

# Reliant Kitten Register



**NEWSLETTER 79**

*November - December 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

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 19 Cedar Court, Churchfields,

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 trend of this year we have on the cover a car with its owner, in this case its first owner, Dr. Grace Dick from Dunfermline owned her yellow Kitten saloon from new until the middle of 2007 when she decided to part with it. The good doctor had maintained the vehicle regardless of cost, though covering only about 30,000 miles in three decades of ownership, most recently having new front dampers and springs fitted in 2006.

She tells me that the car has been out of Scotland on a number of occasions, taking her on holidays to the Yorkshire area, but mostly it was used for more local journeys.

The good doctor sold the car in the summer of this year, we hope to keep track of it in the future.

Welcome to our Christmas edition, I hope this finds you and yours well.

The car is of course what this is all about, and to that end I will be using an article that Kerry Croxton wrote for the Reliant Owners Club last year and kindly agreed to let us use within these humble pages. I have taken the liberty of updating it where appropriate. Thanks for the research and permission to use it Kerry.

After my soapbox stance in the last edition about standards of English in high places, I think there were more mistakes in that edition than I have made for a while, (that old adage about people in glass houses and projectile launching lurks in the back of my mind), still, it was the largest one in recent times, and I am not, and never will be, the font of all knowledge about such matters in the first place! That said, the ones I was having a dig at were education facilities, some of them supposedly of the highest calibre in the land – ought I to feel ashamed? Strive to improve is the best I can hope for – constructive criticism always welcome.

Moving on, every so often my telephone rings and the conversation goes something like, “I’m looking for Mr. Brian Marshall?” “To do with Reliants” and off we go. I really ought to devise a reliable system for dealing with these, but one of my character flaws is that if people are not subscribers, unless they have a particularly interesting story, or I feel that they may become subscribers, or can at least provide details about a relevant vehicle, they often don’t get a lot of my time. Rightly or wrongly I feel that that is the way it has to be.

Last week, early October, I had a call from a chap who had been put onto me by the Scimitar and Sabre Owners Club, he has owned one of those nice cars for a while, and had always aspired to one day owning a Kitten. To that end he had bought some parts a long time ago, amongst them a pair of front dampers complete with springs. He now feels however, that with running Kittens being so rare, that he is unlikely to achieve his goal – I know, I should have done a better sales pitch – anyway, he wondered if I could confirm that they were Kitten dampers – no doubt hoping I could find them a home for him. As the discussion continued it became clear that they were not, having the same attachment method at both ends, they were, if Reliant at all, probably three wheeler front, or possibly Bug rear (how do they attach at the top? Do I really need to know that?!?) . So ended our conversation, but I can’t remember his name. And I never did ask his address, must be slipping, I usually at least send such folk a sample magazine, and of course an application form. But it was an interesting chat, and did serve to remind me that I had not spoken to the R.S.S.O.C. folk for a while, something I must rectify – another item for the ‘To Do’ list!

Speaking of my to do list, a new kitchen was thought desirable, a couple of our friends have had them recently, and so we set about planning how to achieve an

acceptable quality job within a budget – ours was almost 27 years old, and showing it, and with Moira's relatively recent love of baking, well, I am sure that you know how it is.

Close neighbours had 'just rung B & Q and had them come and do it', not a bad job, and, apart from a two month lead time, the job itself was complete in less than a week, but just units, worktops and new 'white goods' as they call the hardware these days. No new electrical sockets or under unit lights or anything like that, the sort of thing you see advertised for sale in the shop for about £2,000 to £3,000, or thereby. Total cost £6,000 plus change installed – just about 3 times our budget, so after visiting many suppliers of such things, a new one has recently opened less than a mile from our house, they had some quite nice ones, we agreed on one we could both live with, till we discovered that it cost £27,000, yes really, I kid you not, you could buy a brand new Jag for less! (actually the one Moira really liked was £36,000) and that was excluding fitting! No thank you Mr. Porcelanosa..

So, we ended up after considering Ikea's non-standard sized units, on a B&Q one, they had a half price deal on, and to cut a long story short, with a lot of help from a number of friends, we had it installed and operational, if not quite complete, in three weeks at the end of October / early November. Total cost about £2,500 or so including some new tools, and both under wall cabinet and inside cabinet (low voltage) lighting as well as doubling the number of 13 amp outlets and having an outside socket fitted while we were at it.

