

Reliant Kitten Register

NEWSLETTER 63

March – April 2005



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 63

Rebel parts stock

Kitten / Fox parts stock

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 the promised Jimp. With hindsight this would have been a good edition to do a feature on them, but, as so often seems to be the case these days, I am not that organised. If any of our Jimp owning readers would care to do us a story that would be a great help.

The literature I used to put out quoted a rather optimistic number of Jimps produced, and I see that figure quoted in the motoring press since – one has to be so careful when putting things in print, the actual number built was just under 60 I now believe.

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.

Welcome to this edition of the Mewsletter. It was Dr. Bill Lonie who way back in the early days, responded to my question about what to call the magazine, he said it didn't matter what I called it, it was not a magazine, but a "Mewsletter", and it stuck! The Rebel Register, when it was still on the go, called its publication, very appropriately, the "Rebellion", and I would have loved something as catchy and appropriate.

Bill sold his Kitten a few years ago, having owned it from new, and while he is no longer a subscriber, I have enjoyed a coffee with him and his wife Win on a number of occasions. He even allowed me to borrow the car to take to an event some years back. We do still exchange Christmas cards, and I may, if I remember, send him a copy of this edition to keep in touch.

Moira, who is quite well these days, is always complaining about the amount of time I spend on the computer, so, unusually, I did not start this edition till number 62 (the last one) was ready to go to the printers – I chose those words carefully, it was ready today – 18th January – but there was snow on the ground, and while I still enjoy driving on snow, I do not enjoy trying to walk on it – so, they will do tomorrow, if the weather improves.

I have still to address the envelopes for edition 62, and more strenuously, cut, assemble and encapsulate the membership cards – thank you Brian and Ian Millar for making them possible, so I will stop this for the moment, and do some more urgent work – just had to make a start!

Many thanks are due to both John Johnstone and Thomas Mitchell for their not inconsiderable help with the membership card encapsulation process – your assistance made a very long winded task the more bearable, not to say much quicker than it would otherwise have been.

Right, it is now March. I collected the front covers for this edition from John last week, thanks John. On the maths front, you remember my question relating to curly haired aged officers, my thanks to those who responded, Steve Hall however had another way of remembering – "SOHCAHTOA", he told me. That'll be :-

S OH (sine = opposite/hypotenuse)
C AH (cosine = adjacent/hypotenuse)
T OA (tangent = opposite/adjacent)

All this in the year when I think it was Hull University that is actually closing its maths department – what is the country coming to? Oh, I forgot, standards of education are improving, so we have nothing to worry about then! (So long as the light works, and water comes out the tap in the morning, I just know it is going to be a good day!)

I know that some of our readers take RUMCAR NEWS, the organisation for unusual microcars, but for the benefit of the rest of us, I see that the real meaning behind the initials MENSA has been divulged by their wonderful editor Tony Marshall – not a relative, MENSA actually stands for "Microcar Experts, Not Simply Anoraks" – so now you know!

I must confess to just a bit of envy every time RUMCAR NEWS drops through my letterbox. Tony, Jean, and the team do a splendid job, lots of colour and a first class layout – the reason for the envy is that I am quite sure the computer I have here is well capable of producing such a thing, it is just that I have no idea how to make it do that! In truth I prefer our A5 booklet, but if you were to see their A4 publication, you might take a different view!

Moving, as ever, swiftly on then...

Rebel Round up

Hi Brian,

18/01/2005

Well after the summer of travelling up to John O' Groats and most importantly making it back in one piece. I took a drive down to visit my dad, who stays in Coatbridge, Lanarkshire, which is only about a 20-mile drive on the M8 motorway. I was cruising along about 50mph when the car began to slowly fill-up with a blue haze, at first I thought that it was just my eyes playing tricks, but the smoke was getting more intense. I took my foot off the accelerator and I then heard a loud popping sound from under the bonnet. I thought that poor Eva was a goner. I was expecting flames to be toasting my trousers by this stage.

Quick thinking was needed, so I switched off the ignition un-buckled the seat belt, ready for the big jump out. Luckily this occurred near the slip road, so I just let her coast to a stop. She is not fitted with hazard lights, but luckily the roads were quiet at the time. I got out and made a dive for the nearest bus shelter. After a minute or three I realised that things were looking up, she had not gone up in a puff of smoke. Thank You Lord (because I had just put £10 of fuel in her).

I opened the bonnet to find the engine bay soaked in oil and the oil filler cap lying over the rocker cover. The oil had spread and dropped over the exhaust manifold / down pipe, causing all the smoke to come into the cabin, how lucky was I?

