

Reliant Kitten Register

NEWSLETTER 66

September – October 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 66

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.

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

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Our front cover picture this time is hot off the press, taken at the Brinkworth show on the 4th September 2005. A rare sight these days, a pair of Rebels. One – OHW 267M - belonging to our very own John Parker from Bristol, the other one to a chap who John tells me lives in his neck of the woods.

John of course was the only Rebel to make it to Burford on the Sunday, so he is certainly doing his bit to fly the Rebel flag.

The Registrar speaks

Hello and welcome to more of your favorite reading material.

My trusty printers have had some staff changes recently, and, whither by coincidence or not I cannot tell, but the turn round time for the magazine has virtually doubled since, whither this is a reflection of how busy they are at this time of year I cannot tell, but it does give me some new challenges to face if deadlines are to be met. It is now August the 19th and I have just been told that it will be at least another week before edition 65 is completed. I have finished putting the address labels and stamps on the envelopes in the hope that they would be done this week – oh well...

I was able to perform a minor miracle yesterday, (18/08/05) Peter Divers' Kitten had just failed its MOT, the garage had carried out such repairs as they could, but it needed a bottom ball joint, they rang me to ask if I knew anyone who could help, and I was able to deliver the required part by hand within the hour, so they fitted it and the car passed its test the same day it failed it! Sounds too easy, well, when I tell you that I have two friends called Derek, one who used to race motorcycles, and has quite a collection of them, and the other who rode a bike for the first time last week, (to do his CBT – oh alright dear, Compulsory Basic Training) but has the bug, and wanted to learn more, and so I had arranged for them to meet, at my place, at 2:30, and the garage rang me about the ball joint at 2:15 – well, mobile phones are great in such circumstances, I was able to confirm the arrival times of the two Dereks, both of whom were coming from different directions, and as soon as they arrived we all went off through the Clyde tunnel to deliver the ball joint to the garage! What service, it was on the car by 3:15, and the car was back in the MOT test centre by 3:30 – Ahh, I can't tell you how satisfying it is to be able to do that with a part for one of our cars that is no longer available through the trade. My thanks to all of you who have made such things possible over the past decade or so whither by contributing to the spares fund, providing old units for refurbishing, and of course Alan, for doing the business. It really is a marvelous feeling to know that we have helped keep another of these wonderful wee cars on the road for another year.

Right, enough, on with the show. You should find enclosed with this edition a form from the F.B.H.V.C, please complete and return it. There will be more on this in page 10. It really is very, very important that we all do this, and do it promptly please.

Rebel Round up

Dear Brian,

September 2005

Many thanks for the latest Mewsletter. It is sad to read that there are fewer Rebels on the road, let's hope that are lost being restored as once on the road, they re easy to keep going (Waxoil in the chassis, clear not black and regular servicing!)

Maybe we should start a competition for the most Rebels in the one place at the same time. (Sounds good to me, Ed). After my Rebel (OHW 267M) was the only one at the Kitten 30th anniversary do at Burford, I am pleased to report (see enclosed photographs), that there is now another one in the area, and hopefully the owner will soon be a member of the Register. The location of the photographs was a Country Show at Brinkworth in Wiltshire.

I have sent the best photographs to John Pearce in the hopes that it might get on the front cover one day.

Best wishes, John Parker - Bristol - No. 301

Thanks for the pictures John, If we are really clever, we may have used one of them on this edition's front cover! Ed

Foxes Den

O.K. people, my fault for bringing forward the magazine deadline I expect, but to date nothing specific from any of you Foxy people out there – talk to me! Ed.

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Catch 22

For Many years Insurers have allowed “days of grace” to renew motor policies, which encompassed a 14 day Road Traffic Act cover note on your personal renewal notice. You should now be aware that for almost all Insurers, this extended cover has been withdrawn.

This is because Insurers must notify the Motor Insurance Database of all deleted or added vehicles within 7 days of the adjustment, this includes lapsed renewals, cancelled Policies, new Policies and renewals.

The majority of transactions are now processed electronically, but with some Policies, cover notes and certificates are still issued manually. It is therefore essential that Insurers are notified immediately of any changes to comply with the Database requirements.

Here lies our concern – having notified the renewal premium to our customer, we must notify the insurers on or before renewal date if the cover is to continue.

You as a policy holder may not wish to pay the renewal premium until a few days before renewal date. If we know that you are to pay the premium a few days before renewal date there will be no problem, since we can notify the insurers in time. If there is an oversight by yourself not advising your renewal intention, then the Policy automatically lapses and you would find yourself with no cover after the expiry of the Policy, and hence be driving without insurance.

We have therefore taken the decision that we contact clients, firstly by telephone, and if there is no response then by letter. This will take place a week before the Policy expires to allow time for the Policy to be renewed.

Our concern is that clients may not understand why are “chasing” renewal instructions when the Policy is not actually due for renewal, well, not for another week.

