

Reliant Kitten *Register*

NEWSLETTER 60

September – October 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 60

Rebel parts stock

Kitten / Fox parts

Rebel alternative parts

Kitten alternative parts

Fox alternative parts

Our Mutual Aid Spares scheme

Mewsletter 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 picture this time is something special. Len Gardner's beautifully resprayed Kitten Van, yes it does have round headlights, I've seen the rest of the pictures. What is so special is that Len spent more on the respray than most of us do on a Kitten,— only to be disappointed, and had to have it re-done. I should run a competition to see who can guess what the job cost, but I am not as organised as I ought to be, so I'll just tell you that it was a £2,179 job. The actual colour of the car is more of a maroon than it appears on the cover.

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

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

INDEX

Page 3	Contact details and cover story
Page 4	Index
Page 5	the Registrar speaks
Page 6	Rebels and Foxes bit
Page 7	Membership matters
Page 8	Kitten 30
Page 9	Liege Page
Page 10	Continued
Page 11	Tempest Update
Page 12	Readers
Page 13	Letters
Page 14	continue
Page 15	for a bit
Page 16	Tales from Tore
Page 17	The Spares situatoion
Page 18	again
Page 19	Getting technical
Page 20	Front dampers
Page 21	Al Osborn
Page 22	Speaks
Page 23	Sales
Page 24	and Wants
Page 25	Epilogue
Page 26	Advert

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.

Welcome to a landmark, our 60th edition, and I've done it again! Failed to have it fall neatly in line with the Christmas mag, which traditionally has been something of a bumper edition – what to do? - make this edition a special, and then have to follow that up with another big one next time? Tell you what, I'll be guided by what falls through my letterbox over the next few weeks, don't let the fact that you are reading this, with no input from you, deter you from putting pen to paper for the next one!

Paul Wheatley has kindly kept me up to date with progress on his Liege, and you will read of his exploits in the Liege Page, thank you Paul.

The attempt to clear out the lock-ups back in September fell flat owing to a change of dates of a certain car club's bi-annual meeting, nice to have someone to blame when things don't work the way one had planned! We will visit this again, though some progress is on-going thanks to a small and elite group locally – oops, just put more stuff in there, tell you what, we'll address this again in the spring!

Al Osborn was on the telephone this morning to seek Les Gill's telephone number re his problem with rear damper mountings, Dick Goodall had been in touch 12 hours earlier to remind me that Al had a solution to that problem some years back, but for the first time, Dick's index did not have a reference, must have been a passing comment rather than an article.

Then when I was visiting Alan & Megan Shaw recently, he kindly presented me with the drawing you will see further on (there was a time when I would put the page number in here, but if recent efforts on that front are a guide, I will forget, so let's just say further on, and leave it at that!). Oops again, no room, tell you what, I'll enclose it on a separate sheet just for you.

And so it goes on. The number of contacts is still steady, but the number of those contacts who have a car that is not on the road, now outnumbers those who have a running one by four or five to one these days.

Bob Neal rang me in response to the question asked last time regarding a handbook or manual for the Fox Tandy campervan, and as far as he is aware, no such publication was ever produced, which is pretty much in line with my own beliefs, thanks for the confirmation Bob.

So, without further ado, on we go.

Rebel Round up

I am trying very hard to play catch up as regards getting this out on time, thanks to John Pearce doing the covers in record time, I have been in possession of them for almost two weeks now. I know that Thomas has written over 1,500 words of his epic journey to John O' Groats in his Rebel – but, I'm afraid you will need to wait till our bumper Christmas edition to see it!

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Foxes Den

17th Sept.'04

While getting my wife's car MOT'd today, I took the opportunity to ask the local MOT guy about some of my worries for the forthcoming MOT on my recently purchased Fox.

My Fox was first registered on 22/08/1987 and has no rear seat belts. The MOT guy said that vehicles registered after 31/03/1986 must have compliant rear seat belts.

Have any other Fox owners come up against this one?

Do I have to fit them? or is there some other reason for their absence?

I also enquired about insurance with the local broker. I was offered £280-ish TPFT (with 9 years NCD) is this reasonable?

Steve Hall - Brighton

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Membership Matters

It seems to me that if I were to expand this a bit and make it a regular feature, It would not be a big leap to mention who the new subscribers were in each edition, and so we would gradually build up a membership list that way – hmm, food for thought. At the last count there were 323 people on the mailing list, including our advertisers and other clubs with whom we exchange publications, this at the start of October 2004.

I am no further forward regarding the production of a membership list, one year!

One thing which did come up, I think it was Duncan Bradford who mentioned it most recently, though we have touched on it in years past, and that is some kind of sticker or badge which could be attached to a vehicle to make it clear to anyone (a future owner for example) that the vehicle is known to the Register.

