

Reliant Kitten *Register*

NEWSLETTER 71

July - August 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 – should be sent to John Pearce

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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A Rebel again this time, this is "Orange Blossom", as featured in John Blagburn's article in Rebel Round Up in this edition. Orange Blossom has yet to cover her first 100,000 miles, though knowing John that will happen in the not too distant future. I did ask for a good picture of the car, but it seems there is no keeping John and his fondness of old radios separate from his love of old cars! I hope Orange Blossom serves you well John. Please keep us up to date with developments.

The Registrar speaks

Right, I need to get back on time with these, don't I? I think I remember saying, some years ago now, that I was going to stop apologising and just get on with things. However I really must let you know that, while it is all my fault that the magazine was so late last time, that it is also down to those who do not contribute articles for the magazine.

I should not really complain, after all, this was my idea in the first place, but so many of you have been so supportive over the years that I really have not had to fill that many pages myself since the very early days, and so it has come as something of a shock to find myself with so many blank pages this year, he said, sharing the blame!

Methinks this might be a good time to start, somewhat belatedly, telling you all who our new members are, that would fill a page or so of the odd edition. Given that I have never produced a membership list, another of the tasks on my 'to-do' list, but complicated for a number of reasons – one day!

Our supportive insurance specialist Rob Spare, has, as good as his word, done it again, and convinced the specialist insurance people he represents to once again donate the prize of a years cherished car insurance policy to one of our number. As we have said before, you have to be in it to win it, and in this instance that not only means the Kitten Register, but also being a holder of a cherished car insurance policy through Spares – see advert on the back cover.

Rob was surprised enough to comment on the fact that the first 6 names out of the hat this year did not hold a cherished car policy issued through Spares, so clearly there are a number of you not availing yourselves of their services. I know that insurance can be a minefield, indeed I myself have not changed my car's insurance supplier in over two decades, or is that three now? No matter, we are very grateful to Rob for his continued support.

I could be sneaky and point out that the fewer of us who do use them for such a policy the better, as it increases the chances of those who do of winning – but that would hardly be fair, would it!?! Besides, if it were just down to numbers, there might not be much incentive for Rob to continue his support, and we would not want to lose that would we?

I do have to say that I was relieved to discover that the winner this year does not live in Scotland, another winner north of the border would surely have raised questions!

This year the winner of a years free insurance is none other than Terry Dixon from Wiltshire, congratulations Terry.

Brian.

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JB's done it again! (bought a Rebel, that is).

Four months ago now, I opened my Mewsletter and headed for the "Cars for sale" section. Well, it wouldn't hurt to look, would it?

Later that same week, I had sold my modern Golf Estate and bought GJR 11L, or "Orange Blossom" as she was named by her previous owners. (Hi Dave & Sue, don't worry, I'm taking care of her and have only taken the mileage from 96,371 to 98,088 since purchase).

Blossom is probably one of the best original (barring a respray down both flanks at some time in the past) Rebels left in existence. The engine is the original and must surely have been overhauled at some point as it goes very well and is obviously in possession of each and every one of its 35 little horses.

The interior is nearly perfect, the carpets have been covered so are in good order, the seats still provide some padding and she came with five almost-new radial tyres in place of the cross plies that used to be fitted.

The gearbox is the best I've ever encountered in a Reliant, being a 750 this is a 4-synchro 'box and even 1st gear can be selected without double declutching.

So, do I regret parting with the galvanised paragon of reliability that was my Golf?

Er, no, I do not! The Golf's 1.8 litre fuel-injected engine was fun to sit behind, but that car lacked "soul" if that's the term I'm looking for. The Rebel, on the other hand, has the sort of handling that one would expect from a small, rear wheel drive car with a slight rearward weight bias (48.8 front, 51.2 rear. Source, Autocar, road test number 2189, 20/06/68. *Yes, that test car was a 700, but comparing other weights with those given in my "Here come the Rebels" brochure, there wouldn't be a difference – apart from that extra ring of synchro cones in the gearbox, mind you, they lost the beautiful remote linkage on that later box, didn't they? ! Ed*). With the good radials on her, she's got some grip too!

So, having bought a car that did virtually no miles at all for the last few years and put it into regular use, I should have all kinds of problems right? Wrong! I had to fit new engine mounts before she was safe to use, but those fitted were the originals so the few quid the replacements cost was hardly something I minded about. You're expecting a long list now, are you not? Sorry, the list of essential jobs was short indeed and cost less in total than the one unexpected repair the Golf had to have (£300 for some bit of the fuel injection, ouch) during my time with it.

Blossom's front suspension needed a little attention, the spring on the driver's side was broken and the damper leaking, so Brian came to the rescue with brand new spring/damper units for a very un-VW-like price. Someone had filled the trunnions with the thickest grease known to Humankind, so they had to come off, be cleaned and then refitted, a new one was found to have been fitted too far up the thread on the hub carrier, so that issue was addressed at the same time, and that was the suspension and steering done.

Dave had already warned me that the fuel delivery hose was leaking, so I shouldn't have been shocked when I washed the open-toed sandals in four star (Thanks Sainsburys for continuing to sell it [4-star]), and new hoses were obtained from Reliant and one fitted, so now I can brim the tank. Useful in calculating that Blossom is averaging a shade under 47mpg, not bad, but a carb overhaul should improve that further as she's too rich at idle and I suspect that the float level needs attention. I'm sticking with a Zenith though, and have a spare that can be overhauled at my leisure in readiness for fitting. An SU may be preferred by some, but I like the Zeniths just fine.

