

Reliant Kitten Register

NEWSLETTER 68

January – February 2006



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

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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 - well for once I got it right! Brian Ayres kindly responded to my plea in the last edition for a picture of his special bodied Kitten, me having deleted the ones I had taken from my all too smart new camera – one day I will get to grips with this modern technology! Many thanks Brian.

The Registrar speaks

Hello and welcome once again. I am back in planning ahead mode having just yesterday taken edition 67 to the printers, it is still November, and I have already completed a quarter of this edition, when what I should be doing is preparing for the S.W.T.V.C.'s A.G.M. next month!

I will lay claim to being the first to notice the backward step in our numbering of the Mewsletters, I will share the blame with John, we have two templates now, depending on what we are putting on the back cover – what I had thought was a permanent change, proved to be only temporary. At the time of writing, Christmas Eve now as it happens, no one has told me about the mistake, but I told John a couple of days ago!

A big thank you to those who responded to my request for early renewal of your subscription, over 100 of you had done so by the end of November, up to almost 200 by the first week in January, which will reduce considerably my workload over the coming weeks – I am very grateful to you. Sadly my gratitude does not, yet, extend to membership cards – I am still working on that one. There are two situations here which give me grief, (in days of old I would have said there were two problems here, but it was decided a year or so back not to have any more problems!), the thing is that the production and encapsulation of the membership cards takes me about three or four days of what, for me at any rate, is hard work, I have the frustration that, short of setting everyone's "current member" flag to NO, the five year people excepted, I could then possibly make their expiry date correct, and produce theirs, then re-set their flags to No, reset everyone else's to "Y", and run them off, remembering to adjust the expiry date of course, but that would exclude those who were late renewing, mind you I could use the argument that that would serve them right. Whatever I do, it all takes time, introduces the possibility of me making a mistake, unless I just run them all off as they are, which would give me the five year people with an expiry date of this December – which is obviously incorrect - and produces cards for the 80 or so folk who have not yet, at the time of writing, renewed – extra work, and indeed waste for those who do not renew at all, and to delay the decision saves me the work meantime. That said it is not a satisfactory way of operating. Frustration and compromise rule!

I should apply for a job with the government – being guilty of knee jerk reactions I would surely qualify! The point being that you were of course just saving up, and after my comments about the lack of people taking up the five year subscription offer, I was deluged with them – next time I will be more patient before passing comment.

Moving on, my thanks again to those who have renewed, the many comments on your renewal notices are too voluminous to either reply to individually, or to include in here, with a few notable exceptions. Your continued support, enthusiasm and understanding not only makes it all worthwhile, but positively stimulating. Thank you.

With belated good wishes for 2006. Brian.

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Rebel Round up

REBELLIOUS CONDUCT - THE PURCHASE

I never set out to become a Rebel owner. More to the point, when I set out on that sunny day in June, I wouldn't even be able to recognise one. I do a bit of navigating for Tony in his 1967 Anglia Super on Classic car events. Tony also likes to take the Anglia to Classic and Vintage shows. This particular June day, Tony invited me to tag along to a Steam and Vintage show at Heddington in Wiltshire. "Tag" along turned out to be that I would drive the Anglia to Heddington whilst Tony enjoyed the view from the other seat for a change.

We parked up in the Classic vehicle display area and decided to start our tour of inspection of the other "classics" so gathered. All fairly predictable stuff until we saw this little white estate car that neither of

us could put a name to. It certainly seemed Reliantish, Tony thought a Kitten perhaps, I thought not, too rounded, but what? As we approached, the badge on the front proved the Reliantish theory but nothing else. We encountered the owner before reaching the badge on the rear door, hearing our shot in the dark ideas, he introduced us to Reliant's first major attempt at a small four wheeler, the Rebel!

Not having seen one before, as far as I am aware that is, this was well worth a closer look. The owner was only too pleased to give us a guided tour, especially as it was for sale and that he could detect my interest. A look at the engine compartment and I was becoming rather hooked. Being an avid DIY'er when it comes to cars, the Rebel's engine bay looked an absolute delight. Nothing in there that doesn't need to be in there, and what is there all looked very accessible. The owner, Jerry, told me that he was but the second owner of this 1972 Rebel. This now sported 850cc of power from a later Reliant, replacing the meagre 750cc engine that used to turn the back wheels.

Throughout the day, I kept being drawn back to the white Rebel which was enjoying a constant stream of visitors, all just as bewildered as I had been. Jerry was asking £750 for the Rebel, on the one hand, not a lot of money for a 'Historic' vehicle these days, but perhaps, quite a lot for not a lot of Historic vehicle. Just how does one value the unusual? A question that was to haunt me for the next few weeks.

This was not the only question I had to answer. The need was arising to find another vehicle as my daily transport to work. This would have to be both inexpensive to purchase and run, could the Rebel be the answer? I took Jerry's phone number to keep my options open should the answer prove to be in the affirmative.

On the affirmative side of the argument, the Rebel was a road fund licence fee exempt example, being first registered in July 1972. On checking with my insurers, if I were to add it to my policy for my existing three 'classics', it would only increase my premium by £35. Plus of course, the fuel consumption would probably be in the near diesel class. Being an estate, it had plenty of carrying potential, and, hopefully, maintenance should prove easy. On the negative side, I really couldn't think of anything other than the £750 asking price and the fact of it being a Reliant.

