

Reliant Kitten Register



NEWSLETTER 67

November - December 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 67

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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The front cover, It might be the lovely Asquith van belonging to Terry Wheeler of Antique Restorations near Sudbury,

The Registrar speaks

Hello and welcome to the Christmas edition of your favorite bedtime reading.

Many thanks to those of you who responded to my plea for early subscription renewal this year, you have saved me from finding myself submerged in an uncontrollable pile of mail during January. Do not let these words of thanks and appreciation deter those of you who have not yet renewed your subs from doing so now!

Our future is secure, I would say for another year, but the fact is that a number of you have conspired to retain my services for another half decade – so you are stuck with me for a while yet!

My thanks for your confidence, it is encouraging to know that you have not yet had enough of my ramblings, and indeed that you are up for yet more of what our various contributors have to offer over the coming years.

By now you will have completed and returned the Federation's survey form, and they will be busily collating and analysing the results of what is the biggest survey of its kind ever undertaken. I look forward to publishing a summary of the results in the future.

P.F. Spare I would also single out, along with Graham Walker, for their continued and much appreciated support of the Register. Do avail yourself of their services whenever you can.

It only remains for me to wish you the compliments of the season. Take care of yourself and the car(s), we will talk again soon.

Brian

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Rebel Round up

Hello fellow "Rebeler's"

Autumn 2005

It's been a long time since I have given you all an update on Eva the Rebel. You may recall that I obtained an engine for her in Peterhead, a town in the North of Scotland with the help of Brian. The owner of the engine, another Brian, had told us that the big ends were suspect.

Having removed the crankshaft from this engine I realised just how worn they were. I was concerned over the rest of the internal stuff now. I took the crankshaft around to Brian's, and he was equally surprised at the amount of scoring on one of the crankshaft journals. It would need to get a re-grind. It was at this stage I decided to strip the engine to bits. With the weight of the crankshaft removed I could now lift the rest of the engine into the flat. The spare engine had been acting as a dead weight in the boot of the car for winter driving. I had commandeered the dining room table as a workbench. I was delighted at being able to do this, as the last time I stripped an engine to bits was in 1996 when I did a year of mechanics at college.

With the pistons out I noted two of the wet liners were damaged (sump end). The head came off easily however due to the amount of red gasket sealant within the head it's history

comes into question. I phoned Reliant to order a set of piston rings for the 4 pistons and big end bearings at a total cost of £113.68 excluding postage & Tax. I thought oh dear, a tad expensive.

A few days later Brain found out through the local Reliant Owners Club that there was a Rialto for sale MOT failure for £50 with a good running engine it seemed a good idea. I bought the Rialto on 30/01/05 and got the engine removed from the Rebel on the same day.

As the tax was up on the 31/01/05 on the Rialto. I had to drive the car down to my dad's at Coatbridge where he has a driveway. I drove the car to work that day and was planning to drive straight from work to my dad's. My co-worker friends were fascinated that I had bought a 3-wheeler. So, during the lunch hour, we all piled into the Rialto.

This poor car, it was lucky to be used twice a week by its previous owner, for Sunday service and the weekly shopping. The Rialto was now fully laden it created great humour with my co-worker Fiona saying, "I had a hair drier that sounded just like this". I pulled from the parking bay and heard an almighty bang. I thought the rear axle had given out, Louise jumped out of the passenger side and was looking on the ground for the exhaust. She looked as concerned as I was, as I could not see anything obvious, but the car was sitting very low to the ground. I suppose it was a bit much for it. I carried on regardless and it made a terrible racket like the wheel was rubbing off the underside of the car.

I went 300 yards, and turned at the roundabout, having a bit of fun carefully flinging it around the roundabout to the screams from the back of the car and that was just the noise of the car. I could not figure out if my co-workers were screaming or laughing in hysteria "it's not going to fall over this is British Engineering at it's best" trying to reassure myself I think.

I got the car back to the parking bay and at the end of my shift drove it on the M8 all the way to Coatbridge. I realised as I was driving it. It was one of the leaf springs that had broken.

I would hit a slight bump on the road and about 2 minutes later the car would eventually stop oscillating by the time that I got to my dad's I was seasick.

In the morning I started work removing battery, radiator, exhaust and prop shaft. After a good few hours the engine was lowered to the ground. Bear in mind the car was going straight to the scrappies, so I was able to cut corners in the removal of the engine and that made the job easier than I suspect it would have been otherwise. Having limited equipment to do the job, I found it was easier to lower the engine to the ground and lift the car on its side. Yes I know that it sounds harsh. Dad and I tipped the poor Rialto on its side and then I heard a waterfall. I had forgotten that there was about ¼ a tank of fuel in the car. It was pouring all over my dad's veggie patch, he went ballistic. We just had to watch it flow into the Golden Wonders.

I then disconnected the rest of the components from the engine and lifted the engine into the boot of my dad's car.

