

Reliant Kitten *Register*

NEWSLETTER 75

March - April 2007



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.....

Edited and distributed by Brian W Marshall,
16 Glendee Gardens, Renfrew, PA4 0AL

☎ 0141 886 6117 Fax 0141 561 5430

The Reliant Kitten Register

Rebel parts stock held by: - Adrian Hanwell

New Kitten / Fox / Rebel parts stock held by Brian Marshall

Rebel alternative parts list contact: John Blagburn

Kitten alternative parts list contact: Situation vacant

Fox alternative parts list contact: Duncan Bradford

Our Mutual Aid Spares scheme is run for us by Phil Hallam

Tempest Registrar: Martin Seymour

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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Following our recent trend, we have this time one of our more recent subscribers, Brian Revill from just off he M1. Brian is one of a number of people called Brian who are currently engaged in doing body off restorations on Kittens. I was privileged enough to meet Brian back on January, where I was able to photograph a novel bracket arrangement that he uses to lift the body off the chassis. Thanks to John Pearce, we may see the bracket in question in the middle of this edition. Brian also has the rather smart Fox Pick-up that you see on our front cover.

The Registrar speaks

75 not out, pretty poor for a cricket score, then again, perhaps not for an individual batsman if he were part of a similarly skillful team! Enough digression. My thanks as ever to those who continue to make it all worthwhile. As almost ever (there were a few glitches last year) I am writing this before edition 74 even went to print. I did ring the printer this morning – 21/12/06, yes, the shortest day of the year, only to be told they were closing at lunchtime tomorrow, till January the 3rd! and only doing stocktaking that day. So no pressure, well not for a couple of weeks – must talk to John about covers – I have this picture here....

Then in today's post came Terry Horler's article, (along with half a dozen other renewals, but none of them 'complicated') so I just thought, before I lose it – I may as well make a start. I see Terry, that you end with a question which has been almost dealt with before, but interestingly John Blagburn has just 'done it' to a Rebel, will I be able to arrange the response in this edition or the next – wee will see!

The interesting point, though perhaps not from Terry's point of view, is that John has 'done it' to a 750 Rebel with its original engine, and so with the early manifold and throttle operating arrangement which may have been 'lost'; on Terry's car as I think it has been 'upgraded' to an 850 engine – so lots of fine detail will need to be considered when the time does come!

On the membership front, renewals in particular, at the time of writing, now January, more than half of our readers have renewed, half a dozen have been good enough to let me know that they will not be staying with us, and so the future is secure for another year (relax you five year people, I have not forgotten that commitment). The level of spares donations has exceeded past years' generous amounts, and we now enjoy our largest ever stock of reconditioned steering racks, and I hope to build up a stock of lower ball joints over the coming months. In that regard, any old units that you have lying about would be appreciated.

The wise old adage of 'accentuate the positive' is never far from my mind, however, for this edition at any rate I have elected to publish a couple more of the letters from folk who are leaving us, the tone of them, even though they are written by folk who, for a variety of perfectly valid reasons, no longer possess an 'eligible vehicle' is the very heart of why doing this gives me so much pleasure.

On the other hand of course, there are people like Daren Butler from Notts, who tells me that after 4 years of ownership, FET 253V is back on the road, not only that, but since August 2006 he has had the car at 3 car shows. This, if I remember correctly, was a car that when he became its custodian back in 2002, he said it only needed a few hours work to get it back on the road. Well done Darren, better late than never. Better yet he tells me it is running well. Great news Darren – a picture of you with the car would enable us to continue the trend of showing owners with their vehicles on our covers this year – any chance?

It is now mid January, and the hoped for articles from John Blagburn and Terry Horler have arrived, thank you chaps, so let's kick off with some Rebellious stories :-

Hang on a minute, I did all that and by the end of February John Pearce kindly offered to do us some pictures, and so an extra A4 sheet was called for this time, not promising that it will always be bigger, but it has been a couple of years since we did that, this is our 75th edition, and the current Mail regime makes many more things possible, and Frank Haynes, you remember Frank, our an in Chile, well his latest letter just arrived, and so it goes on....

Brian.

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REBEL Round Up

REBELLIOUS CONDUCT 6

For those of you enduring my endless ramblings of the life and times of LRF 671K, episode 6 will be a welcome revelation. It's short! (Relatively speaking that is)

This, I would like to think, is due to some successful spannering during the summer months. The list of "jobs to be done" has drastically been reduced leaving me with little new to report. As episode 5 fell off the end of the page and left a nasty mark on the carpet, I had just changed the AAC needle in the SU carb for an AAT needle. Gone is the hesitant running, the Rebel now pulling far more cleanly, especially from cold. Fuel consumption is little, if at all

changed, still averaging well over 40mpg on the daily drag to and from work. In truth, the old AAC needle was probably well worn compared to the replacement AAT needle. Somehow, I am rather dubious of the advantage of having the later spring loaded SU needle HS2 carb. The needle is biased and constantly rubs against the jet, hence, inducing wear. The earlier HS2 had a fixed needle and if centered within the jet correctly, suffers very little wear. It was my intention to fit an early pattern HS2 for this reason, but since the simple expediency of fitting the AAT needle has brought about such a marked improvement, this idea is has slipped down the list. Hold on – just to save you writing in, yes I know that the jet “should” be replaced as well as the needle, but I only had the needle at the time and this did the business, and is a much quicker job too!

The Rebel is currently basking in its moment of glory; it has just won a thumping big trophy. Against the likes of Aston Martin, Rolls Royce, a myriad of MGs, Jaguars, Riley and anything else over 30 years old, the Rebel has beaten the lot. Not for its performance, not for its rarity, not for its condition either, but most certainly for its usage. As a member of the Classic and Historic Motor Club, there is an annual trophy for the member covering the highest annual mileage in their “Club eligible car”. This being a car over 30 years old. At 5500 miles covered, my Rebel has justly received recognition for this magnificent accomplishment. This is even more tongue in cheek when I have to confess that the Rebel has never been anywhere near a Classic and Historic Motor Club event. More often, I complete as navigator in Tony’s Anglia on these occasions whilst fellow members have yet to see the cause of the Trophy being lifted from their grasp – it will probably stay that way too!