At this stage, I hadn't actually driven the Rebel. Vintage rallies are hardly the place to conduct a full road test. Sometime later, I phoned Jerry only to find that he lived in Southampton, some one hundred miles from my home in Yate near Bristol. It was around a month later that I was to see the Rebel for the second time, a pleasant drive down to Southampton with a completely open mind as to whether buy the Rebel or to kick the idea once and for all. I had done little but think about it in the intervening weeks and I had to make a decision. All would be based upon the road test and agreeing the financial nasties.

I did not expect to be impressed by any of the Rebel's driving attributes, but the steering won me over. Light and precise, it went exactly where pointed with no kick back, I was more surprised when I discovered that it was not rack and pinion. With the smaller diameter Kitten steering wheel fitted, it felt highly geared and comfortable. I liked it. The pedals felt very odd at first, they didn't go quite where I expected them to, but they did their job, the middle pedal working at least three of the brakes if not the offside front. I soon remembered to turn right when braking! The long gear lever reminded me of my first 850cc Mini, only now with synchromesh on first gear. Performance was also reminiscent of the Mini but perhaps rather better in top gear. The low ratio indirects didn't seem ideal but the low ratio axle provided a quick sprint to an indicated 60mph. As this could be my daily transport to work, a distance of 10 miles each way in traffic, then the performance was perfectly adequate. A more detailed examination still resulted with more ticks in the yes box so it was now down to some hard bargaining with Jerry. I am really not good at this with the result that the Rebel could be mine for £700 with a new MOT certificate, we shook on it.

As I do not carry such sums of money on me, and Jerry had to arrange for the MOT, it would mean another trip to Southampton to make the swap. So, a week and a bit later, Tony kindly ferried me down to Southampton one August evening to pick up the Rebel. Now this bit did worry me. During Jerry's ownership, the Rebel had covered very few miles, and most of those were being towed on an 'A' frame behind Jerry's camper. Jerry liked to do the vintage shows, especially 2 day events and used the Rebel as his free ticket as an exhibitor. Hence, the poor Rebel had hardly covered any miles under its own power

for the last 3 years, and here I was about to ask 100 miles from it. The indicated mileage of 79,000 miles seemed genuine as the new MOT sat atop a collection of MOT certificates going back some 20 years. These indicated that the annual mileage in later years became fewer and fewer. Deal done, the first stop was at the end of Jerry's back lane to insert 10 litres of fuel from the cans that I had taken with us. Not knowing how much might be in the tank, or the calibration of the gauge, I did know that we would be straight onto the M27 and in unfamiliar territory. Just how far would it be to the next fuel oasis? I need not have worried. The little Rebel ran well all the way home, not even using all of the 10 litres from the cans. That was the good news, not so good, the brakes still pulled to the left and there were numerous rattles. Nothing actually fell off, but then there really isn't much there to fall off anyway.

In the next instalment, I will reveal how the first 2,000 miles of Rebellng went.

Terry Horler. - Bristol, No. 75

Terry, I always get this pang when I read a story like yours. It brings back memories, happy ones I hasten to add, of my early days with Rebels back in the 1970's till the turn of the millennium.

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Dear Brian

Dec.' 2005

As you may have guessed, the Red Rebel made it down to Northumberland (rather admirably too) and is now in regular use pottering around the local country lanes. I even ventured into Newcastle the week before Christmas - not an exercise to be done often! I've just overhauled the carburettor, replacing the needle, jet and float valve, the whole kit of parts costing about £30 from Burlen. This has made a dramatic difference to the running of the engine, especially on these cold winter days and will hopefully improve the fuel consumption. I'm now on the look out for new shocks all round. I've got one new front shock - do you know where I can my hands on another? Also, what equivalent can fit the rear? The info I've collected seems to contradict itself. With the change of job I've now got more time to myself, so hopefully I can get on with the Rebel Yell series for the magazine. Keep up the good work.

Mark Hayton - Northumberland No. 173

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Foxes Den

On the 4th of November Gary Southall wrote to me enquiring about the Register and looking for help with some parts for his Fox Tandy camper. Unfortunately he fell foul of my inefficiency and his letter lay on my desk for a couple of weeks before anything was done. I finally wrote to him on the 24th and typed this up the following day both to send to Duncan too see if he could help with advice about the parts, and to put in the magazine to see if anyone else can. So now is your chance to clear up a bit of space and help the man get his Tandy camper back into perfect condition

Dear Brian,

4th November 2005

Following looking on the Reliant Kitten website I would appreciate it if you would send me details and a magazine as per your website to have a look at. (This is not the first time someone has made similar comments about the web site, and the only web site I set up was set up a decade or more ago, is long out of date, and makes no mention of a free magazine, so I really ought to both update it, and find out which web site people are talking about! Ed.)

I have recently purchased a 1985 Reliant Tandy Utility Camper which I would appreciate some assistance with some parts if you can help me. Bonnet (preferably white) as mine is split. Door handles and door locks both sides. Internal door trim panel (Maxi?) as well as front glass side doors runners and guides

Thanking you in anticipation, Yours faithfully, Gary Southall - Kingswinford

So, there it is, no I am not certain if Gary is looking for side doors, complete, or just the window runners.