Now I am in favour, indeed those of you who have been with us for a few years may recall the competition we ran to design a logo – I may even try to include it to remind you, though it is on your membership card – and don't bother ringing me up to say that you do not have one, they were produced, and sent out at the time of renewal, so most of you should have them, and I have as yet no system for providing them for new members – one down side of making them individual specific, but you are much better with a printed thing, my writing these days, well, you don't want to be trying to decipher it I assure you! again, one year!

So, such a badge as is being suggested could be based around the logo. The real question is do I try and be clever and make them vehicle specific? Or simply trust you to put them on an appropriate vehicle? I say that because, believe it or not, there are still people out there, a very small minority, but none the less people out there who are subscribers, but who have relevant vehicles that they have not yet given me details of!

I had very few responses to my comment regarding the rights and wrongs of circulating the membership list to those few who have expressed the desire not to have their details included on it – all who did comment however were of the opinion that it should only be sent to those who are happy to have their details in circulation, which on reflection is in line with my own feelings on the matter. Further thoughts on this matter will be welcome.

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The Kitten 30th anniversary event

Initial response to Dave Price's questionnaire about the proposed Kitten's 30th anniversary do has brought forth 28 replies so far (2/10/04), all but two of whom have promised to bring appropriate cars. So, if you want to be involved, and have not already done so, return the form NOW, and if you have lost it, send me a sae and I'll send you a copy.

There is even talk of a number of starting points from where entrants could meet up and travel in convoy, and before all the regulation readers write to tell me that you can't travel in convoy these days, just look at that number again, and remember that that is from all over the U.K, so we are in reality talking of convoys of two or three vehicles, not I am sure a problem – though with a bit of planning it may be possible for a number of those convoys to meet up at say four compass points around the ultimate event location – all manner of possibilities, all exciting stuff. I think the wording we need is “a Touring Assembly” to keep us right under the regs these days, watch this space.

Dave is the man, talk to him. 01608 650283 is the number. His address is :- 19 Croft Holm, Moreton in Marsh, GL56 0JH

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Liege Page

Hi Brian,

August 2004

Just to let you know I have finally got round to fitting a Weber downdraught carburettor to "Little Lucy's" engine.

I had got tired of messing around with the twin SUs, forever trying different sets of needles, topping up the dashpots etc., and I have always been disappointed with their fuel economy and concerned about lack of access to the battery etc. on the Liege.

As I had finally collected all the required parts, including a "Rebel Racer" modified inlet manifold and a brand new "old stock" carb (a 32 ICH, originally intended for a Fiesta 1100, only £25 off Ebay, still heat shrink wrapped, a real bargain) I thought it was time to give it a try before the MCC Edinburgh Trial on October 2nd.

It is amazing how the relatively huge lumps of SU have been replaced by a tiny item not much bigger than the manifold itself. I now have much improved access to the battery and alternator (previously a carbs off job before to get to either of those). I had forgotten how difficult it had been to get at the manifold studs too, with the 4 branch exhaust fitted. Hans Kirima kindly supplied me with 4 "Allen" UNC setscrews for the inlet manifold, which are so much easier to get on and off than trying to fiddle about a quarter of a flat at a time with a spanner (a socket won't fit, no side clearance).

Surprisingly, the most time consuming thing was making a new throttle linkage. I had two different carb throttle arms but neither were any use so I had to make one up, also a new bracket to carry the Rialto outer cable ferrule. It's not too pretty but seems to work OK and will be hidden under the air filter. I still have to source an air filter, a universal K&N pancake type will fit though. The Reliant choke cable was too short but the one which came with the carb was long enough, in fact I had to shorten it, no big problem.

On starting up the engine, following a minor adjustment or two, it was very noticeable that the idle is much more steady than with the SUs, which were a nuisance as they tended to "fluff up" a bit if you didn't blip the throttle occasionally and there was always a smell of rich mixture round the car. The advantage of a proper idling circuit and a separate idle mixture screw is very obvious!

Chris and I went out for a test drive this evening. The car has much better throttle response from idle, and a very noticeable mid range improvement too. There doesn't appear to be much difference in the top speed, perhaps not too surprising as Peter's straight-in twin manifolds are undoubtedly pretty good for gas flow and the Liege isn't very aerodynamic, as you know. The only disadvantage is that the engine bay is nowhere near as pretty now the SUs have gone.

Unfortunately, I noticed a fairly major problem today - and the cylinder head is going to have to come off to fix it! Just when you think you see light at the end of the tunnel - you realise it's a train coming at you....

During the process of changing the carbs over, I realised the answer to something that has had me thinking for some time now. A couple of times in the past, possibly over a year ago, when I was previously doing some work on the carbs, I was surprised to see some oil lying in the inlet port of no. 2 cylinder (only) after the engine had been stood overnight. I had assumed it was coming from the dashpot of the SU carb as that one did tend to lose a bit. I couldn't work out why it was only in that port and not in No.1 too though.