Result, a happy wife (not without a number of stressful moments along the way mind you) so I am happy too – more baking to sample soon I expect. By the way, in spite of eating out for 3 days during the operation, I was down to 71kg by the end of October, I doubt I will be that weight again before Easter if ever!

Right, enough digressing, enjoy the festive period, drive safely, and don't forget to pay special attention to lights, tyres and anti-freeze and oil, as well as the charging system and battery – that for those who are using the car, those in the process of rebuilds, don't get too cold in the garage over the winter.

Oh, hang on, I had a call today from Malcolm Rush, he tells me that he has found a really good venue for a get-together in 2009, more details elsewhere, but just close to the Welsh border to the north of Wales I think, we need to move quickly to book a date, some very impressive photo opportunities I understand. As I said, watch for more details either within these pages or on a separate sheet.

## Rebel Round up

John Blagburn, as readers of the appropriate motoring publication will be well aware, has been trying to motivate the editorial team at Practical Classics into doing a bit on Rebels, and I read in the recent edition that they have promised to send Matt to do a report on John's fine example of the marque – we wait with baited breath, well done John both for dropping the gauntlet so tactfully, and for getting your article published along with a picture - It all helps to raise awareness which has to be good.

Not John's thus one, but Mike King's, just to let you see that they are still out there!



## Foxes Den

I know that Duncan has a desire to see as many Tandy campers getting together as possible, and, given that three of them are usually to be found at the R.O.C. national rally weekend, was hoping to encourage others to come along – sounds like a good cover picture opportunity to me – talk to Duncan if you have one of these rare vehicles and he will fill you in..

Mary Metcalfe – and her lucky husband John, both wrote me letters about John's birthday present recently, you should see them further on.

Meantime, having featured an owner with their car on our cover for the past year, Keith Gittus wondered if I would like to go one better next year and do two owners with two cars, sounds like a bit of a challenge Keith, but, with you and Glyn getting us off to such a good start as our readers should enjoy in our next edition, you never know....

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I'm sure the sticker on the back of the Ferrari reads "My other car is a Reliant" !

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## Matters Tempestuous

Well, Jack's Tempest (advertised in the last edition) sold very quickly, Dave Smith has added it to his stable, he plans to use Jack's old car for competition work, a task it is

both used to, suited for, and very successful at in Jack's hands, and put his own Tempest into road trim for more regular road use in the future.

Dave tells me that he hopes to make it to the proposed Tempest get together that Yoland Brown hinted at before at the Stoneleigh kit car weekend in May 2008. The people you might want to contact in that regard are :-



Donald Nicolson's Tempest at Renfrew June 2006

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**Liege page**

The Liege guys, many engineering types among them, have been quick to join the band of, mainly three wheeler owners, who are excited about the possibility of aluminium sumps for the Reliant 850 engine. I know, Dick Harvey and John Box must be thinking, "I've done that before", and so they have, but no one we are aware of knows the whereabouts of the pattern for either of these designs. I do still have a couple of the big headed brass sump plugs that John Box had made to go with his design. It was made for Reliant, they both owned and ended up with the pattern I believe, and it vanished between one of the changes of owners of the company a decade or so ago, with, as far as I am aware, only the one prototype sump ever cast! I did see, touch it even, at Stable Cottage a number of years ago I think what stirred up all the flurry of interest was the appearance – on e-bay, of an alloy sump, possibly the one I am talking about, in October 2007. That said, the Dick Harvey ones had at least one, if not more, baffles, and I can't remember if the Reliant one had, but I don't think so. Does anyone know if the one on e-bay had?

In any case it is very likely that a pattern will need to be made, and that will need careful thought as to the design.

Thanks to the wonders of this electronic age, it may well be that by the time you read this, a lot of progress will have been made. I know that there were lots of e-mails, and postings on the Liege web site and I think also the R3W one about this in October.

The Register does have experience of Alloy castings for non-standard bits for the 850 engine. Thanks to Phil Hallam, we eventually had the pattern for the alloy rocker covers made back in about 1990. The big question then was how much to charge for them in order to recoup the pattern costs in a reasonable time frame, not really having a clue how many we would sell.

