

Reliant Kitten *Register*

NEWSLETTER 72

September - October 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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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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INDEX

Page 2	Contact details
Page 3	Index and cover story
Page 4	The Registrar speaks
Page 5	Rebel Round Up
Page 6	Rebellious Conduct
Page 7	Episode 5
Page 8	The story continues
Page 9	Foxes Den
Page 10	Liege Page
Page 11	Readers Letters
Page 12	A fond farewell
Page 13	from Chorlton
Page 14	Readers Letters
Page 15	The story of
Page 16	VDS 998R
Page 17	A Reliant Kittivan!
Page 18	More from our readers
Page 19	Getting Technical
Page 20	Parts Supply
Page 21	Snippets from the net
Page 22	Sales
Page 23	& Wants
Page 24	Epilogue
Page 25	Advert
Page 26	Obituary

Ahh, take the numberplates off and all becomes unclear! Were the plates still on this car you would not need to look at the windscreen wipers closely to realise that it does not live in the U.K. My thanks to Rik Borgman from the Netherlands for keeping us up to date with the progress on his project. Rick was over in England this year and tells me that the refurbished chassis is ready, and that he has upgraded to the latest clutch and starter motor spec. Keep up the good work Rik.

The Registrar speaks

Welcome once again, I am currently in the middle of this edition, it is actually the 22nd of August, edition 71 went to the printers 10 days ago, and thanks to a number of our readers, this edition is filling up nicely.

That said I just received word that one of our number does not drop everything the moment this publication falls through his letterbox, but reads it as and when he has time, sometimes weeks after it arrives! – this was, as I am sure you can imagine, a devastating revelation, from which I hope to recover, eventually!

Seriously though, I well realise that there can from time to time be more important things in our lives than our wonderful wee cars, or indeed someone else's machinery, but hey, that's not what this publication is all about! The car's the star within these pages, and rightly so.

Right, that was a very quick 5 weeks, it is now September the 28th, we are a week back from our English adventure, thanks to John Pearce I now have here not only the covers for this edition, but the next one as well – so I had better get a move on!

I am determined to get back on schedule with the mag. My telephone hardly stopped yesterday in response to edition 71 falling through letter boxes the length and breadth of the land, which was very nice. Great to talk to you all. So, back to the keyboard today.

As ever when posting the magazine I see addresses of people I had meant to write to, but dared not hold the mag back to include an as yet unwritten letter, lest they then lie on my desk for weeks – I need to work harder, or more effectively at least.

So, with apologies to Patrick Vallat, Tony Plowright, Howard Wadsworth and others, and thanks to Duncan Bradford, John Pearce, Ray Best, Alan and Graeme Shaw and Dennis at Michaels, I will move on and get this to the printers by the end of the month. Well, that was the plan, it is now October the 5th, so I didn't quite make it – off yesterday with Duncan Laing, an ex-Jowett employee no less, checking out a potential scenic run route for the Jowett Car Club's do in Scotland in 2008 – nothing like forward planning!

Brian.

REBELLIOUS CONDUCT - EPISODE 5

At long last, the better weather has allowed me to nibble away at the "Jobs to be done list" that hovered over LRF 671K, my 1972 Rebel Estate. Or, according to the V5C, "Van/side windows".

As purchased, the clutch felt a bit funny, it didn't seem to slip, but full engagement only occurred at some undefined point after my foot left the pedal. Furthermore, initial engagement point could vary, every pull away held its moment of mystery. The clutch seemed to have a will of its own. It was rather as though the hydraulic fluid took its time in releasing pressure. Although the hydraulic fluid level was OK, the colour was just a bit on the grey side. Certainly, this needed changing but I felt there was more to this problem than just yucky fluid. Number one on the list of suspects was the flexible hose to the slave cylinder. Simple enough to change, once the oil filter and starter motor had been removed, only then to discover that the bleed nipple was on the bottom of the slave cylinder. So off came the slave cylinder as well. As air has a habit of rising in a fluid, then the best place to bleed air away is at the highest point,

but then everyone except the person who fitted the slave cylinder to LRF probably knows this anyway! The old hose was decidedly spongy and as luck would have it, a new one just happened to be in the box of spares that came with the car. Did the previous owner suspect something I wonder? With a new hose fitted, bleed nipple uppermost and new fluid in the system, the clutch is now under my full control rather than the previous undecided battle for power. The gear change is now much quicker and cleaner and is really rather good. I still have not discovered why my July 1972 (700cc originally) Rebel should have an all synchro gearbox and hydraulic clutch when common legend has it that this only appeared with the 750cc engine. Answers please on a postcard.....

With the MOT looming, I thought it wise to do a drums off brake check, although the brakes now seemed to be behaving themselves, with no recent sticking on tricks. Despite this, the spate of brake sticking had taken its toll on the front linings. My friend Tony offered to obtain some brake shoes via the Ford Anglia club, which saved me chasing round trying to explain what a Reliant Rebel is to the local motor trade. So, in went the new shoes, adjust and check, simple - and then things went wrong. The following trip into work and the offside front was running hot. I re-adjusted that evening only to have the same problem the next day. So that evening, off with the linings to pump out the slave cylinder pistons as far as I dared for a clean up. The pistons seemed to be moving freely, but the very next day, a hot offside front again. That was it, time to do the job properly. Another rummage in the box of bits that came with the Rebel, this time to extract four new front wheel cylinders. Easily fitted but somehow, I ended up with rather more movement on the pedal than before. As the master cylinder reservoir is not the highest point in the system, I suspected that there might be a small bubble of air trapped in the highest point where the flexible pipes connect with the Bundy piping. Connecting up the Gunsons Easybleed, I was well miffed when the seal to the master cylinder failed to live up to its title, blowing all the contents of the pressure bottle away and totally aireating what was left in the master cylinder reservoir. Typically, I had no more hydraulic fluid to hand either. Fortunately, the local motor shop was still open and by the time I returned, the reservoir of liquid bubbles had returned to a more normal state.