As it is now the back end of our competitive season, Tony invited me along to watch the Allen Trophy, a local Trails event which draws around 70 competitors. For a change, I picked up Tony in the Rebel (the Anglia needed a rest) and proceeded to a very steep and rock strewn hill that was also running with water from the recent heavy rains. We walked up the hill after hiding the Rebel in a nearby bush. I just couldn’t imagine how any road vehicle could climb such rough terrain in such slippery conditions – I was soon to find out. We spectated on a 90 degree left hander just below the steepest part of the climb. The crash bang wallop and high revs marked the approach of the first vehicle, a VW Beetle. Guess what? It cleared the hill. Not all were so fortunate. Not making it but doing well were 3 Lieges and an SS1 Scimitar, something for me to cheer on as a Reliantophile. But as a Mk1 Escort owner also, there were 6 of these to cheer on as well. I could also have cheered on the solitary Midget-Arkley as I have a couple of Sprites, but as it failed right in front of us as a rear tyre deflated, I decided it best to keep quiet. VW Beetle enthusiasts had much to cheer about, lots taking part and most doing very well. Impressive stuff from these Trails drivers, they get their vehicles places that I just wouldn’t believe. Less impressive was the Rebel’s performance in extricating itself from its parking place, it has about as much grip as a broken clothes peg. Trails - don’t think the Rebel will be competing despite having the same 850cc engine as the 3 Lieges. Neither will my Sprites or Escort be subjected to such destructive treatment, but I would certainly spectate again.

A thank you here to Bob Neal of Essex, an ex-Rebel estate owner who very kindly supplied me with a substantial amount of Rebel information. I really feel as though I am getting to know these rare little vehicles now but I am still puzzled about my own. It was originally registered as a Van in July 1972 and displays many of the features one would associate with a 700cc engine. Yet, it has an all synchro gearbox and hydraulic clutch more usually associated with the later 750cc Rebel. No one has come up with an answer to this one. Were vans fitted with the later transmission prior to introduction of the 750cc engine? Were there indeed any 700cc Vans? Certainly, mine has the van only feature of an alternator and no head lining, but I am getting myself a bit confused here. Perhaps the register could publish some chronological list of events of Rebel production; I would like to know how LRF fits into Rebel history.

And on the subject of hydraulic clutches, mine has just started to protest. A recent journey home from work could only be accomplished by stopping the engine to engage first gear. An empty clutch master cylinder reservoir was a bit of a clue that something might need to be added to the "jobs to be done" list. So far, I have been unable to locate the necessary repair kit to fix a leaking slave cylinder so I drive on with fingers crossed as we head into the worst time of the year for open air spanner antics. Those with Rebels with hydraulic clutches may know, to bleed the system, the oil filter and starter motor have to be removed to gain access, no quick job should the reservoir empty. More on this next time.

Through the pages of Mewsletter, I gather that there is a demon modification that can be performed to the inlet manifold of the 850cc engine. Sorry, but I am too new to this to be sure of what needs to be done and why. Could I ask for a beginners introduction to be printed/reprinted please?

There, I said it would be refreshingly brief this time.

Terry Horler - Bristol

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What to do when you want more grunt out of your Rebel 750, but don't wish to throw away that lovely, free-revving engine and fit the relatively lumpy, long-stroke, 850!

Apologies to all of those already offended by the suggestion that the 750 is the better engine, but I have owned one and driven several other Rebels with 850cc engines. The 850 is a good engine, I'm not criticising it per se, but, had not the Zenith 30IZ on my current Rebel been beyond salvation without re-bushing its spindles and a full overhaul, then I would never have known just how much more pleasant a device the 750 can be by comparison!

GJR has done over 98,000 miles now, on the original engine. Yes, it has been looked after, but it is a typical high-mileage Reliant engine, in that it rattles like a very rattly thing indeed, it has a couple of minor oil leaks, though not the sort that cause the level of the cheap 20W50 in its sump to drop alarmingly, and it may need a better distributor at some point, as the one fitted has a non-functioning vacuum capsule.

On the merit side, there are no really scary noises from deep within, the oil pressure is excellent (good enough to keep the light out when it's running, and showing 20+ psi at hot idle, rising to a steady 45-55 psi when revved to about 4000rpm. It doesn't smoke, and I think I'd know if it was sneaking off to the corner shop for a pack of twenty!

So, under these circumstances, what should I do about the worn carb? So worn that it just wouldn't allow the engine to idle at anything less than around 1500 rpm! An eBay seller appeared, selling "new" 30IZs, but he was wanting £135 each and couldn't answer my questions about whether these were intended for the 750 or the 700, so after giving him all the jet sizes that should have appeared in there, yet receiving no relevant information, I decided to go down the tried and tested Weber 32 ICH route.

Good old eBay to the rescue again, this time a 32 ICH surfaced, the name "Reliant" not mentioned in the description (keeps the price down, you see), described as brand new and starting at a sensible sum of money.

At the close of the auction, I made sure that all the RAM was available to me, that no unnecessary processes were running, and that my de-restricted, 1733MHz P3 (Honestly, I kid you not, I did say 'P3' there) was cool and ready to play the sniping game!

Long story short, two days later I had a new Weber 32 ICH, in the box and with all the bits you'd need to fit it to a 957cc Ford Fiesta, was sitting on my living room floor where it would remain until a plan of action was drawn up.

The plan of action:

So, there was this carburettor, sitting on the bench by this time, and I had ascertained that it would be best to connect it using the original rod operation for the throttle, fit the long choke cable that came with the carb as it would have to enter its fitting from in front, then time to ask Dad for his ideas as his engineering expertise and experience kept Shackleton bombers in the air, so they would surely do for my little car!