However, today I noticed that the no.2 inlet valve guide has slipped about 10 mm downwards into the inlet port! It is still firmly attached (and it can't drop right out because the valve head won't let it down that far) but the head will have to be dismantled to replace it. I am certain it's been like that for a good few thousand miles now. Because it sits too low, the top of the no.2 guide now sits in a puddle of oil in the head casting, instead of above it, hence the oil in the inlet port and the puff of blue smoke on start up, it's draining down the valve guide! The other thing is that all the valve stem oil seals have lifted off the guides and are sitting at the top of the valve stems, so they are totally ineffective! This might be because my valve springs are (stronger) Ford 105E Anglia because of the high lift cam and the wire is thicker than the Reliant ones. It's possible that the inner diameter of the springs has caught the shoulders of the seals and lifted them off the guides. I will have to investigate this further.

Strangely, Dave Holroyd was talking about different types of seal just yesterday, his engine also had ineffective oil seals so he's just replaced all of his. I also saw a different set of seals to mine on the counter at Rebel Racers last week (slimmer profile, with a spring band to hold them in place on the guide) - it must have been an omen!

One thing I forgot to mention. When I looked in the inlet ports, surprisingly the valves looked as shiny as new, not at all coked up like I have seen before on other engines. I would have expected a little carbon build up on them, even after 9,000 miles, bearing in mind the fact that the oil seals probably aren't effective.

Perhaps these modern petrols really do work as advertised to keep the engine internals clean - I use Shell Optimax or BP Ultimate if I can get it, otherwise just super unleaded from Sainsbury's down the road! Or maybe synthetic oil just burns cleanly - although to be honest, the oil consumption is very low.

Cheers, Paul Wheatley

Tempest News

Well, what can I say, life little coincidences never fail to amuse me. I had only two envelopes in the post on the afternoon, yes, that is how late the post is getting these days, of Tuesday the 28th of September, well it was the day after a holiday, so I guess the postie had a bit more to carry than usual. Anyway, the point is that both the envelopes came from Hull, (well, HU postcodes at any rate) and they both came from Tempest owners – now what's the chance of that I ask you?

You don't have to take my word for it, Thomas was here that afternoon, and he saw them.

They were however from opposite ends of the world of Tempest ownership, Julie and Stuart Vickers are rebuilding their recently acquired one ready for getting their car on the road, while the other, currently the property of Keith Watling, you will see in our adverts page.

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Readers Letters

Dear Brian,

3 May 2004

I'm writing in the hopes you might be able to help me with a problem. We spoke about this situation when I joined the Register.

I had purchased a partly unfinished Edwardian replica on a Kitten chassis and running gear, which I've since disassembled in order to restart and finish the car. I had thought of making it into a C-Cab van, but then saw Chitty-Chitty Bang-Bang, and thought of an open tourer. In any event it wasn't to be as my health has deteriorated. Result, an unfinished project.

The running gear would appear to have about 65,000 miles on them, assuming the odometer was correct, and I have no reason to think it wasn't. I had purchased headlights to be fitted in the brass bowls, (brand new motorcycle items) additional bras work, side lamps etc. The car came with five oak artillery wheels and brand new tyres, plus another set of rims and spoke blanks, worth a considerable amount in their own right.

Wait for it! Not done yet. The chance to pick up a complete Kitten estate came up, so as a double safety measure, and as a donor for the odd item I might need, I took the car. Reg is LWP 917P (Editor dives off into Registrar mode to see if we know this one – but no sign of it, so, another letter to write to get the details) Both cars are on SORN's. I bought the estate car sight unseen, and when it got here it actually turned out to be rather too good to be a donor, I think, though it certainly could be. The car indicates about 45,000 miles and came from an old boy in Sheffield, so I think that again, the mileage is accurate. Both engines turn, and the estate cranks and has oil pressure. Now to the problem.

I can't continue the project, and I don't know if I ever will be over this illness, so I must sell the lot. I want either or both of these cars to be back on the road one day, but I can't do them myself, so they must go. I have £700 in the pair of them, but I do need to sell so I'll be reasonable with anyone who will do something with them. The Edwardian is dismantled, but I have pictures and all parts for patterns etc., It sounds a big project, but it's actually pretty easy.

If you can connect me with someone I'd be obliged. They need a truck / trailer and some cash. *And the Editor's incompetence strikes again, I've misplaced the letter before I finished typing it in, if you recognise yourself, please give me a ring so I can have your number to hand to dish out to all those enquiries – sorry, Ed.*

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Dear Brian,

16th September 2004

Sorry I took my time doing the registration thing; I've been quite busy bringing the Fox up to a working and presentable state.