The Easybleed narrowly escaped the dustbin as I returned to my usual pump, run and tighten bleed nipple procedure. With the front brakes flushed and bled, the rear brakes were also treated to some of the same. The pedal still required more movement than before but felt perfectly OK so I called it a day at that. On reflection, I suspect that the brakes may not have been releasing fully prior to fitting the new cylinders and hence the small amount of pedal movement that I had become accustomed too. The brakes now have more "feel" so I guess that's another job that I can cross off the list.

Fortunately, this episode with the brakes gave me a couple of weeks before the MOT to bed in the new linings and a final adjust before the dreaded day. It also gave me time to find the grease nipples and give them a squirt. I only found three, so much easier than my Austin-Healey Sprites which have eight each on the front suspension. (And similarly only get a squirt of grease immediately prior to an MOT). A final check around revealed nothing else for me to tinker with so off to my usual MOT garage in search of that all important document. The Rebel certainly created much interest amongst the staff; they were kind enough not to burst out laughing, and indeed kind enough not to find anything wrong with it – phew!

At this point I must thank fellow Rebel Estate owner, John Parker in responding to something I mentioned in my previous episode. John kindly offered to lend me a brake master cylinder splash guard to use as a pattern for my intended fitment to LRF.

However, in the time between Episode 4 and the publication of the Mewsletter, I had been underneath LRF with an empty Weetabix box, pair of Scissors and a roll of Sellotape.

Realising that a thin cardboard splash guard was unlikely to resist any splashes for more than the first puddle, this was simply a pattern to make one in aluminium. This is now fitted and ready to resist the worst that the winter will throw at it. Maybe sticking brakes, the smell of hot Ferodo and being late for work will be a thing of the past.

The MOT also marked my first anniversary with LRF, the previous owner obtaining the last MOT the day before my collecting it. A time to reflect that in the first 12 months I have covered 5500 miles at an average of 42 mpg. The failed battery, headlamp and oil leak fix has amounted to around £75 in expenditure above what I would consider normal servicing costs. This amounting to 2 changes of oil and filter, a set of points, condenser, brake shoes and a squirt of grease! With no road fund licence to pay for and an insurance cost of £35 as an addition to my other vehicles, I have to say that this is very cheap motoring. I must give credit however to the box of bits that came with the Rebel, certainly the set of front wheel cylinders and clutch hose helped considerably toward this.

The "Jobs to be done" list was becoming rather short when I smelt petrol. Nothing very obvious under the bonnet until I pulled the float chamber overflow pipe up from where it normally resides alongside the gearbox. The end of the pipe was wet and with the engine running, a dribble of petrol appeared. The float chamber needle valve looked very worn and was soon replaced with a spare from yet another box of bits that I have for my Sprites. There is more than one type of needle valve used on SU carbs so I replaced like for like so as not to upset the fuel height in the chamber.

Ever since I purchased the Rebel, there has always been hesitancy on a very light throttle when cruising. Having replaced most of the ignition system, I was convinced that this was down to an air leak in the induction system. Having replaced the throttle spindle and checked the manifold joints, I went the whole hog and blanked off the vacuum advance and crankcase vent pipe. The latter now vents to atmosphere via a long pipe next to the steering box. This made no difference but pulling the choke knob out slightly when the hesitancy occurs did. Although the mixture was set correctly at idle, I lowered the jet by 4 flats on the adjusting nut, this destroyed the idling but the hesitancy was dramatically reduced. This indicated that either the metering needle was worn, or the wrong needle fitted. At this point, I had a stroke of luck; a friend invited me to tag along to an autojumble at Ross on Wye. What we failed to realise, until we got there, it was a motorcycle autojumble. We did feel rather conspicuous not being big hairy bikers with tattoos and leathers, but they were a friendly lot. Just as I had had my fill of handlebars, there on a stall, an SU carb with the familiar alloy elbow for a Reliant 850 engine. At £5, I didn't argue the price, or the big biker asking it! Once home, the SU was soon stripped of it's AAT needle, whilst LRF revealed that it was fitted with an AAC needle. Referring to the SU Burlen catalogue, it seems that both types are specified for the 850 engine. Simply swapping the needles has produced a remarkable improvement to the Rebel's forward progress. So remarkable, that's why I'm remarking on it! The hesitancy has gone, pulling from cold is much improved, and it generally feels much livelier. As I have only just done this as Brian calls for my copy to press, I have yet to discover what the fuel consumption is with the AAT needle. As you might imagine, I will be keeping a close scrutiny of this!

As well as using the Rebel everyday for work, I also looked upon it as being a free ticket into a few car shows. However, the 2006 season has only resulted in 3 shows so far. The good news is that the last 2 enabled a double billing of Rebel estates. Both John Parker's 1974 estate and my 1972 example parked next to each other served to confuse the public that these are indeed rare vehicles! It was good to learn that a third Rebel is now on the road in my region, I hope that a photo shoot can soon be arranged for a Rebel threesome. The third being a 1972 van converted into a pickup with of course, an 850cc engine. As John's "genuine"

estate has a 1300cc Ford Escort engine and auto gearbox, then it looks as though there is no such thing as an "original" Rebel in the Bristol area – or is there???