I think that irregular use had done the brakes no favours, but the adjusters were easily freed and everything's ok now.

Other than the jobs mentioned above, the only thing I must do before we run out of Summer is the removal of old paint and underseal from the chassis then treatment with something like black Waxoyl. The outriggers have been replaced at some point and the welding is sound enough, the only rust I found was in the rear bumper brackets, but the car did have a n/s/r accident many years ago and I suspect that the events are connected, it's strange, you can feel the upper surfaces of the chassis legs and they're clean and sound, the chassis generally is solid and has a healthy ring to it when struck with a screwdriver handle, none of that crunching of rusty steel here! Yet the bumper brackets will both need to be remade.

I can live with that though, and stand by my initial claim that this really is one of the best surviving, original cars I ever saw, and I have seen a couple more than some folk will do in their lifetime!

Jobs still to do, other than of the crawling about underneath variety, are to remove the wooden wedges that have been fitted under the seats' rear hoops. They are there to allow extra space for the speakers that are, rather ingeniously, fitted in upturned "Solvite" buckets under the seats! In line with my promise to Dave and Sue, I will not be cutting any trim, so I shall most likely fit different speakers, maybe in pods on the parcel shelf. The Panasonic radio/cassette player works pretty well so I may leave that where it is or remove the "System" altogether and carry a period radio for when I need tunes in there, a little one that makes a lot of noise and has a car aerial socket will be best, so I'll restore one of my Bush TR130s and use that.

Oh yes, other jobs, I like the big, original steering wheel but its rim is a bit crumbly now, so that'll be coming off to be rubbed down and repainted then the wheels could use a coat of magnolia gloss, they're less rusty than most but are starting to get a bit scruffy where tyre-fitting machinery has scratched their rims.

Generally though, two months and approaching 2000 miles since purchase I am delighted with little Blossom and hope to see some of you out and about in your Rebels, Kittens, Foxes and variations thereof during the summer.

Reliant folk are always welcomed in my home, but be warned, a tour of the large collection of ancient electronic gadgetry is unavoidable so if you're allergic to Bakelite and valves stay away!

Mr. Editor, I shall send some more pictures of the car soon and thanks again for the ultra-rapid help with getting the suspension bits to me.

JPB previously of North Shields, now from Ellington in Morpeth.

John, many thanks for the up-date – I came home to a message on the machine the very day that article arrived, suggesting I might want to hold it for a while, as he had just had a failure, and only just made it home, but while changing a back spring on an old car can be a chore and a half, I am sure, thanks to Robert Fairfoull providing a replacement spring at short notice, that all will be well again soon. Ed.

REBELLIOUS CONDUCT - EPISODE 4

My Rebel seems to have a personality trait, a sort of automotive attention deficit disorder. If I leave it for more than a few days, it plays tricks on me when next I use it. The Rebel never fails to start first time, its what happens next that catches me out. This normally displays itself in the form of sticking brakes, however, after a more recent week of inactivity, came a new trick. As soon as the monster 850cc engine fired up, the accompanying rattles and sound of escaping exhaust gas demanded immediate attention. The exhaust down pipe had broken away from the manifold flange. On the good luck side of things, I had just bought a new bottle of Argosheid (having been without for a year) and my Mig welder was just inside the garage door. I don't normally keep my welding gear at home but as my Frogeye needed a welded repair to its damaged silencer, everything was to hand. So one repaired Frogeye and Rebel exhaust later, the bottle of gas has paid for itself already.

With the better weather upon us, it was time to tackle the other jobs that had accumulated over the winter months. The crankshaft pulley oil leak had become serious enough for me not to lift the bonnet with the engine running. Everywhere I parked became marked with a pool of Duckhams, a line of little black dots marking my journey between each pool - I had to take action! With the timing cover off, I continued spannering to remove the front engine plate. This required modifying in order for the new engine mounting rubbers to align correctly. Cutting off the mounting legs just behind the mounting holes, I made up some extended legs which were then welded to the existing 850 plate. Hopefully, the new mountings will not shear off as did one of the old ones. With the radiator out, this gave me a chance to make a better soldered repair to the top hose stub which had pulled out of the radiator earlier in the year. Figuring that this was caused by only having one effective engine mount and a rather hardened and inflexible top hose, I replaced the latter with a silicon hose. This should now reduce the vibrations transmitted to the top hose stub, time will tell.

