

Reliant Kitten Register

NEWSLETTER 65

July – August 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 65

Rebel parts stock

Kitten / Fox parts stock

Rebel alternative parts I

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.

Web page:- <http://www.kitreg.org.uk/> or have a look at <http://www.reliantkitten.co.uk>

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The front cover, ahh, yes, well. I was going to blame the new cover layout, (my idea), but that would be a red herring. The fact is that the mag sometimes goes to the printers before I have the covers, and so a certain amount of guess-work can be involved. It might be the lovely Asquith van belonging to Terry Wheeler of Antique Restorations near Sudbury, or it might be our youngest member Rik Borgman standing beside one of his Kittens on a trailer, or it might be a picture from our Burford get together. We will all have to wait and see!

The Registrar speaks

Welcome once again to what I hope will be another interesting read. My search for another BX diesel automatic was fruitful, and so hopefully I can now spend less time on that front, and more on our wonderful wee Reliants.

Wonderful news about a Tempest from our man in Kirkintilloch, well done Donald Nicholson, and some research for me to do about a Smart car engined Kitten that is about to participate in the 2005 Monte Carlo 2005 Sportscar Challenge. I think the Smart car is rear engine rear wheel drive, so I am more than a little curious to find out just what they have done.

Statistics are wonderful you know, that makes two Tempests on the road for the first time in as many months, one a John Box / Ian Foster one, and one a Steve Campbell one, in one case the first kit, in the other the last. So you could be forgiven for assuming that there could be 12 of them on the road for the first time this year – two in two months = 12 in 12 - see what I mean about statistics! The reality of course is somewhat different, I only expect 1 more Tempest to be running this year.

In an effort to rectify past shortcomings I should remind everyone about Rob Spare's continued support, I know that we all have our own solutions to insurance, and indeed Spares offer a wide range of cover, not just motor insurance, but it is well worth talking to real people, and Rob's team at P.F. Spare are worth giving a call if you have not already done so. See the advert on the back cover for contact details

Right, for some reason I am struggling with this edition as regards getting articles to start at the top of a page, so you will just need to bear with me, it seems to get worse the further on I get, so I'll keep this short and see what can be done. Till next time, take care, and do lubricate things.

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Rebel Round up

Oh dear, not much from the Rebel folk this time. I was somewhat shocked and more than a little saddened to learn how numbers have dropped in the last two years. I had become comfortable that Rebel numbers, those on the road at any rate, had been steady at about 80 or so for several years past, now suddenly we have not much more than half that number taxed in the whole country.

Sad as that fact may be, I need to be putting my own house in order, concentrating on things that I can do, and do have influence over, rather than dwelling on matters outwith my control.

The Register has information on 142 Rebels, but many of those details are out of date, and that figure includes 23 that are known to have been scrapped, and several others that will never run again. I need to both up-date the information, and improve the reporting of it.

When Brian Millar kindly set the whole thing up for us, I had not thought far enough ahead, "the system" in the early days did not have a "last updated" date held against any of the records, and while that was added to the information held after a couple of years, the reports do not show that information, so, when I run a list of Rebels, I get a three page print out which shows exactly what I had asked Brian to make it show. That was to some extent restricted by

my inability to read fonts of what I would describe a "too small" a size! Also by the width of a page of A4 paper

As a result I am told the membership number, person's initials, surname, model, type of body, registration number, chassis number, engine number and, in this case, (There are a number of options in the report) postcode. What it does not show me is the current condition of the vehicle, or the date that information was most recently supplied, and both these things are held in "the system". So, I need to have the reporting amended, and also to update the records, because, you will remember, the inclusion of a last modified date was an addition to the system, so the early records have no date entered, and I need to address that omission on an individual basis in as much as that may now be possible – more work – ho hum, keeps me out of mischief I suppose!

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Foxes Den

Hi All,

July 2005

I've just discovered someone who works in Citroen Parts: the Fox window catches are a Dyane item, and are still available new. He can get them for £9 each, inc VAT, a saving of about 25 - 35%, so knowing how vulnerable they are to cracking due to sunlight, I thought I'd see if anyone wants any spares. Let me know and I'll order some.

All the best, Duncan (Bradford, Norfolk)

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David Leslie tells me that Polo rear damper bushes fit the Fox front strut, so go on, get a set and let me know your opinion please.

David has also converted his Fox to disc front brakes, he did tell me the story on the phone, and as usual I have forgotten most of the detail. I think Fiesta discs and calipers were involved, and I am sure he still uses Fox wheels. The Fox is David's daily transport these days, just needing a steering rack for the MOT this time, which of course we were able to supply ex stock on an exchange basis, delivered within 48 hours.