Roughly pattern / development costs would be in the region of £500 or so depending on how sophisticated a design of sump was finally decided upon, and how many people would be prepared to devote / donate time to the project. Of course you need to not only have a pattern made, but have a sump cast and fitted to an engine, and a car, to make sure that one, it fits and seals properly, and two, does not foul the chassis. The increased wall thickness, and possibly inclusion / addition of cooling fins, would make the external dimensions somewhat larger than the original pressed steel design. Given that those interested run a variety of vehicles fitted with the 850 Reliant engine, any such device would need to be test fitted to each and every one of the proposed vehicles to ensure that there is clearance of things like chassis, sump guards, anti roll bars etc. All of which takes time and costs money. None of which should deter anyone from trying, just be aware, that's all.

Having typed this up at five in the morning during one of those sleepless nights in October, I ought to copy it to the relevant web places, I don't have access to many of them, so I'll send it to Paul and Duncan and ask them to pass it on if they think it would be helpful. Blast, just tried that, this new computer does not have Paul's address – grrrrr! More things to do!!!

I'll leave you with those thoughts for now, and possibly up-date you later.

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As part of a new trend to get the grey cells stimulated, I thought I'd include this recent picture in here, we all know that Peter Davis organised a Reliant engine specific supercharger for half a dozen of the Liege guys a couple of years ago, but now, late 2007, here is a turbo just in the process of being fitted to a Reliant 850, it is a Garrett GT12, which is I believe the smallest one they make, more details to follow in future. Lest I forget, and to give due credit, Steve Broomhall is the man doing it, and it was Steve who kindly sent me the picture in November '07, thanks Steve, and good luck.



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### **30 plus years of the Kitten**

Despite poor sales of their first venture into 4 wheeled economy motoring with the Rebel in 1964, almost a decade later Reliant commissioned Ogle Design to come up with a replacement. The brief, we are told, was for an up-market economy car that could be driven with ease in the congested traffic conditions of the day – late 70's and early 80's! The result was factory code FW10. The name Kitten was the result of 120 suggestions submitted by Reliant employees.

Visually similar to the Robin with a revised front end to accommodate the extra front wheel, driver and front passenger leg room was also greatly enhanced with the engine and gearbox unit being mounted so much further forward in the chassis, there being no wheel in front of them in the Kitten.

The similarity and interchangeability of some parts such as doors and windows with the existing Robin reduced development costs significantly.

There were of course some changes initiated for the Kitten from the outset. For example, Reliant opted for radial tyres.

The first new British small car (under 1000cc) in more than a decade was launched at the Earls Court Motor Show in 1975. "The new Reliant Kitten, in saloon and estate

versions sets completely new standards in economy motoring,” the specification sheet stated. Powered by Reliant’s well proven 848cc alloy engine, these 4 seaters were capable of returning nearly 60mpg with careful driving, with a top speed close to 80mph. Reliant’s managing director Roger Musgrave, described the Kitten as offering “economy from every angle”. A car “built to stay young” was the slogan.

In fact they claimed the Kitten could return 60 mpg at a steady 50mph, and 70mpg at a steady 40mph! Not bad today never mind back in 1975.

Mechanically the Kitten was also similar to its three wheeler stablemate, the Robin, sharing the same engine and gearbox and back axle ratio, the handbrake however was different as were other axle components. The chassis too was modified, not only to accommodate the extra front wheel, but also was made much more rigid with additional cross bracing and an additional tubular cross member giving rise to a very rigid triangulated structure.

The Kitten chassis offered easier production than the Rebel, due to the parallel side members. Prior to the adoption of the galvanising process, which Reliant did not adopt till the Fox came out, they protected the chassis from corrosion by double immersion in a special paint.

At the front the Kitten featured a collapsible steering column and rack and pinion steering conforming to the latest European safety legislation. Kerb to kerb turning circle was less than 24 feet, better than the statutory 25 feet which applied to London taxis since 1905, a point Reliant emphasised in their advertising campaigns.

Reliant designed independent double wishbone and coil damper units with an anti roll bar at the front, and Reliant designed progressive rate leaf spring and telescopic dampers at the rear endowing the car with great road behaviour.

Progress made by mass production car makers meant that the Kitten faced stiffer competition from its rivals. Whereas the Rebel (estate) was about 7.5% cheaper than the Mini estate, the Kitten, at £1499 was 11% more expensive than the Mini. Top speed and acceleration were similar to the larger engined Fiat 127 and Mini, and better than the Hillman Imp. However the Kitten came into its own when it came to fuel economy, being some 20 – 25% better than its rivals.

Magazine road testers reported that it was difficult to get less than 52mpg under normal driving conditions. The Kitten also had the potential for longer life than its rivals being equipped with an all fibreglass body. The Kittens body is considerable smaller than that of its predecessor the Rebel, being 7” shorter and 2” narrower, that may not sound like much, but in a small car it makes a big difference.

