged my laser printer, and while the £75 plus v.a.t. to repair it is still less than a third of the cost of having a colour page done commercially, it is just too much bother as well as expense, so I'm afraid it will be the last colour inside the mag for a long time.

We seem to have reached a new stage in life with Kittens in particular, in that demand exceeds supply, perhaps now we will see a more realistic value put on our wee cars. One sold for £1,400 last month, an estate of course, but a saloon made £900 a couple of months earlier, and there are very few for sale in this edition, that are on the road at any rate. So I guess those of us who have them are holding on to them, and quite right too! I have to say that both of the ones mentioned were in good nick, and well maintained, but it is high time that we broke the £1,000 barrier as a matter of course rather than as an exception. It would make my negotiations with insurance companies a lot easier as regards valuations for agreed value policies, not to say a better reflection of the true worth of these fine wee cars.

So the word is, if you have one on the road, look after it, and, if you are selling one that is on the road, don't be giving it away. I had a chap looking for one in January, so I put him onto a Rebel that has been for sale for a while, an early 600cc saloon, and he rang me back to say did I really think it was worth £200, M.O.T.'d and taxed, tax exempt in fact, but running, on the road, and with a spare engine - I just laughed, you couldn't buy a 600cc engine in running order for £200, never mind a running car.

At they risk of repeating myself, a new engine is in the region of £1,500 these days, a gearbox about £500, and an axle the same, and a set of ball joints retailing at about £250, just how it comes about that we give our wee cars away for similar amounts of money never fails to amuse me, just what do folk expect?

P.F. Spare, our insurance advertiser and friend has, in conjunction with the Cherished Car Insurance folk, once again come up with the goods and treated us to a raffle of a years Cherished Car insurance. This years winner is Stuart Hale from Huddersfield, congratulations

Stuart. It should be noted that club membership entitles any individual to a discount on premium from P.F. Spare that more than offsets your subscription fee to the Register.

I will take the opportunity of again thanking Rob Spare, and the Cherished Car Underwriting Agency people for their continued support in this manner.

Spares offer a friendly, personal service, that is so often all too lacking these days, and we appreciate their generous support of the Register in a way which benefits our unique and special cars and their owners.

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Keith and Miriam White tell me that their Kitten saloon is “running like bird”, this after suffering poor MPG, blackened spark plugs, lumpy running. They soldered the needle to weaken the mixture, then found the in line fuel filter was blocked, this despite replacing it in April '95, just 68,000 miles ago, does nothing last in this consumer society they ask ?

John Waller, our man in Harrold, tells me that he is not too reluctant to tinker underneath XNK 521S to keep it on the road for some more miles, and while I have no wish to divulge secrets, John became an octogenarian back at the millennium, John, you put me to shame, Ed.

Steve Sheppard is still looking for a Rebel estate galvanised chassis – you should just have got the one advertised in the last edition that had the big Ford engine Steve, and used it's chassis – it may not be too late! Ed.

Those are a few extracts from some of the notes that I received with the renewal notices last month, I just included a few of them to share with you the flavour of what, for me at any rate, is a most enjoyable pastime / hobby. Thank you all for your comments and continued support.

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Rebel Round up

Not a lot from our Rebel owning readers this time. That said, and I hope that he will be one of us by the time you read this, but a gentleman who had contacted me about a Rebel downpipe last year, decided against joining us at that time. He did however get in touch with me recently when he needed a couple of bits for his Rebel, two of the more elusive bits it has to be said, namely a left hand threaded track rod end, something I had needed myself last year, and a front damper, and because the ones I get these days are not exactly the same as the original ones, I always sell them in pairs. Anyway we are fast getting on to the spares situation, and that is dealt with, in part at any rate, later. As regular readers will be aware, the number of Rebels on the road in the country has been fairly constant for a decade now, if anything rising slightly, but at under 100 cars, there are not that many of them out there, on the road at any rate, and I believe that we should do all we can to help keep as many as possible in running order.

On the subject of Rebel numbers and the Register, I find myself with very little time to actually analyse the records we keep. A situation arose the other day that caused me to print off the Rebel list, and I was surprised to see that it has grown to three pages, with about 60 cars to a page. Page three did not have many entries, but we do hold records on over 130 Rebels. What the report does not show is if the cars are on the road, nor indeed when the

record was last updated. I do hold much of that information, but there is no room on that report to show it. Time to look at the reporting situation again methinks. Meantime, if you are interested in seeing a copy, let me know, Ed.

Foxes Den - Earth Needed !

No, not an electrical problem, just that I still need to find a home for the poor old Fox [incidentally, vehicle no. 13] that desperately needs rescuing. As I said, it mainly needs a rear spring [which I can find], and exhaust [Kitten – around £100 stainless], and an MOT, but will really need window-frames soon. I have none left, and unless I get a flood of orders [at £260 - £300 a set], no plans to get more made yet.

Yours for under £100, total to get on the road probably £500 to £600, which is chicken-feed when you think what an everlasting vehicle you will then have, with minimal maintenance / running costs.

I estimate, looking at my records, that over the last 20 years my blue Fox has cost under £150 a year to maintain. I discount depreciation cos I don't have any intention of ever selling it, so it's worth the same to me now as it was when it was new – [though it did cost more than £600!] Please try & find a new owner, if you can help.