Once up the road I transferred the engine to the boot of the Rebel and when I got good weather I attempted the connection of the engine to the gearbox within the engine bay. My Rebel had been fitted with an 850 engine, and the Kitten / Robin type of gearbox, with the lengthened propshaft and all the other mods needed to make that possible, but neither Brian nor I had realised that the Rialto, had the later type of gearbox and a pre-engaged starter motor. I had let the Rialto gearbox go to the scrap yard with the car, and when Brian explained

the differences in the size of the starter motor location holes in the starter motor, rear engine plate, and of course the bellhousing, it was all too many changes.

After realising all this and obtaining the knowledge from Brian over the work that would have to be done. I just know that I did not have the right equipment and time for the work that the car needed. I really had to assess were I was going with this one! The MOT was due and I knew that it needed new brake shoes all round, and the chassis had a hole in it that need welding along with the suspension that needed a new set of leafs. I just did not have a garage or the tools needed, nor the time and finance to get Eva on the road and through a MOT.

After much contemplating I decided to sell Eva on E-bay. A guy in Cornwall won the bid, and sure enough he and his mate drove all the way with a Toyota Landcruiser with trailer. It was sad to see old Eva go, but I was happy it was going to a new home. Her new owner has various Reliant's. I had special times with Eva readers may recall that I had visited John O' Groats and toured the coast of Scotland with her. [\[Mewsletter 61 November-December 04 edition.\]](#)

I have now went the other way, and bought a brand new car, a Kia Picanto, something that I never thought I would do, but there you go. Your outlook in life can change, and I wanted something that provided reliable / functional transport, and do you know it has not caused any problems or concerns. With Air-con and A.B.S. with E.B.D. I would not know were to begin, the only similarity to my Rebel is the colour. Maybe one day I will return to the Reliant marquee, but I think it would have to be a Scimitar SST. As my first car was a Scimitar SS1, and the drive on that car was great, it was made to corner. I wish all Rebel owners to hang in there and keep those wheels turning.

Thomas Mitchell

[Thanks for the up-date Thomas.](#)

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Foxes Den

Our Fox alternative parts list individual Peter Hayton has sadly been forced to give up the Fox, and that, together with poor health in the family has conspired to force him to resign from the position. He tells me that it is not an onerous task, there being very few queries, so few that you don't count them monthly, rather annually, and even then can usually count them on your fingers, seldom needing to use both hands. So, if you would care to step forward, I will arrange to have your details included on that page, and have the documentation passed on to you – an enthusiastic volunteer awaited.

Peter, many thanks for doing this job for us these past 5 years, wish Christine well, it seems no time at all since she was on the LeJog with me, though I see looking at my certificate that it was May 1998.

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Hi All

Just to fill you in, the Kitten Register was approached by someone with the remains of several Foxes. Members were asked to help save 6 partially dismantled Foxes from the tip

or the bonfire, particularly to rescue such rare & refurbishable items as steering racks & suspension parts. We got together a merry band of half a dozen or so, but unfortunately someone came along with the ultimate offer - a fistful of cash & everything to be removed at a stroke. This is something we could not have done, and it was what the owner really needed.

Hopefully it means that even more than we could have hoped to save is going to be available for recirculating. [Although we must expect whoever is responsible to want to recoup the cost / time for the operation plus the dismantling and especially the storage. No mean feat]

I've asked for my details to be passed on, so hope contact will be made.

Many thanks to those who offered their help, (and I now know where to ask next time!!)

Dunc

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Liege Page

Right guys, John & Mel are doing a great job with "Liege News", (Boy do I envy them the colour pictures) so you are now in the use it or lose it category within these pages from here on in. Ed.

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Matters Tempestuous

How time continues to fly by at a rate of knots. In the last Mewsletter I put in a plea for anyone who had a Tempest project that they might want to part with and lo and behold, this got one of our members thinking about the project that had been in the garage and not moving forward for some time. A phone call later revealed a well-put together vehicle in need of spraying and finishing but most of the mechanicals sorted. Isn't it funny how we perceive projects sometimes? It has happened to me on a number of occasions that even though nothing has physically changed with the components, due to the pressure of other things and as time passes we consider these components have changed from a living car back to a pile of spares that will need someone else to bring back to life. It is often a difficult decision to make, as, like myself, people have often put a lot of love, care and money into projects, as if you build it right, you know it will always be a good vehicle. Nevertheless, the car in question, I believe, has changed hands and all being well will be taking some more steps towards being finished.

Anyway for the second edition running, I have been contacted by another member who is desperate to get their hands on a Tempest, whether it be in a total kit form, unfinished project or complete car. If you too have a project in your garage I would love to hear from you, even if you are not thinking of parting with it. It would be good to know how many kits are languishing in people's garages. Another exciting Tempest in the pipeline is a Steve Campbell kit with one of the only two believed to be surviving Reliant OHC BRM engines, a rare beast indeed.