Dear Brian,

14 12 05

As I have now sold my Fox to a dealer near Exeter I am afraid that I must resign my membership of the Reliant Kitten Register.

As I mentioned before I have replaced the Fox with a diesel Panda that goes liked a rocket, and now it's done 2,500 miles is returning 60 MPG on the winding and hilly Cornish roads. I miss the pin sharp steering of the Fox, but I do not miss the continual failure of poor quality components that always dogged my Reliants. Thank you for all your help, you offer a great service to Reliant owners, and I certainly appreciated it.

Happy Christmas and New Year, I enclose a cheque towards whichever of your funds is in greatest need.

Yours sincerely, Ian Evans - Helston, Cornwall

It is letters like that that make it all worth while, though some defence of Reliant's component quality would be welcomed ! – Ed.

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Liege Page

Right guys, John & Mel are doing a great job with "Liege News", (And I still envy them the colour pictures) they are also doing very well indeed on the competition front having won the 2005 Keith Nicholls Trophy, with the best Liege performance on the MCC Exeter, Land's End, and Edinburgh Classic Sporting Trials. Well done both of you.

Peter tells me (January 2006) that 29 Liege are now s.v.a.'d, there are 4 more complete but yet to be tested, and a further 19 owners have their chassis, and are busy building as you read this. He has a further 6, or was that 8 to deliver? By then he will have met his current commitment, and will be able to draw breath and decide what to do in future. I know that if he could actually make money doing more, he would, subject to demand, which there seems to be. Watch this space. Thanks for the update Peter.

My thanks to those Liege owners who have renewed their subscriptions for another year, you are very welcome, and I promise to publish almost anything you may care to share with us. Ed.

Just thought I'd put this in here in case any of you Liege guys are thinking of moving away from the twin carbs. That said I think I need more knowledge, or to pass on more knowledge. The subjects are I think linked, well, in fact contrary. Let me explain, a problem shared and all that... Wouter van Oploo, our man in The Netherlands, (well one of them, Wouter is in Schijndel,) he was asking my advice or assistance with his search for a pair of twin inlet manifolds for an 850 engine, and a supercharger. Now, assuming he was thinking of the same engine, it is my understanding (and so quite open to question) that the supercharger only works with a single carburetor, albeit a larger one than the Reliant engine has as standard. However, that apart, moving on, if any one reading this has a pair of Peter's twin inlet manifolds they no longer require, let me know and I will put you in touch with Wouter, similarly – well, we did find a Tempest for sale that had not been advertised by asking in these pages last year – imagine last year was 2005 – he said on November the 22nd ! this writing the magazine ahead can be amusing. Right, as I said, if you happen to have one of Peter's superchargers lying about unwanted, let me know, as Wouter would seem to be in the market. Oh and Wouter, I am pretty certain about the supercharger being designed with 1 single SU in mind, were you planning doing two engines or has there been some confusion?

Ed.

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The following article I have included just as it came, GBP is of course pounds sterling, (Great British Pounds) and I even resisted the temptation to replace it with a £ sign. I've said it before and I'll say it again, I have the greatest of respect and admiration for people who write, or speak, a language that is not their native tongue.

Dear members of the Reliant Kitten Register,

January 2005

First I would like to introduce myself. I am Rik Borgman, 16 years old, and restoring a Reliant Kitten in the Netherlands.

My father bought a Reliant Scimitar SE6A in 1995. That's where the whole Reliant story started in fact. In those years a friend of ours came along sometimes, he had all different types of Reliants, ranging from Kitten to Robin to Regals. Sometimes, when I had to go to school, he took me with him to my school and dropped me out of the car on the playground in front of the school. I liked to drive in those cars very much, so I started to collect all kind of stuff from Reliant, like pictures and posters.

In 2003 I recognised a Reliant Kitten Saloon in my village underneath a great tarpaulin (rather unique, there are only 60 left-hand drive Kittens ever built). The owner told us it was for the scrap yard. I decided to buy it, because a Kitten was a rather cheap car to drive and it will never rust. After all, the body was really damaged. The whole body was ground, with a grinding tool (they where searching for rust???). So we threw the body away. We saved the chassis, and in the summer of 2003 I totally cleaned it, and the front suspension as well. Now it is all galvanised with an epoxy coating on it. In the autumn of 2003 I saw a red Robin on the internet for a couple of pounds, so we collected it to scrap, because we didn't have the place to store it. The engine was blown up, but the other parts where still useable.

In the summer of 2004 I got some pictures from my parents. They were from a yellow Kitten estate. They told me this car is for you when you pass your final exams (if I didn't, they were going to use it as a town car or sell it again). Until then I didn't know they had that car, because it had been standing at a friend's house for almost 7 years in an old shed. Now our friend was going to move house, so the Kitten had to leave, and the only way to store it was in our garden. And my parents had to tell me about it.