Dunc

Still on the Fox front, Sandy Byrne was asking me if I knew anyone who had fitted rear seat belts to a Fox, and I had to admit that I don't, so the question is do you ? if so. Please get in touch, and I will pass the information on, or better yet give the girl a ring on 01362 850744.

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Kitten Alternative parts list person.

I am happy to report that I have had so many wonderful people volunteer for this post that I am thinking I will need to ask for C.V.'s and begin interviews! Seriously, 4 or 5 of you have kindly volunteered for this task, and while I would never willfully exclude anyone, the fact that the list was generated on a computer, makes it simpler, both to maintain and expand it in a similar manner, but also should make the production of copies of the list, I think it is currently 18 A4 pages long, easier as well. I feel that access to a PC would make the task easier.

This is where my record keeping / memory failings really make their frailties conspicuous, because I have had several telephone conversations over the past while on this topic, and Tom Hanna's name is the only one that jumps out at me, and that is only because, well read about it yourself :-

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Dear Brian,

2 December 2003

I have been meaning to ring you for the last few days and it keeps slipping my mind until it is too late to do so. Assuming that you haven't been submerged under a torrent of offers to be "Kitten alternative parts list contact" then I would be quite happy to volunteer to fill the post.

I have managed to buy another MPK1 brake adjuster repair kit (you supplied me with a set earlier in the year) the new one has not yet arrived, but when it does I will send it up for your stock if that's O.K.

Tom Hannah

Tom went on to bring us up to date on the last 18 months with his Kitten, and I will print that part of his story in our readers letters page, Ed.

Meanwhile I was left, as I indicated before, feeling pretty ashamed about my inability to get together a list of those who had made similar offers during the year. No, I am not afraid to delegate, quite the contrary, I mean it has to be pretty obvious that I need all the help I can get!

So, to the others who kindly offered their services, at least two of whom I did (I think) write to at the time, please remind me who you are – I file letters by the name of the individual they are sent to, followed by an incremental number, and by year, but of course that falls down completely when what I need to search for are letters to different individuals on the same topic – the system fails miserably on that front – must revise the system!

Membership Matters

As I have no doubt mentioned elsewhere, this will be the last magazine you receive from the Reliant Kitten Register until you pay your 2004 subscription, so if you have not already done so, please attend to it NOW! If you have lost the form, feel free to slap your own wrist, but send on a cheque for at least £12, payable to the Reliant Kitten Register first, I don't want shaky handwriting making the address on the envelope difficult to read! I am well aware that I am in the main, preaching to the converted, and to those who have renewed already, my thanks, your membership card should be enclosed.

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 the man, talk to him.

The Tempest continues

Dave Smith, tells me (he is one of those guys who is too busy actually doing things to have much time to write and tell us about it all), anyway, his Tempest, MOM 106P, won (in 2003) two Trials Championships, the ACMSC, that is the Association of Central Southern Motor Clubs, and the ASWMC, that is the Association of South Western Motor Clubs events. Keep up the good work Dave, thanks for your continued support, and any time you can find time to put pen to paper to tell us more about your exploits with the car, I'm ready! Ed.

Still on the Tempest front, I am reliably informed that the Reliant / BRM engine has been acquired by our Tempest owning friend Bruce Jones from Sutton Coalfield who is pressing on with the build of his Steve Campbell Tempest. Good luck with the project Bruce, and do, please let us know how it goes. Ed.

Not quite sure where to put this next snippet, but since we are talking about high performance, this seems like a good a place as any. Our Scimitar, and Kitten owning friend, Allan Inwood sent me a cutting which tells us that Ginger Marshall and his brother David, (no

relation to the Registrar), are considering a comeback to the world of Sports GT racing the Cosworth powered Kitten. This car was used as one of the pace setters in the 1980's special saloon racing circuits, and my spies tell me that the car may be seen at Silverstone in November this year – watch this space – or better yet keep me in the picture if you know more about such matters than I, Ed.

Liege Page

Now that Liege owners and builders have their own club and publication, they are well catered for, and so there is not the same need for us to say so much about them. That said, Arleen and I are off to their Peaks'n Dales event which Paul Wheatley is organising in May in Hope valley in deepest Derbyshire, this time we will be sure to get a picture of the two of us in the Liege, THANK YOU VERY MUCH PETER, for the loan of the car again.

The most recent development of a bolt on goodie for your Reliant engine may be of interest to many of our readers, see the adverts page between Sales and Wants.

2003 Quiz - the answer!

Now I could just tell you that the answer is of course Lady Penelope's chauffeur, but, just so you see how it works, here is the chart you probably needed to have come up with :-

Name	Taylor	Walker	Haydon	Parker	Mathews
Car	Kitten	Rebel	Fox	Liege	Tandy
Colour	Yellow	Blue	Red	White	Green
Insurer	AON	RAC	Norwich	Footm/James	A.A.
Drink	Wine	Tea	Beer	Coffee	Stout

I received just 8 answers by the deadline of January 20th, all of them were correct, Duncan Bradford's was however the first out of the hat, (actually I don't have a hat, so I used a very nice hardwood box, and had Roger Martin of A.M.O.C. [The Aston Martin Owners Club] do the draw for us), so congratulations Duncan, the cheque is enclosed. Ed. There was a 9th correct answer that arrived a day late, posted first class in Cornwall on the 19th, it took 38 hours to arrive here and so I am afraid Margaret Evans it was too late, but well done on working out the correct answer. Just shows you how well some folk communicate mind you. When I rang to tell her that I was sorry but the Royal Mail had let her down, her husband Ian answered the telephone, and he didn't even know she had done it! and, yes, it is his magazine!! (So you are not alone my dear!!!)