I have also had a very interesting letter from John Williams who competed in his Tempest over a number of years all over England, winning the British Trials Championship Class D four times! Having built it in mid 1991 this John Box kit has also appeared on local television and Top Gear. In all these years John has had only 2 breakdowns and the car is now

in road trim (I very much hope to go and see it in the near future). That's all for now, to get hold of me through email, post or phone, details inside the front cover.

Martin

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Dear Brian,

15 Oct 05

It was great to receive the information on the Register, many thanks. Please find enclosed a cheque for my subscription.

I do not own a Reliant as yet, but am trying to find a Tempest. I phoned David Smith and Martin Seymour as you suggested, and they both kindly took my number and said they would get in touch if they hear of a Tempest for sale.

During the eighties I owned two Reliant Scimitars, and SE5 and an SE6, they were great cars. However with the price of fuel going up, I decided their cubic capacity was too high and sold them on. I have fancied one of the smaller Reliants for some time, and am now seriously looking for a Tempest. Is there someone out there with a Tempest bargain?

Jeff Matthews - Castle Douglas

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Kitten Register Rally 2005

Being about the 30 year anniversary of the Reliant Kitten it was thought to be an idea to have a club rally, that together with the fact that our leader wished to see 100 Kittens together made it seem a good one.

In a moment of weakness I volunteered to arrange such an event. I would have liked a small committee so that it was not just my ideas but one from a group of our members, but it seems that our readers are a bit slow in doing such things. So it was on my own that I made the arrangements which really meant the event had to take place near to home to enable the arrangements to be made easily.

After looking around I decided on the Cotswold Wildlife Park which had both plenty of space, and other things to do.

We initially had 35 club members who showed an interest in attending, but this dropped down to about 20 by the date of the event.

Saturday the 21st of May was the Assembly day to allow everyone to travel some large distances without missing anything.

Sunday the 22nd of May was the main rally day with a driving test arranged at the wildlife park, and a 30 mile rally around the Cotswolds. Most participants took up the driving test with some good fun as a result, but nobody ventured out onto the roads, preferring to remain on site and talk cars and look at each others offerings.

Some fine standard Kittens in excellent condition, some modified cars, the most interesting being Bob Keene's fabulous 2 Litre Ford powered Kitten with re-arranged rear axle, also Patrick's beautifully modified Kitten all the way from Switzerland. Which is a real credit to Patrick. Several Tempests arrived, which as good to see.

The driving tests were held and showed some interesting results

Brian and John Pearce held the concours competition, spending time examining each car to judge a worthy winner, however it proved more difficult than first realised. To split several tie breakers I joined in the judging to end up with a suitable car as outright winner.

The day was mainly fine, just a small shower at the time of the presentations.

Several suggestions were made to repeat the event in two years time, perhaps it should be up north next time, but that would depend on somebody being prepared to make the arrangement at a suitable venue. Let Brian have letters with your wishes / suggestions please, don't wait till next year, it will be too late as sites need to be booked during 2006.

Dave Price.

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Notes from your renewal notices

Ken Sanby is one individual who deserves special mention, I see from the form that his Kitten which was previously listed as undergoing rebuild, is back on the road. Well done Ken. It is heartening to learn of another one back in active service after a time off the road. I hope the car gives you good service.

David and Jacob Roche from Stoke on Trent have managed to get their new Fox pick-up / Van on the road, using a Rialto axle no less, but back on the road, it now enjoys a rear seat with side windows, and Minilite 12" alloys too, well done chaps.

John Flood, our man in Lincoln, is a convert to the Fuel Cat system, and I must say that having again red the blurb, thanks for including it John, I am tempted. John has an arrangement with a supplier that enables us to enjoy what I can only describe as impressive discounts (pity that didn't include the diesel options mind you!). So, if you are interested, let me know and I will pass the details on.

Terry Metson, our man in Heckington (that's in Liconshire by the way) wonders if his three year search for a, relatively local, spare passengers door for his Kitten is a record – now I am quite sure that from time to time I forget to include the odd advert, I just hope this was not one of them! Anyway, should you be in Linconshire and happen to have a spare Kitten passengers door.

Mark Hinton from Saffron Walden in Essex was good enough to point out what you probably knew by now – namely that my spelling is not all it might be, (on his address label) thanks Mark, if people tell me, I can easily do something a bout it – otherwise...

Mark tells me his Fox is running well, and soon due for its MOT. He also tells me that he managed to squeeze a set of Ford Escort Mk 4 steering rack boots onto his rack, to replace

the damaged ones that were on it. My man uses one from a Ford – not sure which model, though I think it is a Cortina! The other one I just don't know, but he has plenty of them in stock.

Good luck with the MOT Mark, and thanks for your good wishes and continued support, Ed.

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Readers Letters

Hi Brian,

14/10/05

I am writing to say that I'm going to have to sell my Fox C844 PEW. It has sat in my garage for 2 ½ years now, and I have not done anything with it. Working 6 days a week doesn't leave much time for things of "Pleasure" also, I may be going to Canada to live and work next summer, after about two years, taking my Kitten with me! As a footnote there is a 3 litre Scimitar in Oshaka (an SE6 I think) Ontario near Toronto, and a 76 / 77 Robin saloon in California – Orange county L..A. to be exact – they do get about don't they Brian, these little wonder machines?