Sad or not, but I have been collecting Rebel magazine articles over the last few months. More had been written about these cars than I was aware of, which is probably still the case. Anyway, the collection to date looks like this –

AUTOCAR	Sept 18th 1964	Introduction	Saloon 600	938 KNX
MOTOR	Sept 19th 1964	Introduction	Saloon 600	938 KNX

(The cover of this edition also features a Rebel, AUE 38B. This registration also appears on a Scimitar)

MOTOR	Nov 12th 1966	Road Test	Saloon 600	?	?
MOTOR	Oct 14th 1967	Introduction	Estate 700	?	?
VW SAFER MOTORING	March 3rd 1968	Road Test	Saloon 700	JRF 194F	
POPULAR MOTORING	January 1968	Road Test	Saloon 700	HRE 459F	
AUTOCAR	June 20th 1968	Road Test	Estate 700	LRF 442F	
MOTORING WHICH	January 1969	Group Test	Saloon 700	?	?

I believe SMALL CAR also sampled a Rebel but I have yet to track down a copy. If anyone can add to this list of "Rebels in print" then I would be pleased to hear more.

Since joining the RKR, I have become aware that there is more to the world of small four wheeled Reliants than just Rebels and Kittens. I have recently encountered my first Fox sighting. This was during a stay at Carbis Bay in Cornwall at the end of August. An early morning walk into the next village of Lelant, and there it was, parked in a lay by, a Fox Tandy camper. Despite a lack of wheels, it was taxed, so presumably used, and it featured disc front brakes. Walking that way a few days later, the Fox now had a full set of wheels, although I never saw them in motion that week! I attended a couple of car shows in Cornwall (but not with the Rebel) but the Fox did not make an appearance at these. (A Bond Bug did though). It is usual after a period of being away, that my Rebel registers its dislike of being neglected upon my return. Stuck brakes, broken exhaust, what would it be this time? Funnily enough, nothing. My first week back put 250 miles more on the clock for just 23 litres of fuel, near enough 50mpg. (But still with the AAC needle and hesitant running at this time) I think I might be winning!

Well, that's more than enough for this edition, other than to thank Adrian Hanwell for his useful comments upon some of the technicalities of Rebellious Conduct Episode 3. It all helps straighten out the learning curve.

Terry Horler (Yate, Nr Bristol)

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Foxes Den

I have been meaning for some time to try and draw a line under the matter of rubber 'boots' for the ball joints on our wee cars, and Duncan was good enough to provide me with a couple of samples. I too have an, I think better, sample, but I can't remember who sent it in, a year or two back, I think from an agricultural vehicle. I have taken it to our nearest agricultural people, who while they were helpful could not identify it. I thought I had mentioned the details in the mag at the time, but can't find them now – can you remember if I did, and who or what the contact or supplier was?

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Liege Page

Very briefly, I had a run in Paul Wheatley's Liege in the middle of September, what fun! Thanks Paul. John Flood has recently become the first Scottish resident Liege owner, all SVA'd as well, congratulations John. More next time, Brian

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Readers Letters

Dear Brian,

8.8.2006

For about a year now I have been reading your newsletters and have found them to be both interesting and informative. I am not a member of your register, but read the newsletters courtesy of my father-in-law Michael Penistone.

As a result of my marriage I have had a lot to do with his Kittens and his Regal. To cut a long story short, his second kitten had a couple of rust holes in the chassis at the point where the chassis rises up over the back axle. He managed to acquire a replacement chassis in stunning condition. I repaired the old one anyway which is now up for sale for £100, or if anyone is interested in exchanging a rusty chassis for a repaired one I will accept £50 and a rusty chassis.

Thank you for taking the time to read this ramble of mine.

Martyn Denchfield - Goole

Thank you Martyn (though I wish you had not cut the "long story" so short!). It was good to receive your letter and encouraging to learn of what is clearly another Reliant enthusiast out there.

That said I have to say to everyone else that I have no idea the standard of Martyn's welding, and Martyn, if you had seen the state of some of the kitten chassis I have seen over the years, you might have been a bit more specific as to the condition of any part exchange chassis you might be offered! Having said that, it sounds like a good offer to me!

One other point this sort of thing raises in my mind is what do we tell the DVLA in such circumstances? I guess I should be the one with the answer to such questions, but it is one of those grey areas in life that I have never bothered to address. I have only ever changed

chassis on Rebels, and while they, like Kittens, have a chassis plate mounted in the engine bay attached to the body, precious few folk would know where on a Rebel chassis to find the number stamped, on the Kitten it is much more prominent, on the diagonal member just beneath the alternator – so, the question is, what should one tell the DVLA? Obviously you have a situation where the chassis number on the chassis plate will not match the chassis number on the chassis, and while it would take an unusually observant inspector to twig – what is the correct way to proceed? No I won't be losing any sleep over this one, but it is a conundrum, isn't it? Should really involve a new chassis plate I suppose, but that would normally come from the vehicle manufacturer, and while the company still exists, they sadly have no records going that far back – ho hum!

