

Reliant Kitten Register

NEWSLETTER 76

May - June 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.....

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The Reliant Kitten Register

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Fox alternative parts list contact: Duncan Bradford

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Mewsletter pictures

The Register is a member of the FBHVC, which monitors UK & EU legislation and lobbies on our behalf to protect our freedom to use vehicles of all ages on the roads. Readers are invited to show their own support of this worthy cause by becoming members in their own right. Contact the editor for details.

Web page:- <http://www.kitreg.org.uk/> or have a look at <http://www.reliantkitten.co.uk>

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Spread throughout this edition should be no less than 14 pictures, something of a long overdue experiment, do let me know what you think.

Following the trend this year, we feature on the cover not only a vehicle, but it's owner (and some of the family this time too) that rare beast, a Kitten Van that has not had side windows fitted, and just to prove that though such a beast might be rare, it is not unique, you might see another one of them on page 37!

Here we have Stuart Hale from Huddersfield and his daughter Chloe beside their very tidy Kitten Van. It actually has a set of very smart alloy wheels fitted, and I did ask Stuart for another picture showing them off, which he did send me, it even had another Kitten in the background parked along the street a bit, and not his either – how many of the Kitten owning fraternity have a visiting Kitten in the street these days I wonder - but your wonderful Editor messed things up – you may see it another time if he ever gets his act together!

Hello again, and welcome to this experimental edition. The plan is to incorporate some pictures and or drawings that I will have put into the document rather than paying the printers to put in for us. Sadly they will, for now, need to be in black and white for cost reasons.

For once I will try to be organised, and rather than, in desperation when approaching the deadline, I will tell you now that it might be to our collective benefit to sign the petition about the age of road tax exemption for vehicles that is currently on the No. 10 web site. I was something like the 2,250th person to sign it back on March the 19th. My thanks to Duncan Bradford for making me aware of its existence, and of course Stephen Clay MBE for putting it there for us to sign in the first place. I know that the Federation have said that 'they' are not interested in looking at this again, but people power can change politician's attitudes, so I do not see what harm it can do to raise the question again.



Ahh, that looks O.K., thought I'd better try the picture thing at an early stage. That was me on my way to John O'Groats from Lands End in the wee red car back in May 1998, It looks as if we have established that not only can it be done, but I can do it!

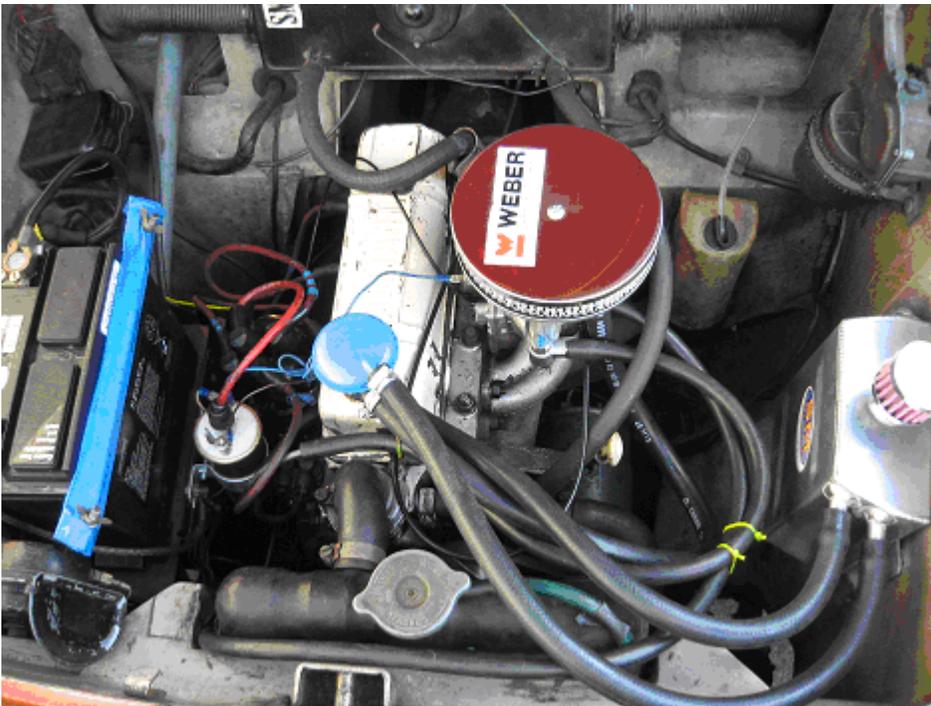
Just looking through the draft of this having just posted edition 75 to you yesterday, I realise how much better the mag would be if I could produce colour pictures in it regularly, I am seeing them in colour on the screen, but sadly cannot afford to have them printed that way – how does Tony Marshall do it – have you seen Rum Car News lately? I guess if I was not so lazy I could print them all here, but it is the collating, stapling and trimming that I find just too much like hard work. John and Mel do it with Liege News, and as I mentioned, Tony does it with Rum Car News, my consolation is that even between them their combined circulation is about half of ours, so I would need to work twice as hard as both of them put together to give you the same quality – ahh, now I don't feel quite so guilty!

The number of compromises I am having to cope with at the moment is very frustrating, the Fox picture is an example, why can't I get rid of the icons above it? I really do need to learn more.

Moving on then,



Above is a motley collection taken at Culzean Castle in Ayrshire at an event that the East Ayrshire Car Club ran there. The Thistle branch of the Reliant Owners Club came up with a good mix of interesting vehicles.



Above is a picture of what is probably the most often featured Rebel in these pages, an under bonnet view this time of John Blagburn's estate, questions on a postcard please!

I took that picture in March this year, along with several others, all showing different views of the engine bay – and some of John and the car as well! I know that others are thinking, (and I know of at least one who is not thinking, but would benefit from doing so) of fitting a Weber to a Rebel, or indeed any other 700 or 750 Reliant engine. They can of course be fitted to the 850 as well, but on a Rebel in particular, it is a really easy improvement to make – probably one you ought to tell your insurance company about mind you. That said the improvement in slow running, pick up, and economy are more noticeable than any improvement in performance, remember a Rebel's engine when turning at 6,000 RPM in top gear has you belting through the countryside at 68 MPH, so unless you are going to change the gearing, you are not really going to get into a lot of bother with Mr. Plod.

John I know has a good collection of pictures of the fitting and installation of the new carb, so if you are interested get in touch.

Foxes Den

Dick Goodall is not a name I normally associate with Foxes, Dick has three Kittens and a Jowett Bradford if memory serves, but he sent me details of a fascinating web site the other day (early April) where, amongst many other fascinating things, he found David Beal's steam powered Fox. David was with us a couple of years ago, but sadly did not renew his subscription. I gather the project is now up and running and can be yours for just £10,000, so if you are into steam powered vehicles, now's your chance. The vehicle is fully rebuilt from the chassis up, have a look at www.steamcar.net , or I will try to include a picture here :-



Taken at the Tour of the Roses run in May 2005.