The reason for not taking the Fox is that there are too many restrictions on commercial vehicles built after 1980. So if you could please put the enclosed ad in the next available "Mewsletter", I would be very grateful.

Regards, Steve Jenkins Shard End (nr. Birmingham)

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Dear Brian,

26th October 2005

Thanks for running the article I sent you on the Kitten front damper issue. To briefly answer your ensuing questions, as stated the Triumph dampers are 1/8" fatter, therefore the Kitten collets have to be opened out by about 25 thou (*Sorry Mike, but 1/8" was about 125 thou when I was a lad – Ed*) Well within the reach of a good file, though easier with a lathe with a 4 jaw chuck. (*Sorry Mike, glad I made the comment mind you, I thought that you had meant you bent them somehow, now I understand - that explains a lot*). No stress is created, and even if they did break, they can't go anywhere because they are physically trapped by the springs – and remember they are now sitting on the Triumph bottom flange (which is ½" wide). All they are doing after the conversion is keeping the spring central.

Not counting the time taken fitting the dampers to the car, cos that's the same whichever type is being fitted, I would say about 2 hours altering each unit prior to fitting.

Having driven the car round now for a couple of months, I am not going to bother upping the ride height as previously intended. I don't think it will be worth the effort as we are talking about about ½", and when I drive my mates Kitten saloon, I can't tell any difference at all in the ride.

The problem with all this is that because Kitten dampers in my experience vary quite considerably, what is very straight forward on some cars, can become much more difficult on others. Should I encounter any subsequent operational problems I shall let you know asap.

Mike Barcroft - 669

Many thanks for the update Mike, Mike went on to make a comment about tyre pressures, they should be in the 20 to 24 region according to the handbook, though I think up to 28 is allowed at the back if carrying a full load.

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Dear Brian,

21/10/05

Please find cheque for £20 and thanks for a really nice readable sensible magazine!

Regards, Terry No 547

Thanks Terry, very flattering, though I do not intend to put into print every such recommendation I get, it was suggested to me that I really ought to include the odd one now and again, so there it is, many thanks. Thanks also to the many of you who have contributed to the spares fund, I do now feel able to proceed with ordering some of the more expensive bits once again.

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Dear Brian,

November '05

Please find herewith enclosed a cheque for £20 to include a donation towards the spares fund, which I think is money well spent.

This summer has been spent giving Kitty a "new" chassis. I say new, but I suppose I mean virtually new. I was fortunate to find a chassis that had been stored in a garage for over ten years, and was in exceptional condition, and best of all, was "just up the road" in Plymouth, and at a very good price, thanks Clive.

My old chassis was at the end of its life, its cross tubes had been patched and patched until a replacement chassis was the only option left. The new chassis had been the basis for a special which never worked out, and several brackets had been added and had to be removed with my faithful angle grinder before painting could commence. I used three coats of hammerite, applied in rapid succession. I then set about fitting a reconditioned engine, gearbox, and rear axle to the bare frame. You will have read in a previous edition of my oil strike while wire brushing the front dampers, this was when the Register's spares service proved to be such a boon, I had the new uprated ones in no time!

Came the day to transfer the body onto the new chassis. I enlisted the help of four friends / relations, with the promise of a bottle of wine (each) for their assistance. A half hour job I thought – if only! The whole operation took an hour and a half, and the additional help of two neighbours before the job was done.

Lifting the body off the old chassis was comparatively simple, but when we started lowering the body onto the new chassis the horrible sound of crunching fiberglass rent the air! This was when we recruited the extra two pairs of hands to hold the body aloft while I crawled underneath to see what the trouble was. I found a bracket was digging into the rear footwell where I had not removed an extra bracket that the special builder had added, unknown to me!

Some frantic work with the angel grinder while the helpers supported the body eventually sorted things out.

The next few days were spent connecting everything up without any real problems.

Came the day of the first run – always a traumatic experience, and this run was no exception – the car had all the directional stability of a dodgem car. It would dart off in any direction at the drop of a hat! I knew the toe in was probably way out, but this behavior was something else! After a sleepless night wondering what on earth could be wrong I had another look at the front suspension, and guess what – the old fool (me) had fitted the top wishbones to the wrong sides! Half an hours work swapping them over and I took Kitty out again – success!

By the way, I was the chap on the Kitten website who said that I'd fitted poly bushes to the Kitten, obtained from Quiller Triumph, as they are the same as on my Bond / Vitesse. You need 4 front inner wishbone bushes and 4 rear tie rod bushes from a 2 litre MkII. That said the bushes tend to bulge, and are hard to feed into the brackets, and I found that the poly was easily reduced by using my bench grinder to remove the excess – it worked perfectly. The stainless bushes do not need shortening, just the bulging poly flanges. By the way there is a very active Reliant website at www.reliant3wheeler.co.uk which has quite a lot of Kitten info – in the hints and tips section I have posted a tip to make head removal a doddle, why not have a look?