To this day I still don't know if that popping sound was the oil cap flying off or was it something more internal.

I nursed her home after seeing my dad and family but she was just so underpowered and sounded rough. When driving from a standstill in first gear she just popped along. The smoke was still intruding into the cabin so I had to drive with the window down it was like 'The Scent of Calcutta' The next day when it was light I had a good look at the engine. Whenever the revs were say about 4000, the oil cap would fly off! It was like a weight on a pressure cooker. In this case it was the smoke jettison from the cap before lift off. The coolant system is not using any water so I don't think the cylinder head is gone. I asked our Brian to have a look, and we have come up with the problem being piston ring / piston issue. Hence all the smoke from the crankshaft ventilation system. Brian had got word that an engine was going spare up north in Peterhead. That is currently in the boot of the Rebel and I can work on it, weather permitting. It also acts as a dead weight when driving in snow laden roads.

Here's hoping I can bring this engine up to standard.

Thomas Mitchell - Renfrew

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Membership Matters

I am pleased to tell you that as of March, we have had 273 individuals continuing their support of the Register.

It will be interesting to see if the end of May number reaches the last years figure. I see from the records that we had 277, and 291 paid up people at the end of May 2003 and 2004

respectively, this from our returns to the Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs, an organisation this Register is happy to support.

Membership renewals are not something I ought to be discussing with you, as it is a case of preaching to the converted. I am membership secretary of a car club with just over 200 members, almost all Scottish resident, though we do have a couple abroad, and they are just as bad as Kitten Register subscribers when it comes to membership renewal. There are always those who cause a lot of extra work for the membership secretaries each year. Payment of subscription by standing order is one potential way of getting round that situation, though that would want to be done right after a rise in subscriptions, and hence hopefully avoid the need to change the amount for a few years – this is something I am considering, and would welcome your thoughts and comments. Given that the subscription has just risen to £14, now might be a good time for me to plan for a new form to go out later in the year for those wishing to pay by this method in future.

That said, our five year folk will see the end of their subscriptions this December, and while it was a one time offer, I could be tempted to repeat it on the 5th anniversary of its introduction. The reduction in admin over the 5 years is considerable. Last time we did this, almost 10% of you took up the offer, which potentially saves me from handling over 100 cheques over the period. I will need to give this more thought, but I am leaning in favour at the moment – again your thoughts will be welcome.

More on such matters in future.

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The Kitten 30th anniversary event

Dave Price is the man, talk to him if you have not already done so, and are interested.

If you are planning coming along, you must let Dave know, and if you have not already done so, NOW might be a good time to do it!

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Liege Page

I happen to know that Paul Wheatley has now found a larger Weber for his Liege, and I was hoping to be able to tell you first hand just what a difference it makes compared to when he took me for a spin at Fladbury when he was still using the twin SU's – but it was snowing when I was down his way last month, and I enjoy my creature comforts rather more than I ought these days I'm afraid.

Peter is still adamant that he is taking no more orders – at least not till he catches up with his outstanding commitments. Still, 62 not out isn't a bad start, is it?

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Tempest Tales

I am contacted from time to time by people with questions about the Tempest. Sometimes these are questions I can answer, but most often they relate to the current supply situation, and those, sadly, I cannot answer at this time.

On a happier note Martin Seymour has recently acquired one of the Steve Campbell Tempest kits, running but unfinished, and Martin has indicated a willingness to take on the mantle of Tempest Registrar. So, if you have a Tempest, or even just are thinking about one. Martin is your man.

Those with such facilities can also contact Martin on :- martin.seymour1@ntlworld.com

Brian

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Readers Letters

Brian,

23-01-05

Keep up the good work, Mewsletter always received with delight. My special has undergone many metamorphoses, and not finished yet.

So far, the Rebel chassis has disintegrated. I bought another totally different (kit) car chassis. The Reliant engine has been in and out, and then back in again.

I considered a F.I.R.E. engine mated to the reliant gearbox, but didn't do that. At the moment I have an Alpha 2 litre T-spark engine, it looks like a big skinny Reliant, and I don't know what the final outcome will be. Still, it keeps me out of trouble.

The Reliant content of the vehicle seems to be shrinking but the original idea is still there.

Yours, Mike Plummer - Sidmouth

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Dear Brian,

23 02 05

I rang you recently to place an advert to sell my Fox, it requires a younger enthusiast to tidy it up, though it has done, and still does plenty of real work. I am taking the easy way out and buying a diesel Panda (at least he is staying with the animal fraternity, though he has gone from colour to black & white, Ed!).