Dear Brian,

9th August 2006

Many thanks for the latest Mewsletter. Your comment on Terry Horler's article about Rebel brake master cylinder guards prompted me to get in touch and offer him the loan of mine as a pattern, but I was too late, he had already made one up in aluminum. Fortuitously both our Rebels passed their M.O.T.'s on successive days, mine on August the 4th, his on the 5th. We plan to take them to a couple of local shows, and, if we can get the man, (sorry, I have forgotten his name) from Patchway along as well, we may have another world record!?!

My (Escort engined) Rebel is still suffering from an overheating problem (which causes it to misfire and die) but hopefully now I have sold one of my other cars I will find the time to sort it!

Best wishes - John Parker - Bristol (Mem. No. 0301)

Dear Brian,

August 2006

Thought I would write a few lines as a way of saying adios. I've sold (given away) my Kitten KTB 634P to a friend who is also an owner but not in the club. Clubs are not his thing. So the vehicle is now on SORN. Anyway, I include a picky of his saloon which he bought in about 2003. He wanted to have a picture of his Kitten going along the road, so he asked his dog Sid, to drive slowly past while he took the snap, result enclosed. Don't those Cosmics and 165's plus spats look well? This is one really sorted Kitten but it has been a long haul rectifying someone else's repairs / bodes / mods. But that is his story to tell not mine, instructive though it may be.

I've enjoyed the club mag since I joined, and thank you Brian for your excellent industry and phone chats / info. I decided to buy something newer to truck about in that doesn't need constant attention, which to be fair these cars demand. Unless you are in the trade I've always said that cars require either time (on something older) or money (on something newer), or in some unfortunate circumstances both (on something knackered or demanding or addictive) like my Vitesse Estate.

So I bought a Smart City Coup LHD 51 plate one owner Full Service History. An interesting comparison with Reliants is this as it has an all alloy 600cc lump in it. Admittedly a bit different in that it is a 3 pot OHC (chain driven) turbo 6 plug unit putting out 50ish BHP but it lugs around 806kgs so the BHP per ton figures are probably similar. (I've not actually worked them out).

Where's the extra weight I hear you ask? Well, below the plastic panels there is quite a chunky steel cage like a dodgem car but going over the roof a well. Power goes through a 6 cog box, sequential like in a motor bike. Semi auto, i.e. no clutch pedal, but you can flip between fully auto in the town, and change when you like via the stick out in the scenic bits when the roads get more entertaining. A really ingenious system that works extremely well (I hope it doesn't go wrong!).

The performance is remarkably similar to the Kitten, The Reliant is quicker of the line cos with the Smart only having 2 pedals, you can't dial up 4 grand and dump the clutch. So the Kitty is off up the road while the not so Smart is sat picking its nose waiting for the turbo to decide to do something. Once doing 20 or so the Smart is definitely quicker through the rev band after the turbo has kicked in. Between 4 and 6 thousand rpm it really goes. Trouble is it has two more gears to trip through, and that takes time on a dead throttle while the Kitten is still under power. Top speed on the Smart is limited by EMS to 85MPH. Now a good Kitten will pull an indicted 90 or so, but at that speed the clock is reading 8-10MPH fast, so its even Stevens really. They are both great fun to drive. No PAS, very positive control and steering feel. The Smart is better on fuel at 60ish average, but then the Kitten is fairly frugal unless you really wring its neck – say 40ish. The actual handling is interesting in the Smart, being very short wheelbase does peculiar things when pushed. The Reliant by comparison is reassuringly traditional and familiar. I.e. you have to be an absolute hairbrained hooligan to get into real trouble. Having said that both cars are, by modern standards, unstable in very windy conditions.

When it comes to things you can transport in the car, the Kitten buries the Smart every time, but then again the Smart wasn't designed with that in mind. The Reliant is obviously far easier to repair (fortunately) but the Smart hasn't gone wrong yet – all I do is put fuel in, give it a wash and go and have fun in it!

One extremely unfair comparison I feel compelled to make and seeing as he has been as good as to write this when he is leaving us I will let him, Ed! In 1964 my mother actually bought a new Regal 3/25. BMA 17B if it's still out there. I think there is more chance of getting Saddam Hussein on "This is Your Life" than the old Regal still being about mind you. I remember being on holiday in Shropshire with my parents when I was a lad, and going along the A488 between Bishop' Castle and Clun. There was a hill on this road (someone reading this will know the one I mean) that is probably 1 in 12 and $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile long. The heroic probably overloaded 3/25 (2+2up) struggled cum clawed its way up that hill at 10 miles an hour in bottom (crash) gear. I recently waltzed up the same hill in the Smart at 60 in fourth pulling 5g's on the tacho and looking to grab the next cog. Such is progress, it'll clock 80 in fifth and revs like a 2 stroke. What a piece of kit. My mate says one of these engines in a Kitten would be very interesting bearing in mind the Kitten is a lot lighter than the Smart. Maybe, if I ever prang it big style....

The Smart is impressive, but what it really demonstrates is just how good the Reliants are, and here I am including the 3 leggers as they are arguably quicker than the Kitten being 2 hundredweight lighter. To compete successfully today, 30 years out of its time with a truly up to date technically second to nothing beautifully engineered vehicle like the Smart, and surpass it in some areas is surely a tribute to these great little cars from Tamworth.

Mike Barcroft - Chorlton - No. 669

Mike, many thanks – it does remind me that I think someone has done it before, I am pretty sure I remember seeing an entry in one of Peter Davis' recent international endurance rallies of a Smart powered Kitten. I did mean to ask about it at the time, I will put that on my list

of things to do during my trip south in September – Peter, if you get your copy of this Mewsletter before I arrive, perhaps you could dig me out the details, please nicely?