Between us, Dad and I worked out how to bend the linkages so that, by swapping the throttle lever over from the original Zenith, the carb would work with no cables needing to be added nor any other kind of bodes, this would look like a factory option!

I enlarged the opening in the inlet manifold, well; it would have been rude to starve my engine of the feast that could be provided for it by my new toy! Then, more happy chance; the original air filter pan fits perfectly on top of the Weber, using the original rubber sleeve and a large worm-drive hose clip around the neck of the pan, belt and braces though, it won't be going anywhere, believe me, especially as those clever Spanish (they who built my Weber) had already fitted three little lugs around the throttle body onto which the filter pan could locate. The bonnet still closes, since the overall height of the new set-up is only fractionally higher than the old, and now, without altering any of the factory settings on the 32 ICH, apart from the fast idle speed, as 3000 rpm on choke is a little unnecessary, the thing runs perfectly.

Biggest difference is the way in which the engine will happily idle for ages at well below the recommended speed, pulls like several very tiny, angry horses and returns around 3% more miles to each gallon of bog-standard, unleaded fuel. Result!

I have enclosed pics to show how the carb looks sitting in there, the blue wire is from a 7 Volt supply for the idle solenoid, which cuts the fuel as soon as the ignition is turned off, so no running on, flooding when hot or problems starting. The 7 Volt supply is simply taken from the ignition switch and has an inline 5 Volt Zener diode to drop the unwanted extra from the 12 Volt coil, a Lucas Sport DLB105 giving a steady 40KV, so noticeably better than a stock one, but the ignition system mods are the stuff of another story, I'm going to attach the pics then it's teatime for me!

'Bye for now, John (Blagburn)

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Foxes Den

The Foxy brigade have been quite recently, and if that does not change between now and publication date should I mention that I had not realised that our man in Devon, the one with the Tandy camper that now enjoys disc front brakes, is in fact powered by a 1275cc BMC engine, so perhaps another article??? now that you are getting the hang of this typing lark? Please nicely. Ed.

I know that nnn had difficulty in finding a new exhaust for his Tandy camper recently, we should probably cover that in the spares section, but is there a problem with exhausts? – I had thought you all had stainless ones by now, but it would seem not.

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Matters Tempestuous

The tempest business is now under new ownership, John Melody is the man, he can be found at :-

Tempest Cars
Unit 6, Thorncroft
Bradshaw Lane
Pilling Tel. :- 01253 790720
PRESTON
Lancs. PR3 6SN

John tells me he is considering having a batch of new chassis made. These would be Fox spec, but of course they will fit a Kitten. So, if you are interested, now might be a good time to talk to him. Please don't all rush in there, he has a business to run, and so does not have a lot of time to spend chatting on the phone to all of us.

The price of the new chassis is not finally defined, for one thing it will depend on how many are to be made. What I can tell you is that they will be more than £1,000 and less than £2,000, yes they will be galvanized, and no, that will not include things like wishbones, just the chassis. So, if you are still interested, do talk to him, and the sooner the better.

Martin Seymour is the man to talk to about Tempests, you can e-mail him or give him a ring

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Readers Letters

Hello Brian,

17th December 2006

Please find enclosed a cheque for twenty pounds, this being Hazel's subs for the coming year and a small donation to the spares fund or whatever you see fit to do with it, thanks for all your efforts throughout the year, I know you have a bit of help along the way.

We plod on down here, the "Wee red fire engine" is not running too badly, despite spending a period earlier in the year in the doghouse (cathouse?) for bad behavior.

She blotted her copybook – the car, not Hazel, in August. I had decided to go into orbit round Manchester in the Kitten. I had a lot of calls to make, and some bits of business to take care of on my own, so I thought, why not use Hazel's little dig a ling?

Of course I picked one of the hottest days of the summer, and by dinner time she was getting a bit hot and bothered as traffic was bad and we were in the middle of town, so I had to

keep stopping and letting her cool off (the Kitten, not Hazel), we carried on after a top up and about 15 minutes of rest period, so it wasn't terminal at all.

I traced the cause to the top of the radiator matrix tubes becoming blocked by what looked like small lead pellets, similar to the sort you get in shotgun cartridges!. When I finally arrived back home Hazel commented that the car hadn't done too badly being as it was the first longish run she has had in three years. She's used mostly for nipping into Hyde, taking rubbish to the tip, taking the dogs to the vets, those sort of trips because of her size and ease of parking, she's really handy (preaching to the converted there methinks, Ed!) better than a trailer and more fun by a mile.

When I got a minute I removed the radiator (*I can just imagine Dick Goodall's thought processes about now, the words minute and Kitten radiator removal in the same sentence ! if only, eh Dick? Ed. That said once I accepted the fact that you only actually need three of the 4 securing bolts to be used, and get your hands on a suitable long extension which lets you get at those three from outside the front wheel arches, I do remember being able to do it in under quarter of an hour – but I had had them off previously, and so they were well doused in copperslip! Ed.*) and investigated the mystery pellets, they were plastic! Internal bleeding maybe? Being serious for a minute, it turned out to have been the delayed results of an ancient repair (not me boss!) done way backing the mists of time on the heater matrix. They'd used plastic 'pudding' or some such magic compound. This, over a period of time, and due to the recent high temperatures on that particular day, degraded into little balls which caused the blockage.

I cleared it with a mixture of white vinegar and a couple of packets of kettle descaler, I spent a week soaking the radiator in this brew, occasionally straining it through a coffee filter bag and re-boiling the mixture in a cheap five quid kettle bought from a local store, with the odd backflush thrown in the internal came up like new.

If you are tempted to use this patent brew, be warned, treat it with respect, and keep it off your skin. It also makes a passable paint stripper!