The excellent fuel economy of the Kitten was proven in one of the most rigorous tests, the Mobil Economy Run. In 1976 a standard Kitten won its class with an overall consumption of 55.11mpg. An even better figure was achieved the following year.

Also in 1976 In the Total Economy Drive the Kitten triumphed too. Total Oil's official report said that the Kitten's win was "an outstanding performance in conditions that did nothing to favour small cars." Malcolm Young of Derby with Mike Swindells of Notts as navigator drove Kitten JOP 19P in what was reckoned to be the toughest and most carefully observed economy event ever staged in Britain, and for the Kitten to win by such an impressive margin was a great boost to Reliant's sales.

The event started at the Thames and took a roundabout route to Manchester via Birmingham, Halifax, Bradford and Keswick totaling some 525 miles. The second leg of 475 miles was against the clock under the most arduous of conditions at speeds of over 60mph at times.

Optional extras on the Kitten included a heated rear window, rear wipe/wash (on the estate) laminated windscreen and reclining passengers seat. The estate version offered up to 35 cubic feet of luggage space. The Kitten was offered in a range of 9 bright colours: Desert Tan, Turquoise, Venetian Blue, London Red, April Yellow, Artic White, Tropic Green, Caramel and Virginia Brown. All of which were applied 8 coats thick.

In 1977 Reliant added a Van to the Kitten range. Designated with a 6cwt payload the sales brochure describes a van that should have been ideal for small businesses. With 55mpg (fully laden), 42 cu.ft. of load space as a two seater or up to 53 cu.ft. with just the driver's seat, the Kitten promised to be just the ticket. The 24 foot turning circle and nippy engine, helped by a lower ratio back axle than the saloon and estate, would have made town deliveries hassle free. Yet the small businessman avoided the Kitten van like the plague it would seem. Rarely do you see a Kitten van these days, though anyone who owns one will be full of praise. It would appear that the price of a handbuilt workhorse could not compete with its mass produced rivals.

The Kitten van was outwardly similar to the estate from the side or back, however from the front it was quite distinctive with its 7" round headlamps (of which we suspect they had more than a few left over from Rebel production!) in contrast to the saloon and estate's rectangular ones. There were slight mechanical differences to aid load lugging, the afore mentioned axle ratio of 3.545:1 compared to the 3.23:1 of the saloon and estate giving 15.5mph per 1000rpm in top compared to the 17mph of the others. This hardly affected acceleration or top speed, the acclaimed maximum being down to 78mph, but in practice the willing engine would take it well into the 80's in all but the worst weather. Reliant offered a lower compression version of the 848cc engine which could run on 2 star petrol, it is not clear how many, if any of these were supplied. The price at launch of the van was £1508 plus vat, which included a passenger seat.

Reliant claimed that the Kitten van was the most economical commercial vehicle produced by any manufacturer, British or foreign! Tests at the MIRA proving ground demonstrated that the Kitten van could return 55mpg fully laden. Even greater fuel economy was achieved when a Kitten van was entered in an economy competition. The Reliant dealer Dalbury Cars drove the Kitten from Mansfield to Heilenhass near Dusseldorf and back averaging 63mpg.

It was not just for fuel economy that the Kitten won awards however. It also came top of the Motor magazines "Index of Merit" for 1975. To win this accolade the Kitten had to achieve top points based on a number of attributes. The equation was something like this: Overall mpg times number of passengers carried divided by the 30-50mph top gear acceleration time times purchase price times 10000!

To cope with the rigors of commercial use the rear of the van featured a wooden floor covered by a rubber mat.

Announced in October 1976 the Kitten DL or de luxe was introduced on both the saloon and estate versions. This offered improved suspension – a stiffer anti roll bar, interior refinements including reclining seats as standard, and better cold starting by means of carburettor improvements and a new air cleaner. The heated rear window became standard equipment and elasticated door pockets replace the earlier moulded ones. Prices were by now £1812.33 for the saloon and £1908.86 for the estate.

Throughout its relatively short production life, the Kitten's price steadily rose making it less and less competitive, and in 1982 it was decided to halt production. Some were registered much later due to a cancelled export order being offered to dealers to complete themselves.

Though more successful than the Rebel, of which only about 2750 or so were built during a 10 year production run.