So, Duncan, if you would be so good as to follow tradition, I, nae we, have been very fortunate that ever since we started the Quiz thing, the winner has very kindly provided me with the next year's Quiz, which is absolutely wonderful from my point of view, as it saves me a lot of brain work, not to mention filling a page of the magazine for us – please nicely ?

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Dear Brian,

18 Dec. 03

Thanks for your letter. I managed without a second car for three years after the Kitten went up in flames, and went to school by bus, usually a 20+ year old bus! However I finally got fed up with late arrivals, breakdowns and cancellations, especially after the occasion when the bus wrecked its transmission going up a hill, and we all arrived at school stinking of burnt clutch. So I decided to buy another small car. I did think about a Reliant, but I just do not have the time to do another rebuild. So I'm afraid I let the side down and bought a Fiat Punto, and I am very pleased with it.

Of course there is the very slight Reliant connection because the Punto's 1108cc engine has replaced the 850cc Reliant unit in 750 formula racing. This gives rise to two interesting results for Reliant people. Firstly, you can buy an adaptor so that you can bolt a Reliant gearbox to a Punto engine. And secondly there are lots of 750 formula chaps who are clearing out piles of pistons, cartloads of cams and carbs, sheds full of heads, garages full of gudgeon pins and gaskets. So now is a great time to stock up on Reliant bits!

I sometimes look at the e-bay classic cars website. There are all kinds of tempting projects, from Rebels to Ants and Austin sevens, old Land Rovers, Hillman Imps, Mk I Escort rally cars, the list goes on and on, but my next project will have to wait till I retire in 2006, not so very long now !

With regards, David Heywood - Norham

Thanks for keeping in touch David, good to know that there can be life after Kittens, Ed.

Readers Letters

Dear Brian,

2 December 2003

I have had a fairly trouble free eighteen months with the Kitten and have so far only had to fit the following.

The front brake adjuster kit (MPK1)
A stainless exhaust
A clock and Voltmeter from a Rialto in the two blank spaces in the dash.
New rear springs and shock absorbers
A new clutch
New rear lights.

I got fed up adjusting points every few weeks, and fitted a Newtronic (formerly Piranah) contactless ignition set up, which has been excellent.

Acting on Mewsletter advice I fitted an overflow water bottle. An expansion tank to the radiator (from a Daihatsu Applause), it fits neatly next to the bonnet stay, on a fabricated bracket.

Lastly I have bought some millboard ready to replace the door trim panels, but won't do them till the spring, as the original coverings are too poor to use.

So, apart from normal servicing it's been very easy to keep the Kitten on the road, and my 5 year old prefers it to any of our other cars, and, depending on who you talk to I've wisely

/ wastefully bought a Renault Dauphine in awful condition (that we don't need) so that I can do a lot of welding in the new year.

Anyway, keep the Mewsletters coming, all the best for Christmas and 2004.

Best wishes Tom (Hannah) - Mid-Glamorgan

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Dear Brian,

22nd December 2003

Please find enclosed Subscription form and cheque for another 12 months "Musings" and also please, a resin model Kitten Estate.

With regard to Thomas Davidson's method of measuring fuel consumption (Mewsletter 54 p 19) I recall 20 plus years ago we had to calculate the theoretical fuel consumption of a proposed new car. Graham in our department had developed a programme, and from it he quoted a figure of something like 628. When quizzed he said "I wasn't told if it was required in Imperial or metric units, so it works out in Leagues per Hogshead".

Keep up the good work, Frank Peters - Coventry

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Dear Brian,

27.12.03

I posted off my renewal fee to you before I had read the mag, so belatedly, the extra cash included is for the spares scheme. I don't feel in desperate need of a model - superb though I'm sure they will be.

As an update of my last communication I thought other owners might be interested in the following. I told you of a heavy "thump" type of noise from under the bonnet on a test drive and stopped to discover something had hit the rad - terminally. I couldn't see anything to explain this so I concluded that it must have been a stone or similar flicked up randomly from another vehicle. The only clue I had was that it occurred under hard acceleration in second using topside of 4 grand. Anyway I got towed home and took the rad off. It was beyond repair, so I coughed up £53 for a recore. I noticed that the fan was in pretty close proximity (1/2 inch) to the rad, so I removed about 1/4 inch from the leading edges of all 3 nylon vanes, reassembled everything, filled up with water and fired it up. No leaks, so out for another test run. I did about 3 miles and was exiting a mini island, gunned it in second up to about 40, was just about to grab third when "whump"- the very same noise. "Oh flipping heck, the beastly thing's done it again, how frightfully inconvenient!" I said to myself (or something along those lines !). I stopped and opened the bonnet. Exactly the same thing, only this time fortunately it had retained the water although contact had been made with the rad. The fins were damaged in the same place but the vertical water ducts were intact. Good job I had taken that 1/4 inch off the fan. But what was doing it? I hadn't been following anything and anyway, the chances of a stone being flicked up a second time were improbable to say the least.