Liege number 22 - "Brum" by Richard Irvine

Two years after I had sold on my last project, I started researching and looking for something new and interesting that would fill the forlorn empty space in my little garage.

W. H. Smith's motoring section of magazines provided me with the "Which Kit" guides to a variety of vehicles available, and one vehicle caught my eye. Upon close inspection it offered everything on my check list of must haves – firstly roadster, secondly the possibility of motorsport events.

I called the factory and spoke to Peter Davis and downloaded all the details I could find on the internet, this was February 2003. Then, with busy family life the research got no further until I discovered the mislaid file and booked a test drive in April 2004. I visited the factory for a tour and drive – very impressive chassis and pedigree.

Upon returning I called Brian (Marshall) at the Reliant Kitten Register for price details of donor parts. As luck would have it Brian had just received a letter from David Udell in the Derby area, stating that due to family commitment he was unable to proceed with his build. Brian kindly confirmed details and a copy of the letter was faxed over. After a couple of phone calls I was able to understand how far the project had progressed and what parts were available with it. I had to wait 10 days before a final inspection could be arranged, by this time it was early May 2004.

Everything was as it should be and I set off to make the collection. I arranged to have a tow bar fitted to my car and hired a trailer. Armed with this all I had to do was turn up, load the rolling chassis onto the trailer, stow the spare parts into the boot, and hand over the cheque.

Loading the trailer was the easy bit, shoe-horning the collection off parts into my tow car was another challenge, as I didn't want to make two journeys. We returned to Harrow triumphant, safe in the knowledge that our new project was off to a good start.

Unable to park outside my house I thought I could reverse up the hill and unload. However, one fried clutch later, confirmed that it's easier to unload and push, but this was only attempted after a cup of tea and the time it took for the smoke to clear.

The rolling chassis was pushed into our garage, with the assorted boxes and bags. First task was to assess how much work could be carried out before requiring additional parts. Wheels, tyres and inner tubes were loaded and built up over the next week at work and then fitted. What was great about this first step, it visibly made the car's appearance ten times better. A good psychological boost when you face an almost vertical learning curve.

Luckily the paperwork that came with the car contained all issues of the owner's club magazine, which always prove a valuable source of information and guidance for all Liege virgins!! Part of the fun of an ongoing project is sourcing and purchasing parts that you require. Reliant dealers are very helpful, but when faced with the prospect of going down to your local spares shop, it's like entering a different world.

I don't know if you remember the group therapy scene in the film "One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest" with Jack Nicholson on a Sunday morning – normal scenario goes like this : "Hi, I would like to purchase rear brakes for a (lowering tone of your voice) Reliant Robin." "Sorry Sir didn't quite hear that." (now, in a slightly higher voice) " I would like to purchase a set of rear break shoes to suit a RELIANT ROBIN". Now not only all the staff in white coats behind a padded counter have heard, but then like a passing volley over the net, the other customers now give a knowing smile and a nod!

Well, things have moved on since then. The big job over the winter was the axle change from Reliant to Suzuki, which was achieved at last. The two tasks I was not looking forward to :- 1) doors, and 2) electrics, so I have already fitted up the driver's door, after gallons of tea, 2 ½ bottles of gin and three weeks of head scratching (Rome wasn't built in a day) and the swear box is overflowing! Electrics will be

sub-contracted out to a friend while I stock up on PG Tips, Mombay Gin and valium to tackle the other door.

Really looking forward to getting the engine started within four weeks, as I just finished all plumbing. I am trying the bleed valve from Landrover Freelander 1.8 heater, on heater return pipe with Rover Metro header tank. My son Oliver, aged 8, and I joined the Tour of the Roses in May, enjoyed the day, but also returned buoyed with extra enthusiasm to get it finished.

Other the next few months the build progressed at a pace. My colleague, Christian, was helping with the electrics and, all in all, it took about 6 weeks and twenty six hours to complete the whole job.

The last task before delivering the Liege to the body shop, was to reset the engine timing. However all my tools, furniture and family had moved 2 days before, down to Dorset. All I had was my kit, sleeping bag, work clothes and a few tools. The garage was completely empty. We needed to set the timing marks and make them visible, white toothpaste always comes in handy. Job done, and the Liege was duly delivered at the bodyshop.

Four weeks later the car was ready. Resplendent in almond green with a fresh MOT as well. The trailer was hired again and taken up to London to collect the car on Saturday 10th September with the SVA booked for 8am the following Tuesday. Upon collection it looked like the new battery was failing. I made a call to the SVA centre at Southampton but they require three workings days notice to reschedule any test. This cost £50 and a replacement battery was needed before our original one could be returned for a warranty claim. A new test was booked and a trailer hired. Everything was ready for that fateful day, Monday 26th September. My preparations and research included what I had gleaned from everyone's experience – all points covered.

The journey took just over an hour from Poole to Southampton SVA centre. Upon arriving, checking in, unloaded and waited for the day's events to begin. At this time I would have gladly swapped places with anyone going in to a dentist's chair or sitting in a waiting room for a job interview!

Our SVA inspector appeared with round-rimmed glasses and a hi-viz vest which was three sizes too big. He reassured me he was an enthusiast and was a Rover man through and through, however failing to recognise the Liege colour of Almond Green which I thought was a classic Morris / Rover product. I could only put this down to colour blindness. Anyway his eyesight took a hammering that day, after the Liege failed our SVA man, Mr. Tolstoy, wrote a small novel of some five, yes five pages of faults. We returned dejected and crestfallen. It only took one week to work out what was required to solve all problems and another two weeks to fit some extra trims and bits and pieces.

However the major problem was the speedo over-reading so I made a quick call to Steven Kenny to confirm my list of woes. His reply was *!#* hell, what a b!!#?d. he suggested recalibrating the speedo, as he had run into a few problems removing the drive from the gearbox. I removed the offending speedo, sent it off to Speedograph, and 10 days later it was returned and fitted.

Upon checking the weather forecast I got up early on October 17th, drove the 17 miles to work and re-set the CO from over 4.5 to a more acceptable level, while the Liege was in the workshop it gained a few fans but it was dwarfed by the giant turbocharged Range Rovers and Discoverys.

With emission reset I was homeward bound & flying past Hurn Airport, I looked down at the speedo, oh hell, it was showing 85/90 mph but we were only doing 45mph. After a phone call next day we discovered the calibration was wrong, 50 % worse than before. Kindly, Tim at Speedograph sent me a recalibrated Reliant speedo based on our original figures (as a temporary solution). It arrived the day before we were due to retest but Postman Pat wanted a signature. However my wife was out taking our two budding Liege fans to school first thing in the morning. Postman Pat's rules dictate that collections can only take place 24 hours later.