When we collected it, I was completely impressed by it. The yellow paint was still very nice. It was just re-sprayed when my parents bought it 7 years ago, so it still looks very nice. It had got a very nice registration number,(42-UK-32) UK means in The Netherlands, very small, and it comes from the United Kingdom, so it is a rather nice registration number. It is really a very nice car, and I am quite pleased with it. (you can see it on the front cover of Mewsletter 65 (July-August 2005) with me)

In 2004 I also bought an orange Kitten estate for scrap, for 50 GBP.

In 2004 we went to England on holiday, and we took a yellow top engine with us, a Robin 750 rear axle and lots of other spares. We bought the Robin 750 axle because of the other ratio which is in it. You can put 12" wheels underneath, with the standard axle, your engine has to make more R.P.M., but when you use this axle with the 12" wheels your R.P.M. is about the same, so you can put 12" wheels under it with this Robin 750 axle and the standard engine, without raising your R.P.M. (I have not tried yet, but I hope this works.)

When I have a holiday, I try to work a bit on my Kitten. Last summer I reconditioned the steering rack, tried to make my 12" minilite wheels fit (which we collected last summer), stripped and cleaned some spare engines, and this Christmas holiday, I made some new corners fit in my centre console.

Plans for the future, put some other chairs in it, from a Rover 100, make a bit nicer dashboard with sky on it, make other side panels in it (because the new chairs are a bit larger, so they won't fit with the original panels) and put 12" minilite wheels under it. So when I have my driving license (18 years old) I can enjoy a nice 1978 Kitten, with some upgraded things on it.

I hope you liked this story, if you do, I will make some other when I have time again.

If you have some Kitten articles or copies of that, or pictures from your Kittens, I am always interested in it.

Kind regards, Rik Borgman NL (membership number: 743) e-mail: j.c.borgman@hccnet.nl

Many thanks for that Rik, yes please, some more when you have the time would be great. I am curious as to just exactly what you did to recondition the steering rack, and also how on earth you can get epoxy, or anything else come to that, to stick to freshly galvanised metal? Ed.

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Notes from your renewal notices

Brian,

21 Nov. 2005

I enclose cheque for £20 to cover sub and also something for spares.

Thanks for sending the gaiters, one of them may last a little longer than a Mini one which is NOT suitable.

I know of two Kitten estates lying derelict in Essex . A friend of mine who will be putting his house on the market in February tells me he will NOT be taking them with him when he moves. They are sound, but need a fair amount of TLC, too good to scrap.

Regards Fred (Rolph) Enfield.

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Dear Brian,

20-11-05

Would you please send an application form or whatever to my friend Mr, David Mollington of Biggin Hill in Kent who wishes to join the Register. He has a Kitten saloon and two Rebels, one van and one estate.

Thank you, Len Gardner - West Wickham.

Duly attended to – at last, 24/11/05, Len. Ed.

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Dear Brian,

Nov.'05

My Kitten has moved on to a new owner (Keith Smith) so I will not be renewing my membership. Thanks for running a great club.

Gary Coates – Brough, East Yorkshire

And in the same post - Keith's renewal arrived with this note, thanks Keith.

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Dear Brian,

November 2005

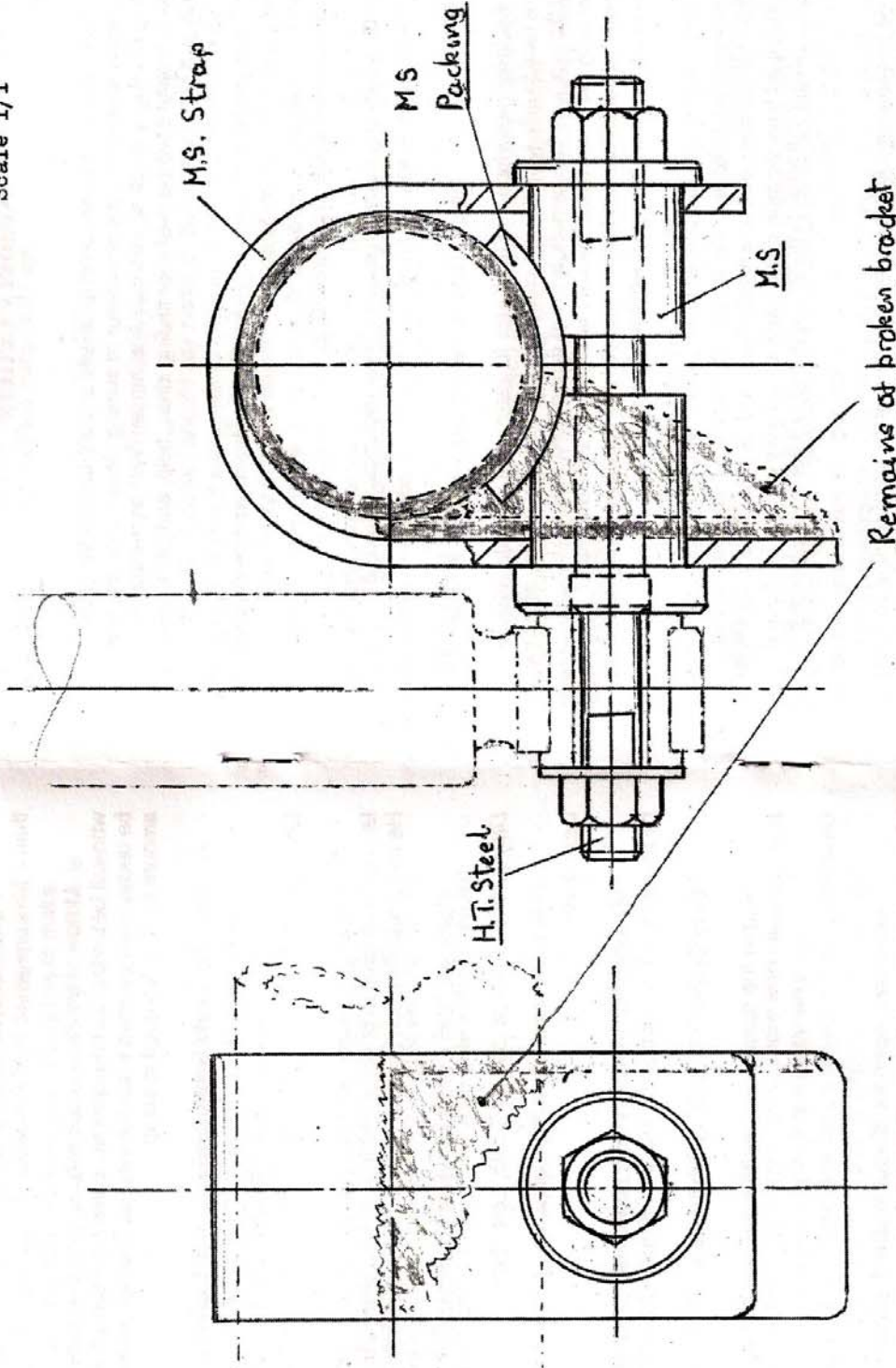
Thanks once again for all your trouble & efforts to keep the Register afloat, and some interesting reading and comments throughout the year.