I then spotted what turned out to be the culprit. The radiator overflow pipe was lying across the front cross member. As we all know this is a softish plastic pipe about 3/8 diameter and should be anchored to the base of the rad. Mine wasn't, it was just pushed on at the top and hung down the side unattached. When high revs are used I reckon the fan had sucked anything loose in the vicinity, in this case the overflow pipe, into the vortex created and had

subsequently trapped the pipe between the fan and the rad. Twice! £53 frigg'n' quid because of a loose overflow pipe! And it could have been £106 if it hadn't have pulled it off the second time, and so letting me spot it.

My kitten doesn't have an overflow pipe now. I use 5000 rpm regularly, and to date I've had no further probs in this area, so I would say to all you good Pocket-Rocketeers - get out there and make sure your pipe is rigid (so to speak!)

Bye for now, Mike Barcroft - Manchester 669

Thanks for that Mike, I know I actually had a conversation recently, though can't for the life of me remember who with, but the topic under discussion was Kitten fans, and the question of whether or not they were all 4 bladed metal ones originally. Now I have an opinion on this, as I am sure everyone else will, but go on, humour me, open the bonnet, have a look, and either give me a ring or drop me a line till we see what the truth is out there quarter of a century down the line, Ed.

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Dear Brian,

28.12.03

Here's next years sub, and thanks for another year's super Mewsletters.

Both Rebel and Fox are up and running, but the Rebel does get put into hibernation in the winter.

The Fox had a nasty happening earlier this year – the air filter broke up, and debris got into the motor resulting in most of No. 1 piston finishing up in the sump! Fortunately I had another standard piston, and the cylinderhead survived a clean up and dressing of the pockmarks !!

All the best for 2004, yours, Dave (Richmond) - Hayes, Middx

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Dear Brian,

29.12.03

Please find enclosed cheque for membership dues. I tried the inlet manifold mod and found it gave good improvements through the rev range, although with 133,000 miles on the clock now, I try not to thrash it too much these days!

On a more serious note I had an upper wishbone collapse at low speed. The channel section did not snap, it simply twisted and distorted along both arms. 25 years old and metal fatigue? Don't know about the replacement I box sectioned. The failed part had been rustproofed only three years ago so I would ask fellow owners to look very carefully at these, because sudden failure is best not experienced. Ideal time to check them would be ball joint greasing time.

All the best Gary Coates. - Brough, East Yorkshire

Thanks for the warning Gary. I have mentioned this in the past, experienced it at motorway speed myself some years ago, as you say, a thrill we can well live without. As to it being fatigue, I am no engineer, but I very much doubt it, it is just weakness caused – in spite of your rustproofing, by corrosion, or "wear", as my M.O.T. man once described it ! I won't dwell on it here, I have very few new ones left, and there is a sad story there too, but they can

be looked after better than most of us actually do, of that I am in no doubt. Trouble is that it is one of those "where do you stop?" jobs, if you are going to take the wishbone off the car, which is the best way, then you probably want to change the bushes while you are in there, and all of a sudden (they are a tight fit, you really need a press, and appropriate lubrication) never mind any de-rusting / welding and painting, and the ball joint circlip will almost certainly disintegrate when you remove it, so you will need a new one of them too – suddenly your afternoon to look after the upper wishbones becomes a weeks work, costs you a lot more than you thought it would, and what about the lower ones, and the strut / track control arms as well ?!? Not forgetting to adopt the John Box recommended mod there while we are at it – open out the hole and fit a larger nut and bolt and appropriate new tube where the strut attaches to the lower wishbone.

All of which should not deter us from looking after them, but it does need a bit of thought and forward planning. Yes we do carry the relevant bushes and circlips in stock, ball joints too should you need them - (though I am happy to see that Reliant have indeed had a new batch of lower ball joints made recently). It is probably best to acquire a full set of spares, and simply change the lot over as a set, yes, the lot, wishbones, ball joints, struts, bushes, the whole shebang, then you can overhaul the ones that came off for when the job needs doing again in another 25 years time!

Ed.

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Now those who are particularly observant will perhaps have noticed that the last few letters had virtually consecutive dates, so, now that I am into the New Year, I'll change topic, this from an enthusiast who has reconciled in his own mind where his future lies :-

Dear Brian,

05.01.04

I'm writing to say that regretfully, I will not be renewing my annual subscription to the Club.

Ever since one of your subscribers showed me his Kitten into which was fitted a Ford 2 litre twin cam engine and, later, seeing the effects of this car's performance at one of the Castle Coombe Track days I was hooked. But I was forgetting that I ran a 260Z Datsun, and a very special home-built Jag "E" type replica. This, together with the up-keep of a 1900 house and large garden meant that there really wasn't enough time for more special building, which was how my Kitten would have ended up, being such a believer in power to weight ratio, and on top of that two years ago I took on the position of Secretary / technical guru / treasurer of the Wildcat Owners Club after the death of the last secretary, and you know just how much work that involves.

I've enjoyed being a member of the Register, and have appreciated the work you have put into the Mewsletter. I have made some contributions which I feel is so important from each and every member, but sadly this is never the case.

In closing, I wish the Register every success in the future.

Kindest regards, Derek Argyle - Camberley No. 012

Without letting my head get too big, (he had gone on to say something about being certain of our success with me at the helm, all too embarrassing really) Derek's letter is typical of those I receive from folk who are leaving us,

not that there are too many of them I hasten to add. Why did I single Derek's out? Well perhaps the fact that he used to work at the Royal Ordnance Factory at Bishopton a few miles from here (before I was born I might add!) More likely just that it was typical.

