

# *Reliant Kitten*

# *Register*

**NEWSLETTER 58**

**May – June 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.....

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# The Reliant Kitten Register MEWSLETTER 58

Rebel parts stock

Kitten / Fox parts stock

Rebel alternative parts

Kitten alternative parts

Fox alternative parts

Our Mutual Aid Spares scheme

Newsletter pictures

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 a picture of John & Mel, of the Liege Car Club in their Liege outside the factory on the 8th of May 2004 on their way to Paul Wheatley's "Peaks 'n Dales" event in Hope in Derbyshire. Arleen and I were there and took the picture. Oh, Billy (the dog) features as well.

Just how does Peter Davis always seem to manage to avoid my camera lens? He was there, as was Chris - one day !!

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.

Summertime 'n the livin' is easy, ah well, that was the mood when I began this back in April! Things have moved on since then, don't they always? And here we are once again needing to get this edition put together and off to the printers.

Things I wanted to say from before, as ever my thanks to John Pearce for our front covers, Rob Spare of P.F. Spare for his continued support with the able assistance of both his helpful staff, and from the Cherished Car Insurance people, all of our advertisers for their support, and most importantly you, for your continuing contributions, whether they be articles, letters, or just your annual subscription.

I had to write out a cheque the other day for our fees to remain associated with the Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs, and the amount is up again, not just because their fees have increased, but because there are more of us than there were at this time last year. An encouraging sign.

Another encouraging sign, well, a welcome bit of mail at any rate, arrived yesterday. As regular readers will be well aware, I sometimes struggle a bit for motivation, discipline, direction, or am just plain lazy and disorganised, and Moira has been known to ask why I put myself through all the hassle and stress of running the Register (It is not the Register that is difficult, it is all the other car club commitments that combine to make life a little too demanding at times – and I must clear out those lock-ups). Well, every now and then something happens to make it all worth while, but even those things can cause my simple mind to struggle a bit. The letter you will read on page 17 from Patrick Vallat is a case in point. I of course had to write a reply, and the standard letter of introduction and welcome hardly seemed adequate, especially as there are Swiss questions that I have been meaning to find answers to for years. So I took the opportunity of asking Patrick some of the burning issues relating to Kittens in Switzerland. But before I made up his envelope – my desk was again out of control, in spite of having been cleared into a box just over a week ago, (a box which I haven't been near since I might add – and that is bad) and I have the imminent possibility of emptying one of my lock-ups in three days time, and need to be organising that operation, as well as posting an alloy rocker cover to a Liege man, a pair of headlights to go to another subscriber, and mum is still moving house remember, oh and Dick Goodall, I have not forgotten about your parcel, just need more time – Aaarrrgghhhh !

The point is, should I type Patrick's letter up in the mag now? or put it somewhere safe and so risk losing it? Action today has to be the answer, I'll make the parcels up later, one day I will stop all this, but not till after I get on top of it all.

However – is not there always one of them? This is probably not aimed at you, it is, as ever, a case of preaching, in the main, to the converted. I am at my wits end regarding folk who do not renew their subscriptions on time. The extra work this causes is simply more bother than it is worth. So I am applying the £3.00 joining fee in future to late renewals. I will remind everyone at the appropriate time. The majority may benefit from my current frustration, you will be reminded of these words nearer Christmas if all goes according to plan – something to do with effort and rewards....

O.K., moan over, on with the show.

Oh no it isn't, well the moan is, but I forgot, well, let's be honest here, I simply did not have the time or space to tell you anything about the Merlins over Malta flyer that you should have found in with the last edition. It had struck a chord, what with dad working on Merlins (and Griffins) at Rolls Royce up the road from here in Hillington, (a factory specifically created for the purpose of producing the Merlin engine) and the Rolls Royce connection with my beloved Jowett Javelins (and Jupiters too). So I just thought that I would share the knowledge of their ambitious plans with you. I had meant to say that if you were in touch with them at all to be sure and mention the Kitten Register, but, as so often seems to be the case, my timing was less than perfect. I understand that things are well ahead with their plans.

On the business of coincidences I had a telephone call, don't get me wrong, I do receive a few of them, but this one was particularly memorable. Graeme Shaw rang me on the evening of Friday the 30th of April to tell me that 25 years and ten minutes previously he had collected his first Kitten, a saloon which he still has and uses, along with the more recently acquired workhorse Kitten estate which

enjoyed an excellent respray last year, anyway, the coincidence was that not only did he receive the Newsletter on his Kitten's 25th birthday, but in it I mentioned that a Kitten had recently sold for £2,600, exactly the sum that Graeme paid for his 25 years previously – how about that!

I was quick to point out to Graeme that, assuming that he keeps the car for another 365 days, his car's depreciation will have averaged £100 a year, which can't be bad, can it? And that's assuming that you attach no value to it then.

No Jane, I certainly do not think it is time you thought about looking for a new one, they should both be good or another 25 years.

On a completely different tack and moving a few miles up the road, I was at an organ concert yesterday (on a Wurlitzer), I had been at one the day before too, a Compton that time. In both instances we were treated to a delightful performance by the well known organist Dr. Arnold Loxam. He is a real character who still ekes a living out of travelling the country playing cinema organs in his individual style, how many people I wonder have actually shaken the hand of the man known far and wide for "The Loxam bounce"? Anyway, his wife gave me permission to relate a story he often tells, bit of a tongue twister it has to be said, but my admiration for this 88 year old performer is such that I couldn't resist repeating it. The story begins with an imitation of the all too common problems and frustration that I am sure we have all encountered in recent years, you know the kind of thing, you ring a number on the telephone, and are met with a polite voice offering you a number of options from which to select one, and on doing so are given further choices, until eventually you are greeted with a polite voice telling you that your call is valued, and that you are now in a queue. Well, in the old days things were a little different, upon picking up the receiver, you were greeted by an individual who asked what number you wished to call, and a gentleman from Norwich, we are told, had the following discussion :-

Which switch is the switch Miss for Ipswich? It's the Ipswich switch which I require.