I would be interested to hear your thoughts on the Gaz shocks, I still feel that they are too expensive. When similar units for the likes of the Triumph range are under £30 why should we be paying more than twice that?

I have had to purchase the Gaz shocks since they seem to represent the best deal so far, and I could not leave the Fox of the road indefinitely.

My overhauled transmission is now back in the Fox, complete with Lucas Electronic Ignition, and the manifolds ported, it all seems O.K. except that I cannot get the tappet noise down to an acceptable level (even after re-facing the tappits) I could yet be after one of your aluminum rocker boxes.

The front and rear suspension and brakes have been largely overhauled. Other than that, the Fox just needed some general tidying and the front shocks for the MOT.

With that in mind please note that the answers to some of the questions on the application form will soon be changing.

Yours sincerely, Steve Hall - Brighton

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From time to time I am contacted by someone who is not a subscriber, but has found out about us when they want to sell or pass their car on. The deal I offer is that in exchange for the car's details, we will run a free advert, and while such individuals are of course welcome to subscribe should they feel so inclined, there is no pressure for them to do so – there follows a letter received with a completed application form (the simplest way to harvest the details I require), and a kind donation.

Dear Brian,

18/09/2004

Thank you for the opportunity of running an advertisement in the Register's Mewsletter. Looking at the magazine I realise it was a lost opportunity for me in not joining the Register when the vehicle was first acquired. Having looked at your Mewsletter (59) what a nice set up you have for your readers. I am sure that the outcome for my vehicle would have been different had I joined your ranks. Oh well. That's life I suppose.

I do hope that one of your members is able to take advantage of my free offer of the Kitten, and bring it to good use again. It was category 7 when acquired, and I don't think that it has altered much since being stored.

Thank you again and I enclose a donation for your funds and wish you all good fortune for the future.

Regards Roy Parsons - Wirral

All very nice, but his comment about his "lost opportunity" made me wonder if he had in fact had an invitation before and not taken it up – but as is too often the case these days, I do not have the time to check – and what would I learn anyway?

What his comment does do is reinforce my belief that everyone is best served if owners simply become subscribers. See article further on regarding membership.

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Dear Brian,

18th September 2004

I recently spent a few days changing some of Kitty's parts. The radiator, timing cover and gearbox rear oil seals. The propshaft front UJ was tight, and I took out the circlips and tapped the yoke as per removal instructions, the nearing caps didn't visibly move, but the joint then worked perfectly, so I put the clips back in and I was surprised to find grease nipples there, so I pumped plenty of grease in.

Confident that all was well, I went on what is for me, a long trip from Norwich to Colchester. I got there without any problems. I checked the water before the return journey, but on the way back, Kitty boiled up. The engine did not seize, but it was very hot when I stopped. I waited ages, then re-filled the system, and we came home with no hint of any trouble.

Before using her again I tightened the head studs to the correct torque, replaced the vacuum pipe to the carb, and welded up the splits in the air filter canister. I have dreaded finding oil in the radiator, but it seems to be clear, so I hope I have been lucky, although the coolant level will not stay up to the indicator level, it hovers a little above the tops of the radiator core tubes.

I have a passion for gadgets, so I tried a SPQR tappet adjuster tool (car boot sale £1) but found it harder to use than feeler gauges, hence we rattle a little from the top end. I have also bought myself a specials ratchet driver for 3/8" sockets, it has a shaft running through the handle, which turns the socket by angle gears so that you only need to move it from side to side for final tightening. I haven't tried it yet, but am sure it is going to be useful.

I found a hexagon grease nipple and bought a gun for it. (car boot sale £1), so I drilled and tapped a hole in the steering rack pinion cover as per the Mewsletter. A tablespoon of golden oil dripped out, so I think I am very fortunate, and have, of course, put a good deal more back in.

I hope that you will be able to help with the enclosed wish list.

Yours truly - Brian Martin (583) Norwich.

P.S. Have fitted 2" diameter clock made by Ford (car boot sale £2) so Kitty can tell me the time now – request in last Mewsletter refers.

Thanks for that Brian, sounds like an air lock in the cooling system, hope you get away with it, but it sounds as though you did all the right things. The coolant level – yes regular reader, I know we have covered this before, but it bears repeating, one of our recommended mods that the factory did eventually adopt in production vehicles, and that is an expansion tank for the cooling system. Ed

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Dear Brian,

22.9.04

I thought I'd drop you a line on my thoughts about restoring a Fox, or Kitten, or any other Reliant.

Recently I sent for a brake light switch and two locking nuts to fit. The cost from Reliant was £21.54. Three brake shoe springs from a dealer came to £10. I requested the price of a rear lifting door handle from a dealer who has a Fox he is breaking, and he said he didn't know off hand, which I take it means I'll pay top price for something that has seen better days.