The Kitten design was not abandoned totally. The rights to production were granted to an Indian manufacturer and continued production in Bangalore as the Sipani Dolphin from 1984. This in turn was the basis for the prototype of India's first sports car the San Storm. The Dolphin itself was also subject to restyling in the early 90's and became the Montana. Fitted with four doors and with the option of a 901cc diesel engine as an alternative to Reliant's 848cc petrol unit.

At home and abroad the Kitten has been the basis for some unusual creations. Jet, yes really, using a small helicopter engine!, electric, Honda Fireblade, Kawasaki 1100, Fiat 1600 and Ford 2 litre as well a Rover V8 powered one. One was even converted into the world's smallest ambulance, and to this day it can be found in the Guinness Book of records as such.

There are also various Kitcars available based on Kitten chassis and running gear, most notably the Tempest, offered either with the Reliant 848cc engine or the 950cc ex-Coventry Climax based unit from the Talbot Sunbeam, and the Cipher. Tony Stevens first considered the Kitten chassis as a potential basis for a new British sports car with the Sienna, a car with separate mudguards along the lines of the Morgan. However only the prototype was made, his son was still running it a decade later. His next project was a car that resembled the 1960s Lotus Elan, the Cipher. This car won praise from the motoring press however Reliant decided it would be too expensive to manufacture after only about seven examples had been produced. two in the Reliant factory at Tamworth, and four by Tony himself.

Using much of the Tempest design, John Box built 11 "Vantiques" The Vantique is a 1930's look-alike van, most of which were used as mobile delivery vans advertising their owner's businesses, florists shop owners seemingly the most prevalent. The only four Fox chassis that were produced by Bean when they owned Reliant in 1991/2, were used by John Box to build Vantiques. Reliant Partsworld have just (early 2007) had their Vantique rebuilt and made roadworthy after several years of being in retirement as a static advert.

The Tempest was more successful, very successful in trials events, and with Reliant approval 23 or so of these MGTD looking type cars were assembled between 1987 and 2001, half as turnkey cars which were completed by 1990, the brainchild of the late Ian Foster of Teal Bugatti fame, ably assisted by John Box. The other half supplied as kits by John Box for their owners to convert their Kitten or Fox into a smart open 2 seater between 1990 and 2000. The Tempest business was sold to Steve Campbell in 2000, he did sell a few kits, hence the doubt about total numbers, before selling the business on to Mike Phillips in 2003, who sadly failed to produce any, Steve taking the moulds, jigs etc. back in 2006. The Tempest project was acquired in 2007 by John Melody of Wizzkits fame, and a "new" demonstrator Tempest was built by John Melody in 2007.

Reed Engineering of Atherstone, Warwickshire built the Cub. This was to be a holiday beach car for the Seychelles. A sunshine roof was mounted on a open, door-less body on the Kitten chassis and running gear. The Avis group ordered 50 to be made available for hire in the Indian Ocean playground. The Cubs were liked by the tourists for their economy and ease of handling on the narrow twisting island roads.

Reliant too revisited the Kitten design. In 1998 a new prototype was seen at the Reliant factory, having been built some time before then, featuring the Fiesta MK2 front lights as per the Robin LX, 12" alloy wheels, the car looked very smart in its dark green metallic paint. There was also an all glass opening rear widow, which featured on the original Kitten saloon. However exhaust emissions regs and type approval costs prevented the vehicle going into production. Such a shame!!

Acknowledgements to Reliant Regal and Robin by the late Don Pither, Reliant Review, Reliant's in house magazine, Transport Source books, Kerry Croxton and John Box

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## **Readers Letters**

Dear Brian,

27th September 07

Progress on the renovation of the kitten is proceeding steadily. The back axle is fully sorted and back in place. I am now doing battle with the front suspension area.

Trying to get the front brake drums off the car was fun!! The brake shoes over the years had cut a groove in the brake drum itself, plus the rust build-up on the outer edge made it impossible to remove the drums.

Slacken off the adjusters!! Great idea. That is, if three of them weren't seized solid and one adjuster totally sheared off. Oh b-----er! So.

Using plenty of WD40. I managed to remove the bolts & screws retaining the "slave cylinders" in position. Then undid the hub retaining nuts. Using the rubber mallet, I persuaded the whole brake drum & shoe assembly's plus the hubs to come away. Then with a lot of jiggering about, the whole assembly fell apart. The adjusters were so badly seized up the back plates were useless. Unless I spent ages cutting out the adjusters and cobbling up some home made set-up.