This letter is going on far too long, *(Oh no it isn't – Ed!)* I've just two more observations

The Kitten had failed the MOT on the offside floor seatbelt mounting, but when I had a look at the top of the old chassis I was shocked to find a hole as big as your fist on the top near this point (picture enclosed) This corrosion is of course invisible to the test inspector! How many more Kittens have this I wonder?

Here's some feedback on the setting of the excellent front dampers you supplied. My present setup has 14 threads showing below the adjustable bottom mount. I'm not sure if this the optimum as I didn't check the ride height before I removed the body. Does anybody know the measurement between the hub centre and the wheel arch? I took your advice and set the clicks to 12, but found this too firm, and am at present running with just 6 clicks and this is much better. Of course the firmer poly bushes may be a factor, but I am willing to live with the firmer ride knowing that I won't have to struggle replacing lower wishbone bushes ever again!

Well that's quite enough for now, thanks for your efforts on our behalf.

Ron (Dark) - No. 0101 Bideford in Devon

Ron, what can I say? Thanks for the letter, and the spares donation as well as your continued support. I know exactly the frustrations you speak of - I had a similar experience when taking a body off a Rebel – a team were involved, half of who were experienced Reliant owners - and no one remembered to disconnect the handbrake cable from the body - Phil (Hallam of the Hallam Kitten fame) I think it was who was dispatched underneath with a hacksaw and the cable was sacrificed while we groaned under the weight of the Rebel bodyshell.

As to your point about chassis corrosion, I have wondered that very thing for over a decade now, twice that long with Rebels, but many seem to be less prone, never did understand why, one of the best ones lived near the seaside – quite contrary to my beliefs and

expectations – I just do not know why it is that some chassis fare better than others – I can only assume that the material used was not the same in all of them, or the paint spec varied.

Anyway, delighted the car is back in service, and that you were impressed with the new dampers and springs – they are good, and thanks too for the info on settings. As to the length of your letter, I know it takes time, but you simply cannot condense such an operation into a page and expect to do it justice, thank you for taking the time to put finger to keyboard. Ed.

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I have to say that I am always surprised that Dick is surprised that his Kitten keeps sailing through it's MOT test every year. That is the third one since he bought that car – my old white one, from Brian Millar.

Brian had replaced the iffy chassis, all the suspension bushes, sand blasting and painting all the wishbones etc while he was at it, and had renewed all the brakes, now by that I mean he had renewed all the brakes. Some people mean by that that they have fitted new shoes, possibly cylinders, and perhaps the odd adjuster, and maybe a pipe or two. Brian replaced everything, new backplates, with new adjusters, drums shoes cylinders, pipes, flexible hoses you name it. So really, there was never going to be any difficulty on that front, well, not for a decade or two at any rate. That, and the fact that Dick is forever greasing things, really means that that car will continue to give good service for many years to come, in spite of the low mileage it is now subjected to.

I have come to believe that high mileage, with good maintenance, is better for a car, rather than excessively low mileage, usually suggesting a lot of short stop start runs, which inevitably cause more wear and tear than longer runs do. Anything under 2 or 3 thousand miles a year is getting too low for good in my opinion. That said, Alan Shaw's pristine Robin has to be the exception that proves the rule, at I think under 30,000 miles in 24 years, it is probably the best looked after Robin in the land, and looks to the world like a virtually brand new vehicle - his Kitten (which he has also owned from new) does most of the work you see.

Ed.

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Tales from Tore - Another Mot....

Every year I intend to be ready for the MOT a month early. Somehow every year it ends up being a last minute job. This time I had done what I thought reasonable for preparation, fitted new rear shockers, fitted a recon steering rack and track rod ends and adjusted the brakes. That's in addition to routine maintenance. OK let's see if I can get a test organised. 'It will be a week sir, the new system is taking longer for each test. Oh and the fee is £40 now, Please bring the log book with you.' Now why would they need the logbook? A thought, this might be a reasonable idea anyway considering the bad etching of numbers on some body plates.

I was due at the garage at 8 a.m. on Monday, which is not my best time of day. By 7-30 I was wiping condensation off the windows and shortly afterwards Kitty was rolling along towards town. Luckily the traffic is not too bad at that time of day, by 8-30 the road would be choked solid with big queues. With 5 minutes to spare I pulled up outside the office. This MOT centre does no repairs and presents a rather basic look. The man took my cash, no cards or cheques accepted here! Then I handed over the pouch containing log book and

Driver's Manual with the page for the weight clearly marked, in view of comments in a recent Mewsletter. I walked to the waiting room. The steel roller door on the testing shed was being opened but the folding steel doors on the waiting room were still locked. Brrr, it's cold. An assistant arrived to open the door and switch on the heater (thank goodness) and the TV. My word, it's the same TV as last year and even more antique with only 2 channels working, and the remote has gone on the blink. I do frequent high-class establishments.