Hopefully having read this you will understand why we do contact our Clients so that if they do require cover to continue, we can help ensure such cover is continued without a gap.

P.F. Spare, Insurance brokers, 34 High Street, Measham DE12 7EB Tel 01530 270574
www.pfspare.co.uk

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Liege Page

The Liege guys have been very quiet of late, which I take it means that they are all now taking the Liege News from John Sawle and Mel Brown. Keep up the good work John & Mel.

I was in touch with Peter the other week, by the time I get this to the printers he will be in Monte Carlo organizing things there, perhaps we will have more to say about that trip, and other Liege exploits next time.

There is one thing that I really envy the Liege people, their number nationally, indeed globally, is now very similar to the number of Rebels on the road, yet you can, several times a year, find a group, whose number can often be counted in double figures, of Liege, together, and like John Parker was saying before about Rebels, when was the last time you saw more than one of them in the same place at the same time? All congratulations must be given to Peter Davies and the intrepid group of individuals who have made such things possible. Well done, and may your success long continue.

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Tempest

On the back cover of this edition you should see a picture of the Tempest's creator, Ian Foster. John Box has always been very modest about his involvement, but were it not for John's attitude, expertise and enthusiasm, the Tempest would not have survived as it has.

Ian Foster 1937 - 2005

Ian, who died on August 13th, was born and brought up in Loughborough. His father was a director of Willowbrook's coachworks, so vehicles formed part of his early life. On leaving school he became an apprentice at Daimler in Coventry where he learned the nuances of vehicle manufacture.

Most of his National Service stint was done in Germany with armoured vehicles, some of which were Daimlers. When his two years were finished he rejoined Daimler in their bus drawing office. This was about the time that Jaguar took over the factory, and the change of atmosphere did not suit Ian.

He got a sales job with a component supply firm, and, with his new wife Margaret, he moved to Beverley for a few years. Another change of job, this time with Small and Parkes, the brake lining makers, brought his family to live in the Bury area where they stayed for many years, albeit in several different homes.

On 1976 Ian set up Trafford Brake Services factoring to the haulage industry. The business grew rapidly, but his interest in cars, of which he owned a large variety, was not fully satisfied, so he decided to manufacture his own.

Thus was born the Teal sports car which was, in effect, a Bugatti look alike. Ian designed and manufactured a chassis for the kit, and supplied a GRP body shell. Running gear was mainly Morris Marina with a Vauxhall rear axle. Many were sold and their owners substituted several engine and gearbox combinations.

At this time Ian sold the Manchester TBS site to his management team, and moved to Burscough where he rapidly built up business in the area. There was no room for Teal manufacture, so that part of his enterprise was sold off.

In 1987 he again wanted to build cars, but this time to me made from new components and supplied 85% complete to be finished by the owner, who could then register it as a new car. The only company able to supply a new rolling chassis was Reliant, and a deal was done for them to supply chassis. Initially at the rate of two a month, rising to 4 when sales got under way. So the Tempest was born. The design was completed and the first car was running within 7 months. The bodies were built by Ian, and fitted to the modified chassis, and, following a few initial changes, the first cars were delivered in 1988. It soon became clear that Reliant was in trouble, and in 1990 the supply of chassis dried up completely. Ian's whole idea had been to supply a new vehicle, and, as this was clearly no longer possible, he felt unable to continue with the project.

For many years Ian, Margaret and the family had been weekend visitors to Windermere, so that when he retired it was a natural choice to live there. It was inconceivable that Ian could do nothing in

retirement, so they decided they would run their new home as a guest house. The house was soon modified to Ian's perfectionist standards and the guests were soon enjoying his carefully prepared breakfasts.

He was in his element with all his family nearby and a Teal and an MG in the garage. He would buzz up and down the paddock on his mower and sail on the lake on the boat he shared with friends.

At the beginning of the year he was diagnosed with kidney cancer, and despite a valiant battle, he died on August the 13th. That the local church was filled to capacity for his funeral indicates his popularity and the affection of his many friends. He leaves Margaret his wife, daughters Sarah and Kate, and twin sons Guy and Mark.

Anon

Article for clubs participating in the FIVA/FBHVC survey

One of the loose inserts with this issue of the Mewsletter is a survey form produced by the Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs (FBHVC) – this isn't just another piece of junk mail: we are sending it to you at our expense because it's important. Do please take the time and trouble to complete it and return it directly to the FBHVC.

It's important, because we can't just take the freedom to use old vehicles (yes, our wonderful wee Reliants are 'old' now!) on the road for granted: in today's world of ever increasing regulation, we have to fight to maintain that freedom – if we don't, we'll lose it. And that's why the FBHVC was set up: The Reliant Kitten Register is one of over 350 clubs in the Federation. The FBHVC protects our interests by engaging with legislators and regulators to ensure that nothing is done to jeopardise the all important freedom to use our vehicles. Representation in Brussels is undertaken through the Federation Internationale des Vehicules Anciens (FIVA), and FIVA employs a professional lobbyist to monitor output from the EU on behalf of the FBHVC and all other EU Federations.