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Right, confession time again, someone, way back in March, asked me for information regarding the dimensions of a Fox, I could not remember, so left it in the pending tray, then, during a clear out in July found it, rang him I think, then asked for Duncan's help, he sent me a copy of the spec sheet (I had forgotten it contained that information), and by the time, less than a week later, I went to write and tell the chap, indeed send him a copy of the spec sheet, I had forgotten who it was that had asked the question! So, for everyone's benefit, here are the facts :- Reliant Fox, general dimensions overall length 3380mm (133") overall height, with tilt 1520mm (59.9") unladen with hardtop 1714mm (87.5") overall width 1540mm (60.7") ground clearance (laden) 165mm (6.5") Track, front 1226mm (48.3") track rear 1260mm (49.6") wheelbase 2146mm (84.5") so now we all know.

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Liege Page

John & Mel continue to do an excellent job producing their quarterly publication "Liege News", and the enthusiastic owners of these wee cars continue to organise events all over the country to compliment the more competitive events that some of their number compete in with impressive results.

For more details about the Liege Car Club, contact John Sawle and Melanie Brown at :-
Beacon Cottage Farm
St. Agnes
Cornwall TR5 0NU

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More Tempestuous Matters

Where does the time go? Had an email from Brian saying "have you anything to add to the next issue?" Well, as yet there is nothing to report that I know of on the commercial re-launch of the kit from Mike Phillips, whom I talked to recently. However, the gear change linkage which is a bane of some people's lives, has moved forward in so much as that the springs for the redesigned unit have been sourced and supplied, and Mike is awaiting an opportunity to weld up a batch of the units. I myself have managed to obtain a replica linkage from another Tempest owner, he trials his machine and both he and his son have had much success in the beastie. It still needs a little finishing but will save me much time and agro, which is a big bonus.

One of the advantages of the Tempest kit in the kit car world is that because it still uses at least two of the major components i.e. chassis, engine, drive train, suspension etc it is classed as a 're-body' from the DVLA point of view. This saves having it to go through the expensive SVA test (Single Vehicle Approval). Having sent off my forms and V5 to Swansea I am now awaiting a date for them to come and have a look at the car.

I had an email from Eric Cox recently who is looking for a Tempest, so if any of you owners want to part with yours do get in contact with me. Now that my stable is getting rather full, if you go back a few issues (no 51 actually) on the right you will see a bright orange estate of the Brian Radford stable, which I bought from him. This is now up for sale, if interested please contact me. (I have photos from when it was stripped right down for a bodyshell respray, which gives an idea of the amount of work that has gone into it). Cheers for now.

Martin Seymour - London No. 551 - On the road - As at December 2004

As ever my thanks to Duncan Bradford, whose contact has kindly provided us with the most recently available figurers of vehicles on the road. The figures relate to December 2004 and paint a rather gloomy picture.

Rebels, which had for a number of years been holding steady at around 80 vehicles on the road, are now down to just 43, while Kittens are down to 331 and Foxes are just 128, and that includes the 16 Tandy campervans that are still running. On the Rebel front there were the same number of saloons on the road as there were vans and estates, well, O.K. tell the truth Brian, 21 and 22 respectively. While Kitten estates exist in twice the number that saloons do, well, if you count the vans as estate cars, (which I did with the Rebel figures) and I am certain that most of the vans, both Rebel and Kitten, have side windows these days. The

Rebel of course was only built as a saloon for the first few years of its production life, the estate and van only being introduced some three years or so later.

So, will we see the long awaited increase in values that some of us have been hoping for? Who knows, what is clear is that unless we look after them, they will become extinct. Defeatist talk or realism – I wonder? There are still quite a number of on-going rebuild projects, and the likes of Michael Bentley's beautifully restored Rebel has never been on the road since its new galvanised chassis and first class respray a decade ago. So there are still excellent examples out there, even if they are not all shown in these figures. This should not make us complacent. The demand for Kitten and Fox wishbones has been gradually increasing over the past few years, and my stock is depleted. Solutions need to be found if we are to keep the remaining vehicles on the road and giving reliable service.

What I saw at Burford greatly encouraged me. The standard of vehicle was excellent and gives great hope for the future.

One thing is clear, we need to look after the remaining ones, now more than ever.

In passing, the potential engine and gearbox donor vehicles are falling towards the 10,000 mark – those with the missing wheel I mean, though I must say that the fall in their numbers is less dramatic than the decline in our wonderful wee 4 wheelers over the past couple of years.