Soon the tester was driving Kitty into the shed. Yes it's the same guy I have seen for the last 5 years so he should know Kittens now. My goodness those 10" wheels do drop hard onto the brake rollers. Then followed light tests, including checking all lights work when they are all illuminated, no chance of an earth fault being overlooked. Then he and the assistant disappeared. Surely it's not a tea break already? Could do with a cuppa myself. After about 10 minutes the tester popped his head round the door. 'Sorry about the delay. We only had the computer terminal put in on Friday and they didn't give me instruction. I've had 3 goes at putting the chassis number in and it won't take it, but I'll do it yet. 'Doesn't this sound like a new computer installation anywhere?

Just then a large and sleek Jaguar saloon crept silently into the shed and my usual garage man climbed out. He looked at the Kitten, gave a cheeky grin and waved at me through the window. Then greeted the tester as an old friend. Aha I thought, a 'big cat' and a 'wee cat' under the same roof for the same purpose.

Then Kitty went on the ramps for under body etc. inspection. This time there was no prolonged look at anything. Well it's either all OK or all failed? Soon the car was off the ramps and back in the car park. This part always seems the longest. Eventually the tester came out with a smile on his face and a wad of papers in his hand.

'Here you are, I managed to get the chassis number in. I should give you an Advise on the front wheel bearings, they're a touch slack. But you don't do much mileage so it won't matter. And I can't find how to do an Advise yet' This guy is known to show his vigilance by giving an Advise to everyone!

I said 'Did you manage to find the car weight from the Handbook?' 'Ach, I know the weight of a 3-wheeler so I added what I thought best.'

So when your Kitten gets MOT'd will it's weight from the computer be what he thought up?

Then came a pleasant shock 'Here's the MOT certificate, just peel off the wee box to stick on the windscreen'. Whoopee, it's through! The test had taken 1¼ hours but I'm not complaining. It just shows that computers don't always save time or paper.

I thanked him and drove off quite bemused as to my good luck. Though it wasn't luck as I had spent a lot of time and work on the car over the year, and so had the previous owner of the car, thanks Brian Millar!

I thought the 'fun' had finished, but not quite. When I got home I peeled the wee oblong off the certificate and stuck it above the tax disc. It's to be a reminder of when the next test is due but I suppose it also shows the car has been tested and when. Then I folded the paper and took it inside the house. Oh dear! When I tried to unfold the paper it stuck together. For a border of glue completely surrounds the opening left by the slip and stays sticky! Having carefully opened the certificate, I cut a piece of greaseproof paper and place it over the sticky bit to avoid further mishaps.

Well that's it for this year. Now what job will crop up next?

Dick Goodall #157

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Getting technical

We have at least one Kitten that is off the road this year due to chassis corrosion at the front suspension turrets, and indeed at the bottom wishbone mountings on both sides, holes have appeared. Now one thing I do still have in the lock-up is a beautifully preserved, in white paint no less, Kitten chassis front. I must investigate how far back it goes, I know from memory that the towers are there, just not sure how far behind them is present (I just had a look, lovely day today October 27th, more like an August day up here, anyway, the front chassis bit is cut a good foot or two behind the front suspension mountings, so there is plenty there for anyone who needs it). I know that chassis grafting is frowned upon in certain circles, but if it is done properly 'they' will not know it has been done at all, and to be honest, a weld, even an imperfect one, can be a lot stronger, and so safer, than rust. 01418866117 is the number you require.

I grant you that finding a competent individual to do the job can be difficult – Peter (Davis), are you busy? (Silly question I know).

I know a number of people who have had chassis repairs carried out badly, and have ruined the handling of the car by so doing. No their fault, just bad luck in their choice of individual to do the

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Parts supply

At the risk of repeating myself – and if I am, it is only because the conflict is yet to be resolved, I really have a situation looming here, we need to be ordering back springs, front dampers, and wishbones. All of which are very slow moving, though we had a sudden run on front dampers early in 2005. I really do not want to tie up the entire spares fund in just two or three items. Now I could go down the road as some car clubs have, of imposing a fixed spares fund levy on top the subscription. I however prefer our voluntary approach, which while it may not yield as much money, does leave you with the choice – see, I am not the dictator you thought I was!

Moving on, I need to put my own house in order, or perhaps speed up the plan I voiced a year ago of farming out more of the spare parts stock. I missed an opportunity at Burford, but with Moira's luggage, and the wheelchair, there really was not a lot of room! The back spring stock is held for us in Derbyshire, thanks Graeme, that works very well from my point of view. Recently however, our man in Essex (well, one of them!) had a failure of the master cylinder on his Rebel, the Register carries new ones in stock – but it is so long since I have been asked for one, that I could not remember where they are – more frustrating for Bob than for me I should imagine, and I can only apologise Bob. Does bring home to me, as though I didn't know it already, that I have too much on my plate, and need to get better organised and or delegate more.