The SVA day dawned clear and bright. Got up early, collected speedo first thing, fitted and tested OK. Loaded the trailer and got on my way to Southampton. We arrived at 12.30 ready for the 1pm retest. Again our inspector was Mr. Tolstoy, who was on hand to retest the car. We exchanged pleasantries and proceeded to the main event. We ran through the test item by item until we came to the windscreen. This had failed because it didn't have the correct radius, but upon clarification from Bristol VOSA office, it seems that in the original test it had been measured incorrectly because it was under 5mm from frame to glass. It turned out Tolstoy had made a mistake, and he promptly apologised. Seizing the moment we discussed the merits of building kit cars and he confided that a chap had retested his pride and joy that very morning, and failed it!

One by one each item on the list was checked and ticked off. We moved over to the rollers – once run up and at each speed increment speedo readings were all within 3%. Another pass. One of the last items was the steering wheel, which was originally a Momo three spoke design but had failed the first test, so I decided to replace it with an original Reliant steering wheel for the retest. However, even this failed! Now at this point some might have given up, but after all the hard work I had one last trick up my sleeve. The night before the test I had modified the Momo steering wheel reducing the radius and covering the centre with foam and flocked black sticky-back plastic, in the best Blue Peter tradition.

Mr. Tolstoy allowed me to swap over the steering wheel in the car park, while he went away and recalculated the design weights. With the steering wheel swapped, the engine number was checked and he confirmed the vehicle had passed all items except the design weights. So if he received a fax from Peter / LMC within seven days the SVA certificate would be posted on. The fax was duly dispatched and the SVA certificate received early the following week.

Then we headed off to the local DVLA office in Bournemouth and filled out all the forms. At 9.30am on a wet Tuesday morning nobody was about when we sat at the counter processing our registration. With two counters open and only one customer, things were not exactly brisk. Ten minutes later another member of public entered the waiting room. While this was going on I was told everything was alright except that the vehicle now had to be inspected. I asked how long it would take – four to six weeks was the answer. I told the lady I had no more holidays left (my nose gets longer) and would she check to see if any earlier dates were possible. Meanwhile the guy who came in struck up the courage to speak to the man behind the vacant desk who said “ sorry sir you need to bring a ticket from the machine outside (just like the Sainsbury's deli counter)”. I supposed he must have jumped the queue!

Anyway the lady returned and advised me the earliest date would be Friday – I said “please show the man a picture” and I handed over a photo of the Liege. She disappeared and came back saying the inspector would visit later this afternoon. A few days after the inspection the new tax disc and number plate were fitted finally and RFX 439W (soon to become L7 EGE), chassis number 22, was legal.

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Matters Tempestuous

John Melody continues to make progress with his Tempest demonstrator which he tells me should be away to the spray shop by the time you read this.

A couple of pictures should follow, is this in fact the biggest get together of Tempests in recent years? Taken at Burford in 2005 these were, can we do this sort of thing again in Cumbria in August? Talk to John Graham if you are interested. His number is :- 01228 534483



So, two years after the event, Brian finally manages to publish some of the Burford pictures, and about time too!



John Melody is an ex R.A.C. patrol man of 25 years experience who built his first kit car in 1992, a Hudson Spirit three wheeler, powered by a Renault 1289cc engine from a Renault 5, on which the kit was based, with 2 wheels at the front. John has built everything from Cobra replicas and GT40's, through several Westfields and a Tiger 6 and a few Marcos', a Sebring (Austin Healy 3000 look alike) and a number of NG's. So he has considerable experience of professionally building kit cars over the past 5 years since he retired from the R.A.C. The Tempest project would seem to be in good hands. Keep us posted John.

I suppose I should blow the trumpet a bit, after all, when last did 3 Tempests get together? And more to the point, when can we beat that? I know that Andrew Norman recently sold his – e-bay strikes again, but you had your chance, it was advertised in here first, so don't blame me! And no, for the record, his is not one of those three. So, come on you Tempestuous guys and gals, lets be hearing from you – why don't you organise a meet?

Jack, are you still doing competitions in yours? Jack's is not in that picture either. Is there a list of events that interested owners could attend?

Brian's diary - January 2007

As I may have mentioned in the past, I used to be into model trains, boats and aircraft. My dad was an engineer who worked for Rolls Royce, and he was secretary of the Scottish R.R.M.E.C. (Rolls Royce Model Engineering Club). We used to fly control line model aircraft and sail model boats in my childhood. We even did a couple of free flight trips, but they proved to be stressful, hazardous and frustrating, and we couldn't afford radio control. We were very involved with the model passenger carrying railway that the R.R.M.E.C. had, indeed we built it, and re-built it after Rolls went bust in 1971. They had to sell the sports fields where the railway ran round the rugby pitch, and the only people they could sell the land to turned out to be the Scottish Rugby Union, because the land was a designated green belt. Strange that the only bit of green there now is the bowling club, hundreds of houses cover the rest of the old playing field these days – strange how things can change in a few decades. The railway is alive and well and regularly carries large numbers of the public in Barshaw park in Paisley.

Anyway, Tom Lockhart, another R.R.M.E.C. member in the late 50's and 60's, had been head hunted from Rolls to England by the 70's and moved to Guildsbrough near Northampton where he still lives.

Tom had been boasting to me in a letter with his 2005 Christmas card (almost the only time we keep in touch these days), that he had just finished building the 3' long model of a Vosper launch that he had started making in 1955. So I took the opportunity of asking him if he thought he was getting better at it now, and if so would he like to finish the re-build of my Dad's 40" British Power Boat hulled cabin cruiser that he had been in the middle of re-building when he died back in 1975? Tom very kindly said yes, and to cut an even longer story short, by Christmas 2006 it was ready.

Here endeth the history lesson.

So, during a gap in the weather, I decided to grasp an opportunity. Brian Revill and Brian Beattie both needed bits from the Register's stock, and the postage involved was going to come to an amount that while it would not fill the Citroen's fuel tank, would go more than half way to doing so. I also had some re-conditioned parts to collect, and so I decided to tie it all together.

I say a gap in the weather, driving in severe weather has never bothered me, but I was hoping to have the opportunity both to sail the boat with Tom, and indeed to introduce him to Keith Parrott, (those who have been with us for over a decade might remember Keith's name, it was from him that I bought the wee red car that I subsequently did the Lands End to John O'Groats run in back in 1998.) Anyway, they both share an interest in railways, and live only a few miles from each other, yet in spite of it being on my wish list to introduce them for over a decade, they had never met. So some dry calm weather would be needed.

Quite by chance, Keith also had a Kitten estate car, not for sale at the time I bought the saloon, but later sold, and then moved on to Brian Radford, who then took it from Lands End to John O'Groats!

I also had some bits to collect in the Midlands, so it all tied in quite nicely with the desire to bring the boat back to Scotland.