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Readers Letters

Dear Brian,

14/2/05

I am not a Kitten owner at present, but owned one for a while some years ago.

I really enjoy the Magazine and am "made up" that you are keeping the heritage of these grand little cars going.

Thanks, Mike Williams - Liverpool No. 625

Thanks for that Mike, thanks also for your continued support, about 10% of our subscribers are associate members, that is to say they have an interest, but no current relevant vehicle, your support does make a difference, and is appreciated, thanks, Ed

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Dear Brian,

17th March 2005

I sold one of my Reliant's to a trader last year, it had only 1 day's MOT and 4 days tax left on it. The said 'trader' said that it was normal practice for him to see to the paperwork.

The first week in January I got a letter from a Mrs. Woolley at the DVLA at Glasgow, she calls herself an "Enforcement Officer" and demanded £50 with menaces. If I did not pay by the end of January the price went up to £100, if I failed to pay that by the end of February, there would be a fine of £1,000 minimum.

It can be an expensive job getting shot of an old motor.

I cut my losses and sent the £50, I sent a covering letter to explain what had happened, but they chose to ignore it.

Once my cheque had been cashed, I contacted the "Trader", and to his credit, a £50 note arrived by return post.

Please find a cheque enclosed, "Friend of the Kitten Register" has a certain ring to it.

Regards, John Stork - Glenelg No. 393

Dear Brian,

05.04.2005

I have just booked my passage with P&O for the Burford meeting.

I started the rebuilt engine on Easter Monday, it runs well, but now I would like a little more punch.

Is it possible to buy new or secondhand, a sport camshaft, twin carb inlet manifold, tubular exhaust manifold, and an aluminum rocker cover and at which price?

Could someone coming to Burford bring those things with them?

I am also looking for better cooling of my engine. This evening I turned on my lathe an oil cooler pipe adaptor to fit between the block and the oil filter. The cooler is a neat small aluminum unit from a Citroen 2CV that was once mounted on my Norton Commando.

For the water cooler I have in mind using a Fiat Panda electric fan mounted in front of the radiator with a remote switch for helping when in traffic jam, I have many Panda fans, and can carry out the necessary modifications.

I have several ideas, but not enough time, I work nine hours a day on electric cars. I hope seeing you and other Kitten friends in May.

Sincerely yours, Patrick

We were able to come up with Patrick's shopping list of special parts, he was very lucky with the twin carbs and manifolds, I was even able to buy a special gasket from John Swale at the Liege meet a few weeks previously. Paul Wheatley just happened to be converting his twin carb fuelled Liege to a Weber, and was prepared to sell all the necessary bits. The camshaft and other parts are off the shelf, Ed.

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Dear Brian,

22-5-05

Just a short note to say how much we enjoyed Sunday the 22nd at the Kitten 30th Anniversary event. I believe a good time was had by all.

Also Thanks to Dave Price for all his hard work in arranging this meeting (I hope more are on the way).

It was great to meet yourself and wife, I can now put a face to the 'phone calls in future.

Once again many thanks to all who attended to make a great day.

Terry Dixon - Wiltshire No. 581

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Dear Brian and fellow Reliant owners,

June 2005

Firstly please accept my apologies for not making the 30th anniversary meeting in May. No excuses as I have only myself to blame. The reason being that on the Wednesday night before the event I was out with the youngsters pretending to be 20 again, playing football! I play every week, so did not expect to get injured (I know, mad!) It all started last season when my daughter asked if I would come out of retirement after 30 years to referee. I had only been playing for 30 minutes when, trying to stop on of the attackers, my right foot and ankle got in the way! My punishment, since Wednesday I have had ice packs on the ankle and foot, which unfortunately is twice the size of the right foot and ankle.

Anyway, I hope everyone had a great time and look forward to reading about the event, with any photos.

Brian, what would you say – don't forget to grease those ball joints!

All the best, Geoff, (Smith) Portsmouth No 376,

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Dear Brian,

13th June 2005

What a brilliant day we had on 22nd May at Burford, didn't we! It was just great to meet yourself and Moira and all the other Reliant owners and spouses and pets (dogs and kittens). I thought the turnout of cars represented a really good cross section of the 4 wheeled beasts. A big thank you to Dave Price for organizing the event. We must do it again in a year or two at most, maybe further up your way next time.

I enclose a CD containing copies off all the photos I took, if you're able to identify all the faces in the group photo it would be a nice record to have, but if your memory for names is a bad as mine this could be quite a challenge!