The chassis and the suspension arms etc. were covered with years of muck and plenty of rust. In the past, someone had gone over the whole lot with "Under seal". Good idea if the surfaces are new and free from rust etc., but when it's put on over rust, it causes more trouble than it's worth. The antiroll bar was resting on the chassis, [chewing both away.] and the end rubbers and clamping washers on the suspension arms were totally done for.

Thank goodness, none of the rust was life threatening. Just more careful scraping.

Pleased to say that the ball joints are all O.K.. Previous owners had used the grease gun with enthusiasm. So much so that two of the swivel joints had to have grease dug out, so as to let the rubber boots seal back against the shafts.

Luckily, I have managed to secure a pair of newish back plates (great, now the brakes can be adjusted.)

So with chassis scraping, and degreasing ongoing, the front business end is looking good.

I have found a website, detailing replacement "Antiroll Bar" synthetic rubber bushes. (The ones on the car were rock hard. Totally perished. I reckon they must be the original pair.) The company is called "Powerflex". They make them for the Kitcar Scene. And luckily they have a pair that should fit the bill. *(Yes Clive, we carry these in stock at excellent prices, and have the correct size of mounting brackets as well thanks to Alan Shaw, Ed.)*

Now for something different. Whilst I have been ferreting around for spare parts etc. The number of people I have come across that have no idea what a Reliant Kitten is, (or was) is astonishing, considering most of the people are in the motor trade.

So as to be able to sound a bit more knowledgeable about the Kitten cars, perhaps you, or someone out there could answer these questions, as I can't seem to find much on the net.

What year was the first Kitten produced?

When was the last unit made?

Was the saloon first up, or was it the estate?

Roughly. How many of each were produced?

I have heard that about 640 estates, and around 2440 saloons were made.

But that is rumour. !!!

Did they ever fit the 750cc engines in the Kittens?

*Right, I am not claiming the following are the definitive answers, but from memory I'll do the best I can to deal with this now, feel free to respond if you know differently! First Kitten, probably built 1974, but I know of none registered before 1975, which was when they were launched. The last one, someone might know the answer to this, and I ought to find out. As far as registrations go the situation is grey owing to a cancelled export order being sold as 'kit cars' through the trade (Reliant dealers were offered a good deal on these) and converted from left hand drive to right before registering, so we have a few 'A' registered ones out there, but the final year of the main volume production run was 1980 till last 'normal' registrations in 1981. Now the matter of Saloon or Estate first, and don't forget the vans, distinguishable by their round headlights, yes I know one owner, finding it hard to locate replacement rectangular headlamps, converted an estate to round ones, hence creating the proverbial exception that proved that rule! The first brochures featured a saloon, but I honestly either don't know or can't remember which came first, I am sure several readers either know the facts, or at any rate have strong opinions, please do share your knowledge.*

*Likewise I have no firm information on numbers of saloons, estates or vans were produced, though I suspect the Glass Guide books may help us tie that down if we had them all and could be bothered to do the research. I know when I asked the factory some years ago they rhymed off the figures – because they had been asked so often the girl knew the answer off the top of her head, but on studying those figure it became clear she was talking about Rebels not Kittens! I do have - somewhere safe – two letters on file answering that question, they are both different, and I suspect both wrong, yes they were written by Reliant in answer to the question at two different times, both asked and answered by different individuals. Again if anyone reading this has any evidence, or even sound information, please lets be hearing from you. (After me banging on about education and standards in the last edition, just how difficult is English? I mean the word "lets" in the last sentence, obviously means "let us" and so should it not have an apostrophe, but it seems to have become accepted as a word – oh dear – I'll just shut up!)*

*Reliant did not ever sell 750cc powered Kittens, that said when I saw the MK II Kitten some years ago – which never made it into production, I think it had one in it! But if that was the case, it was most likely because they had robbed it of the 850 for another vehicle or customer looking for an engine! Right, back to Clive's story :-*

The more I get into this refurbishment of the Kitten, I find I have increasing admiration for the designer of the Kitten chassis. Remember this design was created

before all the 3D computer modelling systems were ever thought of, in fact. it was all done on the drawing board, with a skilled designer draughtsman pushing pencil.

Some of the weight reducing systems (whilst still retaining the torsional rigidity ) are there to see. Especially the use of the two short tubes inboard of the lower suspension arms.