For the last eight years the FBHVC has been supporting its discussions with the UK government with data about the historic vehicle movement in Britain that was collected in 1996. No further data has been collected since, and no similar data has ever been collected in any other country, which means that the only figures available to the FIVA lobbyist are both out of date and partisan: distinct handicaps in negotiations with European institutions.

FIVA has recognised that it has to put that right, and the survey questionnaire we have sent you is the first step in a major project to collect essential economic data about the historic vehicle movement in this country. The same thing is happening in nine other EU countries so that by summer 2006 FBHVC will have up to date information about the historic vehicle movement in the UK to back its arguments in Westminster, and FIVA's lobbyist will have data from across Europe to support his case in Brussels.

Some of the questions about spending and income may seem over personal, but they are important and there is no need for respondents to identify themselves. The FBHVC guarantees that the individual forms will be treated in total confidence and only anonymised, general statistical data will be published. The FBHVC committee believes that without new data, based on a wide sample and credible analytical techniques, the struggle to maintain the freedom of the road may prove impossible: please do your bit to make sure that FBHVC can go on fighting for YOUR right to drive old vehicles on the roads of Britain – and the rest of Europe.

So there you have it, straight from the horseless carriages mouth so to speak. If you think this is in any way a joke, just look to Japan where there are no vehicles over 5 years old, yes, you heard me, 5 years and it's out you go if you are a car in Japan. The law over there forces you to have a full mechanical inspection of all moving parts in a car from its fifth birthday on. The cost of stripping a vehicle down, examining the components to what virtually amounts to aircraft standards, and then rebuilding, often using new components, exceeds the value of the car, so they go out and buy a new one, and export the old ones

to other countries who do not have such draconian restrictions. I am quite sure that there are more than a few vehicle manufacturers over here who would love our government to adopt similar stupidly strict rules, so please, put this down for 10 minutes, complete the form and post it off, Ed.

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Readers Letters

Dear Brian,

05 September 2005

Thanks and congratulations for the latest "Mewsletter" it's both informative and a source of inspiration. I know that producing a newsletter is a great deal of hard work.

After many months of fiddling and fettling and sorting out years of neglect and abuse by former owners, my Kitten JEE 194P (Jeep!) is on the road. It's a joy to drive and really purrs along.

I enclose the details to let you update your records. The colour is Orange I'd say, but looking at the parts list I can't decide if it is Sierra Tan, Desert Tan, or maybe Caramel.

When It came time for me to arrange insurance doom and gloom descended when I phoned my local broker who arranges my motorcycle insurance. He quoted over £300. Gulp! Then I remembered the P.F. Spare advert on the back of the "Mewsletter", gave them a ring, and behold! Insured for just under £100. Very helpful people too - which was nice.

Poor "Jeep" has had a hard life 'till now. There's evidence of much neglect and abuse – water ingress amongst the most noticeable. I knew when I first drove the car home that there was something nasty lurking somewhere. When I lifted the rear seat squab to my horror I discovered a pile of rotting newspapers and the seat squab harbouring moulds that Porton Down would be proud of. The squab has been disposed of and now, with liberal doses of high speed fresh air and AirWick deodorizer the interior now smells like a Paris boudoir. And the wiring, that's another story! Behind the dashboard looked like an explosion in a spaghetti factory.

I have attached a list of parts still needed, and advice or help will be appreciated.

Yours faithfully, Roy Smith - West Sussex

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Dear Brian,

September 2005

I could not believe it when I read that Dick Goodall has a Jowett Bradford van next to his Kitten. I also have my Kitten parked next to my Bradford van in the shed, photo enclosed. My other cars are a Ford Pilot and a Morris Minor campervan.

All the best, James Lambert - Hull

P.S. Excellent mag.

Thanks James, and another potential front cover picture as well, Ed

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Tales from Tore

Good evening Brian and many thanks for the latest Mewsletter.

I have not yet read all of it and will no doubt come back to you.

You kindly informed me that a Car Rally was to take place in Grantown on Spey on Sept. 4th. Now I had ignored a couple of other events earlier in the year in the belief that a rally would take place in Forres about that time. However the wretches brought that one forward from September to July and I missed it. Serves me right for not keeping up with things. So once I heard of the Grantown bash I decided to go. Perhaps I could even get a photo of an Austin Eight? Now here comes the bit which shows just how daft I can be. On the wall of the bedroom is a calendar, and I checked to see what day the rally was due and was a bit surprised to see it was a Saturday. Maybe I should have checked further? So on Saturday Stephen and I set off in Kitty. It's five years since I last drove south of Inverness on the A9 and that was in a new hire car. The trip went as normal as we passed Inverness until we started climbing the Drumossie Brae, which is a long climb of about a 1 in 13 slope. Well poor wee Kitty ran out of puff and we ended up climbing steadily up at 40 mph in 3rd gear. What can I expect from an 850 cc engine? Then followed a fine descent into the river Nairn valley followed by the next stiff climb and 3rd gear saw use again. Perhaps it's just as well I changed the gearbox oil this summer?