I mentioned to you reconditioning steering shaft joints, so I enclose the article from an old Scimitar owner's mag. If you are making one good shaft from two old shafts with one end worn, saw the jaws off the good end of one shaft. This enables you to press out the bearings without damage, to then re-use them in the other shaft. The suggestion at the end to fit a gaiter on the lower joint does work, we used that on Kittens where the lower joint seems to catch the weather more than they do on Foxes.

In the 1960's I used to prepare a supercharged 999cc Cooper S for speed hillclimb work. The car was in full race trim and so could not be used on the road, it would pull safely to

10,000 rpm, though oil pumps did not last long. It would take me a week just setting up the F3 valve springs, inners and outers 10 thou off spring crush (yes, there is nothing more frustrating than to build an engine with a high lift camshaft, just to find the valve springs are coilbound, Ed)

The supercharger was mounted over the engine, at Pontypool Park we rolled the car end over end, and concluded that the gyroscopic effect of the high mounted blower was the culprit, tending to stop the car going round sharp bends. We lowered the blower to wheel centre height, and never rolled again.

From those days I would mention that the 1.5" S. U. carb was favoured by the 750 racers, a single 1.5" performing better than two 1.25's. For ultimate performance a Weber 40 DOCE properly set up may be the best for an 850 engine.

I have noted in passing that the Reliant head could probably be downdrafted like the F3 engine was, that is the inlet port bored down between the valve guide and the manifold face, the old ports, and any water leaks, being then bunged up with epoxy. This then enables two twin choke racing IDA series Webers to be used.

The jetting of carbs to the engine is vital, we used to spend hours on the rolling road setting up the 2 inch S.U. needle, starting with a weak needle, and filing the profile correct over 8 equally spaced points to obtain the correct general profile. This procedure is bad on the nerves standing next to an engine pulling up to 10,000 rpm possibly on full power, with an open exhaust. You do not want neighbours close by, you also hope the rolling road does not seize or exit car left through the garage wall at over 100mph!

I hope I have not bored you for too long, thanks for the advert.

Ian Evans - Ruan Minor, Cornwall

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Dear Brian,

26 February 2005

Thank you for your sub reminder. I know what I did, I put the yellow form back in the magazine having used it as a book mark whilst reading from cover to cover, and then put the magazine away with the previous ones. Had it been merely a small paper slip it would have been left on my desk ready to pay – *Oh, I see, so it's all my fault then? Ed!* - Anyway, I enclose my cheque and an extra pound towards postage.

Recent health problems, and the experience of 79 years has taught me to plan ahead. I decided to take stock recently, I am feeling a bit old to be working on and under cars. Many years ago I rebuilt an Alvis "Speed 20" open tourer with a Van den Plas body. It looked like a large MG sports, two doors, slab tank with spare wheel, and I finished it in metallic green with a matching vinyl soft top. I stripped it down to the chassis until it consisted of just two parallel iron rails with heavily riveted cross members. Nothing else could be removed. I stripped the engine – which was, in fact, perfect! To paint the car (aluminium too) I took lessons in spraying. I can boast that it was so good that when dad bought a brand new Alvis saloon, he immediately asked me to re-spray it metallic gold lower half, and metallic maroon upper. It was the talk of our town. In those days, after the war, you took the colour you got, grateful to get anything.

For the Speed 20 I asked Kingston upon Hull if I could have the PRH 1 registration plate when it came up. Those days there were no charges, if you requested a number, they would usually give it to you when it came up. My request was granted, and three years later I was issued with the number.

For many years past it has adorned my Scimitar, but Scimitar values have plummeted, and as a pensioner on a low fixed income and a disgusting state pension, flogging the number plate was the only way I could afford a new car. I also decided it was imperative to get a car small enough to keep in my garage. I now have a new Mazda MX5 Sport, with hard top in the almost universal metallic finish.

There is no doubt modern cars are well equipped – with power steering and all the other luxuries, and we both love it. It was important that Dorothy did not feel she was too old at 71 to ride in a sports car! It is so easy to drive – actually I have to consciously take care not to drive too fast! I still love cars I can look after myself – there is however nothing I can do with the Mazda, oil and coolant levels excepted, and it is still made of tin!

Taking everything into consideration it has been a wise move, though the wiser thing would have been to put the reg plate cash into the bank! Do we always live by our brains, or our hearts? Anyway, now I may not be allowed to drive one of these days!