With the frequent topping up of oil required whilst the crank pulley seal was leaking, I became increasingly miffed by the stupid oil filler/breather cap on the 850 engine. There was simply no way of gripping it around its skimpy flange to pull it off. Each time, I had to resort to levering it off with a screw driver; no good for me or the rocker cover filler neck. Finding a suitable bar stock length of aluminium, an hour or so on the lathe, I now have my own custom made cap. This retains the standard 'O' ring but has a large flange to get my fingers under. Also, the top is removable so that I can take out and clean/replace the breather gauze from time to time. The outlet stub I increased to 1/2" diameter. This is still connected to the carb via a reducer. I may vent this to atmosphere later and plug the carb vent intake stub. I keep getting ideas of turning the manifold elbow through 180 degrees to move the carb away from over the engine. I may use another SU from my sizeable collection of spare Sprite carbs and have the choice of which side to place the float chamber and linkage. The only downside being the pipe work to the alloy manifold elbow, this will require extending. Alternatively, I could pass the heater outlet hose via the elbow, which should prove tidier, but is elbow heating necessary anyway? If anyone else has gone down this road, I would be pleased to hear of their experiences. The reason I am considering this is I am having a slight case of uneven running on a light throttle. Having replaced most of the ignition system when the coil packed up (excepting the spark plugs which look quite new anyway), I am tending toward a carburetion malady. I have checked the carb, fitted a new throttle spindle and eliminated most likely sources of induction air leaks, but this uneven running continues. It is hardly noticeable on my daily commute but on a light throttle cruising at 45/50mph, the engine really can't make up its mind what revs to maintain. I tend to suspect that the carb piston damping is not effective enough so in the meantime, I am topping up with EP80 instead of engine oil in the damper. I

have rarely been beaten by the twin SU carbs on my Sprites but the single SU on my Rebel is out to try me it seems!

Also under the bonnet, the bonnet prop was causing me concern. Other than to sit it in the central bonnet catch cup, there really is nowhere else to locate it safely. Trouble is, when ever I sit it in the catch cup, it is invariably in the way of where I need to work. More worrying, if the wind blows up, the bonnet can go skywards unchecked. So, out with the original prop and replaced with a spare but modified prop from my Sprite Mk1V. This I extended and re-bent but more importantly, made up and fitted a proper stay bracket that shares the horn mounting bolts. The Sprite prop locates positively in the stay bracket, it can neither slide to one side or lift when I don't want it to, plus, it doesn't get in my way. A job well worth doing.

With under bonnet matters shaping up nicely, it was time to investigate the clonk from the nearside front suspension when free falling off our local "speed cushions". A previous inspection traced this to a badly worn lower trunnion bolt and worn holes in the wishbone fork end. Temporarily, I just put a washer under the head of the bolt to space the worn parts away from the holes. This provided a 90% reducing in descending clonk factor, but a full cure was needed. With wishbone removed (such an easy job) it became clear that this was not a new problem. Someone had neatly welded in some 7/16" washers over the badly worn holes in the wishbone. However, the problem returned and as someone had already beaten me to what I had in mind, I needed a plan 'B'. This arrived in drilling out the wishbone to 5/8" and making up a couple of shouldered bushes to fit snugly in the wishbone/washer combination. With a new 7/16" UNF bolt fitted, this should leave no room for the clonk factor. Getting the wishbone back in was not so easy though. Happy to say, another success, my Rebel is now oil, water leak and clonk free.

This left just the indicators to sort out, the left hand indicator suddenly went on the blink (Well – more to the point, it didn't blink!). This was traced to the indicator switch, a waggle on the stalk usually resumed normal blinking service, but it remained a blinking nuisance. Finding the common Lucas, multi-function switch, (as used on just about every vehicle of the late 1960/70 period), on an autojumble stand, I felt the £3 I paid for it worth the risk of working properly. I carefully marked the colour coding of the cables on the connectors prior to pulling out the old switch. Simply replace with new switch and bingo, lights, horn but no indicators. The problem was, I could not see above the bunch of connectors to confirm the colour code of the cables in the main loom. Eventually, I removed the speedometer for a look see. And there it was, in pulling out the old switch, I somehow pulled some cables out of the top of the connectors. Simply plug back in, I now had indicators but dipped beam vanished. More puzzling and head scratching, this I eventually traced to a break in the switch cable very near to the crimped end where it enters the switch. My "new" switch was operating correctly which only left me with the speedo to replace. So where had the cable nut gone? Almost impossibly, it had slid down the cable and through the hole in the bulkhead. Not much of a problem if you have not fitted blanking plates to the engine compartment side of the bulkhead, which I have. The nut was trapped in the cavity, so off with the blanking plate to shove the nut back through the hole. I must put a cable tie around the cable under the dash to prevent this in future. In all, a 20 minute job took some 2 hours, but at least it only cost £3.

By now, I was feeling rather pleased that I was making good progress in reducing the length of the "Jobs to be done" list on the Rebel. Feeling very brave, I tackled the next – "The front seat covers". Covers I treat with great suspicion, obviously fitted to cover up something really horrible beneath. Fearing what I might find, I was completely taken aback to find that the original black vynide was near perfect. With the new black carpets I recently fitted, (a £10 roll of material from another autojumble) the Rebel is now looking rather good inside. However,

with the onset of the really hot weather, I think I have now discovered the real reason why the seat covers were fitted. Black vynide can attain incredible heights of temperature and stickiness when the sun shines bright. Seat covers now refitted!

Anyway, I have rebelled on enough for this issue, with my first MOT with the Rebel due in August; I could have plenty to report in Part 5 of Rebellious Conduct.

Terry Horler (Yate, Nr Bristol)

Terry, many thanks for the up-date. I have to say I could have cried when I heard of your stalk switch failure, or more to the point your very cheap solution – you see the Register has amongst its stock of new spares, no less than three of these, still in their boxes, I have to say mind you that they cost 8 times what you paid for yours! And after our loft clearance I am not exactly sure of their current location – must complete the cataloguing exercise! Ed.

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I have to say that I think / hope / suspect / believe, and a host of similar adjectives that it is not only Rebel owners who might have such stories to tell as John and Terry, don't be shy talk to me, please, Ed.