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Dear Brian,

2.01.04

As you know, I fitted an 850 engine to my Rebel from a Dorset Fire Brigade pump (alas the last they had), and you wrote with various queries, firstly the engine is standard compression and camshaft. Removal of the 750 engine, and fitting the 850 was easy, well, compared to removing the engine from my 3.8 litre MK II Jaguar.

A few modifications were needed in between. The front steel engine plate on the 850 had the ends bent at 90 degrees, these I cut off, and, using the 750 plate as a pattern, I drilled the 4 holes for the Rebel's mounting brackets, and the one for the dynamo, which is only 3/8ths of an inch from the alternator one. Curiously the heating for the inlet manifold was not used, where the heater pipes fit, two bolts were fitted for a bracket, so I made a new bracket for the throttle cable and the engine runs fine. Although in really cold weather this may cause carburetor icing.

As the rear engine plate was different with smaller hole centres for the pre engaged starter the fire pump used, and the Reliant one uses a different gear ring, I used the engine plate, starter motor and flywheel complete with starter gear ring from the 750 engine (not to mention the clutch slave cylinder mounting holes, early Rebels had a rod operated clutch, with no hydraulic assistance !)

Interestingly to drive the fire pump, they used a standard Reliant clutch plate, bolted directly to the flywheel, then a splined shaft to the pump, this cutting out the need for a clutch cover.

Anyway, the whole exercise took about 8 hours, and I've ended up with an 850 with more low down torque, although at high revs it seems very similar to the 750, and to date, in 4,000 miles, it has used neither water nor oil.

Regards Ben (Sill) Dorset - No 630

Getting Technical, Tehnical Tweeks.

A Osborn

27th Dec. 03

www.AOservices.co.uk

As last item was all the political bit FBHVC and all that, perhaps this time we can get back to the nuts and bolts?

What where the subjects from last Mewsletter? There was a dodgy heater from Terry Metson. Now although this letter was in fact written 'years' ago I don't think a mention re heaters would go amiss. Poor heat from the Kitten box, hot inlet/warm outlet-then try

reversing the flow to shift the dirt and or flush the whole system with whatever bottle of patent water system cleaning fluid you prefer. (Most that I've used seem slightly caustic?). I don't think I've seen any air lock in this department, filling from the highest point usually sorts that. But a blocked heater is more alarming with regard to its effect on the engine than it is on the occupants. A blocked heater stops the hot water flowing away from the rear of the cylinder head! Do not leave the system in this state! If you do have a heater with a serious difference between the temperature of its pipes than it should have, then I expect you'll also notice that the engine temp. is getting on the high side instead of the heater / occupants! You must take the heater out of circuit by reconnecting the appropriate two pipes. Yes you will have to freeze for a while, but at least you'll save the engine! Max revs! When I first started with tweeking the Kitten I phoned the Reliant factory, they said 5500 was maximum revs. In those days of early tuning you certainly had the impression that as you approached 6000 that things were getting a bit busy and perhaps they ain't to be going this fast.

Then you get to balancing the bottom end! and things are now purring. 6500-7000 and this engine is almost saying 'lets go' and I don't mean go bang. So for several years we tore about at these revs, fitting the Piper cam, gas flowed manifold and carb etc. Then I had a main bearing cap come loose, instant drop of oil pressure showed this one up and an even quicker investigate into the sump. Now this main bearing cap looseness continued on several occasions and eventually on another engine it came adrift while too far from home to make safe before damage was done. The main cap retaining studs broke away. Trying to fix this without removing the engine ended up with serious damage to the block, ho hum. So in due course we spoke to Dick Harvey, 'too many revs boy!' so we learn. 6000-6500 on occasions would seem enough with a balanced bottom end while at the same time taking care to make sure that the main bearing studs are new and fitted with care.

As regards racing practices in this area, I did understand (from Dick Harvey) that the 750 engines had their main bearings braced but that the 850 bottom end was only just put together correctly, no serious mods where needed.

Now last Mewsletter Brian asked about the pinking? Are we sitting comfortably? First the causes of pinking in general. Not in any specific order or degree but any one or combination can help to cause the phenomenon. Heat (too much) is a good starting point, which can be eased by running a richer mixture. Lots of carbon in the head, rare in these days of cleaner fuels. Low octane fuel. (The lead free business is not relevant here), which in fact is the same thing as too high a compression ratio. Burning too much oil. This would mean that the engine was short on fuel when it sucked, it got oil instead.

Now we come to the easiest fixed and easiest mistake, too far advanced ignition timing. In fact the correct position for the ignition timing is to advance it until it just pinks on an up hill with some throttle, and then back the ignition off just enough until it stops (pinking!).

Now back to my own plot, I had been running all summer with the winter thermostat and had lost the hot air escape grill from above the carburettor when I'd changed bonnets earlier in the year. AND I'd left the engine with a 1 degree advance, (this is with a 34 degree total advance-no vacuum advance distributor). So bring the ignition back to about 1 degree before TDC (fully retarded) i.e. back about 2 degrees and all is well again. Backing this ignition off coincided with the weather getting cooler as well, so that helped. The performance at the bottom end especially is now a bit stodgy especially when cold but we can use the mid range with more welly as it doesn't complain so much. I have still to re-investigate the advance curve springs also so I'll let you know if we find any think further.