Please find enclosed my subs plus slush fund (that would be the spares fund then Keith! Thanks for that too) for the coming year.

Yours sincerely, Keith Smith - South Yorkshire

Reliant 'Kitten'
Replacement rear
damper mountings.

Scale 1/1



Dimensions are not given. Make the best of whatever materials are to hand. Make the packing last, assessing its thickness when all the rest is fitted to the rear axle casing.

The above was fitted to a very hardworked 1976 Kitten about 7 years ago and has worked well.

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18-05-06
M.

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Readers Letters

Hi Brian,

14/10/05

Thank you for the membership details and the Mewsletter (July . Aug 06) which, especially as a newcomer to owning classic vehicles, was interesting reading, with good, informative contacts. With these and websites to look at it will be useful for finding ideas, help, and parts when necessary.

Thank you for your various glimpses of "problems and joys" within the publication. I am looking forward to the next one and to the fun I am sure I will have with my rare Fox Tandy Campervan which I was fortunate enough to purchase earlier this year (2005).

Yours faithfully, Gary Southall - West Midlands No. 758

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Dear Brian,

3rd January 2006

Enclosed subscription for the Kitten Register and a small donation to the spares fund to help keep the cars on the road. I still enjoy reading about the cars and the exploits of the owners, many of their problems were also experienced by me or my father. When I last spoke to John Blagburn I understood that our Kitten was back on the road and hopefully giving its present owner as much fun as we had when we owned it.

Unfortunately due to a change in my job and lack of garage space it was with great regret that I had to let the car go. My current job involves traveling to London from the north east on a regular basis, and for this I have a Saab 9000 Aero, which must have the most comfortable seats I have ever sat in. I could not imagine driving 320 miles in the Kitten and getting out at the other end without any aches and pains.

As you know my father realised a lifetime ambition of owning an Aston Martin DB6 4 years ago, he regularly uses it, and we are planning a trip to Le Mans this year to see Aston Martin race there for the first time for many a year.

I too aspire to another classic car and hopefully will be in a position to buy a Jaguar E-type Mk I FHC . Unfortunately this causes a problem as I am planning to keep my Cobra replica and therefore require additional garage space. However I am certain that my interest in unusual and interesting cars was sparked by owning the Reliant Kitten, although I do not miss working with little room for hands or tools and remember having to dismantle half the engine bay to change the Kitten's clutch many years ago.

Take care and all the best for 2006.

Martin (Blunn) - Whitley Bay.

Now I just know I should say nothing, but I have to do it, just can't help myself! Martin it was great to get your letter, and thank you for the generous donation too. I've said it before and I'll say it again, it is people like you who make it all worth while. That said I can't resist the dig that I see you feel able to resolve the garaging shortage situation for the Cobra, but couldn't do so for the Kitten! It is good however to know that the Kitten will be replaced by a larger cat. My cousin is getting married in July, and oddly enough his wife will then become Kat Marshall – so we will have one in the family again too, don't they get everywhere?

No, I've looked – still no men in white coats!

Oh, and on the coincidence front, it was John Blagburn who introduced me to Martin and his dad, and they are consecutive membership numbers on the Register, since we sorted it alphabetically some years back!