All the best to you and Moira and keep up the good work – it is much appreciated.

Bob Keene - Maidenhead. No 216

Thanks Bob, regarding the picture of those in attendance, I have a plan...., don't hold your breath. Ed

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Dear Brian,

28th June '05

Many thanks for your letter of 3rd May together with the magazines etc. The ball joints have now been fitted and we are up and running again.

My Kitten DL estate has been with me from new, it had an engine overhull at 120,000 miles, and is original apart from the fitting of Lumenition ignition, fitted after the first time she broke down, the second time she broke down was because she ran out of petrol! She has not broken down since. This has been a remarkable car, total mileage to date is 237,360. An intermittent screen wipe is the only other modification I have made.

It is very pleasing to know that there are so many other people who recognise what great little cars were produced under the Reliant name and I wish the Register every success of "Keeping them Going".

Regards Gordon Craig - Fordingbridge, Hants. No. 738

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Hello Brian,

July 2005

Apologies for not getting back to you before to let you know how I got on.

The head came off easily with Alan Shaw's wonderful tool, which I returned to him last Monday by insured post.

The head was taken to a specialist for checking for flat and was fine, so I don't know what caused the gasket to go.

Reassembled it in a couple of hours on Tuesday and it runs extremely well, it will get another oil and filter change in 500 miles time.

Finally, I'd like to thank you for the unstinting help and advice that you have passed on to me on the occasions that I have sought it.

Wishing you all the best, Tom Hannah - Caerphilly No. 545

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Dear Brian,

July 20th '05

Whenever I write to you it always seems that I am in trouble, and so it is again today! I've spent the last few weeks getting my beloved Kitten ready for a chassis transplant, as she only just managed to pass the last MOT, and certainly would not have passed another. With a great stroke of luck I managed to acquire a virtually new chassis, from an abandoned Kit Car project, and have been busily cleaning, painting and transferring parts from Kitty to the new chassis. The engine, gearbox, rear axle and suspension, are all now in place, only the front suspension to go. I thought this last operation would be no trouble at all. How wrong can you be? Last evening I was wire brushing the front shocker assemblies when I struck oil, literally! Scraping away a heavy rust incrustation, to my horror, oil began to seep out. I suppose it was only to be expected, the shocks were old, but working perfectly.

The bottom line is that I need a pair of front shocks, (complete with springs, if possible) ASAP. I've arranged for a party of friends to come up next weekend to transfer the body to the new chassis, so time is of the essence.

Best wishes to you and Moira, Ron Dark – Bideford No. 0101

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Dear Brian,

July 31st 2005

Apologies for this belated thank you. Many thanks for supplying the replacement door for my Kitten, and bringing it to the Half Moon pub, a nice place to meet up, with the opportunity to dine too.

David and myself have now fitted the door. The broken one came off without too much trouble, we removed the inside panel, and the lock, and transferred them to your door which went on well with a lot of shimming, and after some trimming is now a very good fit. Now for the painting.

Once again many thanks Brian.

Yours sincerely John Waller - Bedford No 489

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Tales from Tore

Dick has as ever been keeping me smiling with his regular stream of witty e-mails interspersed with the on-going saga of life with a Kitten as his daily transport. I know that Dick is by no means alone in having the Kitten as his only car, (though I know that beside his two spare Kittens in the garden, there lurks under a tarpaulen, a Jowett Bradford van!) but I did wonder just how many of our readers only have the trusty Reliant on the road ? – feel free to enlighten me, Ed.

I got into Kitty the other day, switched on the ignition, turned the key.. and . it started!

Betcha thought I would say something different? Then I realised that I had not seen either oil or ignition lamps illuminate before the engine fired. Curious, I thought. Having stopped the engine, I wiggled the fuses and tried again. Still no lights on. I wonder if a bulb has blown, though surely two blowing together would be unusual? A grovel under the dash revealed that not one, but both bulbs were dangling on their wires. Popping them back into place effected a cure. Now that's what I call strange, and no I had not been at the 'Uisge Bheatha'!

I have been to Dick's secluded house on a number of occasions, and for what it's worth Dick, I think it is the potholed drive that does it, just hope the new surface proves more durable, Ed.

Kitty continues to buzz along, must get more servicing done soon. I did make another exhaust bracket for the bell housing, the tinplate one had fractured. To the annoyance of any purists among us I did not paint it before fitting in case it did not fit. Of course it did, so I left it in place. However as a token I gave it a coat of Hammerite smooth, more to determine the heat

resistance of the paint than in the hope that it will provide lasting protection. However as this one is made of 4mm thick mild steel strip, it should last for a while. It's a bit different in shape from the last one and I will try to make a sketch for a future note. Wish me luck!