Which switch is the switch Miss for Ipswich? You've switched my switch on the wrong wire.

You've switched me to Norwich not Ipswich. So now, to prevent further hitch, if you'll tell me which switch is for Ipswich, then I'll know which switch is which.

Yes it does lose something in the typing, and without the Yorkshire accent, but you get the gist.

Right, finally, on with the show.

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## Rebel Round up

Dear Brian,

March 2004

Yet another Newsletter has landed on the doormat, and the feeling of guilt has passed over me yet again. A (long) while back Brian hit me with the request for a brief report on the Rebel alternative parts list, but I never really got around to putting finger to keyboard.

The alternative parts lists exist to assist subscribers to the Register in locating replacement parts for their cherished 4 wheeled Reliants. We are fortunate that Reliant used so many "off the shelf" components, sourcing from other manufacturers that also made parts for other makes of cars. Did you know that the Rebel uses a component that can be found on an Aston Martin DB5? So what if it is the flasher relay, it still sounds good!

Running a list of alternative parts is not as simple as it sounds. Find the cross reference between the Reliant part and the manufacturer's piece and hey presto, an alternative part – easier said than done. Many old reference manuals are no longer available, or if they are, their owners keep them close to their chest, or demand extortionate prices for them. I have spent many hours tracking down an

item only to be told later that someone else already had the information. I've also had the experience where, when asked what model of car the part was for, to be politely told they wouldn't be able to supply at "as it wasn't destined for the car it was designed for". It's not all doom and gloom however – there are some very helpful souls out there that literally bend over backwards to help (generally when there is a sale in the offing...).

Other than doing the odd bit of detective work from time to time, being a list owner is relatively quiet, especially since I placed it on the internet. Whereas I'm lucky to get one phone call a month, the web site on average has over 40 different users looking through it in the same time frame, along with two or three e-mails. Surprisingly I seem to get more requests for information on the Rebel's 3 wheeled stablemates, than the little beastie itself. Most frequently asked questions? "Which track rod end is which" (still confused myself after all this time), "Is my car tax exempt?" And "Where do I get front shock absorbers?" (Come on Brian, what's those shocks you've mentioned, and what adaptions are required?).

Those with access to the internet should go to [www.defiantreliant.co.uk](http://www.defiantreliant.co.uk) for info on the Rebel, history, photos, suppliers and more. Otherwise give me a call – details inside the front cover.

The alternative parts list is by no means complete, and this is where your help is needed. For it to work, I need to know what you know. The list can only be as good as the information put into it, so if you have some good gen, pass it on.

Mark Hayton - Leuchars

*Thanks for the update Mark, It is interesting to learn how ineffectively one communicates, I did not think there was any secret about the alternative Rebel front dampers, I, and others, have successfully adapted the current three wheeler unit to fit. They are longer, but not too much, and there is a need to reduce the diameter of the hole in the bottom bush, and to lengthen it, and there are two approaches to this. I chose to modify the lower wishbones, opening the holes out from 7/16" to ½", and brazing on a washer to the insides of both front and back legs to leave a space which matches the bottom bush on the damper. I'm certain that we covered that in the mag at the time, and the other is to turn up an appropriate spacer/sleeve which Alan Shaw has done for us, and has been used successfully by another subscriber in 2003, only my memory prevents me telling you who. So there are options, and we can supply the damper / spring units quickly for about £45 each, what's the problem?*

*The track rod end situation is very simple providing people understand the difference between left and right hand threads. Obviously because of the age of the cars, and the unknown quantity of the original build consistency, you cannot tell, without looking, which end has the right hand thread, and which the left, but all three rods on the Rebel steering have two ends, and on each rod one of those ends has a left hand thread and the other a right. The ball joints on the track rods are the same as on a Mini for the right hand threaded one, and a left hand threaded version of that, now quite rare, for the other end. Robert Fairfoull sourced a possibility recently, and Phil Hallam is checking the thread pitch on it for us as I type, aren't you Phil? I suspect it might be a couple of threads per inch out, as it tightens up as you screw it on to the track rod. The drag link (big long rod that runs across the car from one side to the other) ends are the same as on the BMC Farina bodied vehicles of the 1960's and 70's.*

*Road tax exemption, I thought we had covered this too, vehicles built before 1973 qualify, the last saloon and estate chassis numbers made in December 1972 were 1123 and 1124 respectively, only the vans are in a grey area, and it may be that they had stopped making them by then.*

*Still on matters Rebel parts related, my stock should have left Renfrew by the time you read this. The event was the end of an era for me, no longer owning a Rebel, and needing to simplify life. What it did enable me to do was meet some demand that had existed for a while. Parts that I had been asked for and was unable to supply are as follows :-*

*Bumpers, hub caps, door handles, estate back bumper support brackets,*

*Still on matters Rebel related, Bruce Emery, our man in Leigh on Sea, wrote recently to tell me of his engagement to Alex, well he actually wrote to make me aware of a Kitten and a Rebel he knew of for sale, and just happened to mention the engagement in passing (Oh I do hope Alix does not read this!) Bruce, you may remember, is the young enthusiast who came here by train some years ago – yes all the way from Essex to Glasgow - and bought “the moss encrusted hut” from me. It is still on the road today, whether that is a testament to the quality of Reliants that pass through my hands, or to Bruce’s determination I am not sure, but whatever the case is, we both deserve some credit.*

*Anyway, moving on, this neatly brings me on to the other point of Bruce’s letter, which was to ask me for a copy of the picture of the three Fox Tandy campervans that featured on a cover recently, well, there were only two on the cover if memory serves, but there was a picture of the three which I seem to recall me printing in colour on a small slip which I enclosed with the mag – but can I find that picture now? Feel free to help me out here by sending a picture to Bruce – can we do this by e-mail? I don’t know, perhaps I will have resolved this by now, if not give me a ring for his details. Oh, and yes, of course, congratulations on the engagement Bruce and Alex.*

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## Foxes Den

Wiggins Florist, 3 Worcester Street, Gloucester

2/6/04

The delivery vehicles for our Florist Business are an Asquith replica van on a Fox chassis our back up van is a Fox. We have just put an exchange engine in the Asquith with a new starter, alternator, clutch, gearbox and radiator. We thought that would secure many more miles and deliveries, but sod’s law, within a week the back axle failed. We had one delivered from the factory, but it was the wrong one, it was for 10” wheels.