After that things were a bittie more successful, even the climb to Slochd Summit, about 1300 feet above sea level, was managed in top gear albeit at less than my usual 55mph cruising speed. Then it was a skate downhill and turn off for Carrbridge where I was relieved to renew my acquaintance with the timber building's facilities in the car park. Travelling by Dulnain Bridge we soon reached Grantown. Well it was quite busy but there was no sign of a rally. So we scouted round and in the tourist info office found the Rally to be on SUNDAY 4th September. Oh silly me, how DID that happen?

So we had a scout round the town. It was nice in the sun but chill in the shade with a wind.

What now? Well I have a liking for steam railways, so we went to the Broomhill station of the Strathspey railway, wasn't it used as 'Glenbogle Station' in the TV series. Don't watch TV myself, boring, boring! Where I was amused to find that their only working steam loco was out of order and a diesel was in use and which decided me not to have a ride. Having bought a couple of 'Glenbogle' platform tickets we proceeded back to Carrbridge and had a coffee and bun in the Landmark Centre, worth a visit for the shop alone. Free entry for shop and restaurant by the way.

The run home was uneventful and more speedy as it's a descent from about 750 ft above sea level to virtually sea level at Inverness. One thing that was very obvious was the rather rough and bumpy surface of the A9 road in places. Which was not smoothed out by Kitten suspension. So much for control from Holyrood?

After a cuppa at home I looked again at my calendar to find that it was showing the wrong month by far! I had forgotten to turn the pages over. Hum.

So on Sunday we set off again with the weather looking quite promising. The previous day's run seemed to have loosened Kitty's joints and she purred along better though still lagging a bit on the steepest hills. Once at Carrbridge I decided that more petrol would be a good idea. And was surprised to see the pumps have the 'National' brand name on them, which was not the only surprise. At Tore unleaded petrol costs 93.9 pence a litre. In the news 'they' have been speculating about whether the £1 per litre mark will soon be reached. Well at Carrbridge it is already £1-04p per litre! Ouch! For diehards like me that equates to £4-74p per gallon, no wonder 'they' changed to metric fuel measure?? Do I detect another con along the lines of the conversion to decimal currency??

On arrival at Grantown the bunting was out and the Square was blocked off for vehicle display. I managed to park in a side street and we joined the crowd. By this time the sun was really warm and I wished that I had taken my light jacket but not to worry. As for the cars, well I saw mostly what I expected of a reasonable entry though mostly post-war. There was an Austin 40 Farina dressed up as a Panda car, something I have not seen before. The most interesting, to me, entry was a Stanley steam car, which is a replica built in 1999 of an original dated 100 years earlier. Eventually this chuffed up and down a side road with a most interesting sound. I wish I had a video camera! Yes I have seen Stanley steamers in the past but usually in dilapidated 'kit' form so this was a welcome change. Not a single Reliant graced the gathering, apart from my Kitty hidden away and an 'X' prefix Robin parked near the square. Ah well, perhaps next time?

After a couple of hours wandering about and partaking of liquid to keep ourselves from dehydrating, sadly non-alcoholic, we left and headed for home. The car was absolutely roasting and needed the doors left open for a few minutes to cool down. Now THAT doesn't happen too often up here. The northbound traffic on the A9 was quite heavy for the Highlands. At Daviot we saw a fabric bodied Austin saloon being pushed into a layby by several folk, I had noticed that the owner lives in Dingwall. But there was plenty of assistance, so I left them to it as I don't have spares for cars of that age. Similarly a Humber Sceptre was receiving assistance from an AA patrol near the Kessock Bridge. Between Inverness and home a small open top car having an 'H' prefix registration followed and then passed Kitty, with its driver and I waving to each other. Having looked in my car books I cannot yet identify it.

Tore city was reached without incident and a welcome cuppa consumed. The only real casualty was a sore back but that's not unusual.

Enough from me for now. Take care and best wishes to you and yours, Dick Goodall #157

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The real M.o.T. situation

Brian,

25/08/2005

You raised a query about problems relating to the weight of a Reliant Rebel relating to MoT testing - here is a summary of our discussions with men from VOSA yesterday.

Every problem that we could throw the men from VOSA, they could demonstrate that the system is capable of coping. The difficulties all seem to stem from operators who are not sufficiently familiar with the system to know what to do with the unusual and who are unwilling to use the help-line (and if that is one of those "press 4 for frustration systems" one could hardly blame them). As such, the problems are likely to be transitional as testers get used to the system. The message for those who suffer during this period is to persuade testers to use the help lines, and if that fails to make use of the public lines themselves (or report the problem to us).