'Those ball joints' had a dose of grease today. The battery did not seem to be charging too well. But after tightening the fan belt, renewed about a month ago, all now seems well. Ah bliss!

Bye for now, Dick Goodall #157

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Getting technical

Top ball joints and wishbones look like being the next focus of my attention as far as difficult parts go. John Box came up with a good solution to top wishbones involving refurbishment rather than manufacturing new ones which may well be a cost effective and practical solution – so don't throw out any wishbones, top or bottom, no matter how poor their condition.

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Parts supply –

Once upon a time we enjoyed the support of the Reliant factory both by way of advertising and discount for subscribers. Sadly they no longer feel that the volume of business warrants such benefits. I was sad to have that link broken, but it does liberate me in some ways.

I was always wary about advertising the parts the Register has available because I had no wish to be seen as being in competition with the company. Ball joints, the bottom ones in particular, were an issue. At the very same time as we started having them refurbished, the company had another batch made, and I felt unable to advertise ours when they were in fact available off the shelf. Parts that the factory have not had available for a while, indeed parts that even the factory has bought from the Register, like front dampers, were obviously a different matter, and regular readers will be aware of the procedure we went through to commission them and new springs last year.

Lower steering columns were another part we had made, and we have always had a stock of headlights available, though I was not able to get my hands on as many as I wanted when re-stocking them last month, because we have a couple of years or so supply in stock based on past demand.

Still on the subject of parts, way back in January – see, I am getting on top of the paperwork – 7 months later! The part in question is a rubber boot, Mark Brockley tells me that the track rod end covers from a Ferguson TE20 tractor make an excellent substitute for both top and bottom ball joint boots on Kittens and Foxes, so now you know too, and if I can find the time and motivation I will see what they cost and how they compare to the pre-war Rover ones I use! Thanks for that Mark, remind me to talk to you about Jimps, Ed.

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Tech Tweaks from Norfolk + F.B.H.V.C.

Hello folks, long time no words from me! Been so busy with so many things – big red Italian motorcycle, camping, out and about, it never ends, we hope. Things Reliant haven't been too busy or technical lately either, but a few things come from recent Mewsletters.

Alan Yates, back in April, wanted a hub puller. Sykes Pickervant do a very 'standard' puller that does very nicely. I used one from a dealer once that was like a small bucket that went over the hub, very strong and firm, but then the lightweight of the horseshoe of the S&P one was used, and its whippyness did a better job.

One small point that still niggles me (*me too, Ed!*) is the people who talk about their engine rebuild and the fact that they've just had a lead free job done on the head! I assume they've spent gobs of money on new 'lead free' valve seats? Why? The standard head copes very well. Can anyone tell me the story of any head problems arising from the use of lead free petrol? Please? I have done 150,000 miles or more on a standard head using unleaded. The only area of apparent failure is on the exhaust valves. After some 50,000 miles, without a loss in compression, if you strip the head, you will see that the exhaust valves have a burnt ring on them that will not come out with normal valve grinding. A heavy session on the valve grinder will soon sort it. The seat in the head is never a problem.

Spares :-

Having the need of a couple of bits the other day I tried both the Reliant Partsworld people and our advertiser Graham Walker, to no avail. I needed the pull off springs for the back brakes, and the clip that holds the brake cylinder to the backplate, and a couple of steering column bushes.

The brake parts turn out to be Mini bits, and so are available from my High Street spares shoppy.

F.B.H.V.C.

We now see how long it is since I wrote for these pages, I have three copies of their quarterly Newsletter on the desk. So a short resume.

Early this year the federation addressed the Prime Minister with regard to attempted charges for SORN and the charges used to subsidise other services, i.e. free provisional licences for the under 21's. Some phrases from the Federation document are so much to the point that I quote them here.

"We believe taxation should be by parliament, not by agency."

"We believe it wrong to subsidise one group from another."

"We believe it is iniquitous to levy a recurring charge on any individual simply for the privilege of keeping, rather than using any object."

These points are still on-going with the government, along with another effort by the department of transport that is proposing that any vehicle that is road taxed must have current insurance cover. To determine this all they would have to do is access the Motor Insurer's database to be able to prosecute from the record. If only they had the resources to actually do

that, the innocent motorist would be better served by having the uninsured ones dealt with through the courts before they bump into us.