I tried all our scrap yards to no avail, and in desperation rang Brian Marshall. He told me he would get back to me. Within 2 hours he had located one and said that I would receive a phone call the next evening (Wednesday), which I did. It was Duncan Bradford from Norwich, he had one.

Well to cut the story short Duncan motored over from Norwich on the Sunday in his Scimitar with the back axle. As I have a Scimitar too, we were able to compare notes.

We spent an enjoyable couple of hours with Duncan before sending him on his way back to Norwich. We took the axle to the repair garage on the Monday and we were back on the road on Tuesday.

Thank you Brian and Duncan. What a fine club, and to think I had forgotten to renew my membership. Keep up the good work and congratulations on a fine Magazine.

Brian Wiggins - Gloucester

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## Membership Matters

As I said last year, and then didn’t manage to get it done, it is still my intention to publish a membership list during the coming year, I know, getting to sound like a scratched gramophone record, but one has to have aspirations, so - IF YOU DO NOT WISH YOUR DETAILS TO APPEAR ON SUCH A LIST, AND HAVE NOT ALREADY DONE SO, PLEASE GET IN TOUCH WITH THE REGISTRAR AND ADVISE HIM ACCORDINGLY - NOW!

One what you might call shortcoming of the Registrar is that he does not publish a list of new subscribers in every magazine. Not quite sure why that is, but it is. However every now and then a rare vehicle crops up, and a mention is deemed appropriate. We had a new Jimp join the ranks in April, it belongs to Mark Brockley from the Wirral, just thought I'd share that with you because it doesn't happen all that often.

Plans for the future! Don't forget that Dave Price's kind offer to plan something for the Kitten's 30th anniversary, I don't actually need to see 100 of you there, but well into double figures would be good. As for camping, I am more into B&B these days, there are a multitude of excellent hosteries all over this wonderful country, but do not let me influence things, Dave is the man, talk to him. If all goes to plan there may be a questionnaire enclosed, please complete and return it promptly. The event will only happen if there is some demand / support for it – the event's existence is in your hands.

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## Liege Page

Well, what can I say? 412 miles in Old Number One over the 32 hours that we had the car for on the 8th and 9th of May. Obviously thank you Peter for the loan of the car, and thank you Paul for organising the event, and of course Chris, who washed the car for us after we took it back. To be there in the thick of things with a dozen other Liege, even to meet Mike Phillips, yes the Tempest man, we met at the Liege factory on the Saturday morning, (That appealed to my sense of humour, meeting the Tempest man at the Liege factory!) welcome to the Register Mike, and to meet Rob Walker there too, and he even paid the deposit on a Liege while he was there – did you know the factory now offer a build service? – well, Peter asked me not to advertise that, as they already have three to do, and that should keep them busy for a day or three - could I be tempted? – no of course not, (well, not till I find a garage to hide it in, and get a new proof reader!).

Arleen and I had come down on the Friday via the Box residence, thanks for the coffee John & Jackie, it was good to see you both again, to Thurlaston near Rugby in her MGZR where Tom and Patience Wardley had kindly offered to put us up for the night. We even used the M6 Toll road to see what it was like, pretty good, (and no speed cameras that we could see) Thanks for the eggs Tom, Rob found homes for them at the end of the day.

I could bore you with the story of our trip, and the event – we even met Joe there, sadly not in his Tempest, the one we advertised in here last time, now sold and has even been abroad on holiday I believe. He came instead in his ex RAF Landrover, good to see you again Joe. Anyway, this is the Liege bit of the mag, so I will see if we get any more input, and leave it at that, other than to mention that the organiser, and this is not a criticism, but Arleen and I won the prize for the furthest travelled to the event, which I felt was a little unfair, as while we were, by over a couple of hundred miles, the furthest travelled, we did not come the whole way in a Liege, and everyone else did. So some folk covered twice the Liege miles that we did to get there even though our total mileage was greatest. It was a nice bottle of wine mind you, thanks Paul.

Paul even had the pictures on the Liege web site on the Sunday evening, again well done Paul, and thanks for a wonderful weekend. Many treasured memories.

Right, it is now June and I have not had any relevant input, so, it was like this :

Because I now accept that my memory is less than perfect, and because I had so many people to meet at Fladbury on the Saturday morning, (well it was only actually 6 people, but two of them I had never met before) I just told everyone – 10:00 o'clock. Now that might have worked had they all been there at the appointed time, but in fact one needed to be amongst the first, and, sadly she was the last to arrive, well after 11:00! So much for that idea! Paula was bringing some 30 flat packed cardboard boxes for us to take back to Scotland to help with mum's imminent flitting – and I could not begin to load other things (mainly Tempest bits for north of the border) till we found out how much space the boxes took up. Unfortunately it was raining most of the time between 10:00 and 11:00, which put the

proverbial dampner on things, though it didn't prevent John Sawle from taking Rob Walker out for a spin in his Liege (it is the one with the appropriate registration number L1 EGE), so if there is any commission Peter, I guess John and I should be sharing it !

I got to meet Chris for the first time, and Mike of Tempest fame too, great to be able to put faces to the names chaps.

Arleen was waiting patiently all the while, and then less than delighted when she discovered that the volume of stuff to come north in her new car was rather great – oops !