I have yet to decide wither to part with either the Kitten or the Scimitar, or even both, who knows, I will let you know what I decide.

I think I have waffled on enough now – I used to be a journalist and was Press Officer for the 6th Airborne, and as such I cannot understand why an officer has not been hauled over the coals or Court Martialed regarding these recent abuse matters. There was an old statement “never bad men, only bad officers” and having been one, I agree. I was the youngest Captain in the middle east at the time. In retrospect I think I have now reached my dotage, and should write my memoirs. However being so practical too, I have not the time for that sort of therapy!

Brian, I am delighted that you, and Moira, are managing to continue with the Register. For some reason that I do not understand, my computer “assistant” a little cat, keeps popping up with a tip of the day, “If you do your best, everything will be for the best” . If you still have that silly bent paper clip, you can change it for a Lynx, or the little pussy cat – it’s all there in the software.

Our very best wishes, Peter and Dorothy Hemming - Newquay

Peter and Dorothy, many thanks for keeping us informed, and do watch your speed in the MX5, I understand very clearly that if you run one of these modern cars up the gears like they were designed to do, you very quickly find yourself into three figure speeds, but enjoy it too!

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Dear Brian,

March 2005

I acquired WFD in April 1992 with 53,045 showing on the clock, and although M.O.T.'d for 12 months the brakes pulled badly, and the near side door was about to drop off. However the general condition was sound, but in need of lots of TLC.

With brakes sorted, seats covered, interior cleaned and painted, new matting and wooden floor, engine removed for repairs, under bonnet painted plus a host of other smaller jobs WFD was ready for the road by May, complete with a blue door, the vehicle being white.

In 2004 WFD was removed from daily use being replaced by a much larger (15 CWt) van with 5 seats. Over the intervening 11.5 years I have covered approximately 75,000 miles, these have been mainly trouble free and I have only needed a tow on three occasions. The first when I first had Kitty and I didn't know that there was an inline fuel filter fitted over the rear axle, second time I had loud knocking noise, investigation revealed a broken crankshaft, and time number three was when a clutch centre plate broke, which was surprising as the clutch had only done a low mileage.

During the time I have been running WFD I have carried out both routine and preventive maintenance and this has repaid me by giving me reliable transport and little or no work at M.O.T. times.

In July 2000 I eventually got round to making the outside presentable by spraying Kitty in a dark blue, I also repainted the inside and under bonnet again. The following year I remodelled the dash board to include a rev counter etc.

Annual mileage has increased from below 3,000 miles per year to more than 11,000, I have carried any item that would fit in, and it was a matter of pride that when used on camping trips everything bar the kitchen sink was packed in.

It is now time for Kitty and I to part and I suspect that I may regret this in years to come, I shall certainly miss the fibre glass body and also some of the rarity value. WFD has served my family and myself well, I have had a lot of fun driving her, for whilst not fast, full advantage could, and was always taken of the good handling, leaving many a motorist behind on the twisty bits.

By 2004 Kitty was needing a new home where she will receive the pampering to which she has grown accustomed, but also the daily work which I am sure will keep her young and active, as she really deserves.

In December we sold her to Steve Walker in the north of England where she will continue to provide daily transport and go on camping trips.

It was nice to see her going to a new home, to be used again after being parked for some time, but it was also a little sad to see her going out of sight for the last time, parting, as it were, with a very good and faithful friend.

John Stewart Ward - Nuneaton

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Notes from your renewal notices.

Dear Brian,

12th Jan 2005

In addition to the mods already notified I have fitted an unleaded cylinder head from Partsworld, excellent service.

My original head released with a couple of light taps in the right places after 28 years (*lucky man you are Fred*).

The opportunity was taken to match the ports in the manifolds with the head, which seems to have freed a couple of horses. The standard manifolds were dreadfully rough castings from which I had to remove 1/8 to 3/16" to blend them to the head porting.

The carb was rebuilt, and the inlet manifold matched to both it and the head. In one place it was 1/4" smaller than the SU diameter.

I have also dispensed with the manifold heating circuit, and put a couple of insulating tufnel breaks between the carb and the manifold. I took the opportunity of milling out the webs between , 1 & 2 and 3 & 4 ports.

All now much smoother, and the engine seems to appreciate the cooler mixture. Winter has made no difference.

Fred Rolph - Enfield.

Thanks for the update Fred, just confirms what we know already. That said, your comments about winter making no difference, could of course be because we don't get real winters any more – could this be an up-side to global warming? Ed.