The FBHVC keeps a watchful eye out on so many fronts I can only mention a few of them in here, Road humps, registration of number plate suppliers, disposal of scrap vehicle parts, day time running lights, MoT computerisation, and plenty more. These people are working hard on our behalf, please do not just 'let them get on with it' it would be good to give them a hand by joining as an individual member. Their Secretary is, and can be found at :-

P H J Whyman, Secretary
Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs Ltd
Kernshill, Shute Street
Stogumber, Taunton, Somerset TA4 3TU

e-mail :- admin@fbhvc.co.uk (not underlined!)

And for a miserable; £11 you can get the excellent and informative quarterly newsletter, and worry like the rest of us!

Alan Osborn - Thetford

Oops, I have caused offence – who was it that said the man who didn't make a mistake didn't make anything? Anyway, sometimes in life a mistake can have a beneficial outcome. My comments in the last edition about my belief that everyone must surely by now be aware of the benefits of fitting a thicker gasket under the carb on the 850 engine came back to haunt me with a vengeance.

Steve Hall it was whose article from Duncan Bradford's Fox and Kitten web group I had included in the mag to give you a flavour of some of what goes on "out there" Well, Steve was most upset with me because he had previously asked the question on line that should have prompted me – and others – to mention the thicker gasket, and he was miffed that not only had I, and the collective group members, failed to respond appropriately, but then I then compounded the situation by appearing to ridicule anyone who did not know something that he had in fact asked the groups assistance with. Well you can imagine how I felt. Anyway, as a result there may be going to be a database made available on line of useful hints and tips with particular emphasis on modifications.

Here is part of the correspondence that ensued :-

Hi Brian,

Just wondering why you took the opportunity to give me a double flaming in Mewsletter 64.

While I'm delighted that you reproduced my post to the Fox and Kitten yahoo group, I'm a little surprised at the additional comments.

While I'm always happy to bow before superior knowledge the fact remains that the M10 threaded rod in my possession fits the tapped holes on my Foxes manifold heater with ease. Datasheet information is a poor substitute for the actual experience. Perhaps manufacturing tolerances in both threads would account for this.

The resulting job is to my satisfaction and works very well. I accept that M10 threaded

rod is a compromise (and an excellent one at that), I do not consider that any wrong parts have been utilised

Now you know that when I first began investigating the hot starting problem with my Fox, I posted a request on the Yahoo group, for any information that the knowledge base could provide (indeed you commented on my approach to the solution). I had my suspicions, but was seeking a tried and tested solution. A number of people offered suggestions, but no positive solutions were offered i.e. buy this, fit this, do that etc. So I went off following my own hunches.

Imagine my surprise when I now find that "Have we not all long ago fitted the thick spacer gasket under the carb on our 850 powered Reliants?" is tacked on the end of my reproduced post.

Where was this common knowledge when I requested it?

I had thought that perhaps not many 850 engines suffered from this problem and that by publicly seeking and detailing my attempts at a solution, I might produce something useful for the few of us that had this problem.

Now I feel like someone (and possibly lots of someones) were having a laugh at my expense. Very discouraging. OK winge over, now what can I do to prevent misunderstandings like this from happening again?

I understand that the Mewsletters are a very useful repository of this type of information but do not remember reading about hot starting problems in the back issues.

I believe that an on-line forum based repository would be a good start. Available to all and easily searched. I appreciate that this would limit access to those with internet facilities.

I've been spending some time on the Reliant3Wheeler forum lately and will ask the moderators if a "Modifications" area can be added for this purpose.

There seems to be much more activity on this forum when compared to the Yahoo groups, so perhaps it would be better supported there.

Any comments you may have would be most welcome (please extinguish the flame thrower first). - Steve

Well, as you might imagine, that started a bit of correspondence of the electronic type between Steve and I, and while it is tempting to fill many pages in the mag with this story, I will try to summarise without missing any relevant facts. Here is Steve's reply to my initial apology.

Hi Brian,

Thanks for the reply, I suppose it might be asking a lot to expect someone to come to my rescue every time I have a problem. But I thought that is what the forums were for.

I can easily imagine that it could become tiresome responding to requests for info on subjects that may have be raised several times. However I did search through the back issues of the Mewsletter and the back posts on the Reliant groups with no joy.

I think we must have a repository for such information that can be accessed by all in future. Would save a lot of misunderstanding.

Thanks again, Steve

Things then moved on, and later the following arrived :-

Hi Brian,

Oh dear, I seem to be stirring things up a little more than intended.

My reason for writing to you about this was to highlight a shortcoming in the system, I certainly do not hold you responsible in any way for that (was a little peeved by the comments though).