Mike, What you say about the Kitten standing up so well in comparison to a design that is decades more modern is, I am sure, not news to many of our readers, we know that a Kitten is a difficult act to follow, a Rebel or Fox too come to that, but it is reassuring that someone who is moving on to more modern machinery and has recent experience of both sides of the fence shares such an opinion. Thanks again for taking the time to keep us informed, I am quite sure I am not the only one who appreciates your efforts.

That said I know a number of long term Kitten owner / drivers who might take issue with the claim that they need constant attention – anyone care to comment? Ed.

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Dear Brian,

Late August 2006

I have finally managed to get around to reading the May-June issue of the Mewsletter. *Now of course this came as a shattering revelation, imagine any of the recipients of this fabulous publication failing to put their lives on hold till every word is read, digested, considered and stored away for future reference before continuing with any other actions – I am devastated! – however he went on :-* The Parrot and Jesus joke makes me smile, each time that I see it again, so I either have a warped mind, or the joke is funny. You asked for information about off-road Rebels, see attached list of three off the road but sound examples. All three owners are all using other cars at present, so the Rebels are safely stored away.

One article in the Mewsletter (edition number 70) had me worried and I feel that the owner of that car needs to pay more attention to safety before an accident occurs. Please would you either publish the following letter, forward it to Terry Holder, or do both :-

Both duly done, Ed. See “Getting Technical” on page 18 for the rest of Adrian Hanwell’s letter. Thanks Adrian. Sorry that there was not time for me to see you during my recent trip south.

VDS 998R I’m a Reliant Kitten car and I’ve lived in a little spot north of Glasgow for most of my life, first in a seaside place called Helensborough on the north shore of the River Clyde, then my mistress sold me to a friend of that chap called Brian, an engineer called Mike, he and his wife Barbara live on what was a secluded farm in the country near a place called Killearn, Balfron Station it is known as locally, but that seems strange to me as there’s no station there!

In January 2006 I was taken down to Yorkshire, once again that Brian chap found me a new home, and I now live near Ilkley where you are meant to wear a hat they tell me, well on the moor at any rate. I will let my new owner tell you my on going story. :-

I’ve played about with three wheeled cars since 1949 running a Bond MK A 122cc Minicar graduating to MK B’s C’s D’s E’s etc. eventually building three Minicar three wheelers to my own design with Villiers 197cc engines. - Many years along the way now a retired hydraulics engineer, I’ve started to ‘play’ again!

I’ve run Fiat 500, 126, 126 etc., but decided they are all too modern and electronic and soulless, so what to buy? Minor? A30? etc., but too many of these around to be different – Reliant? Yes, but Del Boy – sorry – what about a Kitten then? Ah yes, but where do I find a reasonable Kit?

A phone call to that bloke in Scotland – Marshall I remember him called, and join his club and see what he could come up with.

Gave him a ring, seemed a nice guy even though he was a Scot, and after a couple of calls he put me onto a friend of his in a spot over the border called Killearn. He said the car was quite a good 'wee car' and would be for sale.

A phone call to Killearn and we agreed a price for the 'wee car' and I agreed to come up the following week with a trailer.

Trailer and 4*4 arrived together with a friend of mine, we took the risk of venturing over the border to collect the "Wee car".

We arrived with the trailer and the weather turned on us – just chucked it down, and to make matters worse the 'Wee car' had a great heavy tow bar attached that prevented it getting on the trailer!

Eventually we just managed to lift the car OVER the trailer towhook and get the trailer ramp up to make a nice compact load.

After a couple of hundred miles away down the M6 we arrived back at my home in Addingham near Ilkley, dropped off Kitty and went to bed!

A jolly good inspection next day and what to do with it?

Well a 1970's car isn't going to be in as new condition, but that was what I had in mind for it – so a decision had to be made.

Rip out the entire interior all but for the headlining – carpets, everything. Out with all the glass, rubber seals, door handles, locks etc., bale out the water etc.

Outside – all fittings are removed, lamps, mouldings, bumper strips and take all the paint down to bare fibreglass – in other words a shell!

True to Mr. Marshall's word the car was a good one as all the mechanicals were spot on, which left bodywork and interior details only to sort.

Now I like to do things differently, and decided to do away with the bumper steel strip inserts completely with their green mould, and reform the bumper ends into the body profile, this giving a very modern appearance to the bumper form, a feature common to modern cars – in fact just a 'form' of bumper (completely useless of course as a bumper).

O.K., yes I'm different – didn't want a Reliant Kitten 'Saloon' or a 'Van' or an 'Estate', just something else! What the hell does this guy want? – Well a van come car would be different – so in the skip with rear quarter windows and rubber seals (less to buy), and fabricate new panels in aluminium to replace the glass, panels with a little centre section of the panel raised about 3/8" to give the impression of a production panel ex works, not a mod, and what have we got? A "KITTIVAN" – said I like to be different!

Well Kittivan is now 8 months on in grey primer ready for her new colour of metallic grey or silver whatever you wish to call it, and her seats have been recovered in black vinide to go

with the new black carpets. The rear seat went in the skip as the rear, behind the front seats is being decked out in polished wood sides and floor, befitting a Kittivan. Eventually, during the next few weeks, she'll be on the road, taking the place of my Fiat.

I have enclosed a few photos of the car which I don't know if our editor – Mr. Marshall may be able to use.

And finally (this time) I must thank Brian for putting me in touch with Mike at Blane Precision Engineering from whom I bought VDS 998R.