I have been meaning to meet up with John Graham, our man in Carlisle, for some time now. I have not seen John for a few years in spite of passing the road end every time I venture south. This time we made it - Tesco's café on the A69, less than quarter of a mile off the M6 has its uses! Great to see you again John, and thanks for the invitation to the Cumbria Classic event on August 18/19th. Then a break to visit John and Jackie Box at Burton on Kendal whose hospitality is second to none, on my way to Kirkham where most of the parts were going. Brian Beattie has the - very smart - body off his blue Kitten saloon. It sits about 3 feet above the chassis which is undergoing a through rebuild. Brian is fitting many new parts to this car, including dampers and springs, steering rack ball joints, brake drums (well new front ones at

any rate), all new pipes and hoses as well as cylinders and shoes of course. Sadly by the time I arrived it was getting dark – this was January remember.

On the weather front, there had been 7 lorries lying on their sides a few miles either side of the border – I always think that must be a pretty terrifying experience driving an artic and the wind blows you over. I mean, the initial shock aside, how do you get out of the cab? Regardless of which side the vehicle is lying, one door will be on the ground, so you can't open that one, the other one will be facing the sky, (assuming that you didn't roll down an embankment and are on your roof or worse) about 7 or 8 feet above you, assuming that you are not injured, you might be able to reach it, but how could you push it open? And with the weather that bad would you want to? Or is the windscreen out by then anyway – I have to say the windcreens I saw looked intact.

Moving on then for the night to Stalybridge, thank you Alan and Megan for putting up with me yet again. It was good to see you both.

The morning of day two saw me head over the hill to the M1, this by way of the (closed due to the high winds having blown a lorry over at the top of the hill the previous day) A628, a lovely road which we assumed would be clear since the accident had been the previous day. I gingerly slipped round the cones, at three villages, where the signs said the road ahead was closed. By this time I was heading a string of vehicles, and taking my time in case of problems. Right at the top of the hill I felt a bit guilty, the council workers were still clearing the last of the debris, it looked like the load from a lorry had been shed into the countryside, and they were struggling against the wind to carry the remains across a supposedly closed road to their vehicles for removal!

I later learned that a lorry had been blown over there, another lorry had stopped and helped get the driver out of it, and when they were sitting parked in the second lorry, it blew over too! How unlucky must the first driver have been feeling? I would suspect that if he ever drives a lorry again, he won't be using that road for a very long time!

Selfishly I was pleased to have got through, the detour would have cost me at least an hour on my way to Brian Revill's. Yes another Brian, and would you believe another Kitten, a van this time, with its body sitting a few feet above its beautifully painted chassis with new gleaming copper brake pipes. This is the Brian whose very neat body lifting brackets you will have seen pictures of in the last edition. All new bushes in the suspension, just like the other Brian yesterday. This Brian however has a large garage, about 35 feet by 10, and a well equipped workshop as well, the green eyed monster had to be pushed firmly back into its cage I can tell you.

It is great to see folk carrying out such comprehensive rebuilds, these and similar efforts will certainly secure the long term future for those of our wee cars subjected to such treatment. That said you really have to see Alan Shaw's Kitten to believe it. Alan has owned it from new, and it looks just as though it came out of the showroom last week, yet it has covered well over 100,000 miles in the 30 years he has had it. An annual can of WD40 sprayed over the chassis and suspension (or is that a twice annual event Alan?) is his secret to success, that and his engineering expertise and sheer hard work of course, but the results are a marvel to behold. I can honestly say that of the Kittens that are used, and have not been subject to a major rebuild, Alan's is the best on the planet, well of the ones that I have seen at any rate.

One of my favourite sayings can be found in a framed tapestry in Alan and Megan's house, it reads:- "An engineer is a man who can make for a few pence what any fool can make for a pound !"

On then after the conducted tour of Brian's impressive facilities, you saw him beside one of his other 4 wheeled Reliants on the cover of the last edition, to stop for the night with Tom the engineer and model maker, where I wished I had a tape recorder with me. You know what this memory of mine is like, and Tom was in reminiscing mode. Do you know he can remember exactly how many jags he had when in the R.A.F., every time he and his group of aircraft maintenance engineers were moved from one country to another there was another round of injections to protect them from this that or the other, and Tom can remember them all! (Ouch!)

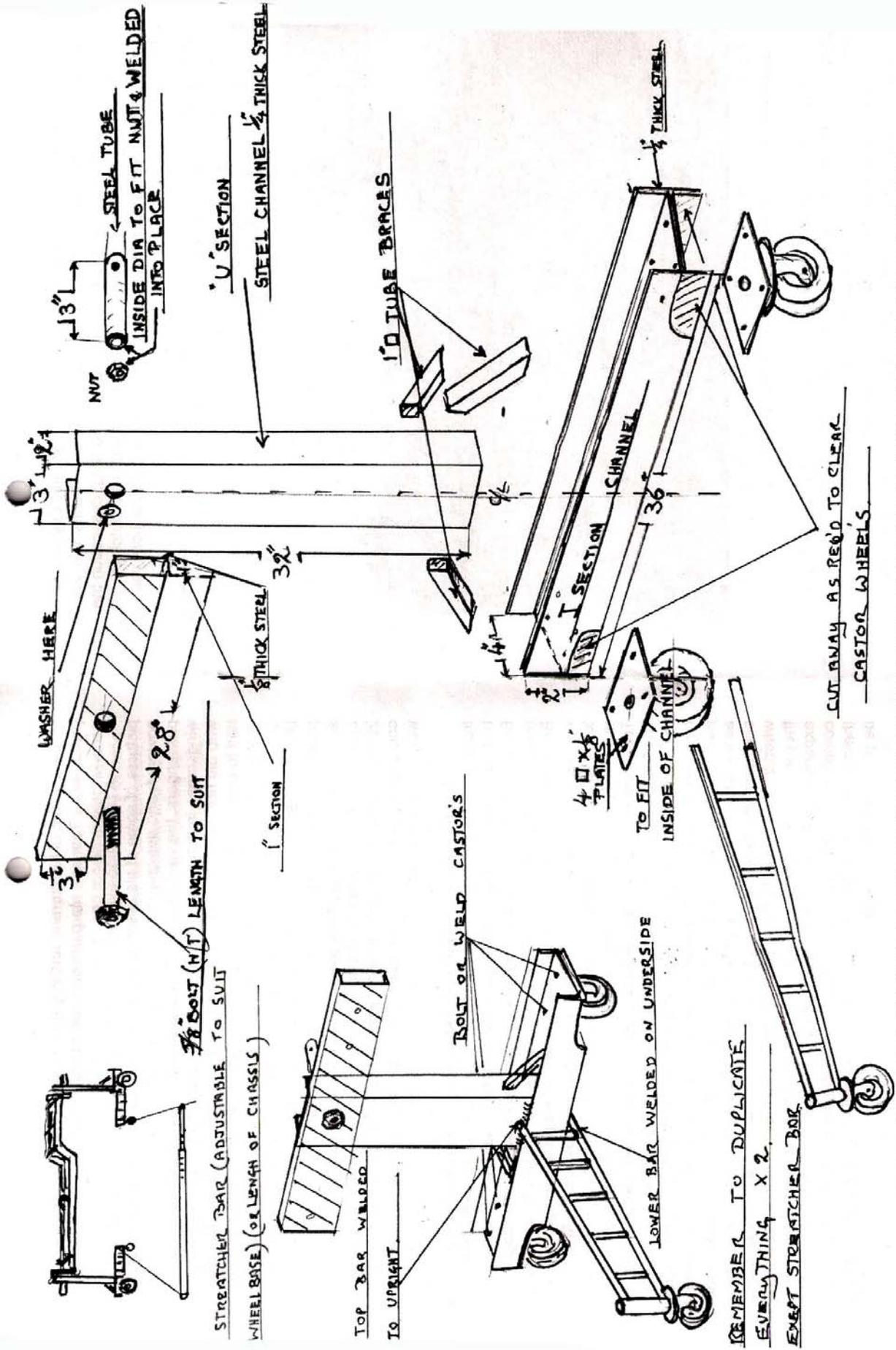
He was actually in what became Pakistan at the very time it separated from India, the 'new' authorities gave them a week to leave the country, and the word came down that all that was to be left were the aircraft; all the tools, spares, manuals and fuel, including any in the aircraft tanks, was to be destroyed or put beyond use, they dumped lorry loads of spares and tools in the sea, what fuel they could not safely burn off was drained into the ground, and, apart from those vehicles they needed to get themselves away, all the others were driven off the jetty into the sea before their C.O. handed over the keys. Can you imagine the fury the Pakistanis must have felt, thinking they were taking over a viable airforce, when they discovered all they had was a collection of useless aircraft!