Update on the above, we have just ordered more front dampers, so they will be in stock again before Christmas, and also a batch of lower wishbones that are not handed, and will fit Foxes, and Kittens with very minor modifications to your Kitten lower wishbone – which, if you followed the advice given in here in the past, you will in fact have carried out long ago!
Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs

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(F.B.H.V.C.)

The AGM of the FBHVC was held on Saturday the 15th of October at Paulesbury near Towcester on the SA5. The accounts were passed unanimously and also the re-election of the directors and committee. It is good to see a keen working team all coming forward again, but one can but think on the future that if it wasn't for these few keen people, we in the historic vehicle movement would be a lot worse off – where is the new blood?

All the committee reports were also accepted. The committee met 6 times in the last year, and have carried on being guardians of our way of life.

One of the major events of the past year was the handing in of the 50,000 signature petition to the government with regard to the intended charging for SORN, i.e. a charge on vehicle possession as opposed to usage. Unfortunately due to the election, and a change of minister, this matter has not been resolved, “they” are still “thinking about it”.

Somebody in the “clean air” movement has asked the FBHVC for information on miles and vehicles to see if there is indeed a problem. The impression is that the very low numbers of older vehicles on the roads makes our contribution an extremely low part of the problem.

Another item that the Federation have been working on is to bring vehicle tax to be more in line be with carbon emissions.

There have also been exemptions obtained with regard to continuation of the use of older paints on our cars (i.e. cellulose).

One anomaly that has come from the police with regard to number plates is that pre 1973 there has not been a problem retaining the original number plate font, but between 1973 and 2001 any replacements cannot be of the original spec. they must be the later font, i.e. like for like is not an option for these vehicles. So while our Rebels are in the main not affected except for the later 750 ones, all the Kittens and Foxes fall into this age group. Brian may be able to help in the short term, as Scotland has its own rules, and some suppliers north of the border are still supplying the correct type of font for our vehicles.

After the finishing of the AGM business, and after lunch, there was a short conference with regard to the new computerisation of the MoT and how it affects us, in short it won't.

The test itself should be exactly the same, all that will alter is that the data from the test goes into a central database and will be used to combat fraud etc. The retesting regime at present is practiced in a lot of garages offering a free retest will have to be tightened up. In fact no new rules will come into play, just the present rules will be followed more closely.

Every time there is a retest after a significant failure point has been corrected, there will have to be a full retest, and of course, this will go into the database. *(I think that a full retest was always the case, but a certain le-way, not to say common sense approach had been*

adopted by many garages over quite a number of years, they will no longer be able to do that in future, Ed.)

One of the new items will be logging onto the new system, that will be done using the registration number and vin number of the vehicle (these are not a necessity for pre 1980 vehicles) but even if only one of these is known, the test can still go ahead, but expect the DVLA to get in touch with you to clarify the missing data or resolve the discrepancy.

The MoT certificate we know will soon become a thing of the past, we will be given a computer print out instead, while the data being held will ensure that a "repeat" certificate will be easy to obtain, and of course, if any authority needs to know about the MoT situation then it can apply for the information direct. In fact in due course you will not need your Mot at the Post Office to re-tax your vehicle, as they will have direct access to that information on-line, all clever stuff.

Alan Osborn

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More snippets from the net :-

I see from the details on your renewal notices that we have now reached the point where almost half of our readers are "on-line", which of course means that half of those reading this are not – so yes, if you were ever in any doubt, there is still very much a need for the magazine to be produced in hard copy (I never have had any such doubts). Also it brings home to me that, well intentioned as they are, recommendation to look a www this or that really is no help at all to people who do not use the internet, and there are still a lot of them out there.

I myself am guilty, perhaps more so than most, because I do have access to the web, but do not use it daily. I usually check for e-mails daily, but am not "surfing the net" on even a monthly basis – there are far too many other things to do with life than spend it hooked up to a computer – it still, in spite of my best efforts, takes me about 100 hours to produce and mail each edition of this magazine, and don't forget, this is not the only magazine I produce – and while I could not do them without a computer, and some of the articles are received in the form of e-mails, I can manage fine without the internet (it is very useful for ordering theatre tickets mind you).

Anyway, back to this internet thing, I read on Peter's Liege site that a new individual is interested in supercharging the Reliant engine. Peter has supplied a number of kits for this purpose, and I have to say that while the results are astounding, the cost and work involved is not for the faint of heart. I am not sure if Peter has a second batch planned yet, but if you are seriously interested I will ask him. You need to either do or have done a lot of the work yourself, and I believe the kit will cost you about the same as a new Reliant engine, only the wrath of supercharger equipped vehicle's spouses prevents me from being more specific!

John Swale of the Liege Car Club did an excellent write up on these in his publication "Liege News", he is one of the privileged few who actually get to drive a vehicle so equipped on a regular basis.