I am questioning my decision to put the Fox on the road again as spares are so dear. It certainly hits your pocket.

I think because things are hard to get the band wagon is easy to jump on.

It is nice to save vehicles, or anything else from the past, but to be held to ransom for little things proves something to me about the motor trade and business ethics.

There is 17 ½% vat, and the postage and packing which ups the cost some more.

Today I need two nuts to fit something, but I know of only one company that can supply them, and the post and packing means that I must pay an extra £3 on top of the 38p for the nuts. Am I nuts?

I will continue to do what I can to the Fox when I can, with the hope I will succeed in completing it before the weather gets worse. But I'm not at all happy that distributors of parts think we have a bottomless purse.

They say if you don't want to get burned, don't get a fire, but as the fire is burning with a red glow, I can't see why I should throw water on it. Well, not yet anyway, but I'm only a one pension person, and have spent quite a bit already.

I'm not a quitter, or I would have done what my wife said long ago, and go modern and into debt. (Not on your nelly). But a good Kitten would be nice once I decide to sell the Fox, if I ever do, after all my work.

All the best, Norman. - Cheshire

What can I say, obviously plan ahead and don't get caught with postage that costs more than the goods, it does occur to me that the mutual aid spares scheme might have been able to help with some parts, see adverts page for some other bits Norman needs. Sadly, I too used to live in the 1970's and 1980's when it came to prices for spares, but the fact is that for many parts Reliant are no more expensive than comparable parts for modern vehicles. We should be grateful that they are there at all, as there have been times in the past when things were shaky on that front. Not wishing to dwell on the subject too long, but I have to say that

Reliant vehicles were never cheap, they were always a specialist vehicle, and the idea that they offer cheap transport, other than for those who look at time in decades rather than years, is just not true. In the 70's a Robin or Kitten would cost you considerably more than a Mini or an Imp. This is one thing that I have to say concerns me a bit when I see vehicles offered "free to a good home", while it is good to know that an owner would rather see a vehicle passed on to an enthusiast rather than have it scrapped, I am concerned that not only are we sending the wrong message in terms of vehicle values, but that we risk attracting the wrong type of owner. While Rebels may be cheap to insure, Kittens and Foxes only are if on special "Classic Car" policies. Often with a mileage restriction – not a problem if you have another vehicle on the road.

Ed.

Tales from Tore

Issue 59 Page 20 - Steering Racks. Nice to see Alan Shaw reminding us all of the need for oil inside this component. An ingenious solution is detailed well. Being totally biased, I will stick to my preferred method as given earlier this year in the mag.

Issue 59 Page 17 etc. - Lots of Reliants. Nice to see Kerry's dedication to saving cars and I wish him well. I see that my namesake, Graham Goodall in Derbyshire, is even more devoted to his Trabants and now has 49 of them! What a man.

Sales & Wants - Wow, no less than 2 Salamanders are on offer! What percentage of the surviving cars is that? With this crooked leg I am tempted by an auto gearbox, but there are already 4 Kittens in my parking area, so perhaps I had better not?

Swivel pin grease. It is now 10 weeks since the last application of grease to Kitty and the steering is still quite free so perhaps the Moly slip Bentone based molybdenised multi-purpose grease is the way forward. Wait a mo! They also sell that thick, black, sticky grease that is used on 5th wheel couplings on lorries and that is alleged to be totally waterproof. Now is it worth trying that as the ultimate ball joint lubricant? It's called - OGL Heavy duty bentone based open gear lubricant. Quote - "Ideal for adverse weather conditions and for use on slow moving, heavily loaded working surfaces, it is an exceptional fifth wheel lubricant for heavy road transport. MoS2, graphite and extreme pressure additives. Completely water resistant, OGL provides a protective coating which will not drip or drain."

Now you know. Cheers, Dick Goodall.

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The Spares Situation (The Kitten Register's spares that is)

As time goes by – well, it has been a while since I spoke to you in song titles! It is becoming clear to me (I can see clearly now? Well it is October now, so the rain will have stopped!) that my ability to stock and despatch spares is becoming restricted. There is not enough space in the house, my ability to actually get up into the loft is coming into question, the lock-ups, hopefully down to one soon, are damp, and so a solution needs to be found. One possibility that springs to mind – I use the word springs carefully, as they, the Kitten ones, are already handled by another individual in the Register on our behalf, and, from my point of view, that works very well indeed – thank you Graeme.

Many, indeed most of the parts we hold in stock, are parts that Reliant and the other dealers are, or have in the past been, unable to supply, like Kitten headlamps, steering racks, front dampers Rebel handbrake cables and the like.