After his service ended Tom re-joined Rolls Royce, and became their trouble shooter, he told me several stories including the one when he was tasked with getting our first line of air defence, the Lightning, back into service after they were all grounded at the height of the cold war. One of our pilots was convinced – by what in fact was a faulty instrument reading, but he was not to know that, to bale out and write off an aircraft because he thought it was out of control and in imminent danger of exploding. At the end of the day the fault was caused by metal swarf falling into a sensor and causing intermittent electrical shorts giving false readings in the cockpit, all down to a lack of de-burring in the manufacturing process, but our first line of defence was grounded for a while till Tom identified and resolved the problem. That success of his was what ultimately led to him leaving Scotland and Rolls Royce, as the firm who made the instrument sensor which was in fact the cause of the problem, were so impressed with Tom that they spent over a year trying to entice him away from Rolls to join them and run their factory.

At the end of the day it was not the 40% pay rise, nor the perk of a company car (Tom used to run an old Riley 1.5 RME when I knew him as a lad and Dad had the Jowett Javelin), nor even the very enticing profit sharing scheme they offered, but the final clincher was when they promised to pay for both of his current, and any future children's private education! (In the event Tom and Margaret only had the two children!)

A fascinating evening, some of it spent looking at drawings and pictures of some of his designs, like an electric bus for Kew Gardens, solar powered, and designed to carry a wheelchair as well as able bodied passengers, the spec involved Triplex in their first round the corner windscreen in that size of vehicle, but the spec was laid out by a committee who did not realise that even to use it within the confines of Kew Gardens, it had to comply with current road traffic legislation, which it couldn't because of their spec, so it never worked in anger. The machine for putting the coloured strips down the edges of the white chopping boards, the one for lifting sheets of thin paper to glue into the high quality children's books to protect the picture pages, to designing and making a machine to handle 4" shell casings to improve their quality and increase the speed of the process, to making the brakes and much of the front suspension for that 1 off 200mph Aston Martin they made a couple of decades ago. I just wish I could remember more of the details, but it was the wee small hours before we got to bed that night.

The morning came and I had arranged for us to collect Keith Parrott from his home in Brixworth on our way to sail the boat in Tom's 'local' model boat club's private lake, a man made pond in a farm the other side of Brixworth. There was a fair breeze, and it was pretty cold, but we had a good half hour's sailing before the cold got to me and we had to call it a day. Back then to Brixworth for a coffee and cakes where Keith's daughter Linda who works for Cummings Diesel is in fact doing a very similar job for them today to that which Tom did for Rolls Royce 50 years previously, the only real difference is the extra middle man, and the rise of the Chinese. While Tom used to go to India where Rolls sub-contracted some machining, Cummings use a German firm, who subcontract to the Chinese for the machining. Tom asked right away where the raw materials came from and how they knew that the material they sent out for machining was the same material that came back, and Linda told us that there was no problem there as the German firm, who supplied the material, sent them samples which she had chemically analysed, and they took samples from the finished parts when they arrived from China, and did chemical analysis on them to ensure they were from the same source! I thought that chemical analysis was an expensive process, but apparently not it would seem when taken in comparison to the huge cost savings of using the resources of China to do the machining it! A fascinating 24 hours the like of which I don't expect I will be privileged to enjoy again.



I'M AFRAID THAT I CANNOT ACCEPT ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CONSTRUCTION & SAFETY OF THIS KIT
 (IF IT LOOKS WEAK **BEEF IT UP!!**)

On then to spend the night with another Tom, Wardley this time, over near Rugby, where I got to re-charge the boat's batteries. Thanks Tom and Patience for your hospitality, and off on the Sunday morning, destination the York area by way of Coventry where I had to drop off our latest batch of lower steering columns for painting – another long story I will not bore you with today.

I was well ahead of time, so I gave Paul Wheatley a ring to see if he might be about as I would be virtually passing his door, and he said, "Come for Sunday lunch", so I did, thank you Paul (he does not just fly a helicopter, and drive a Liege, but he makes a mean Sunday lunch as well).



The Registrar, (now "Captain" Brian) and Tom D. Lockhart, Engineer and model maker extraordinaire. Northamptonshire February 2007.

On then to York, where the plan was to meet my half cousin Gavin, with his son James, and we were going to sail the boat in Rowntree Park pond, but I could not find it, there was as it happened a good reason for that, the entire park was under a few feet of water! So instead we drove through more road closed signs, past some cones under a bridge, and sailed the boat from the pavement in the River Ouse which was in full spate! I may even include a picture to prove it.

On then to Skirpenbeck for the night where I enjoyed the company of friends and family over a dinner for 8, one of whom was from Gambia, an old school pal of my half cousin's (John – yes, I have more than the one!) who comes to the U.K. about twice a decade, and we had another fascinating evening learning about his underwater ship hull inspection business out there, many more memorable stories, and stimulating to have an international perspective added to things, (does the International Club still exist? More research....) but I have bored you enough for one edition.

I did make a second trip south in March this year, well, leaving at the end of February in fact, when I met a number of our readers for the first time, came across a firm who manufacture and repair steam engines, well traction engines and locomotives actually, they had a 7¼" gauge A4 in for a rebuild, and lots more besides, a whole week away I was allowed that time, and if you don't put pen to paper or finger to keyboard soon, I may bore you further in the next edition – you have been warned!