Some details problems-

The incorrect make on the MoT for a Sunbeam: operator error most likely caused by not getting an immediate match on entering the registration number and being prompted to enter make and model - and then entering the word Sunbeam in the wrong box, resulting in the system recognising the name as a model of Talbot and automatically putting this information in the make field. If the operator then fails to notice the mistake and goes further with the test, a point will be reached where it will not be easy to make a correction.

The master database, however, will note any mismatch between the DVLA record and the MoT and this will (should?) trigger action by DVLA either to correct their records (which they will do if the discrepancy falls into an obvious category, such as an incorrect character in the make/model section of a 17 digit VIN) or to write to the keeper advising of the discrepancy with the aim of resolving it. Once the data is correct, there should be no further problem at future tests.

The Catch 22 of the vehicle that needs an MoT to get a registration, as happens for example with the sale to the public of ex military vehicles, but needs a registration to get an MoT: a vehicle can be tested provided it can be identified by one, or more, unique numbers. Those numbers are usually the registration number and/or VIN, but may (rarely) also be an engine number where no other number exists. A tester who is not familiar with the procedure for testing a machine with only a VIN may get stuck before he has started because the first thing he would normally plug in is the registration number. The solution is actually very simple - there is a drop-down menu with a check box to tick if there is no registration - the test then proceeds on the basis of VIN only. This may add about ten seconds to the test for a tester who knows what he is doing, but he has to know what to do. A bit like learning a feature of "Word" - it's usually very easy when you know how, but finding out can be difficult - as you have to know it is there in the first place in order to find out.

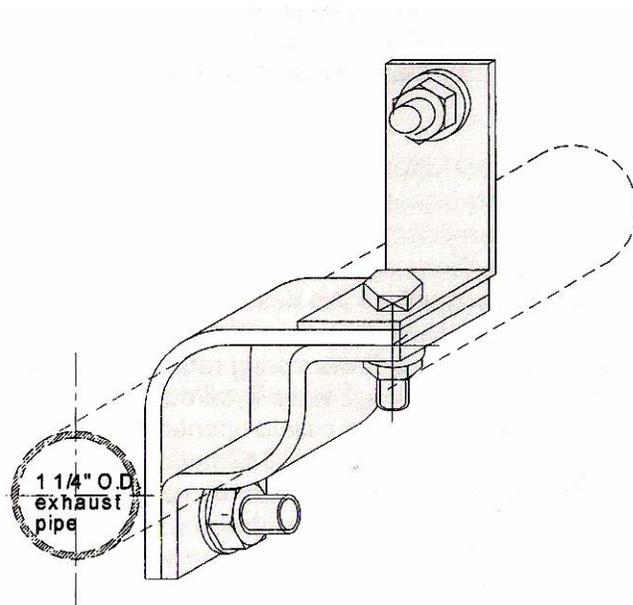
Weights: we have had numerous queries asking why vehicle weights have suddenly become important, with one person being denied a test completely because he could not say how heavy his car was. There is no change to the braking standard, and if vehicles that are not capable of meeting the required standards have been passed in the past, they should not have been. There are several points wrapped together here. First, the brake standards have not changed. What has changed is that the results of the brake tests are fed directly into the computer. It has become clear that many testers have previously been relying on their experience to "guess" a vehicle's weight to enable the roller brake tester to carry out the necessary calculation for brake efficiency, and some may have adjusted their first guess to "help" marginal cases achieve a pass. Now that the results are fed directly into the computer, testers are naturally reluctant to be guessing anything as an incorrect estimate could come back and bite them. For motorcycles, combined machine and rider weight are essential information for calculating brake efficiency when either a roller brake tester or plate tester is used. In other words, the computerisation simply prompts the operator to do the job in the way he has always been meant to do it, and it – in that sense it has removed the element of discretion that allowed a tester to take a short cut.

The system is "populated" with data for common current vehicles (just as MoT testing stations that have yet to be converted to the new system have charts of weights for common current vehicles). If a vehicle is unusual, rare or old, general data will not apply and a unique weight appropriate to that individual vehicle will have to be entered on the system the first time it comes forward for computerised test. Once the data is there, it will be available for future tests and will appear on the system as soon as the registration number has been entered at the start of a test. If the weight is not known, nothing can be entered and the vehicle cannot be tested properly on a roller brake. It can, however be tested using a decelerometer, so the lack of a vehicle weight is no reason to refuse a test.

Another concern was the treatment of vehicles fitted with a transmission brake. Some owners have expressed concern that testing a transmission brake on a rolling road is potentially dangerous or damaging to the vehicle being tested, but that the computerised system demands that such vehicles are tested only on a roller tester. Not so. If the vehicle weight is unknown, it can only be tested by decelerometer. Having said that, however, the recommended procedure for testing a transmission brake is (i) for the vehicle owner to be the "assistant" who operates the brake and (ii) for the assistant to be briefed to apply the transmission brake gently and progressively until the minimum standard is reached, then stop the test. This differs from the routine brake test where testing usually continues after the pass point, to measure maximum braking effort, so that an owner can be warned when the maximum braking standard falls below what would normally be expected for his type of vehicle.