Also look at the welding of the chassis. Whether it was done with robots. [ I doubt it ] or by hand, the integrity of the welding is first class. Proper penetration, and not like some welds you see to day. [good impression of Pigeon poo]. Plus the ability to shim out the suspension mounting points. And get the camber angles correct. Not like the same age design of the Ford Escort. What the welded up, pressed out parts gave you, was what your camber angle was. [Check out what the angles were supposed to be, to what was actually there.] It was just the same with the Granada mk2

So.! I reckon that the Kitten chassis is right up there with the original Lotus seven for it's total simple effectiveness.

Enough of me going on. As you can tell I am still enjoying the experience.

Hope things your end are going well. I just checked out the heater in the workshop! As you get older you just can't stand the cold. And lying on the concrete floor, even with an old carpet on it is pushing it.

Cheers, Clive (Angel) No. 510 - Royston

*Thanks for the update Clive, I think you are one of the lucky ones, not all the chassis were as neatly welded as yours! Ed.*

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Dear Brian,

11/10/07

Just to let you know our new address, we moved twice (practice makes perfect Andrew!) we are now renting whilst I start on the "project" (house with no roof, floors etc., barn for workshop, and windmill shell). *Sounds just like a residential Reliant project Andrew!*

My Kitten van is being rattled about as I drive up a long un-made track and the Tandy camper is on site too. I replaced the van door recently with the original. The old door got severely damaged around the hinges, another door of exactly the same colour had been fitted, but it was not really the right shape (*Yes, they had more than one mould methinks, Ed!*) So repairing the original door was on my list of "things to do before we move"

I repaired it by cutting the front inside section off another non-broken door, I bonded the outer flange (the outer skin is bonded to the inner shell) and butt jointed and fibreglassed inside the door. Doesn't sound very strong, but it is, and very neat too.

Doesn't affect the outer skin and the butt joint is barely visible (only when the door is open) I couldn't source any of the o/s paint, so I went to Halfords and asked for reliant /caramel circa 1978 (before the assistant was born) He surprised himself by finding the code (recipe) and half heartedly mixed me an aerosol whilst I waited. Higher volume lower pressure can (no cfc's I presume) perfect match! (Acrylic?)

The last newsletter I got was No. 77, I hope I have not missed any.

Hope to see you sometime, hope you are all well. Best regards Andrew and Angie. (Norman) no longer from Nutley, but now Cardeston in Shrewsbury.

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Dear Brian,

17th October 2007

Having just received Mewsletter No. 78, my eye was caught on the item from Brian Beattie of Kirkham about the Kitten resto that he is doing.

Particularly the overhaul of bottom ball joints. What I would like to know if I may be so bold is how were these sourced? Were they supplied by the Register? If so, how do you do them? Or did Brian Beattie acquire them locally? In either case could there be a description forthcoming in a future issue of the Mewsletter of how the overhaul was achieved? The reason for asking is that some readers, myself among them, may have the capacity to undertake small engineering jobs like that 'in house' so to speak. So a modus operandi could prove beneficial.

Another question, whilst I am in the mood! Looking through my back issues (which I do often) , I see the article by Jim Lugsden (Issue 52) on the very smart spare wheel carries conversion to the rear tailgate on his Fox. As you may recall, I too am rebuilding a Fox (doing a body off job) I am about to start the bodywork, and would like to know more with a view to incorporating the idea. So if you don't think Jim would mind, could you put me in touch please?

One more question, has anyone ever converted a Fox or Kitten, to disc front brakes? Again, if so, details would be appreciated..

When I get the job nearer completion, photos will ensue.

Yours sincerely, Dave Eyre - Barnsley No. 133

*In the circumstances I rang Dave within a couple of days of receiving that letter, the gist of my response was as follows. The Register has ball joints reconditioned when necessary by our consultant engineer (who as it happens has owned his Kitten from new) and the one featured in the picture in question was one of the reconditioned ones.*

*Alan has kindly supplied a set of drawings, twice full size, of the three, yes three! different styles of lower ball joint that we have found to be used on Kittens and Foxes.*

*One of these designs is poor, and we just scrap any of them we come across having had problems. The other two are identical after they have been through the refurbishment process. A couple of other readers have had copies of the drawings, and, as you rightly allude, a modus operandi would indeed be very helpful to anyone wishing to undertake such a task. I know one of our other Brians was keen to have a go, and spent some time locating a suitable tap, by the time I found out he was going to do it that way, I asked Alan, to discover that he cuts the threads on his lathe!*

*We are looking into the best way of passing the information on, and with Alan's help we hope to achieve that during the coming year.*