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Dad's model boat on the river Ouse in York 4th February 2007

Dear Brian,

April 2007

Since you expressed some interest in my scratch built rotisserie frame for working on the Reliant chassis, I thought I would put pen to paper so to speak, and give you some idea and dimensions required for anyone wanting to build a similar thing.

Any like minded idiot could cobble one together, all you need is a little welding ability, failing that a Meccano set approach would work.

As you will see from my hand crafted blue-print on the centre pages it is quite simple. The materials I used were all secondhand, and can be purchased from reclaimed steel supplier. The bolts and casters can be salvaged too. The smaller castors and extension stabiliser came from a shopping trolley rescued from a river, in fact all the castors could be sourced this way (ask your local supermarket if they have any scrap trolleys). I already had 4 larger castors in my shed, (waste not want not).

Materials list :-

2 bolts 5/8" by 4" or to suit. 22 pieces of "I" section steel 36" by 4" by 2" by 1/4" and 2 pieces of "U" section channel 32" by 3 by 1 1/2" by 1/1" and 2 pieces of oblong section 28" by 3 by 1 1/8 2 pieces of tube 3 2 by? by 1/8 wall thickness (to suit nut) to be welded in to one end of each tube . 6 castors of reasonable diameter (larger ones make for easier movement, especially on surfaces that are less than perfectly smooth. Plus 6 pieces of 1" square tube to be used as braces. The stretcher bar is made up from 2 pieces of aluminum scaffold type pipe of different diameters so that one slides inside the other for adjustment.

To make :-

Have all the pieces cut to size.

Weld the bolts to the swivel bars and the nuts into a suitable piece of tube. (the swivel bars will need washers to help them spin freely).

Weld the construction as shown on the blue print ~(previous page) . Remember that all items shown will have to be duplicated as you need to make two – one for each end.

The holes in the swivel bars will have to be drilled to your own preference of attachment, (I found suitable holes and used these) .

Holes will have to be drilled in the stretcher bar and bolts fitted.

I think anyone wanting to work on a chassis would find this gadget a boon, no more grovelling (only to the wife)

DO NOT FIT THE ENGINE AND GEARBOX TO THE CHASSIS WHILST ON THE ROTISSERIE AS THIS WILL MAKE IT TOO HEAVY.

Better safe than sorry. Good luck, Dave Eyre - Barnsley - No. 133

Thanks for that Dave, before I am asked – are you taking orders? And if so, how much? Ed

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Above is an unusual shot of the back end of four of the Liege (did we ever agree what the plural of Liege was?) on the Tour of the Roses run.

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Hi Brian, just recently I have taken on the running of the Wear side branch of the Reliant Sabre and Scimitar Owners Club. I have also taken on the responsibility of organising events along with Graeme Conway who runs Teesside, and Peter Freeman who runs Newcastle. The three branches are planning to go to the following events together and if enough interest is shown for a particular event we will set up a stand. As we are based in the North East most of the events we are attending are in this area. There are quite a lot of members in our area that have owned other models of the Reliant range, so we have an interest in all the Reliant vehicles. I for one have owned quite a few and I still do so if you have a tidy Reliant and you would like to join us contact Dave Allen on 0191 2342306 or 0794 1217123 Or log on to WWW.scimitarNEoggins.talktalk.net

Here is a list of events we hope to attend. Note some of these could change as it depends upon the interest for a particular event. Ring me to confirm we are attending an event or check on our web site.

Sun 13th May North East Restoration Club Show Wilden Road Pattinson Ind Estate Washington NE38 8QB
Sat 26th May Run to Whitehouse Farm NE61 6AW (Vintage Auction) Off A1 Nr Morpeth
Sun 27th May Fins and Chrome Preston Park Stockton
Sun 10th June Sunderland and District Classic Vehicle Society Seaburn Sunderland The Recreation Ground Seaburn
Sun 24th June Raby Castle Keverstone Bank Staindrop Co Durham
Sun 1st July Dilston Castle Nr Corbridge Northumberland Off B6307
Sun 15th July Otterburn Festival Otterburn Mill Otterburn Northumberland A696
Sun 29th July Classic auto jumble and Classic car show Locomotion National Railway Museum Shildon
Sun 5th Aug Pickering Traction Engine Rally A169 Pickering
Sun 27th Aug North East Bus Preservation Trust Seaburn Sunderland The Recreation Ground Seaburn
Sun 2nd Sept North East Restoration Club Show Wilden Road Pattinson Ind Estate Washington NE38 8QB
Sun 23rd Sept Beamish Museum Off A693
Sun 28th Oct Ryhope Engines Museum Ryhope Sunderland Off A1018
9th to 11th Nov N E C Classis Car Show bus trip Date (to be announced)
Dave Allen - Wallsend - No. 791

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Good evening Brian.

April 2007

A short fuse....

As I mentioned last week, I started Kitty one day and none of the accessories worked. A quick peek showed that both of the top two fuses had blown. Having replaced them, all seemed well. That is until a couple of days later when I noticed that the paper label inside the new top fuse was scorched brown in part. Hmm. There are no less than five wires from this fuse and I wondered if it was overloaded. So I got a 30-0-30 amp ammeter and attached wires with suitable spade connectors. One by one I removed the wires and connected the ammeter in series to see what readings I obtained, being :-

Headlamp flasher - 7 amps (40/45 watt bulbs are fitted)

Radiator cooling fan - nearly 10 amps

Interior lamp negligible - but 5 watts is about 1/2 amp

Hazard flashers - not working! - should be (21 watt x 4 bulbs) / 12 volts, say 7 amps.

Total possible load - 24.5 amps on a 35 amp fuse.

But I have been told that the 35 amps is the 'blow' rating and the fuses are only supposed to take a steady load of 17 amps. True or false? This could be the problem. I think that wiring the radiator fan from the solenoid and through an in-line fuse would relieve the load on the top fuse enough to cure the problem. Could I find an in-line fuse in my collection? Of course not. I must visit a factor in town next time I visit.

A Hazardous problem?

As told above, the hazard flashers were not working. Every time this has happened in the past I have found the hazard lights switch to be faulty. Working on this assumption, I phoned Denis at Michaels of Selby (01757 270002) to order the switch and other parts. Efficient as ever, Dennis posted the order the same day and it arrived next day to our postie's amazement. So I fitted the switch, and the hazard lights still did not work! Oh bother. I spent the next couple of hours scratching about in the spaghetti (wiring) trying to find the problem, even substituting the flasher unit for a spare one. Dinner intervened and while I had a post prandial break, I studied the wiring diagram. A quick check with a test lamp showed that no juice was reaching the flasher unit. I smell a rat, a Reliant wiring connector rat! There are two connectors for the top fuse. The lower has one wire to it, while the upper has no less than three piggy backed onto it. These I removed and first scraped clean then polished with fine wet & dry paper. On plugging things together, everything worked. I really should have known.