Well I have had a go at sketches and here they are. What used to take 10 minutes with paper and pencil now takes ages with a CAD program. Is this progress??

On the previous page is the Mk.1 effort. While it works, fitting requires partial 'unbending' to get it over the pipe then closing again to clamp the pipe. Not only is this awkward, it cracks any paint applied before fitting. Now here's the Mk. 2 version. It's made in 2 separate parts and so can be fitted and removed more easily. Hardly rocket science, but the idea may be useful to others.



Both brackets were made using simple hand tools and a bench vice. The former used for bending was an ancient box spanner of 1 1/4" OD on its body. Never throw anything away! Cheers, #157

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*You may remember some comments within these pages a few months back about Triumph Herald front dampers made by Mike Barcroft, well, good as his word, here is the latest on the subject from Mike. I have to say that I did consider not using this article, but feel that the disclaimer keeps the Register covered, and I would not want to be accused of excessive censorship. Draw your own conclusions :-*

Brian,

August 2005

I can now give a definite answer to the question – Do Herald front dampers fit on a Kitten? Yes, but not quite. Well technically speaking, no. Sort of. I think I'd better explain. They don't go straight on.

The first complication is that not all Herald or Kitten units are the same. I have seen several Triumph types, and my mate and I have 6 Kitten dampers between us, and three are different. They (Triumph and Reliant dampers) are dimensionally very similar. The performance of the damper is going to be similar on each car, similar but not identical. And having tried it, and being ruthlessly honest, I'd say that the ride is fractionally firmer, but I can live with that.

Operationally the only real difference is the spring. Therefore the important point is to use the Kitten springs. Keep them central on the units, and get the ride height right. The Triumph springs will not

fit the Kitten tower even if you wanted to use them, and they would be too hard anyway, the Herald weight some 600lbs more than the Kitten.

The Triumph damper unit has a lower spring retaining flange. The Kitten has lower collets. The Kitten springs were secured at the bottom of the Triumph units using their original Kitten collets opened out slightly to fit round the Triumph damper body, which is about 1/8" fatter than the Reliant unit was, but sitting on the inner part of the Triumph flange.

This same flange has to be reduced a bit at one side, cos it fouls the front anti roll bar mounting on the Kitten. Two new upper spring retaining discs were made from some 4mm steel plate with a smaller inner plate to keep the springs central. You can alter the spring height / tension by simply adding spacers under the top retaining plate. The upper donut / washers go back on a la Kitten.

Great I thought, job done, bang 'em back on the car. Well, not quite, as the bottom bolts won't go in. I should have measured them first. The Kitten items are about 3/32" bigger. I could actually have used the Triumph bolts, but they would obviously been a poor fit in the Kitten wishbone. The steel tube in the Herald bottom eyes is also too long, so the solution was to push out all the bottom eyes (which vary from unit to unit on the Kitten - some fit, some don't, so you might have to be a bit inventive) and swap Triumph for Reliant. This all sounds a bit too complicated, but it isn't really, and anyway, I like messing about.

The car drives and handles very much like it did before, although the ride height is about 1/2" lower than before (I do intend to lift it) I used two old but serviceable Triumph units to see if it was a practical idea first. If it fails the Motty (last year the dampers got a verbal warning) which I don't think the new / old Triumph ones will. I will repeat the exercise with 2 new Triumph units.

Last year, so they will probably be more expensive by now, Oldham Reliants quoted £194 a pair for Kitten units complete (the Register's price is £140ish without springs I think) The best price I have had for Herald dampers is would you believe £20 each including vat. From T. D. Fitchetts in Telford 01952 619585, so for me, no contest, but make up your own mind.

I have a whizzo mate with a top flight lathe which certainly helped, but it can definitely be done in the garden shed with a Black and Decker and a hacksaw and a file if you are minded to have a bash.

If you want to screw new items straight on the car, then forget all this rhubarb and buy them from the Register, but at least now we know.