Anyway, John and Mel headed off, complete with dog, and Arleen and I left after a coffee and scone (actually they give you two scones – how am I ever going to lose weight?) in the Tea room next to the factory with Paula. I had taken Paula into Evesham in the Liege to fill it with fuel ahead of our trip up the M1. So at least she now understands just what it is like to travel in one of these wonderful wee cars.

John Jones had kindly invited us to go along with him, and Chris, but they were not leaving till later, Chris' wife Pat was working till 2:00, so we decided just to make our own way, thanks for the offer John.

Arleen and I finally hit the road well after midday, it took us the better part of an hour to reach the M1, and we travelled the whole way with the hood up. The Liege was running well enough, but the fuel consumption was not quite Reliant, more Rolls Royce. Now this could be because I was running at over 5,000 r.p.m. (well over most of the way!) the whole way, or it could be because one of the carbs was running too rich, but I have lost my confidence in interfering with such things I'm afraid – it 'taint broke, don't fix it, is the motto these days.

So, we were first to arrive at Hope. A bit late for lunch, just after 3:30, and too near the evening meal planned by Paul for everyone. We had called in at the Travellers Rest, and Arleen much preferred the look of the menu at the Poachers Arms where we were to be spending the night, so we ate there after a shower, at 5:00pm, and very nice it was too, though their Rhubarb and Apple Pie could not come close to that provided at the Chequers Inn in Fladbury the previous year!

Off then to meet everyone in the Travellers Rest, and a good evening was had by all – Arleen was disgusted with me for eating again, but the meal in the Poacher's was just a late lunch !

Not a very late night, as it had been a long couple of days, and a full day was planned for the Sunday.

So, a quick breakfast, and we were off along the road to meet everyone, well, that was the plan. When we arrived there were only half a dozen Liege in the car park. Gradually that number grew, until it had almost doubled, and Paul asked me, since I had Number One, if I would lead the way to the ridge below the top of the field, for a photo shoot. Off I went, and was gradually joined by ten other Liege. Many pictures were then taken, though there seemed to have been a misunderstanding with the farmer whose field it was – no harm done.

Simon Robson, we learn't, had had a breakdown – well, let's tell it like it was, he had a problem with a broken oil pressure sender, and did not want to risk a breakdown, so very wisely stopped to fix it before continuing on his way to join us. Now if every RAC breakdown van carried Easyouts as part of their kit, he would have been back on the road a lot sooner than he was! Don't forget to fix it properly Simon!!

So, we were off, the first off road section started a few hundred yards from the car park, Joe was sat at the first hairpin, just before the tarmac ended, with his camera running – hope we will get to see the results Joe. I was too busy flashing my lights to change down in time, and made a bit of a meal of that first hairpin!

Arleen was good at reading Paul's excellent instructions, but I was playing safe and keeping the car in front in view most of the time, just in case. Most of the off road work was done in first gear, getting into second on occasions.

The rain held off, the sun even poked it's nose out a few times, and we had a great time. Through the picturesque grounds of Chatsworth house, where Arleen was hesitant as I dived off – on the route – past the sign that said "Road unsuitable for motor vehicles" or words to that effect - ahh, great stuff!

About a third of the route was off road, and brought home to me just how clever an engineer Peter Davis is. That wee car behaves more like a mountain goat. Arleen's reservation prevented me from trying a few things, probably just as well! What a day when the 18 year old tells the 52 year old to take it easy!

We did upset one local farmer, I had to bite my tongue not to laugh out loud, he came tearing past us in his Landrover, going three times as fast as we were in a vehicle weighing 4 or 5 times what a Liege does, then stops us to remonstrate about the damage we were causing to the countryside – one has to be polite and try not to inflame such situations, and Paul did an excellent job on that front, but I really had to try hard not to burst out laughing – he had done a lot more damage chasing and passing us than the 12 of us did all together, (and we were travelling in three separate groups, or were till his delay caused two of the groups to catch up with each other!) not to mention the danger of the speed he was doing to the albeit few, hill walkers that were on the route. It transpired that he had a running battle going on with some motorcyclists, and was very miffed that they had managed to get the police on their side because he had felled a tree over the path in an effort to block what is in fact a public right of way – all very sad, and unfortunate that we got caught up in it, but interesting to meet such an individual face to face, though he was clearly at a loss to understand why we had come all the way from Scotland to drive through hills in his neck of the woods!

The sun did shine for quite a bit of the run, and we did remember to get a few pictures of us with the car this time – so I no longer have that excuse for asking for the car another time! The picture that is on the web site shows Paul taking the picture of us with our camera, which we now have here, thanks Paul. (One day I will graduate to colour pictures in the magazine).

There are always frustrations, like not making the time to stop outside the pub called "The Robin Hood" to take a picture. But a wonderful day it was, and on the way back to Fladbury that afternoon I had to throttle back a few times to keep the revs below 6,000 – thanks Paul for weakening that second carb's mixture for us at lunch time.

Average MPG for the trip was not much up on 30, but considering the speeds we were maintaining I guess that is about all one can expect.

Wonderful memories, a wonderful car, and wonderful people, what more could anyone want?

Brian

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## **Another Tempestous Tale**

Dear Brian,

28th May 2004

Here is an unexpected letter from a reluctant writer. Your cover picture on the last magazine inspired me to get Eileen's camera out and take a similar view of my Tempest, in the hope of showing the differences there can be between normally identical cars.

The first thing I noticed was the vertical door hinge on Denis Baggaley's car. This will eliminate the irritating self closing tendency with mine, on which the door hinge is in line with the windscreen pillar. He has used different lights from mine too. What is the item on the right hand side of the rear panel? My petrol filler cap is on the left side, as his appears to be, but I have nothing on the right.

The sidescreens supplied with my hood had deep fabric frames. I never liked them much, so last winter I finally made some new, frameless, ones. These look better, and provide much improved visibility. Denis' has slim metal frames, which presumably work well too.