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Tales from Tore

Good afternoon Brian,

30th November 2005

Kitty seemed to be going well this month and I thought that all was well but of course wee cats love attention and today it dashed my hopes. When I turned the ignition key all I got was a loud click. Hmmm. So I opened the bonnet and poked round. The battery terminals were clean and tight, as was that for the earth lead on the engine. The solenoid leads were OK. Oh dear, time to dive into the depths and try the starter motor. The nut holding on the big, red lead was a shade loose so I nipped it up cautiously as it fits on a brass bolt. Was there any improvement? Well, not really. There seemed to be only one more possibility so I applied a spanner to the starter motor mounting bolt nuts, and they were indeed a touch slack. Having tightened them, the starter motor whirred briskly into life every time. Well that seems to be sorted.

Having donned so many clothes to keep the chill out I decided to do a little more. Starting has been getting a little poor so I changed the points and they certainly needed it, in fact they were a bit burnt so the condenser could be dud. I must get and fit another tomorrow. A quick check showed the starting to be as I expect it, within a second of turning the key.

At this point I dropped my wee inspection lamp and the bulb gave up, but not to worry it uses a 12V 21W indicator bulb and I had a new spare to hand. Now I need to replace that too.

Which only left minor things to do like topping up engine oil, SU carburettor dashpot oil and the washer bottle fluid. Finally I checked that all lamps were illuminating, it's amazing how many cars that I see have at least one lamp not working. By this time it was dark so I will oil the door hinges tomorrow and 'grease those ball joints' at the weekend. Never a dull moment is there?

It's not only cars which give us entertainment of course. After the tumble drier had given trouble and the repairman failed to fix it, we bought another. Now if I had a workshop manual I just might have been able to find the fault and fix it. GRRR! Dick Goodall #157

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Getting technical

Dear Brian,

29 November 2005

I only ever get 10,000 miles out of a Fox clutch, this since the vehicle was new, and it recently started to slip again. As I had rebuilt all other mechanicals of the car except for the gearbox, I thought I'd rebuild one from a scrap Robin and swap 'boxes' over when we change the clutch. It's called planned maintenance of fear.

Perhaps a few notes on the rebuild may be of interest to other readers.

The first thing is that Duncan Bradford tells me I have a 750 'box, because reverse is on the left and the selectors are a mirror image of those shown in the Fox parts list (The Register has these in stock by the way). This meant that the rear cover gasket does not fit, but everything else is O.K., except for the speedo drive pinion which has 12 teeth to the Robin's 10. Subsequent experiments have shown that the

12 tooth pinion will not fit, and I suspect that the centre distance between the tail shaft and the pinion assembly is greater on the Fox 'box, as this is the only way they can use the same wormwheel on both boxes. So now I have a 100 mile an hour Fox (if only!).

I replaced all the bearings including the lay shaft needle rollers, and here one must be very careful. The Reliant original part does not seem to be available now. They are a crowded, i.e. uncaged, needle roller, with little pips on the roller ends to prevent them from falling out of the cups. Size is 1816 (which is dimensions in millimetres I think) . Be very careful to get an H.N. not K.N. 1816 which is far more common. The K.N. has a plastic cage and less than half the load rating of the crowded H.N. type.

Now, if you have ever rebuilt a Reliant 'box, you will know that the lay gear assembly has to be placed loose in the empty casing before the main shaft is fitted. It then has to be manouvered into position and the layshaft inserted whilst the thrust washers are doing their best to escape. I found that I couldn't push a dummy shaft through in the usual way with the real layshaft because the rear cover blocks the exit hole. Also the loose rollers of the H.N. bearing fell out. (Now you see, that is where I would become totally discouraged! Ed) In the end I made a dummy layshaft with a tapped hole in the end for extraction purposes, so that with the box vertical, I was able to withdraw the dummy and insert the real shaft. The dummy shaft has to be a few thou shorter than the length of the laygear assembly and the two thrust washers. After several attempts I managed the job with the aid of some very thick grease to hold the needles in.

I would disagree with the Haynes manual which recommends lubricating the bits and pieces as they are assembled. If you keep the inside dry and degreased, parts which you accidentally drop inside, and there will be plenty, pins, rollers etc, will be the more easily shaken out. Moreover they don't stick to the surfaces and fool you into thinking that you have removed the rogue part when in fact it is glued by lubricant to the inside. It is inconceivable that after a couple of revolutions in neutral when filled with oil, everything will not be lubricated. Also at the assembly stage , muck and workshop detritus won't tend to stick to the inside of the box before the cover is on.

When fitting the selectors with the little roll pins, I recommend making a properly fitting punch.

I am not at all impressed with the front oil seal, and neither was my old clutch. Is it supposed to just act as a thrower, or is the little lip supposed to seal against the front cover face? I wish now that I had made something to adapt a garter seal, but one must stop somewhere.

The new clutch came from Fleetline, the clutch specialists in Thornton Heath. When I told their salesman, who seemed to be a very knowledgeable chap, of my troubles, he recommended the clutch from a Hillman Imp, mark 2, which is what we fitted. He said that this has stronger springs than the original Reliant one, we will see. Another possibility is a helical spring clutch with nine springs.