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Foxes Den

Foxes: Alternative Parts

Having quietly assumed the soubriquet of Fox Alternative Parts List Contact some time ago now, it's time for me to come clean: There is no list! Fortunately I've not been deluged with requests, but three things are apparent: the need for alternatives to original parts is real, many of the 'originally suggested' alternatives are now equally rare, and any suggestion of parts as alternatives needs to be backed up by evidence more than just hearsay.

It is also important to identify parts exactly. For example: Tie-bar bushes are 'known' to be a Ford part, possibly Cortina. I've spent time with blurry Ford microfiches to no avail: dimensions are not given, and I've lost track of just how many Cortina models there are. It was easier to go to a bush specialist and adopt/adapt a totally different specification.

Dick Goodall deserves an award for trawling through the first few years of mags extracting all mentions of alternatives found. However, there are more 'thought-to-bes' than definites, so I'm issuing a plea to all of you, especially those of you with a technical bent, to come up with detailed information which you can verify.

I promise to compile all I get into a list. It will deal with parts by the categories listed in the official Parts List. I'll also note whether or not the item applies to Kittens too.

The list is already under construction, and will never be finished, but I aim to publish something useful just as soon as I have contributions from some of you.

Duncan Bradford,

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Matters Tempestuous

Dear Brian,

12th July 2006

Subject – Tempest article in the April 2006
R.O.C. Top Gear Magazine

I studied the article in this magazine with great interest because they can use either the Kitten or the Fox as the basis of construction, and realised I had examples of both which I need to dispose of.

A complete Fox which I think you saw about 10 years ago at the ROC national rally A333 CTV.

A Kitten which has been broken for spares, some of which have been used on the Fox.

There are also loads of Robin and Rialto spares collected over 25 years, some of which are suitable for Liege kit cars.

I spoke to John Box on the phone and he recommended I should contact you.

I do not enjoy the best of health these days, and though I am only 68 years of age, will not be doing anything with those vehicles. I know that if anything happens to me my children would fetch in the skip, and they would be lost to the Reliant fraternity forever.

Hope you are able to find a home for them – reasonable offers will be accepted.

I would prefer to see the Fox remain complete if possible.

Yours sincerely - Dick Whittington - Loughborough.

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Still on the subject of Tempests, as you will read in the epilogue we had an unexpected guest recently, and he tells me – something I have been meaning to ascertain for a long time actually – that the Malcolm Curnow supplied good quality 4 branch exhaust manifold does fit the engine in the Tempest. I was curious to know if it would, curious too to know if it would fit in the Kitten and Fox as well, but that seemed likely as the Liege has a tighter engine bay than the Kitten certainly. In the Tempest however, not only is the engine bay different, but remember the engine sits about 7” further back in the chassis, so the chassis is narrower there due to the diagonal cross bracing, but fit it does, so now we know.

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Liege Page

John and Mel have reached a milestone with membership of the Liege car Club reaching the 50 mark for the first time. With Peter only having taken orders for 52 of these marvelous wee cars that has to be the highest percentage of owners to members in any car club I know of, well done John and Mel.

I read the reports of the run I missed back in May with a pang of anguish, it was clearly a truly wonderful event, and I am really frustrated that I could not be there. Their next get together is in the Poole area on September the 24th for details contact Richard Irvine at 24 York Road, Broadstone, Poole Dorset BH18 8ET. That too is frustrating for me as I should be in Birmingham the week before – hmm, I wonder.....

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Readers Letters

I guess it must be something to do with the warm weather and the fact that so many of you are out there doing things rather than writing to me, but my incoming mail tray has been empty for over a month now, feel free to help rectify that situation. (No, sadly, that does not mean that my desk is clear, the battle of the bits of paper continues), only these days it is punctuated by the odd trip to my beloved's garden to do battle with the weeds, not that it is a big garden you understand, just about 12 feet by 18, and there are lots of lovely bushes, even a tree in the middle of it, but an amazing number of weeds seem to have sprung up after the recent rain.

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Brian's Diary - August 2006

Now I warned you about this – nothing from you, so more from me – not good enough, and you know what you need to do in order to rectify the situation!

Neil Tuer, one of our most recent subscribers, is rebuilding a Kitten saloon. The car has some interesting mods, but externally is a standard Kitten saloon. He was in need of a steering rack and a lower steering column, and it occurred to me when his cheque arrived at the beginning of August, that the £25 I had charged him for postage and packing would very nearly cover the cost of the fuel that my car would use to make the delivery myself.

That would serve a number of purposes. For a start it would get me out of the house for a few hours, secondly it would save me from making up a parcel, thirdly it would let me have a run through some of Scotland's finest scenery, Neil lives near Tulliemet just south of Ballinluig, between Perth and Pitlochry just east of the A9, but from here, while I would be using the motorway to get to the Stirling road, I would then cut off through Crieff and up the Sma' Glen through Amulree to Dunkeld. Another real bonus of this trip was that I could pop in to see Bill Dick at Dunblane, and deliver the plastic roof for a dolls house that we had given to George Mitchell's wife Maureen a couple of years ago, but at the time could not find the roof, and it has been lying in the lock-up since we cleared the loft last December! (you can just tell how much I love making up parcels, can't you?) So, all in all, it seemed like a win win win win situation all round. It was raining mind you, but the car does not leak. So, after a previously arranged pub lunch with an old friend who had retired recently, I headed off. Thanks to John Johnstone who had clambered up into the loft for me to retrieve the lower steering column, everything was in the car, and I left Renfrew just before 3:00pm.