Regards to all Mike Bartcroft – No. 669

*Well, thanks for that Mike. Yes, early Kittens had different front dampers, and springs and anti roll bars from the later ones, I can't remember the chassis number the change was made, but it was early on. I could be inquisitive and ask how you "opened the Kitten collets out slightly", and just what stresses that operation put into them. But I guess time will tell. The fact that you were good enough to write the article before adjusting the ride height makes me think it is all really quite a bit of time and effort involved. I grant you, if you are not paying for the time, what you have done sounds as though it could save some money. Do you have any idea how many man hours were involved?*

*For one who has been known to criticize the use of non-standard parts I have to concede that the springs we use are in fact Fox spec, and so are 150lb ones rather than the later Kittens 140lb ones (the early Kittens used a 120lb spring I believe, along with the smaller bottom bushes). The new dampers we supply however are a huge step up in spec, they are both adjustable damp rate, and have adjustable spring seats, high quality poly bushes are used, and so to compare them with the humble Triumph unit is really not comparing like with like. Here endeth the case or the defence! Ed. Oh, one last word, I did just ring T. D. Fitchetts to check I had the number in correctly, and they told me that they just had a chap in last week with a Kitten damper making comparisons, and that they would not recommend it as there are too many differences.*

*All of which makes me wonder if I should just delete the last couple of pages – never let it be said I don't let you see both sides of a story! Ed.*

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## **Parts supply –**

I have been surprised by the demand for front dampers this year. When we commissioned the first new batch in almost a decade last year we had firm orders for 8, plus 2 probables, so I ordered 14, only to have to order more in February this year. The minimum batch quantity to get a sensible price is 10 dampers, 5 pairs. We have at the time of writing, just the two pairs left, and they are both spoken for subject to payment arriving, (one of them being a pair for the chap who took the sample to Fitchetts to compare with Herald ones as it happens, and he had not even read the previous article at that time!) so I expect they will be gone before you read this. What to do? Should I spend another £600 of the spares fund on more for stock? That would be most of the fund at this time, and given the desire to maintain good stocks of reconditioned steering racks and ball joints, I expect to be spending a few hundred pounds on those items before the end of the year. Decisions decisions. One thought is that we have supplied new front dampers for 4% of the remaining Kittens and Foxes out there in the past 8 months, just how many more are we really likely to be asked for in the coming year(s)? That said it is comforting to be able to answer in the affirmative when asked if we have any.

Then there is the ever present matter of wishbones, even more expensive than new front dampers to have made – or are they? Moves are afoot, but, like all these matters, what do we spend the money on first, and what, if any, compromises can we realistically make?

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## **More snippets from the net :-**

Right, this is interesting, within a week of my typing up my concerns about wishbones, I was reminded about the lack of general knowledge about these, lower ones in particular – this in relation to Kittens and Foxes. The Rebel of course uses a readily available design of wishbone, from the Triumph range, and for some reason they seem to be a lot less prone to corrosion than the Kitten / Fox ones. This all came to light on Duncan's Fox and Kitten web group recently when David Roche asked if Kitten and Fox front suspension was the same – I promptly gave a brief outline of the differences, only to find that another answer was posted saying they were the same – which of course they are not. I've said it before and I'll say it again, this internet thing is amazing, but whose job is it to police it? Certainly not mine!!! That said, in this case Duncan was quick to jump in and tell the truth, but it just shows you how false information can be quickly spread.

I am sure that no one was lying here, just ignorant of the facts and or making invalid assumptions, but the wonders of modern technology can allow such false information to spread very quickly indeed.

The ensuing discussion made me realise that though I do not like or want to repeat things, there are always new people coming along who do not know the facts, make assumptions, and old fogies like me who, in spite of being well aware of the dangers of doing so, assume things as well! The latter comment in relation to the fact that most of our vehicles are now a quarter of a century or more old, and in that time, some owners have been known to remove parts and replace them with others, in some cases from a different albeit similar vehicle – witness the Jimp that was found to have one Kitten lower wishbone and a Fox one on the other side – it is wonderful what you can do with a drill and a larger diameter bolt – but of course you have followed John's advice from some years back and modified your Kitten's lower wishbones and strut outer end to Fox spec years ago, haven't you? So, they are all the same, reinforcing plates apart, aren't they?

The “If ‘taint broke don’t fix it” adage clashes terribly with the “Let’s make it better” one in this case, doesn’t it? And I have to say from my experience, while one really ought not to bury one’s head in the sand, unless you are in there anyway, provided there is no relative movement between the lower wishbone and the strut, and the MoT man will surely tell you if there is, it can involve a lot of work, which while it will help to preserve the vehicle’s long term future, could have it off the road for a week or more!

But, prevention is better than cure. So, the recommendation is, do it. That said if you have, as a couple of our readers have, owned your Kitten from new, and never in 25 years or so had any bother, what’s the point?

## Sales and Wants

For Sale :- A set of 4 Kitten wheels, shotblasted and painted silver, with brand new KUHMO 145/80R10 69T tubeless tires. £120 Contact Brian on 0141 8866117

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

For Sale :- Reliant 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. Owing to holidays, these are still available, if you were one of the people who rang and left a message and Bill has not yet been back to you, please ring again now.

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

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

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## Epilogue

Before you ask, no I have not started the Christmas edition yet, (he said in September) so feel free to contribute an article for it – now would good if you were wondering when.

What I am of a mind to do, you will see if I have decided to go ahead by the contents of the envelope this came to you in, is to send out the renewal notices early this year.