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Forgive me if you have seen this before, but I am under a lot of pressure on the time front right now, I need to get the mag finished and off to the printers, I also need to clear my desk – yes again – and this form was not filed, I assume because I was going to copy the story into the mag :-

Dear Brian

21/12/04

Please find enclosed cheque.

Talking of spares, I recently stripped a 1992 Robin LX and still have most pf the parts which I am prepared to sell at reasonable prices. These include 2 radiators, 2 complete doors, various gauges, dashboard, two heater cores from the earlier type heaters (Robin / Regal?) which may be of use to Rebel owners I think. Neither one clogged up, but they do leak. I also have 2 Rialto back axles 2.7 =1 (that can't be right, Ed.) and a gearbox, all of which are sound, and various engine components.

Having read in the magazine that some members were paying silly prices for nuts and bolts, I thought the information may be of interest. I am not asking a lot for these items, however I am not prepared to give them away either!

I do not like to see members being ripped off just because they run an older vehicle , so providing the members are genuine, I hope I may be of some assistance in this way.

Keep up the good work,

Mick Pennistone - Goole, East Yorkshire

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Some snippets from Brian’s desk
(before they are recycled)

Richard Irvine, our man in Harrow, (thanks for the card Richard), tells us that his Liege, the one I put him onto that David Udell was selling as a rolling chassis back in 2004, “is coming on a treat”, if I remember correctly it is chassis number 022, and I think Peter (Davis of Liege), has, again, stopped taking orders, he is up to number 62 now. I am still trying to decide whither I want number 99, or number 100! (Always assuming that Peter has found another way for me to disengage the clutch, i.e. without the need for my left foot to be involved!) However, as long as Peter is prepared to loan me “Number One” from time to time, (it is ten years old this year would you believe!) I am under no pressure to decide! Ed.

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Not wishing to end on a sad note – so I’ll put this in here rather than in the epilogue. I had a call from Jim this afternoon, Tuesday 29th March, to tell me that my old Kitten, the “Wee Red Car” was destroyed in a fire this morning, police, fire brigade the lot. No one hurt, but nothing left of the car. No, I never did get round to fitting the newer carb lid while I had it, and I don’t think Douglas did when he had it, and I am certain that Jim would not have done so – so we all failed. Have you made sure that the lid on the float chamber of your Kitten has an overflow pipe, and indeed a tube attached to the overflow tube to take any excess fuel safely away from the engine bay? This does not apply to Foxes, they were built with an overflow, and Rebels do not use the SU carb, unless you have fitted one, on an 850 engine perhaps?

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Dear Brian,

March 2005

I have passed on my Kitten to a new owner, who I hope will be able to spend more time and take care of looking after her than I have been able to do. I have suggested that he should join the Register.

I would like to thank you for all the hard work and assistance that you have given, it has been much appreciated.

Therefore I will not be renewing my membership, but I hope you will accept the enclosed donation to the Register.

Many thanks and best wishes for the future of the Register.

Frank Jones - Enfield.

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Tales from Tore

A very good evening to you.

11th Jan. '05

Having received the bumper edition 61 of the Mewsletter for this Christmastide, I dipped therein at random. Forsooth!

Page 40 - Inlet manifold atomiser gauze mod. This rings a bell from my youth, yes oh sage of the Kitten register I did have one! Mayhap 40 years ago a popular motoring magazine (perhaps Car Mechanics) had an article about an Austin A35 which had a modified inlet and exhaust set up, resulting in much improved performance and mpg. One of the mods was a 'Mangoletsi manifold modifier', which was a device very similar to the one described here. Whether it is still on sale is doubtful.

A little research on the Internet showed that Mangoletsi had accessories available for other popular cars of the era such as the Mini and Austin / Morris 1100 and Morris Minor. It seems that Mangoletsi inlet manifolds are still available but I cannot yet find their address.

Now there is some useless knowledge!

More seriously, if such a gadget was available for the Kitten I might just have a go. Scrooges of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but trips to the filling station!

Cover Picture, edition 62 :- The cover to the Rebel's grille set me thinking. Could it be a winter radiator muff. Has the car been converted to a rear engine? Or perhaps it is now electrically driven? Ah, perhaps I have it! Pedal power is now employed thus giving the ultimate in mpg!

Cheers from a very windy & wet Tore City. Dick Goodall

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Good evening Brian.

21st January 2005

For what it's worth (not much I fear) here's an account of a little recent Kitty work which shows that I too can make silly mistakes in doing wee jobs.

Best Regards, Dick Goodall

A little Kitty maintenance.