Since I'm the disgruntled one here, it makes good sense that I should attempt a solution and I would be foolish if I didn't consult with the knowledgeable members of the community first (don't want to be a newbie upstart).

To facilitate a "Modifications" repository, I believe the following worth considering.

1. New dedicated area on an existing forum.
2. New dedicated area on an existing web site.
3. New dedicated web site.

Bob's Bug Site is an excellent source of updating and improving information. It isn't updated often but is there to refer to and easily found. I was thinking more along the lines of a general access database where those that wished to include something that could benefit others could post their information.

I asked John Copestake if the R3W forum would provide a new space. The site management did not approve and suggested that the existing Mechanical section could be used for this purpose. Again, I was thinking of an online reference area, rather than a discussion area. So perhaps this is not the way to go.

I tried to contact the webmaster of "The Fox's Lair". This site has not been updated for a long time and contains lots of errors. I thought the webmaster might welcome a bit of assistance and might allow the said database to be accessed from their site. Unfortunately, I am unable to contact them (do you have any info on this site?). *(No, I do not, Ed.)*

If all else fails, I am prepared to construct and manage a new web site for this purpose. My son is a competent web site designer/ builder, and has agreed to help me if required. A well constructed site could be linked to the other group sites and could contain references to previous articles in the Mewsletter back issues (or contain reproduced articles with your permission). The "Alternative Parts" list that is quite poorly implemented on the Fox's Lair site (but what a good idea) could be introduced here, I believe that RKR has developed this area. Food for thought I hope.

I certainly do not mind you reproducing earlier comments if you think that doing so will help to encourage others to freely share their knowledge for the benefit of us all.

As mentioned, I am happy to develop this idea if it will be useful to the community, and if those people with the necessary information will supply me.

Your further comments will be most welcome. Steve

Then a while later, this :-

Hi Brian,

I'm very pleased to inform you that we now have a place to compile modification, improvement and alternative parts data.

I've been carrying on an email conversation with John Copestake today and he has provided a space on the R3W forum site for this purpose.

I just hope my badgering will lead to something useful for all of us. The new areas will need lots of input to become really useful, so I would appreciate anything that you could do to encourage people to submit their knowledge and/or experiences. A productive day wouldn't you say? Steve

So there you are, there was more, and the situation is developing, but I think I have given you some insight into some of the paddling beneath the surface that helps keep things afloat.

One thing I must confess is that I have never fully understood these web forums, the guys talk about a photograph section for example, and I have never been able to access it, indeed a few months ago I even re-registered, I think a mistake really, in an near desperate effort to find access to the pictures, all to no avail!

That said I can find the pictures on Peter Davis' Liege Page no bother at all – there are many things I do not understand about this electronic age, but I try not to lose much sleep over it all.

Having said that, I really find it hard to believe that we had not mentioned the thick spacer gasket within these pages in the past, but I am not going to dwell on my failings, in the circumstances it seems that some good may come of them. Finally, this chapter ends with a beginning, read on.

Ed.

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I'm very pleased to inform you that R3W (<http://www.r3w.co.uk>) have provided a space on their website for the much needed freely accessible database of information regarding the updating, improving and maintaining of Reliant vehicle systems.

Two new areas have been added to the site, these are "Hints and Tips" and "Alternative Parts".

Hints and Tips contains submissions from those that wish to share their experience or recommendations of techniques to maintain, update and improve Reliant vehicle systems.

The Alternative Parts area provides an opportunity for those that have identified whose parts bin Reliant raided while assembling their vehicle to share that information with the rest of us.

Submissions to these areas also need to be sent to the webmaster (info on page) and

there is a promise that with enough input the information submitted will be incorporated into a fully functional database.

If you have relevant information that is not generally known and would like others to benefit from it, submit your information in these new areas. Equally if you have a problem that you can't find a solution for or would like something on your Reliant to work better, you may find that these new areas hold the information that you are looking for.

Please take the time to see what is contained here and add what you know to be missing, input or access is equally welcome from / to newcomers and the establishment alike.

The site name is a little misleading as they have provided areas for four wheel Reliants also and there is much discussion here.

I joined the forum in the middle of June 2005, and have noticed that the current and past discussions cover a broad range of Reliant ownership topics. The Reliant 3 Wheeler forum is easy to join and quite active for this time of year.

For the PC paranoid among us, the site only sends an identification cookie to your computer (which can be blocked without incident).

Here is the answer to the resurfacing familiar question syndrome, experienced on Reliant forums. I hope that those with something to contribute will get posting and help to build up this repository of Reliant knowledge. Steve Hall

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More snippets from the net :-

After last time I wonder if I dare do this, or at any rate dare make comments – still, nothing ventured and all that...