They are all slow moving, in most cases less than one a year. Though we have actually moved 4 steering racks this year alone, a record! They are a special category, as we have them reconditioned, but they are held in stock dry, and have to be oiled and the boots fitted before despatch, and I get that done locally, so that is not a particularly good example. The headlights, all fourteen or so of them, represent an investment of about £280, and we only sell one or two pairs a year, indeed the most recent sale was of a single unit, which is why I am suspicious as to the stock being an even number – they are amongst the many parts kept in the loft, and I am not about to clamber up there to count them. They are obviously fragile – oh why is none of this straightforward?

Ball joints are a delicate issue, as Reliant at one time could not supply them, and so we took steps to ensure availability, and I have over 24 bottom ones, reconditioned and improved, in stock, which represents about a thousand pounds worth! They could do with painting as it looks as though they will be in stock for a while as Reliant have them available again. Also the top ones we have here, well, it is a long story, again based on past supply problems.

Anyway, it seems to me that one solution, rather than look for someone with sufficient space time and energy to take everything, would be for a number of people to volunteer to become the custodian of one part, and then we can publish an up to date list, and move on from there.

There would be options, an individual could, if he or she was able and willing, pay for the parts, and then collect the money as they are sold, or, the Register could retain ownership, and payment could be made here, and we would authorise despatch. I am quite prepared to be flexible in this regard.

It all seems to need a bit of thought, and you need to consider if you are able and willing to become a specific part owner or custodian.

I do see this as one possible way forward. It really is not a lot of work, I doubt if I make up more than a dozen or two parcels a year, but even that is proving too much these days. So on an individual part, you would not expect to make up more than two or three parcels a year, but you would be required to have a safe, secure and dry place to keep the stock of the part you chose to look after.

That said I realise that I have amongst my personal stock of secondhand parts, many rare parts, like wishbones and lower steering columns, these are not “on the list”, that is quite simply because they are mine, as distinct from the Register’s bits. However, as my other half is constantly at pains to point out these days, I do not own a Reliant any longer, and so how can I justify keeping spares for vehicles I no longer possess? I have to admit that it is a difficult question to answer!

Also I realise while putting this up on the screen, that it is mainly those parts that cause me the most frustration, because while I have them, I do not have easy access to them, being buried in the depths of one of the lock-ups. Never mind, one situation at a time.

That brings me neatly on to another matter, subject of a letter from Andrew Norman, which was making radical suggestions about ownership of a Salamander, the only small Reliant based vehicle built with an automatic gearbox. Andrew even spoke to me about this

idea of his to ensure that I printed his letter, but I am as yet undecided, and while I have no wish whatever to upset Andrew by not publishing his letter, it is a touchy subject from my point of view – I have never made any secret of my belief that the best small organisations are those run by a benign dictatorship – so you will just need to see if I have published Andrew's letter on another page, or perhaps next time. The fact is that it has been a year or three since the subscription to the Register altered, and we have had not one, but two increases in the cost of postage since then, so subs if they do not increase next year, will certainly have to do so for 2006. My feeling is that 13 is not a good number, and 14 a bit of a jump, not an unprecedented jump mind you, so I am leaning towards 14 from the end of 2005. I'll probably phase it in by making the increase effective for new members during 2005, and the rest of us from the end of 2005, which as it happens ties in very well with the need to have membership application forms re-printed in the near future! Thank you anyway Andrew for the kind thought, I know your ideas are well intentioned.

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Getting Technical

When I called in at Alan Shaw's recently, he had waiting for me the following answer to a question asked in the last edition, thank you Alan: Oops, I am out of space, I'll enclose the drawing as a separate sheet rather than add another 4 pages to this edition, or perhaps just hold it over till next time – hmmm, more decisions! You'd think I'd have the hang of this by now, Wouldn't you?

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Front dampers for the Kitten and Fox

On the Kitten / Fox damper front, there are a raft of possibilities, all of them compromises, and I am having difficulty knowing which way to go. There are a number of alternatives, a variety of prices, and a variety of options, like do we want adjustable damp rates? Certainly adjustable spring seats make for much easier changing of the spring, but most people, as far as I am aware, would rather have a complete damper and spring unit, ready to fit to the vehicle. That said, the Fox has a heavier spring than the Kitten, and so there is a case for just holding dampers, and fitting the springs to order. The problem there, from my point of view, is that I don't want to be doing anything, save making up the odd parcel as required, if that.

Carl from Coventry is trying out one option from Lo-Cost Dampers, while Steve Hall is looking at another option from Gaz, they are cheaper, but have half an inch less travel than the originals – does that matter? I guess the answer to that one depends on what type of use you put your Kitten or Fox to, and to some extent, the condition of the roads where you live, and how many and how severe the speed humps in your area are.