Ron Stowell - Addingham, Yorkshire

Dear Brian,

27 September 2006

I take a long time to write letters, but at last I have found time to write to you to say thank you for your help with the rotten suspension rubbers on my Tempest. After my telephone call to you in August, I immediately contacted Keith Gittus, as you had advised. He was very helpful, and told me that I needed to get some Triumph Herald differential mounting rubber bushes. Finding where to get Triumph bits in this area took some research, and a few wild goose chases, but eventually a very helpful garage was located, and the rubber bushes ordered. To get quick delivery I paid to have them posted directly to me.

Pretty straightforward really. After a week when nothing turned up, I rang the garage. They reacted very well, and immediately contacted the suppliers in Bristol, and arranged for another set of bushes to be supplied. These arrived the next morning, which was very satisfying.

Fitting the bushes was not completely simple because they had to be cut to size. I did this using a junior hacksaw and a bit of selective assembly. (Is there a better way of cutting thick black rubber?) Preliminary tests seem to show that they are working well, and they appear to have reduced an annoying vibration that used to develop at about 50mph. Further experience is necessary for a definitive opinion, but at the moment I am distracted by the need to get the brakes balanced well enough to pass the MOT.

The strange white rubber of the original bushes seemed to be lousy stuff, since they had just disintegrated. The Triumph ones look like durable black rubber, and I hope for better endurance. If you ever find some of the correct shape and material, please announce it in the magazine. Without advice from you and Keith I would have had a long and frustrating job to find suitable parts, so thank you very much to you both.

Yours sincerely, Les Richmond Looe in Cornwall.

Les, Keith, Duncan, we need to get this sorted, I was sad not to have been able to simply supply the bushes from stock when Les first rang, we were in the process of negotiations which took a while, we do have some here now, but I did not realise that the Triumph alternative needed any cutting – should they Keith? We do now carry the high quality Poly alternative bushes that Duncan, and others have used. I even supplied a set to a garage to fit to a Fox Tandy at about the same time, and I am sure that if they had needed to cut them I would have heard all about it! Thank you Duncan for loaning your then stock set, now duly replaced. But really such things should be a matter of a phone call, not the palaver that Les had to go through.

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Getting Technical

Dear Brian,

August 2006

I refer to Terry Holder's article that was published on page five of the May-June 2006 Mewsletter. I felt that I just had to write, regarding some of the points mentioned, but I will cut it down to just three:-

- 1). Whilst WD40 might be used as an emergency get-you-home solution for a brake master cylinder seizure, it is ESSENTIAL that the offending cylinder is stripped down, cleaned and inspected before the vehicle is taken out again. Removal of the corrosion from the cylinder bore and inspection of the bore and seals is an ABSOLUTE MINIMUM requirement after a brake seizure. The inspection will show what else is needed.
- 2). Measuring the output VOLTAGE to determine if a resistor has been added to the coil circuit will NOT work, unless the current is flowing. Without current flowing, there will be twelve (or so) volts at the coil terminal, whichever position the ignition is switched to (other than off). Terry should either have measured the resistance in the loop, or refitted a coil, ensured that the points were closed, pulled the spade connector from the solenoid, then tried the ignition switch in the two positions, with the current flowing through the coil. He would need to keep the test time to a minimum, to prevent the coil from overheating. Rebels do not have a ballast resistor as standard.
- 3). The steel bush in the lower front wishbone probably seized into the plastic bushes before the bolt worked loose. This should certainly have been freed off, cleaned and greased as a bare minimum. I use NLG1 boat grease (from a ships chandlery) for this component. NLG1 is a totally waterproof grease and is ideal for this location. The sleeve is very thin walled and tightening the clamp bolts "very tight" has probably forced the ends through the worn oversized holes in the wishbone. The tube is a spacer, put there to prevent excessive clamping on the faces of the two top-hat shaped plastic bushes. Tightening onto a worn bolt hole could overclamp the moving joint and put undue strain on the screw thread in the vertical link. The screwed part could then develop fatigue cracks and snap off with disastrous consequences. I have seen snapped ones in Triumphs (caused by lower trunnion seizure) in the past. When the lower vertical link snaps, it allows the bottom of the wheel to move outwards and this can snap the brake hose, causing loss of steering AND SIMULTANEOUS LOSS OF THE FOOTBRAKE. The safer option would have been to have left the wishbone bolt loose and klunking! When the wishbone has been repaired I would recommend that Terry purchases a set of three aerosol tins of dye-penetrant test fluid and carefully crack-checks the base and base threads of his trunnion. If cracking has started, it could continue after the wishbone has been repaired and a failure of the vertical link could still result. Ardrex is a trade name for a good quality dye-penetrant test manufacturer.

Regards, Adrian.

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Dear Brian,

September 2006

Duncan Sanders, of the Daimler and Lanchester Owner's Club was given a tip by Christian Demmler (of the same club) that Duncan has tried with excellent results.

The tip is that cellulose paint can be stripped from a fibreglass body, using a steam

cleaner. Duncan says that he used a borrowed industrial steam cleaner, which blasts steam out at pressure, to strip the paint from his Daimler SP250 (Dart), but I wonder if a household steam wallpaper stripper would work, if you made a smaller steam box for the business end?

Best Wishes, Adrian.