I did back flush the block too, quite a lot of rubbish came out of there as well, is it me and mine or are they all the same regarding the rubbish that comes out of the 9/16" drain hole at the rear of the block?

By courtesy of our Australian relatives I fitted an in-line filter into the top hose, they are in common use over there it seems. I also by-passed the afore mentioned suspect heater matrix with a view to removing it in the spring, and getting it professionally sorted. Why didn't I get the radiator re-built? Simple, it's only about 4 years old, and was a new Reliant unit, and the local repairers wanted too much cash to strip it down and clean it, like £85 too much! Just to interrupt again, that is why we recommend fitting a Mini rad, about half the price of a Reliant one, much more readily available, and all you need to do is remove the cowl, and make two simple adaptor plates – the side securing bolts are in different positions from the Kitten ones, so you need a plate for each side to take up the difference, i.e. with 4 holes in each plate, two to match the Reliant body mounting, and 2 to match the trapped nuts in the Mini rad side plates.

Anyway, the job's now a good-un as they say, a new set of tyres went on for the mot., and another one survives to fight another day.

A funny thing happened to me the same day as the overheating adventure, down Trafford road in Salford. There I was following this fire engine, I assume they had been out checking fire extinguishers or fire doors. Whatever firemen do when they are not fighting fires.

One of the firemen got out as we were stuck in traffic and walked to the Kitten, stuck his head through the open window, and said "Ere our kid, is this a fire engine? ", well being a long time Reliant owner I gave him the standard reply "Are you taking the Mick pal?" "Oh no" says he "No offence mate, but the driver's just said 'hey look what's behind us' 'go and ask him if he comes from Runcorn'

It transpires that there used to be a chemical factory over that way, and they had a couple of red Kitten estates like ours, to use as on site fast response emergence vehicles for chemical spills etc., they carried fire e4xtinguishers and first aid kits round the site. They were chosen the fireman told me, purely because of their maneuverability and nippiness in a confined area.

The firm eventually got rid of them, and the driver of the fire engine had recognized the Reliant and being as it's bright red, he wanted to know if it was from the site.

I still don't know 100% if these guys were actually serious or taking the Mick, but if they weren't serious they were wasting their time as firemen, and should have been on the stage.

You lead an interesting life in a Reliant, don't you folks? I had heard about the Kitten ambulance, now a fire engine, anyone know of a Kitten Police van?

All the best Brian to you and yours from both me and Hazel, all of you take care.

Regards bill Starkey (Hazel's pit crew) No 386 -

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Hi Brian,

Dec.'06

Due to older age and now retirement I thought now was the time to acquire a more modern car with, hopefully, the need for much less maintenance.

That done I have now sold my Kitten estate to a gentleman in Penzance who has already owned Kittens, but was not a member of the Kitten Register, therefore I shall not be renewing my subscription this next year, but find enclosed a cheque for £25 to create membership for the gentleman concerned, details enclosed, and any excess to go to the spares fund.

Also Brian, this year I was awarded the free insurance from P.F. Spare and their Cherished Car Underwriters, but as I shall not now be requiring this I enclose the free certificate so that you can re-draw it and award it to another current member.

I am quite sad to see the Reliant Kitten go, but having 2 other cars and also 4 vintage motorcycles to tax, insure and MOT, this is costly enough.

I am sure the Kitten has gone to a good home, as have three other motorcycles and one car I have parted with of late, this all in an effort to 'cut the cloth'; to suit retirement income.

However I have enjoyed my many chats with you and other Register folk by telephone and also at the meeting at Burford.

Keep up the good work Brian.

Regards, Terry Dixon - Melksham No 581

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Dear Brian,

11/12/06

Please find enclosed my Kitten Register renewal form and cheque. Sadly I don't have any progress to report on the Kitten, being a student studying for my PhD at university I don't have the time just now. The car is still sitting in my girlfriend's dad's garage, and apart from going in there just to look at it to cheer myself up occasionally (I'm not sure if I'm confessing to some kind of weird fetish, or if other Kitten owners do the same thing!) I haven't done anything to get it back on the road. I did try to keep the battery charged initially, but it was impossible to do it frequently enough, and the last time I tried it would not hold a charge.

The list of things to do includes dealing with some corrosion on the chassis, sorting juddering brakes, replacing the headlights, possibly replacing the rear shock absorbers etc., etc.

I can't do any real work on it until I have some garage space of my own to put it in, which in turn won't be till I've finished my PhD. Even then it will have to take its place in the queue with my other projects (Not sure 'the girlfriend' will take kindly to being described as an 'other project' Oliver – however accurate that description might be! Ed.) I certainly won't be selling it though, as it's my 'dream Kitten' in every respect except one: I always wanted one in brown with a gold stripe down the side (yes seriously). I have particularly wanted a Kitten saloon since I was a small child and I used to look at pictures of them in the owner's manual and the Haynes manual. The attraction is purely physical – once I bought one I realised how much more practical the estate is!

My parents Kitten estate (CNW 565T) which they bought in 1980 with only about 6,000 miles on the clock. When my dad was working under the bonnet I used to climb up on to one of the front wheels and peer into the engine bay to watch. When my parents eventually sold the car, I remember suggesting to them that they should keep it for me to learn to drive in, to which my mum replied "You wouldn't be seen dead driving a Reliant Kitten!".

I'm also developing a real hankering to buy a Fox too, and with the numbers that seem to turn up on e-bay, it's just a question of space that is holding me back! I particularly enjoyed Duncan Bradford's history of the Fox in issue 73 of the Mewsletter. I can't help thinking that the history of Reliant is littered with really good ideas that just never quite made it for one reason or another.

Terry Horler's Rebel articles have also been very entertaining. As an MG Midget owner I recognized his name as the author of the book "Original Sprit4e and Midget". Perhaps we'll see an "Original Rebel and Kitten" in the future?

Anyway thanks for all the hard work you put into running the Register.