Aha another little gem from last Mewsletter, an engine fan goes into the radiator! My first comment is why haven't you got an electric fan?? There's oodles of room in front of the radiator.

Secondly do you have the Robin water pump and fan i.e. the big three bolt yellow plastic thing? (Some of them are white!! Ed.) As this gives naff all clearance to the radiator as soon as you fit the four bolt metal fan of the Kitten with the shorter water pump boss then clearance is returned. An emergency stop is also the best way to see this phenomenon jump into action, I know!

That's it for this time, keep that water circulating.

Cheers Al Osborn.

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Tales from Tore

YHK (Brian Millar's old car) has performed quite well, only a couple of minor items being attended to apart from routine maintenance. The fitting of the swivel intake air cleaner has resulted in minor fuel vapourisation problems for the first time, so it is likely to be discarded for the time being. I may be (probably am?) quite wrong, but I think that the combination of a water heated inlet manifold and an air intake at the exhaust manifold exceeds requirements. Oh and no heat shield at all is fitted to the carb drip tray. Another wee job to do!

Dashed Pot? I found that the carburetter's dashpot oil needed replenishing every week, and not by just a few drops either. Also while driving at light throttle openings a sort of surging motion was noticeable. The next time I topped up the oil I realised that the resistance of the piston to motion through the oil was quite small. So I fitted a spare filler (from another carb) with piston and hey presto, the piston now is stiff (like my back?) and the surging has gone. I can only assume that the old one was worn.

Shiver me Timbers (feet, fingers, etc.)! After that long, mild autumn the cold weather has arrived and the heater air temperature was cool, man. The temperature gauge needle only moved a trifle above the 'C' mark on the dial unless I was really pushing the car home up the hill from town. I had fitted a new thermostat when the radiator was replaced in summer, but tried another new one. No luck, the engine was still running cool. So I visited a different motor factor. The previous thermostats had both been marked 82C, but I managed to get a QH one marked 92C. (ref. QTH 107). Apparently units for 82C, 88C and 92C are available. After fitting this one the needle now just moves to the middle of the dial and the heater works rather better, warm but not hot, yet! What you say, a Reliant that does not risk overheating? It's true though.

Possibly the answer would be to remove the mechanical fan which I fitted in the hot, summer weather and rely on the Kenlowe fan alone. But that means removing the radiator to get at the fan securing bolts (fiddly on this car) and losing antifreeze (Scrooge would not approve). So it probably won't happen just yet.

Best regards Dick No 157 3 Croftcrunie Cottages Tore, Muir of Ord, IV6 7SB

Ah, yes Dick, this brings back memories. Oddly enough another Dick, Watson of HRG and Rolls Royce fame, (he said - completely missing out his formula 1 career with Coopers in 57's and Vanwall in the 60's and his work with AC Cars). Anyway, Dick ran a yellow Kitten

estate for a decade before my brother Alan acquired it , Mike Cowie has that car now, and it's problem, as is I believe the problem with all correctly assembled Reliant engines, was getting the engine to warm up to temperature. The hotter the more efficient, and we used 92 degree thermostats always, and blanked off the grill, and the two vents beside the numberplate, and of course removed the mechanical fan, that is the first thing I do with all Reliants I acquire. While the above will normally help the engine to warm up, none of this will get you hot air out of the heater if the heater matrix is blocked, which yours obviously isn't, or you would not be getting heat through at all. Yes, of course things are not black and white, a heater matrix, just like a radiator, will normally be only partially blocked, and is the degree of blockage, and the material causing the restriction of flow, that together will affect the devices thermal efficiency, actual flow, though essential, has little to do with it !

Ed.

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Another part of the spares problem solved?

Following on from Adrian Hanwell's article in here last time, the matter of what to do with all those spares really wants to be addressed. Now I know that the Reliant Owners Club are finally getting round to talking about this subject, and as you know the Register keeps a stock of some of the more elusive Kitten and Rebel parts. The fact is that, generous individuals apart, the club(s) really ought to be doing something. What is needed, in my humble opinion, are premises, and volunteer people, along with a good racking and stock control system, right down to individual boxes, and yes, shoe boxes do just fine, provided the premises are dry, and preferably have the chill kept off them during winter. Yes I do realise that the above costs thousands of pound a year to run, and that the Owners Club and the Register combined have only just over a thousand members (not counting those who subscribe to both). But (oh how I just love starting a sentence with a preposition, don't you? By the way, have you seen the new children's book, Eats Shoots & Leaves, all about a hungry cowboy I think, well, perhaps not!) As I was saying, the Jowett Car Club run an effective spares scheme, they have for a couple of decades or so now had a five pound spares levy on subscriptions, and as a result they now have a healthy fund on which the spares section can call for capital projects. They of course have not enjoyed the company's existence for four decades now, Jowett engineering closing in 1964. So we are not comparing like with like.