The box is now in the Fox, and seems to be working well, except when the oil is cold, second gear syncro is very weak and easily beaten. I hope that when the new bulking rings bed in this will right itself. When warm the box is perfectly satisfactory, and I prefer having reverse on the left as it brings the gear lever directly under the steering wheel in top and third.

If anyone wants dimensions of the bits and pieces I have made, or if they want to pay postage both ways, to borrow them, please let me know. They also include dummy mainshaft bearings for trial assemblies without the necessity of pressing bearings onto shafts and into covers.

I think that with the conventional old car one needs a Mig welding plant, but with the Resin Rocket one needs a lathe and super glue.

All the best, Jim Lugsden - Beckenham,

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Parts supply

Slow but steady progress is being made thanks to a number of people. If not by the time you read this, very shortly thereafter we will have lower wishbones in stock again. It was decided after much debate and thought to have these powder coated. It does add to the cost, is quite possibly not the best protection in the world, but seemed like a reasonable compromise. They are Fox spec, but not handed, so Kitten owners will in future be forced into adopting the John Box recommendation to move up to the latest spec. in the development trail, that is to say they will have to run a drill through the strut and use the thicker bolt in future.

Front dampers are again in stock, and if just three more folk ask for a lower steering column we will then be needing to re-order them too.

The refurbishment of upper wishbones looks like being the next focus of attention. If there are any other parts you are having difficulty with do let me know.

I am aware of the problems with windscreen rubbers, but because there are two types, one for each type of glass, and with tooling costs being what they are, it may be some time before we venture down that road – do not let that deter you from talking to me if you are having difficulty – I may not be able to help, but the more aware we are of numbers the better. On that front perhaps some research into just how many of the cars have laminated screens and how many are toughened, might be of interest. I also expect that some research into the availability of the actual windscreens might point us in a particular direction. Tooling costs in relation to the sort of quantity we are likely to be talking about mean that we are looking at an investment of over a thousand pounds, and that would be each – so unless we can decide / agree on one type, we are not realistically going to make progress here – unless there are a lot more of you replacing windscreen rubbers than I am aware of! As I said – talk to me.

While talking about windscreens, I am reminded that Denis Baggaley was asking if anyone wanted one? Denis is in the Stoke on Trent area, if you need a Kitten windscreen, let me know and I will put you in touch – no I don't know if it is toughened or laminated, sorry.

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Somewhere in between being technical and the parts situation, my memory is again failing me. Someone, no doubt abroad, was asking me about left hand drive Kitten headlights, and I said I did not know off the top of my head. However, when glancing through a copy of the alternative parts list I had printed off for Owen O'Brien the other day, I happened to notice that Guy Buntinx told us many moons ago that a Cibie 443 and a Lucas 7164 are left hand drive headlights for the Kitten, so with belated thanks to Guy, and apologies to whoever it was that asked the question in January, or was it December? Anyway, there you go.

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Tech Tweaks

I didn't see any real problems in the recent editions, so I thought as winter is now upon us a few notes on starting the wee (this Scottish lingo must be brushing off !) engines would be in order.

Obviously a good battery is a good start(!) the Reliant lump must spin to start. Full choke is always needed on a cold engine (summer and winter *) then immediately the engine starts up drop the choke control back to half job, reducing it steadily for the first mile or so. Choke should be fully off by the time the temperature gauge is up to normal. But you all knew that anyway! You understand that the full choke lowers the main jet hence richening the mixture while half choke and less is really only a faster tickover. The relationship between these two actions is a little delicate, and once you've got it right leave it alone. The one area you

can get away with on normal hot running is a lack of oil in your carb. dash pot, but for the first mile of cold running you can't get away with it. You will have a fast tick over that as soon as you try driving away will die on you, more oil in that dash pot is needed.

For some years I had indifferent starting that turned out to be loose rivets in the connectors on the top of the ignition coil, keep the top of the coil clean and the electrical bits shiny. Don't use WD40 here unless you must to actually dispel moisture. As soon as running / weather is back to normal then clean off the WD40 or within a little while it will attract dirt and dust and, make starting even worse.

Back to the battery, now you've fitted a larger than standard battery haven't you ? The original battery was Ah La Robin - built down to a size / weight, and of course with limited vehicle for it to be used on-up to a price.

Cut out the front of the battery box into the wing, fill the tray with fibre glass or even stick in a "Tupperware" box. (The really casual person will just leave the front of the battery open to the dirt off the front wheel!) Extend the battery clamp and fit a bigger battery. The one I fitted for many years was the size for the Cortina (remember them!) twice the battery for half the price. By the way, my present battery will be finished this next winter, it only just managed last winter, with one or two jump starts, so come the first frost I will have to change it, it was first fitted in the November of 1996, I think I've had my monies worth!

If you do get stuck with a fading battery at the side of the road, a trick to remember to get going is A) reduce the plug gap, to say about 15 thou, and B) if you can, get some heat into the plugs with a blow lamp (modern paint burner will do). Finally when connecting and reconnecting the battery there is a safe way. Removal - disconnect the earth first. Then a slipped spanner doesn't cause flashes and bangs. Reconnections - connect the live first - same reason.

As for hot starting well everybody has the heat insulation washer underneath the carb. that the factory couldn't be bothered to fit in the Kitty or the Robin, haven't they?