Best wishes, Oliver Lewis - Bakewell in Derbyshire. No. 585

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Two shots of the excellent body lifting brackets designed by Brian Revill. Brian might be prepared to make more sets if required. Contact the Registrar in the first instance.





No it's not a light sabre in John Box's hand in this picture. It is in fact the blueprints for the Fox Chassis!



One of Robert Fairfoull's Rebels on the Isle of Skye on its way to its new owner, Dr. Mark Johnson of Benbecula.

Hi Brian,

10/12/06

I have not been able to do any more to my Kittens because of a new garage roof, an MOT test on my V.P. Princess, and extra insulation in the loft, so the details of my cars are the same as last year.

In Mewsletter 72 there is a letter from Martin Denchfield about a replacement chassis, and you made some comments about the positioning of chassis numbers. My son bought a restored Lotus Europa with a replacement chassis, and I understand from him that on a Lotus the chassis is classed as a subframe for mounting the engine and suspension, and the body carries the number.

Perhaps you or the Reliant Owners Club could check if this is so, and if it applies to the Reliants as well?

Andy Yule - Bucksburn (Aberdeen) No. 718

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Brian,

29th December 2006

Please find enclosed subscription and a small donation to the spares fund. Once again I enjoyed reading about the work that other members have carried out on their cars, and the purchases of Rebels, Kittens and Foxes. Glad to see my old friend John Blagburn has finally gone back to his roots and purchased a Reliant again.

I managed to sell most of my remaining stock of reliant parts to Mike Bromby, hopefully the complete set of cylinders and seals have helped him to keep another car roadworthy. As far as what is left, an odd assortment of thrust bearing, timing chain and tensioner, throttle cable track rod end and fuel pump repair kit. I will be happy to donate these to the club if anyone wants to collect them.

With regard to my own motoring adventures, still no E-Type, and the Cobra replica has spent most of the back end of the summer getting a much needed rewire (all plastic cars suffer the same problems) and getting new wheels and suspension. However my dad and I did have an adventure in his /Aston Martin DB6 going back to Le Mans to see Aston Martin's unfortunately unsuccessful return to the 24 hour race. We got to drive round the famous Le Mans circuit for 3 and a half laps, and my dad's enthusiasm almost got the better of him as he red lined the engine on a number of occasions. Our only failure on the 1,200 mile plus round trip was a rotor arm which decided to come apart in the distributor. Fortunately we managed to find the arm and pin which had come loose, changed the rotor arm (one of a mountain of spares carried in the car) and continue on our way. Don't know how much fuel we used or the MPG on the circuit, but we filled the 20 gallon tank 4 times. A great experience, especially being on the circuit with 92 other Aston Martins dating from the 1930's to the present day.

As a final note I do look forward to seeing the C5 envelope appearing through the letterbox, and usually I find myself reading the magazine on my train journey to London each week as I rarely drive there these days. Of the four automotive clubs that I am now a member of, Jaguar Enthusiasts, Cobra Replica, Kitten Register and Aston Martin, the Mewsletter holds the most enjoyment for me still.

Hope you had a good Christmas and wishing you all the best for the New Year.

Martin (Blunn) Whitley Bay No. 37

Martin, as ever I look forward to your letter each year, and thanks for your generous spares donation and good wishes. It is a good feeling to be appreciated, and while I am naturally delighted to know that we can still provide enjoyment – particularly when compared with the other illustrious organisations to which you subscribe, receiving your annual epistle not only fills a page of the mag for me, but gives me a warm glow of satisfaction as well. Thank you. Brian.

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Brian,

5/1/07

As you know I have sold the Kitten and so I will not be renewing my subscription, but I enclose my cheque for £20 as a spares donation in appreciation of all you have done and are continuing to do for the Reliant Kitten Register.

I gave the new owner of my Kitten the latest Mewsletter, and he seemed interested in joining the Register. I have not got his name and address.

Best wishes for 2007, Reg Wyatt Poole No. 445 retiring

If ever there are times when I wonder why I do this, Reg's generosity and kindness just sum it up – what can I say? Thank you Reg, and all the very best to you and yours for the future. Brian

Dear Brian,

14th January 2007

I will not be renewing my subs this time as I have sold my collection of Reliants.

The Jimp has gone back to Cheshire, to a lady who used to work at P.K. Engineering (*the firm who built them, Ed.*) as a teenager and wanted to relive her youth years again.

The beige Fox has gone to Norwich in Norfolk, (not to Duncan methinks) and the other Fox has gone to the further reaches of Wales to a place I cannot even say let alone spell.

I am not happy about it, but age and poor health have finally found me out, and I just cannot give them the attention they need any more. I have now got a little Hyundai Amica, super little car, no rattles, no drafts, no wet feet when you go through puddles, no fiddling with the choke to keep her idling at traffic lights when cold. I can use the car wash without getting wet. The heater works, it is a brilliant little car Brian, but I hate it IT'S GOT NO SOUL OR CHARACTER.

But, realistically, it is so much easier for me.

I would like to thank you for a good number of years of membership, for helpful advice, information, and a good laugh in the Mewsletter, and I would specially like to mention Duncan Bradford who has, on a number of occasions, given me brilliant advice, not always concerning Reliant cars.

I wish you and Moira a very happy New Year and best wishes to you both in the future.

Yours most sadly, Andrew Hudson Brixington (Kent) No. 191

See what I mean? How could I not publish that? As I was saying in my introduction, the bit about accentuating the positive, I know he is leaving us, but his parting comments just help to convince me that whatever we are doing, it is not far off the mark.

I could be unkind and suggest that if any individual has problems with their Reliant stalling at the lights, then it is down to poor maintenance rather than the car. That said I know that many, if not all do-it yourself owners, are doing the best they can, and while such efforts may be a bit short of the mark sometimes, that should not belittle; the efforts and good intentions.