The M8 has had lane closures just west of the Kingston bridge for some weeks, and I was naive enough to think that at that time of day there would be no delay, but it took longer than I had anticipated to get the first 6 miles of the journey, and the spray was bad, and I was beginning to wonder if this was such a good idea – I had been unable to raise Bill, Neil, or his mother Lyn on the phone to make them aware of my intentions, and Maureen told me that George was dozing – oh, sorry dosing sheep, and would most likely not be back for some time.

Not to be deterred I pressed on and arrived at Dunblane just on 4:00pm. Bill, it was good to see you again, thanks for the refreshments, Brenda, am sorry I missed you (she was in Glasgow would you believe, I must have passed her on my way up!)

Not entirely certain where I was going, and aware of just how long George and I usually end up chatting for I was keen to get on, so 5:00pm saw me back on the road to Crieff. As I turned off in Gilmerton, within 60 yards of Simon Chisholm's front door, I had a pang of guilt – why had I not included him in my plan for the day? – but the last minute decision to do this today, and the uncertainty of my exact destination pressing on my mind, I turned left up the Sma' Glen – it's the A822 if you care to have a look, right into the very centre of Scotland. I had thought of carrying on up the A826 to Aberfeldy, and round that way, but the Dunkeld route I thought would be quicker and more direct. The temptation to turn left at Amulree and follow the Glen Quaich road to Kenmore was hard to resist, a wonderful wee road that, and then the lovely run from Kenmore to Aberfeldy, but no time for such a detour, I was hoping to do all this on no more than £25 worth of fuel remember.

The rain had stopped by now and the sun was trying to come through, and before too long I had to put my sunglasses on. This road is one of my favourites in the whole country, you feel so small and insignificant surrounded by those impressive mountains. There is the odd pylon, and the odd house, I even saw 4 cars in 20 miles, actually had to pass two of them, not that I was pressing on, just enjoying the scenery, but I draw the line at being reduced to anything less than top gear!

I made it to the A9 at Dunkeld without incident, then almost turned off too soon, but got it right second time, or so I thought. I used to enjoy single track roads as a youngster, even more recently than that, but these days I am not confident that my ability to suddenly stamp on the brake is perhaps what it once was, and while on 'normal' roads my driving technique more than makes up for any such shortcomings, the care needed to ensure safe progress on an unknown twisty single track tree lined road not only makes for frustratingly low average speeds, but involves a level of concentration that I find takes most of the pleasure out of the activity.

In my focused mental attitude I missed the entrance to the access road to the Tuer residence, and it was a couple of miles later before I realised I must have gone too far. So, back on the phone, still no answer, but I made a note of Neil's dad Ian's mobile number from the ansaphone message this time, and got him. He directed me to the bottom of the drive, and Neil was by then there waiting for me. The drive is half a mile up an unsurfaced road with lot of grass growing up the middle of it, over two cattle grids, and you can't see the house from the bottom of the drive, so I don't feel too guilty about having missed it on my first pass.

Both Neil and Lyn, his mum, were in fact just going out, so I had been lucky, but there was time for a once over the car, and a coffee, and you should see the size of the organic corgettes Lyn grows, more like marrows – thanks Lyn.

So, off then at just about 7:00pm and back down the road to Gilmerton, where I really felt I could not just drive through without stopping to say hello. Simon was in, he had just sat down for a meal with the lovely Myra, who had just flown in from the States that very afternoon, so I had a quick chat over a welcome glass of water, and learned that the yellow Rebel saloon that used to belong to Tony King from Clydebank, and which had been off the road for over a decade and a half, had, just a few months ago, been acquired by an unknown gentleman from

near Glamis, who had it back on the road within weeks of acquiring it – so make that one more Rebel on the road in Scotland than I said earlier. (sorry, later as it happens!).

On then to Sherrifmuir and to drop off the dolls house roof. George is the chap who is into Volvo 300'rs, and his most recent acquisition is a showroom condition 1.7 three door car from 1985 with about 27,000 miles from new. Dry stored for years, and really looks as though it came out of the showroom yesterday, apart from the tyres, they are all the original ones, the spare has never been on the car, and so it still has full tread, and thanks to the car being kept out of the sunlight, the original tyres still look to be serviceable – what a find.

We had a blether, mainly about cars which I know bores Maureen more than a little, sorry Maureen, it's the old dog new trick syndrome I'm afraid!

Duly topped up with coffee to keep me awake for my return to Renfrew I left Sherrifmuir at the back of 10:20pm and was back home before 11:30. No traffic delays on the M8 at that time of night!

No, in my haste, I didn't log the mileage, but the following day it took just £23 to re-fill the tank, and while my absence from this keyboard for a day has delayed this edition for 24 hours, the adventure has filled the past three pages – all in all a trade off I can live with!

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Now, 4 days later, another adventure, this time in a Rebel!

Phil, you remember, the tale of the Hallam Kitten? I know it was a decade ago now that Phil treated us to a series of articles covering the body off rebuild and extensive modifications to his Kitten saloon. Well that Phil, as you may also recall, has a very original Rebel saloon too. In fact his Kitten has been laid up for a few years now, but the Rebel is used more than most of them are these days I suspect.