Classic Microcars can offer a motorcycle unit, it is metric, but does fit. It is confusing trying to compare prices, as some units come complete with springs, and some do not. While spring prices vary, they do not vary as dramatically as the damper prices do. Then there are the ever present matters of V.A.T and carriage, and If I do take some into stock, we are of course talking about two lots of carriage costs, one from them to here, and one from here to you, when you need them, so any discount for bulk has to more than offset the extra carriage costs.

There is a very neat hydraulic spring compressor on the market just now, which would make the fitting of the springs a simple task, but at about £100 it would add say a tenner to the damper cost, assuming a batch of five pairs, and I am told that I should not be bringing more things into the house – problems problems, and more decisions to be made.

One of the possible suppliers did suggest that we could enjoy a better financial deal if we bought them the hydraulic spring compressor – more decisions.

I do now have two deposit cheques for dampers, and a third individual has said that if we get them, he will take a pair, so we are not far away from being able to order the 5 pairs that seem to be a minimum order quantity.

Just reading this over I am wondering what is keeping me, the need for everyone to understand that compromises need to be made if the costs are not to soar is one reason for putting this all down in black and white, but once the compromise is decided upon, we are in fact very close to putting some into stock, which, a year since I sold the last pair, can't be bad. - What to do about the springs (Fox or Kitten, fitted to the damper, or not?)

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A Osborn

7th June 04

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The last Mewsletter (No. 58), had very little technical controversy , questions, or any technical points at all! Almost disappointing.

Thankfully my Kitten van got through the MOT with nothing more than a couple of "Advises". Although the only thing I had to do this year before the MOT, was to change the handbrake cable. It was in full working order apart from those silly metal grooves the bare steel cable goes in round the corner just before it clevises onto the handbrake link protruding through the backplate. Yet again you gob more grease into that channel, and bingo, a nasty rusty piece of wire from the cable will jab you nicely in the forefinger! Having done this in the past, we grease here with caution. Cable gone, the MOT man will not be impressed. Nor will I be if it breaks, (or doesn't, if you see what I mean). So, get an old one out of the spares pile, clean and grease it, and fit it.

We now notice that the replacement cable is at its limits as far as adjustment is concerned and the rear brake adjusters are as far as they will go, and we only just have rear brakes.

The reason for all this is that the drums are well worn. I could get both brake and cable adjustment back by the brake shoes with new ones, but the fitted ones are only half worn, i.e. the problem is with the worn out drums. Hopefully we have some more (less worn) drums in the spares pile.

An interesting note from the last Mewsletter was the availability of a decent clutch release bearing, i.e. a proper race type. But with an unfortunate snag of having to re-drill the flywheel, or get the one for the later clutch. Having said all that, having fitted several clutches over the years, and had a bit of fun with release bearings (graphite) all in they aren't really a problem, provided you change them when you change the clutch, there is no advantage, in fact quite the opposite in not replacing all three clutch parts at the same time. In fact 5 pieces need changing, as you must replace the two roll pins in the clutch cross shaft, they only last one and a half clutches.

I did have one entertaining moment when I did a clutch change a while ago, and either I used a part worn plate, or maybe it was a used cover. But in a fit of using at least one new part I fitted a new release bearing with the old cover or plate. The clutch worked fine for the first 20 yards, then slipped! As I knew I'd adjusted everything correctly, it then dawned on me that the problem was this new release bearing. Normally the release bearing and the plate wear in tandem, and take up the wear in each other in such a way that things should never need adjusting once things have bedded in. But now with this new release bearing, it was just holding the clutch off. What to do? Not being one who enjoys gearbox removals, and having just done it! the problem is that the thrust bearing and hence the gearbox, is too close to the clutch / engine. What we want is a spacer piece between the two, and it doesn't have to be very thick. About the thickness of an average washer will do. Now, how to fit a dozen or so 1/2 AF washers around the bell housing without major dismantling. Turn the washers into little horseshoes (hacksaw / file) loosen the gearbox bellhousing nuts, and with a little prising, insert said washers./ Now I don't recommend YOU do this, after all it is a bodge of the first order, but being a lazy person! Yes it did work, and those washers were in there for many miles.

One day giving it some welly down the by-pass there was a ting-a ling noise. Ah, one of the washers had dropped into the clutch and found its way out! being a keeper of all parts, useful or not, we still have some of those washers that were recovered at the next clutch job. 'They bring a smile to the face – one bodge we got away with.

As regards the fitting of the later clutch, it says you leave off the clutch lever return spring, and reverse the pedal return spring? Surely this is going to attempt to operate the clutch for you? Perhaps we can have an explanation for the next Mewsletter.

One final thought re side windows, I have always driven around in the van, usually carting junk of one form or another. But just recently I thought it would be nice to fit rear side windows, especially as I have the rubbers and the glass. My insurance company then had "kittens" when I asked them, "modified vehicle" they cried, almost incensed with the thought that some one would change a vehicle, can't do it they said, uninsurable they said!