I know that many reading this will be all too familiar with the problem, and I also know that a few will be thinking, ahh yes, obviously either the mixture or timing is not quite set up correctly, either that or the crank has too much endfloat!

Andrew joined us back in June of 1997, and so has been a faithful follower for the best part of a decade. Andrew we wish you well for the future, I know it is not comparing like things, but I hope the new car serves you well.

Ed.

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Wet Kittens - A solution 14/1/07

Heavy rain all night – stopped now so you're off to the supermarket – come out laden with shopping – open the rear window of Kitty, and – a shower of water from the window glass drops into the rear of the car! Need not happen – Take a strip of self sticking guttering – invert it (i.e. fit it upside down). Fit this along the top edge of the window glass, water will now run off down the side of the car.

Kittivan is progressing well, hope to be on the road 1st Feb.

Regards, Ron (Stowell) - Ilkley No. 759

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Dear Brian,

Santiago 16-2-07

I noticed with the last magazine you included a yellow page with a list of details of one's Reliant cars, but you had only been able to fill in the details of 'Jock', the Scottish one, 'John', the English one remaining 'out on a limb' so to speak.

So as not to show favoritism, I will include details of both, I am assuming that they both have the original engines. Both cars were painted the same shade of yellow, 'Jock' had a green door fitted at one time – perhaps by your brother Alan?

By the look of the chassis numbers 'Jock' appears to be 1104 cars newer than 'John', yet from the engine numbers (shared with the Robin, or was the robin still 750cc in late 1976 and grow to 850cc in the eighties?) it looks to be only 61 cars newer and this is further compounded by the date of registry being only 43 days apart.

'Jock' seems to be the SE model and has electric rear window with the rear window washer and wiper and cover, which 'John' does not possess, BUT alas 'Jock's' chassis is a little rustier than 'John's' By the way Brian, I did manage to speak to Wouter van Oploo in

Holland, thanks very much for his number, so I have already had the pleasure of 'meeting' three Dutch blokes over the blower. Alas of the two left hand drive Kitten estates for sale in the Netherlands, typically, just like in Hollywood films, there was a good one and a bad one, the good one, which was as runner, was snapped up for a reasonable 1200 euros, but the bad one was going for 2000 euros, No way Jose! I had even convinced young Tom Mclean to drive the 100kms up to Holland and collect the good one on the back of one of his boss' car transporters, with the promise he could run it till it was due for shipment.

Speaking to Wouter it is amazing the trouble reliant went to to produce a LHD Kitten, when so very few were actually built. Even the estate rear door hinges and locks ere swapped over, so that it must be opened with the left hand not the right one, as it opens the other way. Why not even the Japanese carmakers, with their huge volumes and whose car are all designed originally as RHD for their home market, bother to have LHD or RHD rear doors, likewise they even leave the rear wiper in the RHD position on LHD cars. Check out the rear door on say a Suzuki Vitara Jeep.

I was very sad to hear of the passing of dear friend Bill Dick in September 2006, though I only read about it in the last mag. He was a very nice and decent chap ,we was his charming wife, who was very cooperative in driving bill round in her red 318 BMW estate to his various garages and yard, while Tom McLean and I followed, to see all of his collection. She even helped us push Mike Cowie's trailer into the yard. It' great to meet a wife who not only appreciated her hubby's hobby, but also helps rather than begrudges and hinders him. Bill chatted away remembering the troubles he had coming into the then Santiago airport of "Cerillos" where on donwind, base, and then final, one literally flew right over the centre of Santiago. In the late 60's this was finally avoided when the new airport "Pudahel" was inaugurated, where final was from he unpopulated north west of Santiago. Bill was a man after my own heart he also had a large collection of cars, so I understood him perfectly. Except for my 1950 Jag XK120 roadster, and the 1955 21' mahogany Chris Craft Capri runabout, the rest of my collection is more bread and butter. I guess it's an extension of the Dinky / Corgy syndrome. The difference between men and boys is the price of their toys.

I have 14 cars at the moment! Only three motorbikes (I used to have 8 bikes in the U.K.) and the classic boat. Must reduce the cars to between 8 – 10.

Best wishes to you, Moira and Arleen, as well as all this happy Reliant RKR 'family' you have so graciously brought together through your unfailing efforts.

Regards, Frank

Frank, what can I say, my head will be too bog to get through the door – a couple of points - the yellow form was in fact your renewal notice, no matter, I have updated the records from the information you sent, thank you. I had not realised that the Kitten engine was in a different left to right location in LHD models, is that really the case? I had thought it was the body moulding that was different, but I will defer to those who know about such things. I have only ever seen one left hand drive Kitten, a saloon, and foolishly I didn't pay enough attention – it was being broken for spares, and that was over 10 years ago now.

A small thin, well, actually not so small, and please Wouter, correct me if I am wrong, names are important, and while with different languages there can be confusion, but Frank, I see you have a different spelling for Wouter van Oploo than I have, Wouter, feel free to correct me if that is incorrect.

On the chassis number engine number date of registration matter, this will take too much room for this edition, but all Kitten engines were in the number range 100001 on, and the Robin had the 850 from August / September 1975.

Brian

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Events

It has been a while since I gave much publicity to events, the silence in response to my past invitation for volunteers to organise a follow up to our Burford get-to-gether has been deafening, however, both Adrian Hanwell, and the National Motor Museum, and more than a few others I should think, organise events regularly, Sunday July the first I am told is the date for this year's Michael Sedgtwick run, I am assured that the run will not exceed 85 miles and will take place on metalled roads of a 'non car busting' nature, so I guess our Liege friends will not be interested then! There will be 3 classes the first two of which will not be of interest to us, but the third includes vehicles built between 1962 and 1990, so I guess we could fit in there. If you are interested David Ross is the event Organiser, he tells me that the only skills needed to enter are the ability to follow detailed instructions between prominent locations, to be able to plot 6 figure map references on a 1.25" to the mile O.S. map, and to be able to follow 'tulip'; style route instructions – all sounds pretty standard stuff to me. There was a simple 4 line slip included with the invitation, it just required your name on the first line, your address on the next two lines, and your telephone number and year and make of car on the 4th line, and those details should be sent to the Secretary of the meeting who I am reliably informed is one Ann Ross who can be contacted at Owlswood, Dock Lane, Beaulieu, Hampshire SO42 7YJ. And if you send her an s.a.e. with those details and request them, she will see to it that details will be sent to you 8 weeks before the event.