That said, the rent on such premises is in the region of one or two thousand pounds a year, and the rates, insurance, and running expenses half as much again. This for a service run for a few hours on a Monday night weekly by a group of volunteers. The annual turnover these days is down to about £20,000 or so, and all profits are re-invested in appropriate spares with the fund the Club has accumulated, and which continues to grow year on year, held in reserve for the manufacture of parts in the future, their Javelin and Jupiter alloy crankcases are all half a century or more old now you know, and new patterns for such things do not come cheap! (The original Javelin and Jupiter crankcases were cast just down the road here in Rolls Royces' now long gone Renfrew foundry you know !) It all seems to work pretty well all things considered.

They began by purchasing the stock from a dealer, one George Mitchell, a good friend of mine as it happens, which gave them a basis from which to start. That said, the vast majority of George's stock was post war, and now, some 25 years later, half of the club members have pre-war cars. Again, not a problem we will face!

So, at the risk of areas of overlap, yes, I should be considering making the spares fund contribution compulsory, and indeed I ought to be suggesting that the R.O.C. do likewise. Will

either of those things happen? And if so when? Watch this space, or better yet feel free to add your two pence worth to the debate.

Oh, and no Adrian, I have not yet amended my will – I will put that on my 2004 To Do list.

Ed.

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Some more from Tore.

Little Things Mean a Lot? (wasn't that a song?) At the beginning of January I fitted new contact breaker points to kitty and was rewarded by better starting and smoother running, as I had hoped. The rotor arm looked a bit tired and I noted it for replacement when convenient. A few days ago I bought one from a local accessory store and fitted it. I was quite surprised by how much more smoothly the engine now runs, well worth the couple of quid expense.

Stiffening Up (like me?) Having "greased those ball joints" 3 weeks ago I was surprised to find the steering feeling stiff on Friday morning, perhaps the salty slush on the roads had got into the ball joints? But it was a horrible day so I had to leave things alone.

Yesterday (Saturday) I decided to take action, it was frosty but calm and a sufficient layer of old jackets should keep me warm. Surely the ball joints should be OK so let's look at the rack. After raising kitty's front on car ramps, I located the steering rack and removed the cover to the bottom end of the pinion shaft. Only a very little dirty oil ran out so it looked as though lubrication was in order. After drilling and tapping a hole in the cover a 'grease' nipple was fitted and the cover refitted. An empty, spare 'grease' gun was found and filled with hypoid oil and I set about filling the rack with oil. After 100 strokes of the handle it went slack, and I found that all the oil had been pumped into the rack. A road test showed that the steering was now back to its usual light, precise state. Just for form I greased the ball joints again, grease is cheap.

Is there a moral to this story? In one of Alan Shaw's excellent articles he said that every steering rack he has dismantled was very short of oil or dry, which state I would imagine had caused the wear which had resulted in the need for overhaul. So it seems that Kitten steering racks would benefit from regular topping up of the oil, and a nipple in the pinion cover is easy to fit and access. I try to grease the steering every month and I think that a couple of strokes of the oil gun at the same time would do no harm and possibly a great of good.

Before someone says that it might be possible to pressurise the rack and burst the bellows, may I point out that the 'O' ring at the top of the pinion shaft does not seem to act as an oil seal. In fact when a rack I had just filled with oil was on the bench and I turned the pinion, I could hear air being drawn in and expelled past the 'O' ring at different points of the rack travel, probably by the action of the rubber bellows. Which may be the reason why water can enter the rack housing, it could be sucked in.

With those thoughts I take my leave of you for now.

Best Regards, Dick Goodall No. 157

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Sales & Wants

For Sale :- 1976 Kitten DL estate XCA 361R stainless exhaust. Also various spare parts, only 60,000 miles from new. M.O.T till Aug, taxed till end of Feb. £400 O.N.O. contact Jean Turner.

For Sale :- 1977 Kitten Saloon, same owner since Nov.'78. the car has been dry stored for a number of years. Contact Patricia Harman London area.

For sale :- Kitten Saloon P reg 86.000 miles sweet engine, no tax or test but runs well.

For Sale :- Reliant Rebel 600 saloon, Tax exempt, and M.O.T.'d till Aug 2004. A great wee car, yours for just £200, ask Tony Pearson for details, Yorkshire.

For Sale :- Kitten Van S reg 1977. Condition is fair. Needs front right brake piston changing. Was driveable till laid up in garage one year ago. £100 o.n.o. - photos on yahoo – Fox and kitten

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

For Sale :- Fox chassis galvanised in Watford - has front suspension attached - buyer collects, offers to Richard

For Sale :- 4 doors, ex three wheelers. £ 20 each Contact Ralph Erwin

For sale :- two leaf springs, one 3 leaf, the other 4. A Kitten air filter, a pair of S/H front wings, a new front panel (with a small part removed) front and rear seats (S/H). New internal door panels (brown) and second hand door panels (black). Contact Graham Annetts

John Sawle is making new inlet manifolds for the Reliant engine, in cast aluminium, that follow the same basic shape as the original but with the following changes:

¾" or 19mm has been added to the length of each branch which moves the carburettor away from the engine centre line by the same amount. This allows clearance when fitting a 4-branch exhaust manifold for nos. 2 and 3 cylinders to have a larger pipe diameter and a decent radius on the pipe bend. The same effect can be obtained by using spacers between the block and the original inlet manifold, but these require longer studs.

The passages passing forwards and backwards, which are twin pipes siamesed together in the original manifold, are now one oval pipe with an hour glass cross section. This is an improvement on, and saves the work of, cutting away the web between the pipes at the cylinder block flange. A new gasket can be supplied to match, with the square exhaust ports opened out to 32mm diameter circles.