Best Regards, Dick (Goodall) #157 - Tore

The picture below is of one of those pretty few Kittens that has only ever had the one owner, this one belongs to Dr. Grace Dick from Dunfermline in Fife. It was advertised within these pages a while back, but she is not quite ready to give up her independence just yet. Her local dealer had told her it was worth several thousand pounds, and while she has had it maintained regardless of cost, sadly they do not command such prices, not yet at any rate.



Moira had mentioned something to the effect that it was a while since I had had any non-motoring related humour within these pages, now I have no idea where he found it, but our man in Tore, which is by no means on the way to the moon, well, not from here at any rate, anyway, Dick sent me the following little gem the other day :-

NAVAJO MESSAGE TO THE MOON

When NASA was preparing for the Apollo Project, it took the astronauts to a Navajo reservation in Arizona for training. One day, a Navajo elder and his son came across the space crew walking among the rocks. The elder, who spoke only Navajo, asked a question. His son translated for the NASA people:

"What are these guys in the big suits doing?"

One of the astronauts said that they were practicing for a trip to the moon. When his son relayed this comment the Navajo elder got all excited and asked if it would be possible to give to the astronauts a message to deliver to the moon.

Recognizing a promotional opportunity when he saw one, a NASA official accompanying the astronauts said, "Why, certainly!" and told an underling to get a tape recorder.

The Navajo elder's comments into the microphone were brief. The NASA official asked the son if he would translate what his father had said. The son listened to the recording and laughed uproariously. But he refused to translate.

So the NASA people took the tape to a nearby Navajo village and played it for other members of the tribe.

They too laughed long and loudly, but also refused to translate the elder's message to the moon.

An official government translator was summoned. After he finally stopped laughing, the translator relayed the message:

"WATCH OUT FOR THESE ASSHOLES. THEY HAVE COME TO STEAL YOUR LAND."

Best Regards, #157

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Hiya Brian,

Friday 27th April 2007

Please find enclosed my cheque for payment of a pair of back springs for the Kitten.

While I wait for them I have a chance to sort out one or two other bitty jobs in the little red fire engine while it's elevated on its four beer crates. (Boddingtons), jobs which otherwise in all likelihood wouldn't get done, like touching up the chassis here and there with a bit of black hammerite and waxoil in one or two places.

I have also fitted an experimental electric cooling fan in front of the radiator, a job that's been on the back boiler for a bit now (no pun intended), the fan is a small six inch eight bladed device from a water cooled Vee twin Honda motorbike (are they 12 volt? Ed.) It was hanging about here so I thought 'why not?', we'll see how it fares, it shifts some air I can tell you that much.

I know the theory is to remove the mechanical fan but I left it on for now. The electric one simply turns off and on via a toggle switch on the dash, no sensor or anything, just a manual job with a warning light, all wired through a relay of course, the fan motor draws over 6 amps, I measured it, and I have fitted it the correct way round! The beer crates were already empty when I acquired them.

Today, Friday, Hazel and I nipped over to visit John Copestake in Penistone, the Carwise Reliant spares man, the reason for this visitation was to collect an oil pressure relief valve spring for a spare engine I am fiddling with – Hang on Bill, I thought we had all moved on in that area, and I will need to speak to John if he is still supplying these. We don't use them any longer they are un-reliable, there is a 'new (20 years old now I think) modified pressure release valve that Reliant introduced that does away with the ball, the spring, and hardened seat in the crankcase, and you should replace the old design with the new one when you are in there anyway, Ed. In passing John mentioned that he had a couple of new Kitten mild steel exhaust systems in stock for £65 each, so I bought one and collected it today. Not stainless but better than the 'temporarily permanent' one that's fitted at present, which comprises a huge stainless 'cherry bomb' off one side of a V8 Ford Mustang! With a home made baffle stuck in the 'outspout' to keep Mr. Plod at bay.

Strictly a daytime silencer! and one or two ex-neighbours have passed comment, but they also had a moan when there were two attached to the Mustang, the noise has to be less now doesn't it mate? The new exhaust is the next job in line, this weekend, or maybe make that next week.

Anyway, John Copestake has another exhaust if anyone local needs one in a hurry. He seems to be a good man, very obliging and helpful. First time I have dealt with him but I would do so again no worries. (I'm not on commission, honest).

So that's all for now, I'll give you a follow up report when I'm fully up and running again, once more, thanks for the time and effort you and everyone puts into the Register, it is appreciated.

Regards, Bill and Hazel Starkey - No. 386

Update on my comment about oil pressure switches, it was a cost issue for a bench engine, they are both well aware of the facts.

Getting Technical

You may remember that we were asked a question about speedo calibration, now you may need to wait till next time for confirmation as regards the quality of the work, but Jim Lugsden tells me that he uses Speedy Cables 01639 732213 to do his speedo recalibration, at about £45 a time. Obviously they need to know certain facts before they can carry out the work, and given that Reliant changed the number of teeth on the Kitten speedo drive gear part of the way through the production run, and that some people have had to change gearboxes in the quarter of a century or so since then, there may be more unknown's than you might imagine, however, they do have the facilities, and expertise to help, and, provided they are given accurate information I do not doubt they can 'do it'!

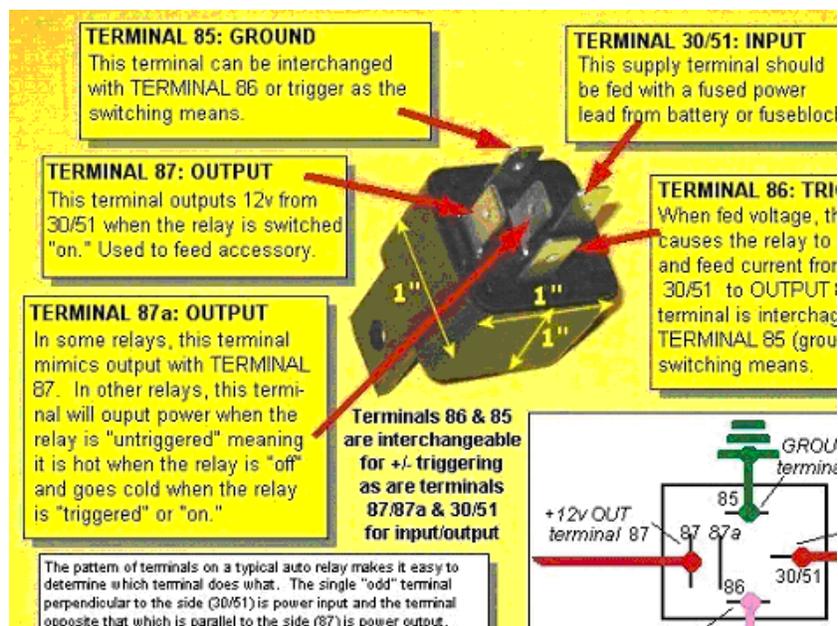
Fitting of relays to protect switches from failure.