Dennis has retained the original spare wheel position on the rear panel. I felt that it looked too high there, and made boot access inconvenient, so I lowered my spare wheel into the rear panel. This involves moving the petrol tank forward, but does give it much greater protection from the rear. Originally the spare wheel was uncovered, and it looked fine, but John Box turned up at a kit car rally, (Stonleigh), with a covered spare, and it inspired me to try a similar thing. The cover is rather crudely made from scrap wood and fibreglass, but it serves.

I can't work with cloth, so my hood cover is another scrap wood and fibreglass job. Finally the little yellow thing under the numberplate detaches easily to reveal a towing bracket. I never use it these days, but I did tow a small boat with it when we first moved to Cornwall.

I enclose two photographs, you may need to become an expert on Tempests as well as rebels and Kittens if Mike Phillip's efforts are a success.

Best wishes, Les (Richmond) Looe, Cornwall

*Thank you Les for taking the trouble to put finger to keyboard, it is appreciated. Does bring home to me, yet again, how useful it would be if I could include colour (or indeed any) pictures in the magazine. Ed.*

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## Readers Letters

Dear Brian,

Porrentury 10.04.2004

I am the happy owner of 3 Kittens. One is my wife's car since 12 years (I ride British motorcycles every day, a 1969 Norton 750 and a 1950 Triumph combination).

I am on the last days of the restoration of the second (a right hand drive estate of 1977 I bought in Birmingham) the third, a 1979 coupe is for parts.

I have a friend who has 2 estates, but otherwise I never saw one in Switzerland. I buy my parts by Reliant Services Strichley (Birmingham).

I would be happy to know other Kitten owners and share experiences with that wonderful small car.

I am car mechanic and my hobby is restoring British bikes and cars.

I send you £20 for the subscription and if you have older club magazines or readable things on Kitten, I would be happy.

I have the Don Pither book and some Reliant Robin, Rialto and Kitten prospectus.

I drive hundreds of cars every year since 30 years, but the more I work on modern cars, the more I love and care my Kitten despite the problem with the cylinder head studs (I think I have found the solution with much longer studs on my last engine rebuilt).

Sincerely yours, Patrick Vallat - Porreutruy, Switzerland

*Patrick, thank you for your letter, and the photograph of the rebuilt chassis. Obviously I wrote back to Patrick at the time, but his letter allowed me the opportunity of at least trying to move the Swiss*

*connection along. We do, have had for some years, a Swiss subscriber, though I do not know if he has a Reliant car, have you Jean-Charles? Also I know, though he would not break client confidentiality, that John at Rossefield Motors of Bradford, has sold a couple of immaculate Kittens over the years, to a customer in Switzerland, what I don't know is if Patrick's friend with the two estates might be Rossefield's customer, or if there are more Kittens in Switzerland than anyone suspects. Watch this space. Ed.*

*One thing I did not mention to Patrick was my own interest in Motorcycles, but let us not get sidetracked, you hear quite enough from me, Ed!*

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Dear Brian,

1st May 2004

Thank you for the reminder. My Kitten, sadly, is no longer operational. The chassis where the front nearside top wishbone locates, has corroded and I now have an extremely large amount of negative camber on this side. It is probably fixable, but I do not have the time.

Otherwise, the rest of the chassis is very good. I have fitted another engine which is also good, and the car was used every day.

If anyone would like the car, they can take it away for £50. A trailer will be required.

Yours Truly - Chris Smith - Birmingham (Memb. 494; retiring)

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Dear Brian,

30.4.04

Great to receive the latest edition of the Newsletter, if only to hear what my middle son is up to. Of course its also useful to find out where the parts destined for my Liege keep disappearing to! I notice that James now owns up to purloining my alternator, no mention yet of the alternator bracket, radiator or water pump. I expect I'll read about those in "What Katy did Next", or even "What Katy did at University". (*Oh, I don't know Tony, that might have to be censored! – Ed*)

He also failed to mention Katy's Christmas present, courtesy of Adrian over in Brentwood, a heated rear windscreen, more use in keeping James' hands warm whilst pushing Katy to the kerb, than in assisting rear vision I suspect!

Now the real reason for the letter, I have taken into protective custody Kitten Saloon PUV 405R which was residing in a barn over near Boston - no - not Massachusetts! It seemed a simple task to arrange collection at the same time as collecting my Liege chassis from Fladbury. There were no ferries to negotiate or bridges with spectacular views, but a quick look at the map will show you that driving from Dartmoor to Boston via Evesham and back single-handed is not a task for the faint-hearted, rather one for the downright foolish amongst us.

Notwithstanding, on Easter Sunday this task was attempted and accomplished in the space of 13 ½ hours, some 525 miles and many litres of diesel. All I have to do now is find room to park PUV and assemble my Liege. Watch this space!!!

Kindest regards Tony Clapham. No. 653 Liege No 054

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*Now a question asked on Duncan's web group in April by John Davies*

Hello, does anyone know roughly how many Kittens are known of? and how many of them are still left on the road, this just Kittens not the kit car variants. thanks, John

*Now I am known to hesitate in my response to such on-line requests, after all, everyone should know that all you need to do is subscribe to the Register, and all will be revealed. if I go and divulge all our secrets on line, what would be the point in subscribing? Well, the Newsletter obviously, well the current editions at any rate, it takes – I hope - a few months before the current edition finds its way “out there”. Special discount from certain well known and supportive parts suppliers, publication printers and suppliers, insurance brokers, and breakdown services, all of whom need to know your membership number, not to mention access to my own wealth of knowledge and experience on hand, access to the Register’s ever increasing – so Moira keeps telling me! stock of rare Rebel, Kitten and Fox parts, why the list of benefits is almost endless! Anyway, to answer the question, the Register’s database has information on 528 kittens, and, though this is the worst time of year to ask, because it is in June that the official figures for the previous December are released, I am sadly confident that the number of kittens “on the road” will have dropped below 350. Rebels seem to have steadied up at about 80 to 90, and Foxes, well you will need to wait and see, but I guess a couple of hundred or so. So now you know.*

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Hello Brian,

May 2004

Great to see you at last at Fladbury the other week – lots of interesting people together, well worth the early morning drive. I lament having to live in a city.