The carburettor flange is a square with 4 tapped holes to mount either the standard S.U. carb. and pre-heater or the Weber 34 ICH carburettor. The hole into the manifold is enlarged to 1 1/2", 38mm, diameter. The hotspot connection to the standard exhaust manifold is removed.

Pattern making will be complete by the end of February and I will then get 10 castings made and machined. If you wish to order one, they will cost £50 including P & P with gaskets at £6.50 each.

Moving the carburettor and air filters may have consequences for under bonnet clearance but there is sufficient space in the Liege for the alteration to succeed and other cars have, I think, more room. This manifold should also work with the supercharger but exact information on that will have to wait until I have fitted one to my own car.

If you wish to order a manifold please write to John Sawle,

Wanted :- a Kitten Estate, don't mind if it needs some work, but must be cheap and fairly local. Red Skelton

Wanted :- Bruce Jones needs an early Rebel gear lever extension

Wanted :- A galvanised Rebel Estate chassis

Wanted :- A copy of the book 750 racer by Dick Harvey for Al Osborn.

Wanted :- Wash / Wipe control for a Fox.

Wanted :- for a Kitten estate. Rear wiper motor and washer bottle. Distributor, 2 bonnet hinges, 2 rear door hinges, 2 sunvisors, 4 bumper ends, front and rear, left and right hand side. Heated rear window (estate). These are for Wouter Van Oploo in Holland, if you can help give Brian a ring and we will see if we can arrange transport. 0141 8866117 or e-mail Wouter direct on w.van.oploo@hetnet.nl

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Epilogue

In spite of what you may think, I do keep my mouth shut sometimes, witness Dave Richmond's letter on page 16, I was very tempted to add comment to the effect that I both admire and envy his ability to so easily overcome a mechanical failure that would have had a lesser man's vehicle out of service for a long time, not to say scrapped, but if I added comment to every letter I published, we would have to make this monthly – NO, ABSOLUTELY NOT! (That to both of you who said "Yes please")

I was having a few hours off (yes again!) the other day, watching Denise Van Outen give us the run down on the 100 most popular musicals. From a motoring point of view I have to say it was disappointing that Chitty Chitty Bang Bang only made it to 11th place, Moira has never liked West Side Story, (one of my favourites) and was amazed that it made fourth spot, and I was a little surprised that Grease just beat the Sound of Music for the title. Still, the Wizard of Oz made it into third place, and good old Singing in the Rain was 6th. Easter Parade was a long way down, and Mary Poppins supercalifragilisticexpalidotiously made it into 5th. Strange world we live in right enough. The fact that the Rocky Horror Picture Show was up there in 7th place must, like it or not, tell us something about the society in which we live, (My beloved proof reader made a comment at this point about me showing my age, and she being so much younger than I – hmmm) but at least Oliver made it into the top ten. Ah well, so much for my day off, it was grand mind you, aided and abetted by a nice bottle of red I have to say!

Back to matters categorical, as ever I know preaching to the converted, but anyone reading this who has not paid their 2004 subscription, will not be receiving any more copies of the Mewsletter till they pay up – you have been warned !

Folk who have renewed, excepting any that have crossed in the post in the last couple of days, should find their 2004 membership card enclosed with this edition.

At the time of writing, late January, 189 people have renewed their subscriptions, and 8 new people have joined us since Christmas, my thanks for your continued support, so the future is secure for another year of these musings.

Moving on to matters astronomical, I see that the Martians have adopted a new strategy, having simply shot down the first few attempts of ours at contaminating their world, they have come to realise that we are not going to give up so easily, they have therefore decided to let our vehicles land in future, but encompass them in a set, rather like a movie set, so that we can see what we want to see, or at any rate what they want us to see – watch this space !

Oh, update on that, the American “Rover” ran off the set yesterday, and the Martians were a bit rough picking it up and putting it back into position in its controlled environment, so much so that they interrupted communications for a few hours, and made some hearts beat faster back at Houston!

Right, enough. Back to serious matters for a moment if you will. Not for the first time I have been asked about a window sticker, John Graham, to give credit where it is due, was the most recent person to remind me about that. By the way John, I did wave coming out of Tesco’s at Carlisle last week, I had been taking my brother down to Leeds to collect his ‘new’ car, and we stopped on the A69 for fuel, yes it was a Rover, so I was thinking about you. Anyway, this is one of those tricky ones, I can of course get them made, but the cost very much depends on the quantity, a reasonable price break comes at 500 units, but that is quite a lot of stock to carry, I am considering finding out if I could get a batch of 250 done, and also 250 tax disc holders to the same pattern for the 500 price, watch this space.

Right, HELP ! I really seem to have lost the plot this time. I received today (February 3rd) a sturdy Boots processing thick card envelope containing three pictures of a yellow Kitten saloon, LJH 724P bearing an Utterly Butterly logo, the problems are that whoever sent them didn’t put their name on them, or enclose a note. It does say “My Kitten” on the back of one of the pictures. I can’t read the postmark, and worse yet, LJH 724P is not on the database !!! I do vaguely remember a telephone conversation about it, but my memory has again let me down. It could well be one that I should have advertised, I can’t remember. So if you know anything about the car, please get in touch.

Have a really good year, and please don’t forget to lubricate things.

Brian



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