There are – off the top of my head (feel free to correct me if you know differently) but as far as I know, just 4 Rebels on the road in Scotland at the moment (I think there are possibly twice that number, but the others are not known to the Register). Three of them are saloons and one an estate, three have galvanized chassis, and the fourth had a new chassis specially made for it in Kent a couple of decades ago. Three of them were rescued from Englandshire by yours truly. So if we ever get to the stage of asking what that bloke Marshall ever did for Reliants anyway? Well there are three Rebels on the road today that might not be on the road, (oh, and just for the record, I located and brought to Scotland two of the three galvanized chassis as well!), were it not for him!

Finding good custodians can be difficult, all too often we have to compromise and venture into the unknown. One Rebel that John Blagburn and I rescued from down south, came to Scotland to be extensively renovated, new headlining, 850 engine and Kitten / Robin gearbox installed, with the early Rebel gear linkage fitted, only to be sold to a resident of the south west of England, never to be heard of again. Well, we tried, but were let down – perhaps it will re-appear in years to come.

That reminds me of another frustration of mine, if only these people would subscribe to the Register, we might not lose touch with the cars so easily – one downside of the internet and e-bay.

Right, what has this got to do with Brian's diary – well, that is another day gone, and still nothing from you in the post – Phil Hallam was the key on this occasion. He was off to France to see how work was going on his new house, and so was not going to be in the country at the beginning of August – and the Thistle branch of the Reliant Owners Club were short of appropriate vehicles for their club stand at Edlington, which is the new venue of the East Ayrshire Car club's annual event that used to take place at Culzean in the grounds of that wonderful castle.

I had asked Phil if I might take his Rebel along, and he had kindly agreed. The venue is only a few miles, and more to the point only a few roundabouts, and not a single set of traffic lights, from his house, so he agreed to let me take it. I do have great difficulty with clutches these days, but pedals that go down through the floor, like Jowett Javelins, and Rebels, I can still manage at a push – no pun intended!

So, there we were, after the hottest and driest July for many a long year, hoping that the weather would hold for just one more weekend, well it did and it didn't!

The rain, which had been light when I left Renfrew in the morning, began to get heavier by the time I, and friend David (no, you don't know David, but I was his best man over 30 years ago, and he has come to live in Renfrew recently, and had nothing better to do that day), arrived at the Hallam residence.

Amelia made us a welcome cup of tea and we went to get off, but the Rebel's battery was not quite up to the task – a quick jump from the Citroen and we were off.

I had either forgotten, or failed to realise how close Phil lives to the event venue at Edlington, but it was only 3 miles along the road – not sufficient to put much charge back into the battery! But really good for my left leg!

Unfortunately Robert Fairfoull could not make it on the day, and so Rebel number 00003 was not there as well, but there was a Fox, belonging to Graham Spraggon, and 2 three wheelers (both Rialtos if you must know, a saloon and an estate) on the Reliant Owners Club stand, as well as a Falcon and a couple of more modern 4 wheelers (and a 6 wheeler, but we don't want to know about that I am sure!)

The weather deteriorated, but then improved, and by lunchtime it was dry, and by 2:00pm the sun started making its presence felt. Which was very good news for two of the girls who had come as passengers in the 6 wheeler, because they had planned to cycle home!

I had elected not to take the wheelchair – too much hassle on a rough field, and a lot of effort to clean it after such an adventure, so I stayed in the 6 wheeler and enjoyed some hospitality in comfort and good company.

When we came to leave the Rebel's battery seemed to be completely flat – a new shape for a battery Dave thought! And again it leapt into life with a jump from the nearest Rialto. That has to be one of the best things about a generator, it will, given time, charge a completely flat battery – alternators, wonderful as they are, simply cannot do that!

Obviously with two 'T' junctions and three roundabouts to circumnavigate, and my left leg being the way it is, I was a little apprehensive lest I stall the engine, but of course with the Rebel's low gearing, there was never much chance of that happening.

We made it back to Stevenson without incident, and after more refreshments provided by Amelia, we headed for home.

I have to say I really enjoyed driving the Rebel, it has been a couple of years since I did that, and you forget just how good the steering is, and how user friendly the low gearing is, mind you, a fifth gear would be nice at anything over 40 - 45 MPH!

So thanks Phil, I hope you enjoyed France as much as I enjoyed driving the Rebel.

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Continuous Insurance from the Record

My thanks to the Federation for this article from their Newsletter No. 4 of 2006, which is now in a nice glossy A5 booklet format to avoid extra postal charges under the new Royal Mail charging system – thankfully we will not have to alter anything as we happen to comply as we are.

A consultation early in 2005 proposed to make it an offence to be the keeper of an uninsured motor vehicle. The consultation made it clear that there would be exemptions for vehicles off road under SORN, and, responding to the consultation FBHVC stressed the need also to exempt vehicles that had been off the road since before the introduction of SORN. Assurances were received that this would be the case.

The proposal included an automated system for identifying offenders. In essence the DVLA would run a program against their own database and that of the Motor Insurance Bureau (MIB) and automatic penalty notices would then be issued for any taxed vehicle that was found not to be insured - (presumably) the system could also work in reverse.