Other insurance companies gave lots of silly reasons why they wouldn't insure me, one wouldn't touch wide wheels! Another said classic insurance – maximum 6000 miles a year! And so on. Eventually a complaint to my existing insurers management with the information that fitting Reliant windows to a Reliant, as they did in the factory could not really be considered to be a modification, they agreed. So now we are allowed to fit side windows behind the doors. But being one ever to see a silly angle, I am thinking of only fitting the nearside one as an aid to view over the left shoulder. View over the right shoulder does not need a window, so we'll leave that as a van! Does my Kitty then become a var or a can?

Regards,

Al Osborn

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Sales & Wants

For Sale :- A Cipher, yes, you heard me correctly, probably the only Cipher on the road in the U.K. Frank Heil has decided to part with it. Very rare in fair condition full M.O.T. with a lot of history and a spare set of wheels and tyres.

For Sale :- A Jensen Healy in very good condition complete with toneau cover and hard top

For Sale :- A rare Kitten van, yes it is still a van. Offers about £550 for this excellent condition example, MOT. For full details ring Stewart Ward

For Sale :- A unique opportunity to purchase an original John Box Tempest. Cost to build using all new parts, £10,000. Demo and web car, leather upholstery, stainless steel exhaust, metallic BRG. Full weather kit. Only 8,200 miles. Taxed and MOT. Registered as a Tempest. Yours for just £5,000.

For Sale :- Rebel window frames in good condition, two sets, one set still attached to the doors.

For Sale :- A set of 4 Kitten wheels, blasted and painted, with new (never used) tyres. Yours for £100 plus carriage, or buyer collects.

For Sale :- 1980 Scimitar SE6b automatic in Red. Taxed and tested, £1,000 Contact Keith White

For Sale :- Salamander - Contact Robin He also has a Robin looking for a home.

For Sale :- A new Fox chassis, complete with new engine, rebuilt gearbox, new suspension (disc brakes at the front), new radiator, new 4.1 axle, new Fox wiring loom, pedal box, many other bits and 5 clean second hand Fox wheels. £1,750 the lot. Contact John Box

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

A rare opportunity to acquire a Salamander, Mr. Faulkner

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.

Free to a good home :- A Reliant Kitten, this red estate car has been stored for a couple of years, and prepared for MOT spring 2004, but move forces new priorities. Contact Ian Harbron

Free to a good home :- A Reliant Kitten was condition 7 when put into storage and your editor has done it again, lost the details, if you recognise your car, please give me a ring so that I can pass the details on to anyone who is interested, thank you, Ed.

Wanted :- Austin Allegro windscreen wiper assembly, complete. If you can help please get in touch with John Dillon – he needs one for his Liege!

Wanted :- Pair of Rebel seat belts, ring John Denis

Wanted :- A clock for a Reliant dashboard.

Epilogue

Did I mention that I am finally getting into the decimal age? Well, it's like this, I have neither the time nor the inclination to actually count these bits of paper that conspire to keep me away from the keyboard, or the top of my desk, but the new policy is to process them 10 at a time, not 10 a day, as it would take forever to get through them, but 10 at a sitting. Well that's the theory, it has been my plan for a few weeks now, though I have yet to put it into practice. This week, well I won't bore you, but thanks to John having the covers ready for me on my English trip last week, getting this edition finished is a high priority. Today's post brought more work – it almost always does – and one of the letters received today you will read in the letters pages. Right, no time like the present, it is now 14:20 on Wednesday the 29th, the MOT testing station just rang to ask if I could bring the Citroen another day, as one of their machines is down, so I agreed to Friday, so I will stop this, take advantage of the 'spare' couple of hours, and see if I can get through 10 of those bits of paper before I go on, well, the first five are in fact Norman Schofield's letter, so that will kill two birds as they say!

Right, it is now 16:43, so that was more than two hours, I did get sidetracked, and Duncan Bradford will, as he reads this, recall the odd comments I made in a note I sent him along with two pages of A4 paper that were amongst the many that were making getting at this keyboard difficult, so I dealt with his first before typing up Norman's letter, which was written on fairly small paper, and covered 5 sheets, which along with Duncan's two, and the letter I then wrote to cover them, and a few fuel receipts from my recent trip, makes the ten processed at that session – next session starts after food – talk to you later, or more likely tomorrow, as some of today's mail really ought not to be ignored, and is complicated, a new subscriber, who has been threatening to join our number for years, sent a big cheque, but it was intended to take advantage of an old offer which is no longer available. More work!

Right, another mad rush at the end, apologies for any errors or omissions, and remember to grease all ball joints, propshafts, and oil those Rebel trunnions before the winter sets in.

Till next time take care, happy motoring.

Brian

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