Adrian's annual event, the Great Eastern Weekend will take place as usual at INGATESTONE HALL, Ingatestone, Essex, on Sunday 22nd July 2007, and you can contact him on 01277 227708 of an evening for further details.

I should also make mention, sorry John, almost forgot, our man in Carlisle, John Graham tells me that the Cumbria Classic weekend is taking place this year pm August 18/19th weekend. John tells me that we would be welcome either as individuals, or with a club stand – hmm, there's a thought, it will be two years since we last got together - any ideas ? John can be contacted on 01228 534483 or written to at 86 Moor Park Avenue, Bell View, Carlisle CA2 7LY

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Adrian Hanwell, "Norton Villas",
59, Western Road, Brentwood,
Essex, CM14 4SU.
Tel:- Home (01277) 227708 Office (01268) 402344

INVITATION. To all Classic car owners and Auto-jumblers.

You are invited to join us at our annual GREAT EASTERN RALLY, which will take place at INGATESTONE HALL, Ingatestone, Essex, on Sunday 22nd July 2007. The gates to the rally field will open to classic cars and visitors at 10.00am. Auto-jumblers may arrive early to set up. We actively encourage all pre-1950 vehicles, all B.S.A. cars, all Daimlers, all

Lanchesters and auto-jumble stallholders to attend, but all other classic or thoroughbred vehicle owner's will be made welcome. The rally is completely free to exhibitors, auto-jumblers and visitors and there are no extra compulsory costs. Those wishing to dispose of unwanted items from their garage may sell them from a table at the edge of the field. No charge will be made. A raffle will be run to assist towards the organising costs and attendees are REQUESTED to bring items to donate to us as raffle prizes. Please don't let this REQUEST stop you from coming if you don't have anything to bring. Solid brass plaques will be on sale to those who want them. They are expensive but we sell them at cost. There is no charge to attend the rally, but those wishing to visit the hall, will have to pay the Landowner's admission charge to do so and visitors, will be not be welcomed into it until after 1.00pm. There are toilets and tea rooms within the hall, but the toilets and tea rooms do not open until 12.00 noon. Please arrive after that time if you are likely to need the facilities urgently.

We look forward to seeing you at the rally.

Adrian Hanwell. - Daimler And Lanchester Owner's Club.
Essex Branch Secretary.

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Getting Technical

Dear Brian,

23/12/2006

Just a few thoughts on heaters. If you fit a 13lb cap on the radiator you can raise the boiling point and use a hotter thermostat. The temperature sender unit will need to be replaced to give an accurate gauge reading. The last few years production on Robins were fitted with 13lb caps and have an appropriate sender unit.

The Kitten blower is too far from the heater. I have seen carb adaptors which are piped straight through the neater, but do not know which model they were used on. The trouble with this system is that the cold draught through the carb reduces the temperature of the water reaching the heater matrix, hence reducing its heat output. It is worth looking at the take of adaptor at the back of the cylinder head. The water passage which feeds it is very shallow, and if it is screwed in too far, (or is too long) the adaptor can partially restrict the passage, as can a build up of silt.

With my very best wishes.

John (Box)

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Parts supply

Though not really a parts supply point, I have just, not for the first time, almost fallen foul of the parcel weight limit situation. Andrew Wales had kindly offered to clean up some old unit ball joints for us. The local facilities I used to enjoy access to are no longer available to me. And when I went to make up the parcel I could only find 2 old units, now I knew I had more than that, but could not find them. Then, just as I was about to give up and send what I had, I found the original bag with 4 in it. So I set about making up a very neat box with the 6 in it. Only to discover that it weights too much! If you go over 2kg, about 4 ½ lbs., the cost rockets, and once I undid the neat box and weighed them, they weigh just about a pound each,

so 6 of them is far too heavy. I ended up making up 2 parcels, only to then discover that if you use parcel Force it would have been cheaper as one! Aaarrggghhh!

On the parts front, the difficulty we had in sourcing bushes for the last batch of Kitten back springs brought home to me that we might want to consider getting a batch of Fox springs done sooner rather than later. The problem is one of money and space. We need to get batches of 10 springs done at a time to get anything close to a sensible price. Even then they will cost about £80 a spring, plus delivery, and I would be looking to the Register's spares fund making a couple of pounds as well, so we are talking about the better part of £200 a pair delivered.

I know they would be slow moving, past experience with Kitten ones has taught us that, and the demand for Fox ones has always been slow. Anyway, we are prepared to look at this again, but it could only be considered if at least two people, preferably three or four, were prepared to buy a pair at the same time – talk to me.

Another thing I was asked about recently was Fox exhausts, can anyone point us in a helpful direction? I really thought we had all gone down the stainless route, but it would seem not yet.

Talk to me if you are interested, and we will see what can be done.

On the spares front, delivery of things like springs, dampers, even steering racks, is the better part of £20 these days, Duncan was suggesting that some items, springs in particular, and front dampers / springs, could be planned for, and with the appropriate forward planning it may be possible for someone to buy them, and we may be able to arrange to have them taken to some of the bigger rallies during the year, from where the individual could either collect them personally, or have a designated individual collect them on his or her behalf. Could well work. In my experience it is most often when something breaks or fails an MOT that an urgent need arises, but I am all in favour of doing what can be done to help any one who wants to plan ahead a bit, and so save on delivery charges. Duncan reckons that anyone running about on leaf springs that have done 100,000 miles or more should be thinking about replacing them.