The legislation to make this possible has been incorporated in the Road Safety Bill. At the committee stage the Minister of State for Transport, Dr. Stephen Ladyman, confirmed that regulations (which will be statutory Instrument after the enactment of the Bill), will include exemptions for SORN vehicles. Dr. Ladyman gave his personal assurances on this point, and logic dictates that this exemption must extend to pre-SORN vehicles as well.

At the end of June the Insurance Times printed an article with a bold headline 'MIB Victory for All-vehicle Cover' stating that : What the new law will mean is that if you have a registered vehicle then it has to be insured. When the journalist was challenged by the FBHVC he accepted that he knew about exemptions but felt that since they only applied to a minority they weren't worth mentioning.

Unfortunately, this has been taken up elsewhere in the press: please do not worry, FBHVC is satisfied that SORN and pre-SORN vehicles will be exempt from the continuous insurance requirements.

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Getting Technical

Dear Brian,

1st Aug. 06

Thanks for another very informative Mewsletter, I particularly liked the article on head gasket replacement by Duncan Bradford, and I totally agree with everything he says in it. If you do not do it this way it is a total waste of time.

I use my Kitten on a daily basis (70 miles round trip) to work, so I must have good reliability from my engine. After removing the head last time after much sweating and cursing I found the studs very tight in the head holes on the exposed manifold side. These seem to corrode the worst, they must be cleaned thoroughly and I also ran a 10mm drill through all the stud holes in the head, then I put a small countersink in each hole on the face side of the head (1/1mm max). After being told by various mechanics who work on Reliant engines that the later type composite gaskets are not as good as the earlier types, I put a thin smear of red hermitite on each side of said gasket then placing it in position I put copper grease on the studs and followed the same procedure as Duncan.

To my mind it is the only sensible way of doing it, the gasket will have compressed a lot after even 2 miles of driving. Next day I put the torque wrench on all the nuts and got quarter of a turn on all the nuts (half a turn on some) After 500 miles I rechecked again and got another 1/8th turn on them. At 1,000 miles all the nuts were O.K. During this time I lost no water whatsoever and have only put in about a cupful since January, even during the hot weather recently we have had no overheating, no hot starting problems or rough running.

As Duncan says in his letter "a bit tedious" but what is the price of a couple of rocker cover gaskets compared to a "head job" or constant water loss (or pressure build up). Do it right first time. Thanks Duncan.

M. J. Prentice - Goole, East Yorkshire No. 664

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Parts supply

After my comment in here last time about the rapidly changing situation, things have, for the moment, calmed down. We do once again have front dampers in stock, and springs too.

As you may be aware we are on the lookout for old unit top and bottom ball joints for re-conditioning, one or two of the ones we have had back as old units have either not been the right part in the first place, or have been beyond repair. Steering racks and top wishbones as well, if you have an old one that is in need of re-con, please get in touch. I plan to be down south in mid September, so collection is a possibility.

Two other things in here, one, rear leaf springs for Kittens. We sold the last pair a few months ago, and I decided to replace the stock recently, they are slow moving, but not totally stagnant, we sell on average about two pairs a year, so on to the supplier. I was pretty sure there would be a delay, as I knew they had no stock of the small bushes, the ones at the back of the spring, well, they didn't have when I was looking for some earlier in the year, and sure enough, they had not re-stocked. They said they would have to re-quote, which they did, a price increase of over 100% - not funny, and probably not on. It is one thing expecting you to pay about £100 for a pair of new back springs, but would you pay over £200? I think that might be doubtful – so protracted negotiations are on-going. The fact seems to be that the cost of

spring steel has rocketed over the past couple of years or so, and the company did not have a realistic price structure for small batch production in any case, so it looks as though we have to face the fact that back springs are now a high cost item.

Anti roll bar mounting bushes, and indeed the metal brackets that hold them on to the chassis are another part under our close scrutiny at the moment. We do get asked for the bushes from time to time, and sometimes for the metal retaining brackets as well, though we have never had new ones of them, in stock.

The original bush material can be improved upon, and indeed the thickness of metal on some of the retaining brackets is not all it might be. I hope to have this resolved before you read this, but in case I don't feel free to contribute. Two key questions, are the mounting brackets symmetrical? That is, are the two holes in them in the middle, or are they offset to opposing sides? Also, how thick are they? – by that I mean the thickness of the material they are made from - answers in either mm's or inches (or perhaps fractions of inches!). While you are measuring things, how thick – what diameter - is the anti-roll bar on your Kitten / Fox?

So that's it on the parts front for the moment. I've said it before and I'll say it again, if you are having difficulty sourcing parts, or even before then, talk to me.

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More snippets from the net :-

One of the hot topics I see coming under the spotlight recently is the old chestnut of oil filler caps for our wee Reliant engines.

A couple of topics in one really here, Terry Horler if you remember from *Rebellious Conduct 4*, somewhere nearer the front of this edition, was telling us, and asking advice – see, I didn't even interrupt him at the time, but will have my two pence worth in here instead! Well, as I said, two issues here, firstly the difficulty some people have removing, or indeed replacing the oil filler cap. I have in fact over reacted to this as I am told that the alloy rocker covers we have available are the other way round, i.e. we over-compensated for this situation, and the caps fall in too easily, and conversely, if you have any crankcase pressure at all, pop out very easily too – but all our engines are in fact too good condition to have crankcase pressure – aren't they?

The recommendation from a number of people seems to be to use a Ford one, which prompted the question “which Ford one”, the definitive answer appears to be one from a V6 2.8 or 3.0 litre as used in a wide range of their vehicles including the Scimitar and more recently a Sierra 4*4. So now you know.