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Sales and Wants

For Sale :- Reliant Scimitar 1980 SE6B Essex auto. Red with fawn velour brown leather interior, tinted electric windows, Wolfrace wheels, Stainless steel exhaust £1250 Keith White

For Sale :- Kitten front and rear seat covers, in beige velour, just the one front one I'm afraid, and the back one looks like just the back of the seat. They are a few years old, but have never been in a car, and look to be very professionally made. Yours for just £20 plus the postage, Ring Brian on 0141 8866117.

For Sale :- Tricia Nash wrote me, well, all of us actually, a lovely poem, but no room this time I fear, her Kitten however needs re-homing. St.Albans.

For Sale :- Reliant Kitten, Taxed but just about out of MOT, very last minute contact this, same owner for the last 19 years.

For Sale :- Fox for sale, or swap for Kitten saloon parts. My Fox needs a front screen, brakes, front suspension bushes, a battery and a throttle cable. It does start and run, but has been off the road for almost 3 years. Price about £100, or will exchange it for the following Kitten saloon bits :- Working rear window stay, complete interior, black or tan, or two front seats in black for a Kitten. And a pair of bonnet hinges.. Contact Steve Birmingham area

We are having loft insulation put in early in the New Year, I am often bemused at how standards change over the years, our house is not yet 25 years old, it was built without double glazing, and had only a few inches of insulation in the loft. The current thinking I am told by the powers that be, is that we should have 10", or 250mm of loft insulation these days. And, in their opinion, we only have 50mm, so they wish to give me another 200mm. This of course means that they need not only access to the loft, but that it be emptied, or at the very least any contents left up there need to be on shelves that are high enough to let them do their thing beneath the shelves.

You needed to know that because it affects both my personal remaining stock of Reliant parts, and to some extent the Register's stock as well. I have about 7 Rebel dashboards up there, and will only be able to keep one of each type at the most (current wisdom suggests I should not be keeping any of them!). So, if you would like a spare Rebel dashboard, now would be a good time to give me a call.

There are also a host of small parts that I really need to move on to a new custodian. I am not in favour of giving these away. The cost of re-flooring and shelving the loft is going to be a few hundred pounds, and anything I can do to help offset that cost would be good. So 0141 8866117 is the number, give me a ring, if you don't, sadly, and though it really goes against the grain, much of it will be dumped as I really cannot go on storing these things indefinitely. Brian

Wanted :- A working party! Bill Dick has decided that he needs more room at his Scottish residence, and two of his Kittens look like falling under the axe. I have said that I will see what can be done as far as salvaging the re-useable parts, and organising the labour to remove both them and the remains. This is not the best time of year for this kind of operation, and no date has yet been set, but talk to me if you can be in the Stirling area over a weekend anytime between now and the spring and let's see what we can do – who was it again that was looking for a door? My next planned trip south is early in March. 0141 8866117 is still the number.

Wanted :- A Tempest, or a Liege, ring Jeff

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Epilogue

Well, another year has either passed or is about to pass into history, and what have we achieved, not the Royal we, you and I. For my part, it was great to meet everyone who came to Burford, the standard of car was truly excellent, I was very impressed. Yes the weather could have been better, and we could have done with more time as well, but a great do none the less. Special mention must of course be made not only of Dave Price for organising it for us, but of Patrick who came, in his Kitten, all the way from Switzerland, it was great to finally get to meet you Patrick.

Points I probably should make in here, not that I want to be boasting about my shortcomings, but back in October someone rang to say that the Federation's form had only been printed on the outside, so he didn't know what the questions were! I did say I would pop one in the post, but I had put the few spares there were somewhere safe, and then I forgot who it was that had called! So if it was you, please accept my apologies, let me know, and I'll get one off right away.

Still on my shortcomings, I have done my own proof reading this time, just put up with it please, I have had to!

My thanks to Alan Osborn for again attending the F.B.H.V.C's A.G.M. on our behalf, it is always better to have a first hand report rather than just reading the minutes.

If you have not renewed your subscription yet, please do so now. My heartfelt thanks to those who have already done so, you have made my life over the next couple of months a lot easier.

Many folk were good enough to respond positively to my request for early renewal this year, and to them I am very grateful. That said I was surprised at the number who, so far, have taken up the 5 year offer, it really is a bargain, and equally importantly will reduce my workload over the coming years. Don't forget, the offer of a five year subscription for just £60 is only open till the end of 2005. Rik, I will contact you directly to discuss your suggestion in this regard.

Prompt subscription renewal is really important, it is a huge amount of extra work to re-instate those who leave it too late, you will exclude yourself from the annual insurance prize draw for a start, be omitted from the count on the Federation's annual return, need to have the address label print flag reset, leave me guessing how many magazines to have produced. I really cannot stress how much bother it is if people do not renew on time, so much so that in future anyone wanting to renew after February will have to pay the joining fee again.

Right, that's it for membership matters - I shall climb down from my soapbox now and wish you well over the festive season.

Till next time take care, may you have happy and trouble free motoring, and we will talk again early in 2006.

Brian

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