As you may be aware I am membership secretary for a west of Scotland car club, and their renewals fall at the same time as the Register’s, which conspires to keep me rather too busy in January and February. So, while your subscription is not due till the New Year, it would be a great help to me if you would not mind sending your subscription for 2006 in early. To that end you may well find a renewal form enclosed.

This does not alter the subscription year, which has always run from 1st January till 31st December, but it will lend weight to my argument (with the lovely Moira, who has been trying to persuade me to give up the “other” responsibilities) that I can continue in that post for another year. Obviously the Register takes priority, and if one does have to go, it won’t be this one!

Your help in this matter will be appreciated. Oh, and on that subject, I have decided to renew the offer of a five year subscription, and to make that an attractive offer (because it will save me work in the long run) I am prepared to offer, till the end of 2005 only, a five year subscription for just £60. That not only saves you a couple of pounds a year on the new annual subscription of £14, but also protects you from any other subscription increases till the end of 2010, not a bad deal when you think about it, and, if I get this edition to you before the end of October, even gives you up to two months to save up for what in the great scheme of things is only the cost of a couple of tankfulls of petrol in your wonderful wee Reliant!

There's a thought, at £14, the annual subscription to the Register at this time, relates to about half a tankfull of fuel. I wonder what one of them will cost in 2010?

You know it's a sobering thought, for some months past I have been putting £50 of fuel in the Citroen at a time, big tanks may be good for range, but not so good on the pocket every time you fill up! I know I have to fill up less often with a 60 litre tank, it's just the thought of putting in £50 at a time. Did you know that in England, that is the largest denomination of currency, a £50 note I mean – up here in the real world we have had £100 notes for years – not that I actually get to see that many of them!

Oh, a last minuet word from Frank, our man in Chile. Thanks for the letter Frank. Yes, Mike has the trailer back, sadly the wheels that I believe you had left to come back with it had long gone, as had the spare, by the time the trailer was collected from Watford, and only one of the temporary mudguards that Scott fitted for the journey survived the full distance, but it is back.

The really good news of course is that Frank now has custody of his two yellow Kitten estates, having finally found a way of getting them through customs. Well done Frank, we look forward to hearing how things go in the future for what we believe are the only South American resident Kittens.

Very briefly, while we are on the subject of foreign Kittens, I had a call from Gregory yesterday, 12th September, about a part for a Fox, turns out it is a three wheeler, long story, but he knows of several Kittens in the area, he lives in Athens in Greece, watch this space.

Oh, I know that Alan Osborn has written us an article, and I did wait for the post this morning Al, 14/9/05, but it was not there, next time. Till then take care, may you have happy and trouble free motoring, and we will talk again nearer Christmas.

**Brian**

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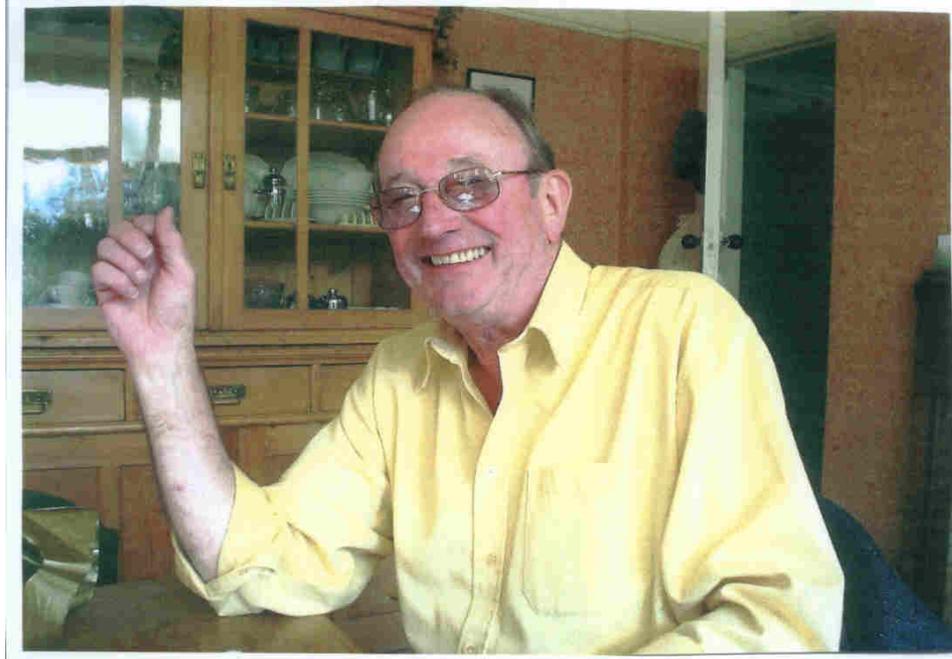
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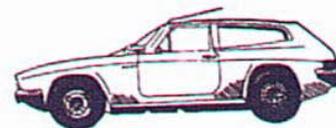
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