On the Terry point, the one about venting the engine to atmosphere, I seem to remember the carburetion being badly disrupted if the pipe from the oil filler to the inlet is either removed or blocked, but can't remember the technical reason(s) for this – or am I imagining it all? – helpful comments and responses eagerly awaited. Technical articles about the “sealed”, as in breathes its own fumes engine from the 70's spring to mind, but, as we all know, this mind of mine gets confused at times!

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Now I've no idea how that came about, but I am a page short! One of my internet friends recently sent me the following, which I found amusing :-

Mechanics vs. Pilots:-

After every flight, pilots fill out a form called a gripe sheet, which conveys to the mechanics problems encountered with the aircraft during the flight that need repair or correction. The mechanics read and correct the problem, and then respond in writing on the lower half of the form what remedial action was taken, and the pilot reviews the gripe sheets before the next flight. Never let it be said that ground crews and engineers lack a sense of humor.

Here are some actual logged maintenance complaints and problems as submitted by Qantas pilots and the solution recorded by maintenance engineers. By the way, Qantas is the only major airline that has never had a crash.

(P = The problem logged by the pilot.)
(S = The solution and action taken by the engineers.)

P: Left inside main tire almost needs replacement.
S: Almost replaced left inside main tire.

P: Test flight OK, except auto-land very rough.
S: Auto-land not installed on this aircraft.

P: Something loose in cockpit.
S: Something tightened in cockpit.

P: Dead bugs on windshield.
S: Live bugs on order.

P: Autopilot in altitude-hold mode produces a 200 feet per minute descent.
S: Cannot reproduce problem on ground.

P: Evidence of leak on right main landing gear.
S: Evidence removed.

P: DME volume unbelievably loud.
S: DME volume set to more believable level.

P: Friction locks cause throttle levers to stick.
S: That's what they're there for.

P: IFF inoperative.
S: IFF always inoperative in OFF mode.

P: Suspected crack in windshield.
S: Suspect you're right.

P: Number 3 engine missing.
S: Engine found on right wing after brief search.

P: Aircraft handles funny.

S: Aircraft warned to straighten up, fly right, and be serious.

P: Target radar hums.

S: Reprogrammed target radar with lyrics.

P: Mouse in cockpit.

S: Cat installed.

P: Noise coming from under instrument panel. Sounds like a midget pounding on something with a hammer.

S: Took hammer away from midget.

Sales and Wants

For Sale :- A Liege! Not often they come on the market, but this one is on the road, SVA'd and everything, it could do with a respray he tells me, and does jump out of third on the overrun. It could be yours for £7,500, Adrian Young is the man you need to speak to,

For Sale :- Andrew Norman's Tempest, this is the first one built by Ian Foster and John Box, as seen on the publicity brochure. £4,250 will secure you this wonderful piece of most British motoring heritage Nutley in East Sussex.

For Sale :- Reliant Fox, no MOT but good condition, brakes done, good engine, almost ready for MOT. Offers to Norman

For Sale :- Fox estate, 'A' registered, detachable top, £395 with spares, good tyres.

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 :- 750cc Reliant engine and early Rebel gearbox with remote gearchange. Offers to Mike Hine. Can deliver between Cornwall and London area.

For Sale :- Alan has a number of those wonderful ceramic magnets that a number of us use to improve the running of our engines, they are available from Alan for just £12 delivered, ring him for details

Looking for a new home is Pete Staniforth's tired Kitten , it is not on the road, and is in need of a lot of TLC, he is in Shoreham-by-Sea in West Sussex,

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Epilogue

Here we are once again at the end of another edition. By the time you read this you will know if I have been successful in getting back on track as far as putting this out on time goes. (It is currently the 4th of August and I only have two blank pages to fill).

I must again say a big thank you to Rob Spare for his continued support both by way of his advert, and of course for yet again being able to secure the year's free insurance deal for one of our readers through his relationship with the Cherished Car Insurance folk. Rob, it is much appreciated.

Rob's company, P.F. Spare, are not always the cheapest in the market, though seldom far off in that regard, indeed I know a number of our readers who say they do offer the best deal, but the level of help and assistance they give is, in my experience, second to none, (although I do not insure my car with them, I do insure my house contents, including the Registers' stock of new spare parts through them) and his staff are particularly familiar with Reliants, no annoying telephone menus to get through or recorded voices, just real, helpful people on the other end of the telephone.

So when your insurance is coming up for renewal, do give Spares a ring for a quote.

By the time you read this I may in fact be home from what will only have been my second trip south of the border this year – mid September - so you should be safe from the prospect of me turning up on your doorstep till next year at least!

Talking of unexpected visitors, Dave Price, yes you remember Dave, he is the guy who organised our Burford get together last year – which reminds me, anyone care to organise something similar for next year? Anyway, as I was saying, Dave rang just now to say he was in Paisley, and were we home? So we got to spend a couple of pleasant hours together – sorry we were so distracted Dave – Moira was in full swing helping with some of the food preparations for our niece's 18th birthday the following day. Great to see you again Dave.

Remember to lubricate those parts which can be looked after in that way, it really does make things last longer, as well as making them easier to dismantle should the need ever arise.

Till next time take care, may your Reliant serve you well, we will talk again soon.

Brian

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