Some might recall that I came up with a modest list of second hand and some new spares recently, well most are still available. Please send s.a.e. for copy of the list.

Regards to all, Al Osborn.

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More snippets from the net :- Duncan Bradford says :-

I have managed to get the heater working well at last... using the Holts 2-part radiator flush treatment. I noticed the pack is enough to treat 2 Foxes so that's my next intention. I did use it years ago and was impressed that it actually left the inside of the radiator all shiny and new-looking. Downside is that it takes half a day and a lot of flushing and engine-running, and must admit it was so good it destroyed the plug of limescale that was stopping the waterpump from leaking, so revealing the need for a new one, but I guess it's better than discovering that in the middle of a journey.

On to my pet project - tracing the Tandy campervans: I now have some info at least on 23 of them, plus knowledge of another two, one of which sold late last year on eBay. So email me if you have any info on any Tandy campers and I will send what I know to see if you can add anything.

Second issue follows :-

My late Fox, no. 575, has the dim-dip lights as fitted to the late Robin, i.e. when you try to drive on park lamps the headlamps come on extra dim, its for town driving. Lately my headlamps have been a bit slow to respond to the main lampswitch, sometimes only a split second, sometimes a second or two, then lately not until I hit the dashboard in frustration! I wiggled the wires at the back of the switch and checked the fuse [until I realised the headlamp circuit isn't via a fuse [!]]. I now suspect the dim-dip unit, but have no idea where to look or for what. I assume once I find it I could bypass it easily. I just for various reasons

want to spend as little time as possible upside down with my legs in the rain and a torch in my mouth. So.. Anyone any ideas on what or where to look out for it?

Sales and Wants

For Sale :- a rare opportunity, Reliant Tempest kit No. 1 is for sale taxed and tested. Stuart Vickers from East Yorkshire is the man you need to talk to and for £4,600 SRH 949R can be yours. This car was at Burford last year and has to be the lowest mileage John Box Tempest out there.

For Sale :- 1976 Kitten chassis & shell complete with reconditioned engine,. It is in Scotland this one, near Pitlochry on the A9,

For Sale :- Reliant Kitten Saloon. Was running when taken off the road and put into storage mid 2003. £150 and it can be yours. Contact Tony Clapham. Exeter

For Sale :- A unique special, was once a Reliant Kitten, now – wow. Open top 2 seater, finished in black, very smart, taxed and tested, yours for just £1,600, contact Brian Ayres Ravenshead. See the front cover.

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 Coventry area.

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's Kitten still 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 near Birmingham

For Sale :- a Rebel steering wheel, recently uncovered whilst clearing the attic, ring Brian on 0141 8866117 yours for a tenner plus postage.

Wanted :- A copy of Dick Harvey's book the 750 Racer. Patrick Vallatt in Switzerland is looking for a copy.

Wanted :- One, yes just the one, new Rebel front damper, contact Mark Hayton

Still Wanted :- A working party - Bill Dick still needs more room at Dunblane, The days are getting longer now, so let's see what we can do – who was it again that was looking for a door? Oh yes and Paul Elmy was looking for a pair of seats. 0141 8866117 is still the number if you can help.

Wanted :- A Tempest, or a Liege

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Epilogue

My special thanks to Jim Lugsden for his gearbox article, and to Alan Shaw who has also provided me with a technical article on the removal of reluctant engine mountings, as you may see on the centre pages I am only a couple of years late publishing another of Alan's drawings!

At the time of writing, early December actually, the Fox operation which was talked about with the request for volunteers, was then abandoned because the seller sold them to someone else, however that deal fell through, and we were back in the frame again. Tony Plowright just happens to own a vehicle that the Fox seller was keen on, and so there is yet the possibility that something good might come of all the frustration. Thanks to all involved, makes the breaking and disposal of a couple of Kittens up here look simple! I mention frustration, in fact much good has come out of all this, because it has put a number of our readers in touch with each other directly, and that can be no bad thing. Putting individuals in touch brings to the front of my mind the membership list question, again, one day I will make a serious effort to solve this one.

I see in our wanted section that Jeff is lumping the Liege and Tempest together in as much as he is looking for either one or the other (have a look at the front cover Jeff, that can be yours for less than 2 grand!). I am quite sure that the Tempest people would be delighted to reach the average selling price of a Liege, though I know, and quite agree, that both are undervalued, but a Tempest does represent the better value, you can pick one up, on the odd occasion that they become available, for a few thousand pounds, while the cheapest Liege will set you back nearer £10,000. Interesting then that the Tempest would seem to fare better in hillclimbs, the only reason that the Liege gets so much more publicity in that regard is their superiority in numbers – at events in particular, you can often find a number of Liege in the same event, you seldom see more than one Tempest in an event, and the fact that, generally speaking, their (Liege) owners build them specifically to take part in such events. I have to say that the Tempest is the more practical and better road car. But horses for courses I love the Liege off road, and it does have a better power to weight ratio, even given the same engine.

Till next time take care, may you have happy and trouble free motoring, and we will talk again when the days are longer. Do I really need to mention grease guns, oil cans, and the odd can of WD squirt?

Brian

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