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Parts supply

Firstly a big Thank You to those who recently donated old unit ball joints, wishbones, lower steering columns, and in particular steering racks, in particular Bob Nash who while he was not on my route in September, took the time and trouble to post his contribution up to me, also Bill Woodhouse who did the same, not only with a pair of ball joints, but also with a pair of brand new front struts which I had supplied in error, a genuine no ones fault mistake, Bill's car had been re-chassied using a Fox chassis, so the Kitten struts I had supplied would not fit! It is all greatly appreciated. And Bob it was good to hear from you again. My one sorrow is that while I did finally get to meet Al Osborn for the first time during my recent trip south, while I was in Norfolk, I just could not fit Bob or Duncan into my plans – a case of so near and yet so far!

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More snippets from the net :-

There have been quite a lot of e-mails and web chat room communications flying about during August relating to one man's frustration with steering rack gaiters. I have never had a problem here as the local chap, a fellow Scot name of Coulthard as it happens, his first name is Jack, and he tells me he is not related to the fast one. But that link in my mind helps me to remember his name! Anyway, Jack fits the boots / gaiters / bellows, call them what you will, when he is lubricating the reconditioned racks for us prior to dispatch, and any time anyone has wanted a pair of gaiters to fit themselves, I just get a pair from him. The problem arises when independent folk who do not like to bother me with such things try to buy them themselves from a local supplier. Duncan asked me what other vehicle they fitted – I must remember at the end of all this to update the alternative parts lists for the Kitten, and I assume Duncan that you have done so with the Fox one? But, Jack was always less than forthcoming about what else they fit, he said one of them was from a Ford, I think he mentioned a Cortina, but not which Mk, so that's no help, he has a shed with thousands of these things, I guess he buys job lots in bulk. However, the final word, the very day I had got three pairs from Jack, this arrived in my in-box – well done Duncan.

Panic over as regards the gaiters!! I Finally tried the ones I should have tried: Quinton Hazell 'Universal' QG1000. They fit a dream - Nearside needs one step cutting off the wide end, O/S needs 2 steps cutting off, then they are an easy slack fit over the rack, but not so slack that the cable ties don't cinch them in to be a leak-proof seal. After all my fuss. Also replaced one t/r end gaiter & one lower b/j gaiter with those from S Wales Prop Shafts. They seem fine without any ties so far.

So no need to get on to your steering man. Incidentally the QG1000 could be the ones he uses anyway, as they too have 14 ribs...

All the best, Dunc.

Just thought that I would let you know that the kitten is now MOT'd and on the road, many thanks to everyone on here who offered their advice and knowledge.

Also, the top rear door hinge on the back is shot, are new ones available? or can I get a kit to recondition it?

Nick Keyser

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Still on (and off) the net, wipers have been a topic of conversation, both parking switches and wheel boxes, and the nut which holds the things on through the body. Some feedback would be great because my memory is not clear on these matters, but both Andrew Norman on the telephone, and Martin on the net. Anyway, Andrew's problem was that the whole thing turned because the crimping if that is how it was done, between the wheelbox casing and the threaded shaft that protrudes through the body with the splines to drive the wiper arm, and his question was which bit was most easily available, i.e. should he destroy the nut on the outside, or try and hold the shaft still, and so risk damaging it or the wheelbox casing? We do not have any new ones here, so I was not able to offer any helpful advice other than to suggest he check with some of the dealers, or Reliant themselves, to see what new parts, or serviceable second hand ones might be readily available – once again I realise I should have had a look at the alternative parts list, and if no information could be found there, make sure it gets updated with Andrew's findings.

I should explain that Andrew's Kitten does not have a radio, but someone in the past cut the hole in the dash, so access is pretty easy to that wheelbox without having to remove the dashboard.

Moving on then to the parking switch, here is the question – oh, by the way, Andrew can't remember the last time he had a Reliant with a working wiper parking switch! Come to think of it I seem to remember a long time ago having learnt to time switching them off to an art.

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Hi All

I have to replace the windscreen wiper motor on the Kitten, but my spare does not have the plastic block connector on the side. I can swap it across, but what I need to know is if it is just a push fit into the two holes or is there another connector that goes into the back of the block connector from inside the motor itself?

Thanks, Martin

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Sales and Wants

For Sale :- Chris near Birmingham is breaking a Kitten estate for spares, very good engine All mechanical parts, glass, doors etc. almost new exhaust, axle etc £50 the lot, could deliver if required SOLD to Keith - Gittus?

For Sale ;- My 1971 Rebel Saloon, "Purple Ronnie" MOT and taxed till June 2007 (It is road tax exempt). 850cc engine, rebuilt gearbox, S.S. exhaust Jobs done include chassis, brakes and hoses, engine, clutch, seats, loads spent, receipts available, lovely little car, cosmetics to finish. £450 o.v.n.o. Eddy

For Sale :- Kitten Estate rear trim in good condition for sale. The trim is black with the silver chrome type piping along the centre. Ideal if you are converting a van or renovating your Kitten. Email Martin for photos. £18 London area

For Sale :- Kitten chassis and body, separate but both in reasonable condition. Offers to Bob Culver Herts area

For Sale :- Rebel Estate car, partial rebuild nearly complete, full respray , new exhaust and lots of spares contact Roy Smith in Yorkshire.

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

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 :- 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. Also an engine, doors and a windscreen. Offers to Mike Hine. Can deliver between Cornwall and London area.

For Sale :- Alan still has a couple 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, GONE 11/11

Wanted :- a pair of Kitten front seats and seat belts. Jason Briggs Doncaster.