Sorry I couldn't join you in the Peaks and Dales on the Sunday, next time please let me know (Rob has I believe now joined the Liege Car club as well, and so that should take care of notification of their events, Ed ).

Regarding Saharan pleasures – if you know or hear of anyone making a crossing it might be useful to me to know about it. Mildly scared that it may become obsessive.

I have to have the Liege built, no time in England, no garage, laziness, tending to veer off at tangents etc – Oh dear, you too ? Ed.

Regards, Rob

*Thanks for the letter Rob, it was good to meet you too, just sorry the weather was not great, and that I was rather busy talking to so many interesting people. Ed.*

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A Osborn

7th June 04

[www.AOservices.co.uk](http://www.AOservices.co.uk)

More words of wisdom Brian asked for!? So here we go with another few. Hopefully somewhere along the line we are helping with some minor, or even major problem.

What happened in March and April? Leaks from the wiper mechanism into the cab, yes we've had a few of these, and in fact the last one ran down into the wiper motor and destroyed the nearly new wiper parking switch! Not amused, I'd had a switch last 100,000 miles, and the new one, fitted at vast expense lasts a month!! Another new one in place at more cost. When that switch fails, you still have working wipers, but you have to park them by switching them off at just the right time, a real pain. To seal the leak? I have used silicon, remove the wipers and the nuts, and then the rubbers. A good squidge of silicone, and replace the bits should get it sorted.

Some years ago, when I had the Robin, I complained to a dealer about a leak through here on the drivers side, and it dripped onto my right ankle, not a situation where you can move your foot. The

dealers answer was to wear Wellingtons! (We changed dealers). I also note that No 157 (Dick Goodall) had some rubbers at one point.

What Katy did! Said that the car runs quite happily on unleaded "as she has an in line converter" I think this car will go just as well without the in line converter. The alleged problems with unleaded have been exaggerated, certainly as far as the Reliant engine is concerned. You must bear in mind that the common unleaded petrol has two things different from our good old four star, there is the removal of the tetraethyl lead so that unleaded allegedly no longer helps with valve seat cushioning, and it has a lower octane rating than four star.

The standard Reliant engine will cope with the lower octane rating O.K. although from a specific engine number (details available on request when I find it) the engine was fitted with "improved" valve seats (*mind you the valve seat part number did not change – Ed!*) Despite all this I have been running around on old Kitten and Robin heads for 20 years, and while I do sometimes see some burning, that is on the valves not the seat, and only then after over 40,000 miles, and not only has such burning never stopped an engine, it has never even reduced compression, though I have had to grind in the valves, this with a grind wheel rather than the old grinding paste. If anyone else has more experience of this please let me know. P.S. I see that the number of garages selling the old four star is rapidly diminishing, so it's a case of use it or lose it, but then again who is going to travel 50 miles for a tank of fuel at some significant price over what it is at the end of the road?

FBHVC. A few interesting points from these people this time round. There is a new consultation document for vehicle inspection scheme as applied to kit cars. If that is your bag then I suggest you ask for details from the DVLA, they have a long consultation document.

Disposal of scrap vehicle parts. Now we Kitty boys (and girls) don't have any scrap bits, do we? Everything gets recycled so many times!! But apparently there actually comes a time when a part really does reach the end of its useful life, and apparently there are wide discrepancies between Councils as regards what they say their policy is, and what actually happens at waste recycling plants.

Abandoned vehicle removal. This is under review by DEFRA, but the intended shortening of he notice period seems to have been dropped in line with the Federations recommendations. So that apparently abandoned vehicles on private land (restoration projects to you and me) will no longer be nicked by the Council when you go on holiday for a week or two.

Seat belts and children. There are a number of fine details on this subject as to what you can and cannot do, I wonder if your local bobby even knows (pretty sure he doesn't, Ed) So if you have any worries on this score, then I could talk you through some of the facts as presented by the FBHVC, but you are all members in your own right by now, aren't you? So you know all this.

That's it for now, my Kitty car is hopefully behaving, just coming up for the MOT so I must service the brakes, perhaps even give it a wash, once a year is about right, isn't it?

Regards, Al Osborn

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## Tales from Tore

Good evening Brian and many thanks for the despatch of Issue 57, lots to go through as usual.