Well it seems a long time since Christmas and I suppose it would be a good idea to do some work on Kitty. She's been a bit sluggish in the mornings until warmed up. So let's fit a new set of contact points and might as well go the whole hog and fit a new condenser too as I've never changed that in 15 k miles. There's a new rotor arm in stock and the end of the old one has been polished up several times so it must be a bit worn. Hmm, the contacts inside the distributor cap look a bit fuzzy but I don't have a new one so just clean them up. Having replaced everything and gapped the question is, are things better, which is the real test. Well, er, nope, Kitty won't start at all! So poke about and look under the distributor cap and aha! the lead to the points tail is fitted the wrong way round, which just lets the retaining tags for the wires touch the baseplate and short out. Turn it round and all is well.

There's a new air filter in stock and it might as well do its job as remain in the clutter. Having removed both cover and filter it seemed a good idea to check the action of the carburettor air slide, which was surprisingly stiff. I wonder why? So unscrewed the dashpot cap and pulled it upwards and surprise, the slide moved up with it. Once the cap, wire and plug were removed the slide worked freely. Thinks, could it be that the oil in the dashpot is too thick? I am guilty of using engine oil from the oil can for a quick top up. A quick fix seemed a good idea, so the long tube on a can of WD40 was poked right down into the oil chamber and a 3 second squirt given in the hope of diluting the thick oil. After replacing the wee plug, wire and cover the air slide then moved more freely so it seems to work.

After a couple of days local running the engine pulls from cold rather better though a warm up for a couple of minutes before starting off seems beneficial. Especially if left for another couple of minutes for heat to soak into the poor wee beast's system.

While I was out in the cold it seemed a good idea to grease the ball joints, the bane of a Kitten owner's life I feel. The Moly bentone grease has proved good, as it should have at a cost of £7, but the tin is now almost finished. I did manage to find a cartridge of plain bentone based grease for a couple of quid in a local tool store and will be interested to see what results it gives in its turn.

There was a wee bit of slack in the steering which seemed to be in the top pinion bearing of the rack, which is poorly lubricated. The lower pinion bearing cover was removed and a little oil dribbled out so at least some is still in there. After sorting out the shims, they were adjusted to reduce the thickness by about 4 thou to see what happened. After reassembly a quarter oil gun of hypoy oil was injected through the nipple I fitted in the pinion cover last year. A road test showed that not only had the play been virtually removed but the steering was lighter. So the time was well spent.

OK now for the warmth of the house and a good, hot flagon of coffee!

#157

Then, a few months later, Dick asked me for a new lower steering column, and this followed

Good evening Brian.

April 2005

Yesterday was very warm here. I got the grass mowed in the morning, took Vivian to get bark chips and compost from Wickes, then settled down to fit the new lower steering column. There was the usual problem of access to the lower pinch bolt and I removed the coil to make a bit more space. While doing this one LT terminal fell off its wire in a shower of green fur, that could explain the recent erratic running. Luckily that fault was easily fixed by fitting a new terminal.

Having removed the old unit, fitting the new one should have been straightforward, but! I had problems fitting the end onto the steering rack pinion shaft, not for the first time I might add. On close inspection the answer was plain. The rack's pinion shaft serrations did not quite extend all round its diameter, and it was necessary to line up the gap in the end of the steering column jaw with the gap in the serrations. I've not come across that one before.

The final result of my labours is much improved steering, well worth the effort.

REGISTRATION DOCUMENTATION

Our friends at the FBHVC have suggested that I make you aware of the current situation regarding vehicles that are off the road, and have been so since before 1998. Such vehicles do not fall within the automatic system the DVLA have been using to issue the new V5C type of registration document. So, if you have a vehicle which is not declared SORN, and think that you will ever want to sell it, or put it back on the road, then now would be a good time to take advantage of the current situation where the DVLA will, if you ask them, provide you with a new V5C for such a vehicle.

What you need to do is to send your old V5 to the DVLA at Swansea SA99 1BA with a covering note requesting a new certificate. The old V5 will be returned to you with the new document IF your note requests its return - if not requested, the old V5 will be destroyed.

Obtaining a new V5C will NOT make anyone liable for SORN, and failure to apply for a V5C at this time will NOT lose you the registration number or any other entitlements at this time. The worst that could happen, as things stand, is that a keeper of a vehicle who has not obtained a V5C for their old car may suffer difficulties and delays if, at some time in the future, they try to use the old V5 to re-licence the vehicle, or notify a change.