This information is given in good faith but I accept no responsibility for its use.

Following Jim's mention in Mewsletter 24, I thought it would be a good idea to expand on the relay theme:-

In Reliants in general, some of the switches are prone to failure through prolonged high currents overheating the switch, especially the dashboard light switch and the column headlamp control switch. Fitting relays in the Main and Dip beam supply wires will cure this. The relays need to be fitted into the wiring at some point after the switches in order to protect them.

A relay can be considered as a trigger. It uses a small current to trigger the closing of internal switch contacts specially made for high current use. They cost a few pounds at any motor factor, and have various ratings. Go for a higher rating than you need, at least 30amps. They should have the terminals labelled in an odd but standardised way and normally look something like the following diagram, which I obtained courtesy of Chet Walters, <http://www.rattlebars.com>
Thanks Chet!



So: terminals 85 and 86 carry the current that is used to trigger the main supply to the lights. Either 86 or 85 needs to get current via the original wire from the normal switch, and the other [85 or 86] needs to be connected to an earth.

Terminal 30/51 needs connecting to a 12volt supply via cable and terminals at least as heavy as the original supply, and 87 is connected to the lights via the remains of the original wiring.

In the Reliant Fox and Kitten, and maybe other models, the headlamp feed wires are Blue/Red tracer and Blue/White tracer. Yes, this was an industry standard for decades, one was the main beam and the other the dip, can anyone remember which was which? Ed. A convenient point to break into them is after they leave the column switch and before they reach the junction block under the steering column. At the back of the junction block each wire becomes two – left hand / right hand lamp wires, which makes things more complicated.

Unclip the junction box, free the wiring down from the switch, peel back the tape and find the blue/white and blue/red wires.

You need to cut into each. You need to leave enough wire each side of the cut into each. You need to leave enough wire each side of the cut to fit a connector. It's neater to make the cuts in different parts of the wires so the connections aren't alongside. You'll need good connections; they will carry a fair current. The connections should be soldered and must be insulated. Crimp-type connections aren't safe or reliable enough. So plan ahead.

A good place for mounting the relays is near the flasher units up on the offside kickboard. This gives a short run to the fuse box, where you should be able to run a doubled wire to a spare spade terminal on the bottom fuse for relay terminals 30/51, going through the grommet alongside the wiring loom through the bulkhead. It gives terminals 85/6 reasonable access to splice into an earth wire [black] too. You could splice in using bullet connectors with a twin socket. The blue/tracer wires from the switch need to be extended to terminals 86/5 and the blue/tracer wires to the junction block need extending to connect to terminals 87. Again, bullet connectors would be a good choice.

When you're sure you have everything ready, disconnect the battery before proceeding. When you are done ensure all is insulated and secured tidily before testing. You should hear a click as the relay triggers whenever you operate the headlamps, except using the hi-beam flash switch. This operates from another source of power, but the short use means the switch isn't stressed. It is a useful emergency if the other circuit fails.

I hope the above is of use!

Duncan Bradford

Thanks for that Duncan, I am no auto electrician, but it was my belief that in an ideal world the relay would want to be mounted as close as possible to the device it was operating, in the case of headlights, the best place would be to plug the relay directly onto the headlight, not sure how practical that may be, and obviously then you would need two of them, but that was certainly firmly embedded somewhere in this less than reliable brain of mine – Ed.

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Below, a picture from Burford at our gathering there in 2005



Another Burford photo follows, oh how I wish we could do these in colour!



Sales and wants

For Sale :- 1982 Reliant Fox, in beige. On SORN at the moment this vehicle has had £17,000 spent on it in its life and has many extras, sun roof, rally seats, electronic ignition rev counter 4 branch manifold unleaded head fast road cam too many to mention. Sensible offers to Bob The car is in the south Ockendon area in Essex.

For Sale :- The Hallam Kitten is on the move again, M.O.T.'d till December the much modified in the body kit department could be yours, Graham is the man you need to talk to, he is in Ayrshire

For Sale :- T registered Kitten estate for spares or repair with new bits. £80 the lot, contact Tevor Bailey Poole in Dorset.

For Sale :- 1969 Reliant Rebel project, (just needs painting) lots of new bits, £500. contact Chris Norris Suffolk

Wanted :- Kitten to cherish, i.e. maintain and drive. A sound vehicle with a long MOT. Please e-mail details to :- rbnhales@yahoo.co.uk

Robin, a quarter of our readers are not on-line, so anyone with a suitable vehicle for sale contact the editor if you do not have access to e-mail. Ed.



A shot of some of the interesting vehicles in Andrew Norman's drive taken in March 2007 just before he sold the Tempest. Good luck with the impending move Andrew, and thanks again for your and Angie's hospitality.

Brian

Epilogue

Here I am again at the last part of the magazine, well, not quite, I have in fact just this week mailed your copy of edition 75, and, keen to keep the momentum going, have, as promised, included a number of pictures. At the time of writing I cannot know how they are going to turn out, do let me know what you think. I have to say that the impression would be a whole lot better if I could afford to let you see them in colour, but small steps and all that.

Right now (April 7th, just watched the qualifying of the Malaysian Grand Prix, boring, a red car on pole – again!) this edition is about half done, and I am distracted by having to try and find things. O.K., I have just spent hours trying to adjust the size of some of the pictures to get things tidy, and am really frustrated. I want to have the centre page left empty to have Dave Eyre's chassis rotisserie drawings in there, there are times when I think I am getting to old to learn new tricks! Dave it was good to meet you and Hazel the other day, I must apologise as I was not at my best, next time we'll take the boat out for a sail.

It is now May the first, our renewal notice from the Federation has just arrived, and though it is not due till the 1st of June, I thought I would send off our subs right away, just in case my newly tidied desk gets out of control again – oh no it won't!

The point is, that after our dip in numbers last year for the first time since I started doing this, I was delighted to see that, in spite of all those letters from folk who were leaving us that I published in the last couple of editions, our numbers are actually 3% up on the levels of just 11 months ago, so it was in high spirits that I posted a cheque for £82.23 to Jim Whyman at the F.B.V.H.C. on our behalf.

Oh listen, all the excitement of pictures is my excuse this time, for about the third edition in a row I have missed Al Osborn's Resin Rockets advert from these pages, Alan is still out there in Thetford, and still offers his usual services.

Aarrgghhh, just as I thought I was almost finished, there is a blank page at number 23, and I can't understand why!! There are no gaps when I run through the document – BUT! - And Moira and I have a window of opportunity to have a holiday - which I am very keen to take advantage of – but I really need to get this to the printers before we get away, so if it is a bit untidy just blame me and accept my apologies, the old adage of learning to walk before running springs to mind, but nothing ventured and all that, even in black and white, the pictures don't look too bad when I print them here, I just hope the printer manages to do as well, do let me know what you think.

Right, just time to remind you about grease guns and lubrication, keep those wheels turning, and have a great start to the summer.

Brian

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