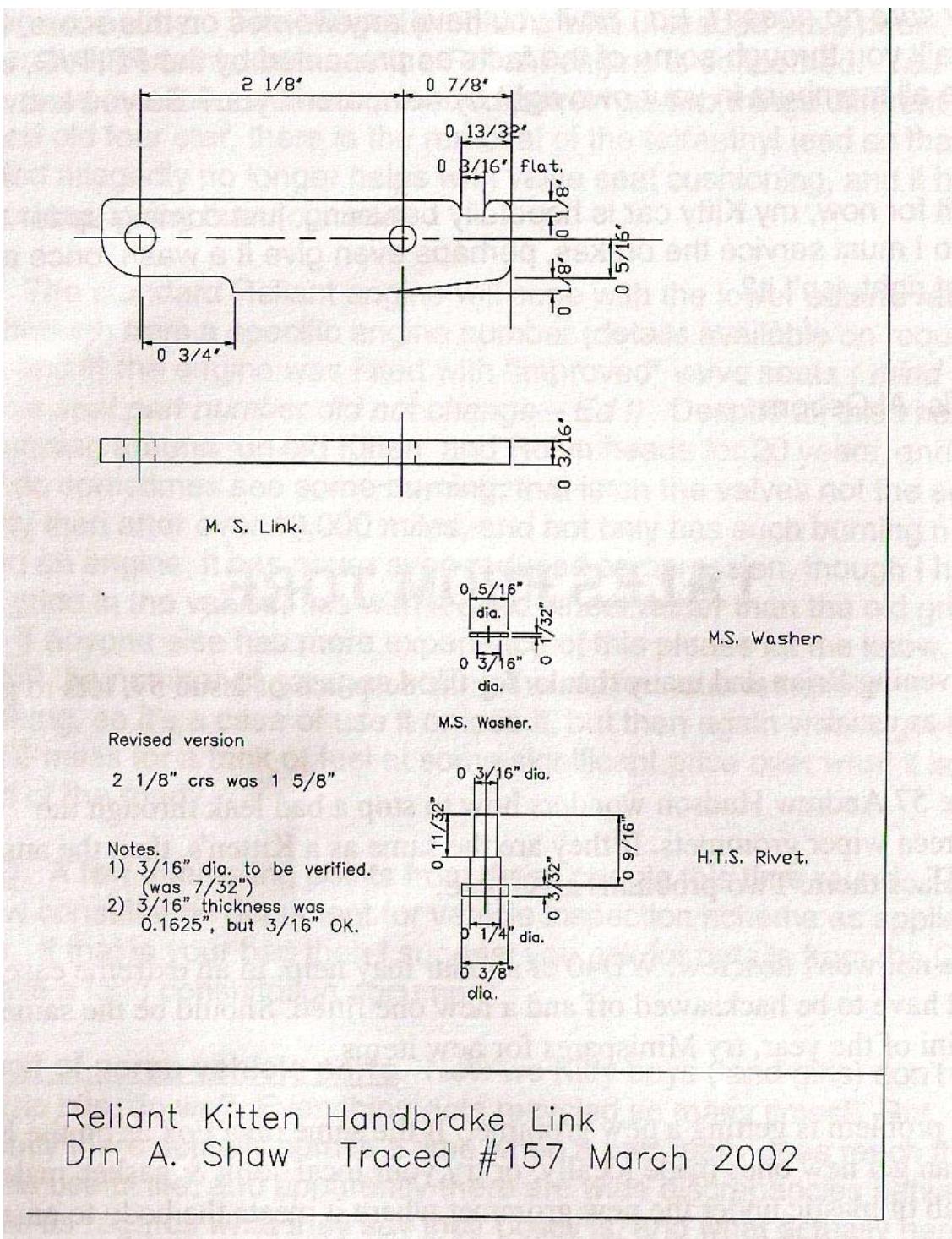
On page 57 Andrew Hudson wonders how to stop a bad leak through the windscreen wiper grommets. If they are the same as a Kitten's, then the answer is to replace them. Two problems arise here.

First the nut won't unscrew. WD40 or similar may help. In an extreme case the nut will have to be hacksawed off and a new one fitted. Should be the same as on a Mini of the year, try Minispares for new items.

Second problem is getting a new grommet. If the same on a Fox as on the Kitten then I can get new ones made locally, or try your local 'joint & gasket' maker. Put a dab of mastic under the new grommet where it meets the body to ensure a seal.

HANDBRAKE LINK Page 27 –28 Attached (hopefully) is my a copy of my Autosketch record of a drawing sent to me by Alan Shaw in March 2002. Perhaps it may help? Hope springs eternal!!

Cheers, Dick Goodall.



## A solution to part of the spares problem?

Well, Adrian got the ball rolling on this one, he even kindly agreed to give a home to my Rebel spares, though, in spite of Dave King's best efforts, half of the parts remain in my lock-ups. If nothing else that exercise brought home to me just how important it is to catalogue things, and to keep them dry. As to the solution, feel free to contribute your ideas in here. Meantime Adrian, there is a plan 'B', just bear with me please.

Ed.

## Getting Technical

I had a telephone call the other day, should have done this at the time really, given my memory. The point is that when Tom Wardley read the tale of Dick Goodall's clutch difficulty he recalled the problems his father had with clutches some years ago, and indeed this jogged my own memory, because I had a similar problem, related at the time in these pages I think. The rear engine plate needs to be tight against the crankcase, (mine had somehow lost three of the setscrews, and the fourth one was very loose), sadly you need either the engine or gearbox out of the car to check that, but any play in between these bits will destroy a clutch, and cause difficult to trace vibrations. Thanks for the reminder Tom.

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Brian,

6th June 2004

I converted an 86 Rialto to the later (Reliant) clutch. I bought a three piece clutch kit for the latest Robin from Partco. Visible differences are the race-type release bearing & diaphragm spring cover. The cover doesn't fit the earlier flywheel (different hole spacing for both fasteners and dowels) so I re-drilled mine after machining a device to centre the new cover. A simpler method would be to obtain the later flywheel.

Other parts required are:

- \* a different gearbox front cover (the one with the first motion shaft oil seal in it). This differs from the one used with graphite release bearings by having a tubular steel extension to guide the new race-type release bearing.
- \* a new release fork. I obtained a complete shaft assembly with the release fork second hand but the new fork will fit the existing shaft.

After that it's just a question of assembly as normal with the exception that you leave the clutch arm return spring off the gearbox & rearrange the pedal spring so it pulls the pedal down (towards the floor) as opposed to upwards. Remove the clutch pedal stop at the same time. Simply adjust the clutch cable so that the pedal is level with the brake pedal.

I was told at the time I made enquiries about this mod that it could not be easily done if the engine/gearbox was not fitted with the pre-engaged starter - I don't know whether this is true or not. I do know that the pre-engaged starter motor will not directly replace the inertia type because the mounting holes are differently spaced.

It's well worth doing - there's not much space to keep the clutch foot off the pedal & even though I made every effort the car ate graphite release bearings. The clutch action is much better - it feels better & engages at a better point in the pedal travel - & the diaphragm spring plate is light yet positive.

Tony Idle - RSSOC 2332

*My thanks to Tony who provided the above in response to a request I had made on Duncan Bradford's Fox and Kitten group on the internet. Oh, and I am in no doubt at all that the pre-engaged starter motor*

*is a complete red herring as far as the clutch is concerned, other than to note that while the later flywheel is a good idea, so it is, provided that you avoid the later starter gear ring, because it is for the pre-engaged starter, so while the later flywheel is good, the later gear ring is most certainly not! Ed*

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## Sales & Wants

For Sale :- for spares or repair. A Kitten van, converted with side windows and a back seat, non runner but complete. Ring Brian for details 0141 8866117. This is your last chance for this one, it will be broken for spares if not re-homed immediately.