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Epilogue

Funny how things go in cycles, even if they are irregular cycles. Years ago, and for a long time, I used to have half of the next edition of the Mewsletter typed up before the current edition was back from the printers, but for the past year that has not been the case, till now!

I was really shocked at how late the May / June edition was getting out to you, the last one too, as I will have mentioned in recent times, the lack of articles was a matter of concern. A matter of concern which thankfully a number of you responded to, and when Mike Baracroft's letter arrived in the middle of August, hot on the heels of the ones from Martyn Denchfield and John Parker, just a week after I had taken edition 71 to the printers, I decided that I really

needed to type it up right away so that it would not get buried in the pile of papers that still manage to overwhelm my desk – I must develop a better relationship with my desk, if only I could see it! The rule of 10 mentioned in the past has been conspicuous by its lack of application of late, too many distractions – often very welcome distractions I have to say, if I end up with a Brian's diary story in this edition, you will have read of my Jowett Javelin / Aston Martin evening in August, which was fabulous fun, and gave me the opportunity to see Mike and Barbara Cowie again too, which was wonderful, all great stuff, but does not get the work done – I know, all work and no play... Just to bring us all up to date, there is no such article in this edition, my sincere thanks to those who made its absence possible.

I managed to type up Ron Stowell's letter the day it arrived, see, I am trying to keep on top of the incoming mail, and I resisted the temptation to interrupt him at the time, but his mention of the Villiers 197cc engine did remind me of the "Blue Banger" an affectionately named 7¼" gauge 0-6-0 passenger pulling model of a diesel shunter which was built by the Rolls Royce Model Engineering Club in the early 1960's. My father was at that time, and up till his untimely death in 1975, Secretary of that organisation, and they built the model as a quick fix solution to towing lots of kids of all ages round the club's ¼ mile track at weekends. Model steam locomotives being both more time consuming to construct, and more time consuming to get in steam! (Though they were one hell of a lot more fun to drive! External combustion does it for me every time – but it is a lot more work, and skill, don't let me get started on keeping a good fire going and at the same time keeping the water level in the boiler up – those days remain some of the happiest memories I have, though at the time I failed to realise that the skills and enthusiasm for making such models were dying out fast, though I still visit narrow gauge railways, most of the models these days seem to be of narrow gauge locomotives, I have driven a 7 ¼" Stirling single, and a 5" gauge Britannia as well as a 5" austerity 2-8-0, it had an axle driven pump, so you had to remember to open the by-pass valve or you filled the boiler to the top in a couple of laps of the track, hydraulics and steam are not a good mix!) So it came to pass that a Villiers 197cc engine had a spacer fitted to reduce compression so that it could be hand started. The point was that later engines of that type had a dynastart, and I just wondered Ron, if any of yours were so equipped?

Moving on then, any future delays this year will be down to me, John had the covers for both this edition, and the Christmas one, ready for me to collect during my mid September trip south, good to see you again John, and thanks as ever. I did take the time to accept Sheila & Dick Sherwin's invitation to see the 'JET' set in the flesh, well fibreglass if you must be pedantic, but frustratingly the M25 traffic kept that visit to Plummers Plain near Horsham, to under an hour, a case of better than nothing, and it was great to meet you both. One day I will not be in a mad rush, though the one thing I did learn from that trip is that I need to allow more time in my future plans to cope with the traffic!

To everyone else I met, on that trip, it was good to see you again, and to those I could not manage to fit in, perhaps another time.

Till then take care, may your Reliant serve you well, we will talk again soon, oh, apologies for any mistakes, proof reader very busy (baking again!) – had to check it myself this time!

Oh, and you will remember, in spite of the weather, indeed because of it, to exercise that grease gun, before Christmas, won't you?

Brian

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Bill Dick 22/8/1932 - 14/9/2006

As you will gather from the heading, Bill is no longer with us. Moira and I had enjoyed a few hours in his company on her birthday at the end of August. Sadly he had a heart attack at home two days later, and I last saw him in hospital in Glasgow early in September. He was surrounded by car magazines and frustrated by a T.V. control that did not work. We spoke of his plans for the future.

I know that Bill was well known in the motoring fraternity, a great fan of fibreglass bodied cars. Flying had been his life, he was with British Airways for most of his working life, flying Concorde towards the end of his long career as a pilot. Bill had a large fleet of vehicles of all sorts and sizes, though he sold his Austin 7 last year, and the factory prototype Jensen 541, he still had about 20 cars in his collection earlier this year, and a similar number of motorbikes, though he had come to realise that he would not be able to get them all going, and was in negotiations to sell some of them.

Bill had the biggest collection of new and used Rebel spares on the planet, having brought a plane load back from Bermuda a couple of decades or so ago. I know that a few of our guys were involved in cataloguing them some time back, though no location was recorded, a list does still exist, but Bill had sold a house since then, and many of the parts had to be moved. He had also in the meantime secured the Michael Eryl collection of Rebel spares, and a couple of the cars. The fate of these parts and vehicles is at the time of writing unknown.

Bill was one of a very few of our readers who was a named driver on my classic car insurance policy, after his own Scottish resident Kittens needed more looking after than he had time to give them. He used to borrow my Kitten or Rebel when he was in Scotland, before he moved from Watford to live here. Regular readers may recall the story of the time Brenda got a fright when sitting in the passenger seat of the wee red car some years ago in Crieff at a set of lights, the door was whipped open and Simon Chisholm asked what she and Bill were doing in my Kitten!

A great man who will be sadly missed.

Our condolences go to Brenda and the family at this sad time.

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