The new form, the V5C, is twice the size of the colourful V5 it replaces, they fold it in half. I have to say that it seems like a very good idea, if you have a vehicle in the situation outlined, to update your documentation now, before they introduce a charge for providing such services, and before they change any of the entitlements. There really does not seem to be a down side if you want to ensure that the future for your old out of use vehicle is secured.

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The Spares Situation.

The plan is still to farm the stock out to a number of appropriate individuals, and the latest development of the plan is to bring many of them to Oxfordshire in May for distribution at our anniversary event. Given that I may be scrounging a lift, there might not be a lot of spare space, but we will see what can be done to save on transport costs.

Please do remind me in the meantime those who have volunteered to help out in this regard, I seem to have mis-placed the file with the list of offers.

One thing which does concern me a bit – all my fault I know, but what with the need for more front dampers, and springs, and the batch of lower steering columns purchased recently, there is very little money in the spares fund at the moment, and a high value of slow moving stock held, which leaves me somewhat frustrated as I feel that our options are restricted too much to luck and my best guesses, which, while they have been pretty good so far, do from time to time leave me feeling that things could be better organised.

I don't know whether to be flattered or concerned by the increasing number of dealers and garages that contact me for advice about parts these days, and on that subject, if you happen to know what window winder mechanism they used on the Asquith vans, it would be good to know that.

Things I am running short of are wishbones, so please do not throw any old ones you may have out. The cost of having these components manufactured is too close to £100 a time

in the sort of quantities we are talking about for us to be able to consider having them done at this time.

As ever, your thoughts, comments and experiences are of interest, do drop me a note if you are having any spares problems.

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Snippets from the net :-

There has been a lot of stuff recently about wheel sizes and locks and keys, and electrics, hot starting problems, and a variety of suggested solutions – much of it stuff we have covered in the past. Even an article in another magazine about oil pressure relief valves – I thought we had put that to bed a decade ago, but of course there is a new generation out there using Reliant engines to power other things – one day we will educate everyone! My editorial skills however would be tested to beyond their current abilities to give you a meaningful summary – perhaps next time!?!

Getting Technical

Hi Brian,

21st January 2005

As I might have told you, I'm in the process of rebuilding the original (yellow top) engine from my Fox (I'm currently running a redtop from an old Rialto).

It really isn't in bad condition, but thought it prudent to do a strip and rebuild to ascertain the overall state.

I am fitting new bearings throughout and found that when replacing small end bushes an expanding reamer is required (nearly to the point).

The nearest local machine tools shop (in Worthing) quoted me £137 for an expanding reamer of the correct size for the job or £38 for a fixed reamer within 2 thou of the required size.

I shopped around and found that CHRONOS (www.chronos.co.uk) do an "economy" expanding reamer (17 to 19/32") for £9.50 including VAT and postage within the UK.

Since I will probably never use it again, an economy model will do just fine.

It has arrived and seems nicely made.

I thought you might like to know this in case you ever got asked (assuming you didn't already know). It is good news for anyone doing a Reliant engine rebuild.

Regards, Steve Hall - Brighton

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Brian,

January 2005

Re the Weber 32 ICH carb, the following jets work quite well with good MPG too.

Main jet	115
Idle	40
Pump	40
Correction	170
Emulsion tube	F2
Pump bleed back	60
Needle valve	175

Fuel one is critical, and measured with gasket in place, it should be 7mm plus or minus .25mm, a juggle with the idle pump, up a bit, may give some joy.

Harry (Darby) - Barry

Harry, great to hear from you again, thanks for the info. Brian

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Alan Shaw has now provided me with two articles which I have yet to publish, the first being on the rear damper mounting mod, the second on oil filters, thanks for these Alan, one day I will get organised – they will put that on my gravestone I expect!

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Sales & Wants

For Sale: A rare opportunity to purchase a Reliant Rebel 750 Estate. Totally original and unmodified condition. Two owners from new. Historic vehicle, road tax exempt, reg GJR11L, nine month MOT, fully maintained and never off the road. Very treasured second car, space required hence reluctant sale. Serious offers only.

For Sale :- Martin Blunn has a number of new Kitten parts available, including brake shoes, a master cylinder, wheel cylinders, ball joints and various cables, oil and air filters.

For Sale :- 1984 Fox estate in daily use, MOT till Aug 05, lots of spares, £450 tel.

For Sale :- Very tidy 1981 Kitten for sale, taxed and tested, needs front seats, but very tidy body.

For Sale :- Hard top for FOX. Used to convert the Fox from pick up to van. Includes opening rear panel with heated window. £50.