For Sale :- Reliant Rebel saloon. Off the road some years, no engine or gearbox.

For Sale : A rare chance to acquire an early and interesting Rebel saloon, this one featured in Daniel Lockton's book. Sadly damaged in a recent accident, it is for sale along with a small collection of Rebel spares including an early gearbox. Offers around £200 contact James Freer

For Sale :- Tempest kit No1 MNC140P. Never finished. Rebuilt after standing 15 years. Needs interior, tidying and documentation sorting out. Need space. Less than the kit cost at just £1,500. Steve Campbell

For Sale :- Kitten DL saloon 1978 London Red (resprayed) SS exhaust, four new ball joints, Kenlow fan £500 Contact Keith White

For Sale :- Scimitar SE6B 1980 Carmen Red fawn velour auto. Essex 3 litre SS exhaust, power steering electric windows. £1,500 Contact Keith White

For Sale :- Kitten estate for spares or repair, or will break, contact Douglas north east Scotland. Near Peterhead.

For Sale :- Sadly a prospective buyer of the Salamander advertised in here last time, came to look at the car, (it is on the road) said he would return to collect and pay for it, then left a note a few weeks later to say he had been, but no one was in – always best to make firm arrangements and not to turn up on spec. So the Salamander is still for sale – unless the individual concerned – not a subscriber – has returned by arrangement meantime. Contact Robin He also has a Robin looking for a home.

For Sale :- 1977 Kitten Estate in yellow (advertised incorrectly last time due to my failing eyesight !) Newly MOT'd. Unleaded head, alloy wheels, electronic ignition, new front shock absorbers, stainless exhaust, Offers to David Wright West Sussex.

For Sale :- Reliant Rialto. Mot till September '04 contact John Stork for details

A rare opportunity to acquire a Salamander (yes, another one!)

We have in stock several of the more difficult Kitten / Fox parts, like steering racks (exchange) lower steering columns and headlights, and are looking at an alternative front damper. Don't be stuck, talk to the Registrar. 0141 8866117

Free to a new custodian Gordon Gillespie has 7 Reliant 10" wheels with good tyres free for the collection from Doncaster,

Free to a good home : two Kitten estates, one has a stainless exhaust and recent ball joints. Contact John Stork The cars are at Glenelg on the west coast of Scotland near the Isle of Skye.

Wanted :- Rob from Marlow needs a black Kitten driver's seat for his car,

Wanted :- Sandy Burne needs a good 850 engine, so does the old chap in the south east of Scotland, and I don't have his number to hand ! Oh, and Glyn Jones could be doing with one for his daughter's Asquith too, If you have a good running 850 engine for sale, give the Registrar a ring and he will put you in touch.

## Epilogue

Right, here I am again, it is the first of June, plenty of time, except that I have this Rally with the S.W.T.V.C. in Pitlochry in less than two weeks time, and still a bit of work to do for that, so I need to get this to the printers now or it will be late getting to you, and of course mum is moving at the end of June.

On the Reliant front, I have to move / remove or break up the Kitten van (and Richard's old Rebel saloon) by the end of the month. Mike Cowie, whose white Kitten saloon I see is back in active service, well done Mike, has generously allowed us to store them at his place this past half decade or so, and the time has come to tidy those loose ends up, so a working party is needed.

The Kitten van is my last complete Reliant, and so it is an emotional time for me. Many years ago I was given an early Rebel saloon, in need of an MOT, and needing quite a lot of work. I was able to rise to the challenge and get it through the test, selling it shortly after to a young couple who seemed really keen, it seemed a bit like fate actually, they came and knocked on my door to ask if the car was for sale within a few hours of me getting back from the MOT test station! Sadly I discovered that they scrapped it a few months later due to gearbox problems.

All very sad, as is the current situation where I have a Reliant which needs a lot of work, I have virtually all of the new bits it needs, but not the physical ability these days to do the work. I used to complain that there were three things in life that you needed to achieve anything; the time, the money, and the motivation. The complaint was that you never seemed to have all three at the same time! Now I discover that I missed out the fundamental and obvious fourth ingredient, the physical ability. How we take our health for granted in the early years! The enthusiasm of youth seems to have evaporated, and while there is some wisdom to replace it, no longer the ability – ah well, at least I can still type – so you are not free of me yet!

Oh, one thing I learnt recently, a case of poor communication I think, or did you know this already? The factory, Reliant Partsworld, do in fact have Kitten exhausts in stock, and they are stainless! Also the price is not bad, so now you know, well now I know, perhaps you did all along!

Speaking of poor communication, Harry Darby deserves a special mention. Harry took the trouble to write to me months ago with an idea, and I have put his letter somewhere safe, sorry Harry, perhaps by the next edition I will be better organised.

I began this epilogue with mention of a weekend in Pitlochry in two weeks time, well that event went off last weekend in better weather than I had dared hope for, 55 cars from 1923 to 1964 had a wonderful weekend in Perthshire, and I was flattered by the many compliments. 8 months planning, all over into history in 36 hours – and I failed to get this to the printers before I headed off to enjoy myself – Moira even came too. Sadly mum could not cope with the pressure and stress of moving house, and is in hospital as I type, we have 14 days to empty 40 years of her life from the old family home into a new flat half the size – I think it is all a cunning plan on her part to avoid the difficult decisions, and let my brother Alan and I make the move for her!

Right, enough reminiscing, keep lubricating things, and thanks again Peter and Paul for a wonderful and memorable weekend in Hope in May – will I end up with a Liege? Well the Kitten van we will be breaking has the Reliant parts required – watch this space.

**Brian**

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