There has recently been some discussion on line between Paul and Ron regarding front suspension bushes. I am again, in spite of getting into bother before, going to express an opinion here. The subject is Kitten and Fox wishbone bushes, the top and bottom ones being a different size. One of them, and I need to get this clear in my mind because I always struggle to remember which one, but one of them is the same as used on a range of Triumph vehicles, however the correspondent was recommending another Triumph bush for the second one, except that by his own admission you need to modify the bush to make it fit. Now I think that there are two Triumph bushes that fit correctly, so I need to do my homework and be able to quote model and preferably part number, (Spitfire / Vittesse / Herald for one, and Dolomite I think for the other – need to check this out) but, unless we are really that stuck, I cannot honestly endorse parts that do not fit, I accept that the modification needed only needs the use of a grinder to shorten the new bush, but grinders can be dangerous things in inexperienced hands, they also tend to be powerful, and so I can't help but feel that a certain amount of skill would be required so as to ensure that too much material is not removed. I quite accept that many, possibly even most folk reading this would have the tools and experience necessary to do the job, but as far as the Register is concerned, if and when we have to resort to modifying parts to fit, I would like to be sure that we have clear and concise instructions.

I should of course not miss the opportunity of pointing out that the Register does still have stock of the original bushes!

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Sales and Wants

For Sale :- Reliant 850cc Engine, ex Fox, nominally 40,000 miles completely stripped ready for rebuild. Best offer over £200

Fro Sale :- Relaint Kitten estate, this a good one. Martin Seymour is your man, the car is in the London area.

For Sale :- Two Reliant Fox vans with spares and new door frames, one factory supplied bulkhead for use as a pick-up. Both need some work, but spares come with them to do this. £350. for both. Both vans are in /Cardiff. Contact Bill Smith

For Sale :- A rare Jimp. Unleaded head, mechanically very good, has been of the road for a number of years for resrtoration. Wil need trailering as the brakes need attention. New cylinders and shoes supplied. Reluctant sale, space needed. £400 o.v.n.o.

Wanted :- A restoration project – surely we can help this man out ! - preferably a car that can still be driven in order to get it home without too much expense. Gwilym Pritchard is the man

Wanted :- Set of good brake drums for a Kitten,

Wanted :- Tony Plowright was wanting some original parts for his Fox Tandy, an original fridge – Electrolux 212, sliding window catches, see recent web stories, a roof skylight – Fiamma 35 * 35cm the opening part, and a wiring diagram and or handbook (which I think we have established they never did produce).

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Epilogue

Once again the nights are beginning to stretch out, the season of events is beginning to thin down a bit, those that are into such things will soon be able to have the odd weekend off to do other things, let me think now – grease guns and nipples sounds good for starters.

One thing I ought to be making clear is that, Alan willing, we will very soon now be needing to have top ball joints refurbished as well as bottom ones, so if you have any old top ball joints, don't throw them out. I will let you know what to do with them soon.

Just clearing out some paperwork the today, and I came across a copy of Alan Osborn's hints and tips, and what jumps out and smacks me in the face – why the thick gasket under the carb to help with hot starting problems story – so while I have yet to discover if and where in a past Mewsletter we mentioned it, we certainly did give plenty of cover about Alan's hints and tips over the years.

Still on the clearing of paperwork front, thanks to a lot of help and encouragement from Moira I have been making real progress recently, like finally dealing with some of your renewal notices from the beginning of the year – at last! Darren Butler deserves a mention in this regard because he has in the past year acquired no less than three additional Kittens, one estate sand two saloons, and not one of them previously known to the Register! Darren, I meant to get in touch, you had suggested that FET 253V only needed a little work to get back on the road, and I was wondering if you had managed that?

Brian Ayers also deserves a special mention because he has completed the conversion of his Kitten into a special, not just completed the job, but has it running – I did take pictures of it a year or so back, but sadly had problems with the new camera, and they were lost. Well done Brian, if you could provide a current picture – fabulous backgrounds abound in Brian's neck of the woods at Newstead Abbey, we could perhaps use it on a front cover, please nicely?

A positive note to end on. With about 12,000 three wheelers on the road, the Reliant Owners Club with a national membership of about 1,000, has less than one in 10 owners or about 8% are a member of the relevant club, while this Register, on the same basis, has over 60% of owners as subscribers. Must be doing something right!

Till next time take care, may you have happy and trouble free motoring, and we will talk again in the autumn..

Brian

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