Another difficult part I was asked about recently was Rebel fuel tanks, in stainless if possible – well, we have one them in the past, sadly the master craftsman who used to make them for us is no longer with us, Bobby Brown of what is Stainless Steel Silencers used to do them or me as a favour – they do not normally do tanks. So it can be done, but price is now an issue, why can't we adapt a Kitten / Robin one? We can get them for about £60.

On a positive note, gleaned from Duncan's web group tjhis, the man tells us that heater control knobs that make good replacements for those on a Kitten or Fox can be found in many a scrapyard on a Nissan Micra [about G reg - the model before the last, Mr Magoo, model]. On the dash you will see 4 heater control knobs. They will pull off with a lot of grip, grit and determination, and are a firm push fit onto the Reliant control lever. They look better, and you will have 2 spare for a friend.

Ed.

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More snippets from the net :-

Martin Seymour recently created a stir – February 2007 - by asking for opinions about the noise of a tired Reliant engine on start up from cold. Spurred by my comments about main bearings being more prone to wear than big ends, and his own experience with bottom end engine failure in the past. This led to various recommendations, allegations, and a potentially

confusing host of options about a variety of oil additives. The fact is that, good as they may be, oil additives are primarily intended to help protect bearing surfaces by a variety of chemical means, they may in some cases coat the surfaces to a degree, and that coating may very well help to prevent further wear, (as well as blocking up the internal oilways in the engine, well, lets be kind here, coating them too, and hence reducing the clear diameter), but they are meant to be used to prevent wear, i.e. be installed before wear occurs, not after! If an engine is already very rattly / clattery on start up, and it is obviously very difficult indeed to diagnose the cause of a noise through the written word, the first step would be to fit a worry meter (oil pressure gauge), but I suspect that the engine needs at very least new bearings, possibly a crankshaft regrind, and possibly a new oil pump, the cost of which, along with the associated gaskets and work, might make a couple of hundred pounds spent on a good secondhand engine an attractive alternative, if one were readily available.

I could fill a page or two with the responses, oh why not? Hang on, I'll tell you why not, I am running out of space and an interesting thing then developed, it really is an interesting this internet, and, as we all know, a small world when you begin to specialize. A name cropped up, again on Duncan's web group, and a question was asked, and it turns out that Ian Lawson, Les Newell share an interest in trials, Locosts, old motorcycles and buggies. This all came about because of the mythical 4 wheel drive Fox which is mentioned in a book about 4 wheel drive vehicles. I did see the book a while back, complete with a picture of a Fox, but it looked like a standard Fox, yet not only claimed to be 4 wheel drive, but also claimed to have 11" of ground clearance, so I dismissed the thing as either a hoax or a mistake. That said I am sure that I did make passing reference to it in these pages at the time, possibly about a year ago?

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My Memory!

Right, it is confession time again. As has been known to happen in the past, I published an incorrect telephone number in an advert within the last edition. Brian Midgley from Dore near Sheffield deserves special mention as one of the folk who rang to try and pass on two Kitten seats, but I had, once again, allowed my generosity to rule common sense, by letting someone who was not a Register subscriber run an advert, and when the mistake was uncovered I could do nothing about it, because, not being a subscriber, we did not have his details on file – when will I learn to insist that folk join us first, it would make things so much easier in the long run.

Sales and Wants

For Sale :- Andrew Norman has to go to a new home :- engine & gearbox

For Sale :- Kitten estate LFT 662X. Off the road but running, this was a really good one, and still has a really good engine. Ring Ken Stallard for details, South Wales

For Sale :- set of Fox 12" wheels, with tyres St. Ives, Cornwall

For Sale :- W reg Kitten saloon, tidy project for restoration, engine not good but would make easy restoration, quiet axle and good gearbox, spare dismantled engines included along with various spares. Jim Near Edinburgh

Wanted :- Jason Briggs (& Nicola) need Kitten seats and all window rubbers

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Epilogue

I must apologise to Bill Starkey for my interruptions to his story about Hazel's Kitten, the "Wee Red Fire Engine", I just couldn't help myself. I used to be very guilty of making such interruptions, and have been trying – really hard – to curb such urges of late, however I seem to have slipped into my old ways a bit in this edition – need to find some new pills!

I did, just, manage to resist the temptation to interrupt Oliver Lewis' letter for a second time, to congratulate him on the nice play on words in the third last paragraph of his letter when he suggested that Reliant's history had been littered with good ideas, coming from a Kitten owner I thought that was clever, nice one Oliver, and thanks for both your letter and support. I have to say that if you don't get that battery sorted or replaced, and so be able to run the engine up to temperature every so often, things like the clutch will seize up. The idea of restoring a car is fine, if it is a restoration project you are looking for, but it is much cheaper, though availability may be an issue, to simply buy a running one when you are ready.

Right, I don't pretend to understand why, but in spite of encapsulating your membership cards (on my own this year!) a couple or three weeks ago, I am now 95% finished with the typing of this edition, it is currently the 16th of February, and I have a number of pictures from people like John Blagburn, thank you John, and everyone else who sent in pictures, which are interesting, and so, not for the first time, the frustration of not being to easily include pictures within these pages raises it's ugly head. I mentioned this to Colin (daughter's boyfriend) over the festive break, and he refused to believe that it was a problem, asked me to show him, and it worked fine! How maddening is that? So, if it works fine again, i.e. not just in a test document, you may see pictures, in black and white, together with many shades of grey, within these pages in future, not only that, but if you keep sending me articles, I may be tempted to take advantage of the extra weight that we are currently allowed to post with a second class stamp – so you know what to do if you want even more of this stuff to come your way, don't you?

Till next time take care, may you have happy and trouble free motoring, oh please don't forget to use that grease gun.

Brian

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