For Sale :- 1986 Reliant Fox Tandy Camper. New tyres, battery, windscreen, galvanised chassis. No time to finish – low miles, engine runs, lots of parts to finish interior. £350 to take it away, call Tony

For Sale :- Kitten saloon, turquoise, was regular reliable runner until laid up. Buyer collects £100 o.n.o.

For Sale :- A set of 4 Kitten wheels, blasted and painted, with new (never used) tyres. Yours for £150 delivered if you live within 30 miles of the M6 or M1. Ring 0141 8866117.

For Sale :- Reliant's 1980 Motor Show Scimitar, introducing the SE6B model. Carmen red with fawn velour and tan leather, bought by me in 1990 when it won concours at the NAC. Still eye catching. £1,500 Keith White

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 second hand Fox wheels. £1,750 the lot. Contact John Box

For Sale :- I have TWO BOXES of Rebel parts that need a home. Mostly later model. I have to make space and thus would like them to go a good home. I've tried to list part numbers but just don't seem to get the time. Please contact me and haggle!! The boxes are the remains of two cars that were broken, and I'd rather see them passed on than thrown out. Some parts are new and I'd imagine are unobtainable now. In brief:- early gearbox [totally re-built (new bearings, seals, gaskets, brand new lay gear!!)] new gearbox and wheel bearings steering box speedo cables front suspension components new springs & shock absorbers electrics - various wiring loom sections gauges - I've tested a couple and seem fine just about every gasket and seal you can think of! door latches loads of new little grommets and fittings

Contact me listing the parts you require and I'll see what I can do - on jf-cars@mailpuppy.com marking your email "important". [I get so many these days I may miss it if you don't].

A rare opportunity to acquire a Salamander, Mr. Faulkner

Free to a new home, Martin Blunn has an 850 Reliant gearbox, condition unknown - E-mail him at martin_blunn@hotmail.com North East England

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

Wanted :- Drivers side front seat (preferably a reclining one) for a Kitten, Brown or Beige.

Wanted :- Fox rear panel at the back of the cab, contact Bruce

Wanted :- Kitten rolling chassis, actually don't need the back axle, but do need all the front bits, including the steering rack. Contact Dave

Wanted :- original black vinyl Kitten van drivers seat, the man is in Gloucestershire, but I didn't get his telephone number, ring the Editor if you can help it is for Mr. Cows.

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Epilogue

Well, here we are at the end of another edition. The nights are getting shorter, more daylight hours after work, or whatever you do to fill your day, to get out there and look after that wee Reliant of yours, whatever guise it comes in.

One thing I have failed to do, in spite of moving my stock of Rebel spares on to Adrian Hanwell for safe keeping / cataloguing, whatever, and that is that there were three or four individuals who had wanted bits, had even gone to the bother of letting me have lists, and I

failed to either look out the bits that I had that were relevant, or pass those lists on to Adrian. In particular someone was wanting the plywood front floor for a Rebel van, and Brian Millar provided me with one last year, and I can't remember who it was that was wanting it – if it was you, get in touch with Adrian. He has it, and should by now have measured it and created a drawing for future reference.

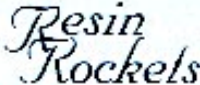
I did spend half a day or so in the Burford area in March, trying to find accommodation that might tempt Moira to join me (us) in May. Unfortunately for me, that very weekend is her aunt's 80th birthday, so compromises will have to be reached.

One conclusion I did come to was that the main reason these wee towns and villages are so full of character is the total absence of supermarkets. How refreshing it is to actually be able to visit the village shop where this or that commodity has been sold by generations of in many cases the same family, to the locals. What a pleasant change – I am not sure that in our rush towards the bigger is better philosophy of the supermarket era, that we have not lost something much more important than shareholder profits along the way.

Will I see you in May? If so, what vehicle will I be in? Well, if I do make it, make sure I know who you are, this memory of mine is a problem these days – an attendance book is one thing we will surely need – be sure to sign it please.

There should be lots of photo opportunities, and hopefully the next few years front cover pictures might be taken over the weekend – don't assume that someone else will do it – take plenty of pictures – I might even run a "best picture" competition.

Brian



Reliant engine tuning for economy or whizz, not quite halfshaft breaking torque, but optimising the Reliant 850 so that its full potential is achieved.

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Mamfolds optimised
Heads tuned, including attention to valves
Carburettor gas flowed
Rockets realigned and lightened

—————<

Also wiring bits - all the funny coloured cables and crimps with electrical advice

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