*Jim will I am sure by now have told you what he can about the Fox back door spare wheel carrier, and yes, I guess an article on that would both fill a page or three in a future edition, as well as being of interest to a number of our readers, Jim or possibly Dave by now, if you felt able to enlighten us, that would be appreciated.*

*On the disc brake conversion, we have in fact covered this, albeit not in great depth, a number of times in the past – I guess you must be missing some back issues Dave! Dick Goodall's Index might help you there. I know I should know, and I do, somewhere, have a copy of Dick's work, but I need to be moving forward...,. The fact is that everyone who has done it has gone down a different route, and all except those with the Tandy camper body, and the very big engines (big in horsepower I mean, and by big I mean more – normally considerably more - than twice the original 40 (on a good day), 850cc unit's output, have concluded that, the self adjustment feature excluded, the operation was a waste of time and effort.*

*Finally, we look forward to the pictures in due course. Ed.*

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*While on the subject of letters, one arrived in the middle of our kitchen refurbishment operation, not from a reader, but an enquiry, the vast majority of enquiries come over the telephone, hence my mentioning this one. It was sent by Mr. Michael Rowley – an odd coincidence as it happens, because it was the late John Rowley, a good friend, who had helped me decorate the kitchen just over 22 years ago! Michael however, whilst owning a Rialto and a Scimitar, also has an early Rebel, FVC 25D, chassis number 100096 which he believes to be a prototype, but as you will probably be aware we have several earlier ones on file, and indeed chassis number 10003 is on the road in Scotland as I type, and it was the factory development vehicle, coaxed away from Reliant by the late John Bowcott of Lucas fame who regular readers will perhaps remember for his articles in this magazine.*

*The point of Michael's letter was that he is looking for a Kitten, possibly a project, and could I send him some information about our magazine? And so begins another new relationship, I just love it.*

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*More from Clive :-*

“Always read the label”

As I remarked previously. When I was trying to remove the front brake drums off the kitten, how I had to use a great deal of WD40.

Well the can of WD40 I had, ran out, and so as to keep on soaking the brake adjusters and the slave cylinder bolt heads behind the brake plates, I used an aerosol can of penetrating fluid, which I had been given.

This half full can came from my son-in-law, who works for a V.W. garage which was having a big clear out in the workshops, and rather than see the can slung out in the skip, he gave it to me.

Before I got to trying to get the brake drums off, I had already scraped off most of the road muck and a fair bit of the rust, from the suspension arms etc.

After I had got the brake back plates off, I set about finishing the scraping down of the suspension arms etc. As the engine bay area had plenty of oil / grease around, I brushed all the area with a degreasing agent. I left it for a couple of hours then jet washed it off.

When it was thoroughly dry, I put a coat of Jenolite on all the rusty surfaces, and when this was dry (powdery white) I wire brushed it down. Took ages to get behind the suspension arm pivot points.

Then I put a coat of Hammerite Red oxide on. This also took a while as I did not want it going everywhere. I let this dry for a couple of days. After which I got the tin of top coat out ready to finish the job.

It was at this point I noticed a piece of grit / muck, trapped in the undercoat, so I picked up a screwdriver blade to flick it off.

Yes it flicked off no problem, but so did a big piece of the under coat. I scraped at the undercoat, and blow me down it all started to peel off. Even lifted the jenolite away.

Words like, “well blow me” “bother” and “fiddlesticks” came to mind.

I checked the other side suspension arms. Scraped away but all was rock hard.

So I set to and started to scrape off the L.H. suspension all over again, but in some small areas it was fine.

Got me thinking as to why the R H side was O.K. but the L. H. side had peeled away.

Then the penny dropped. On the RH. Side I had used only the WD40. The area I had sprayed / soaked with it, had obviously washed off when I used the degreasing agent. But the LH. side was where I had used the half full can of penetrating oil spray. I picked up the can and tried to read what it contained. It was in German, which I cannot speak but a few words I can get the drift. So I checked out the big techno words in a "Tecno speak" German dictionary.

Turns out the spray contains a "Poly fluro carbon" plus other searching chemicals.

These poly do-dars, are similar to Teflon. Which as we all know is what covers non stick frying pans, etc. and where I had scraped off the road muck, getting back to bare metal, this lovely stuff had coated it, hence nothing will coat over it.

I decided to clean it off with a high pressure steam jet

I have been chasing around to get hold of a really high pressure steam cleaning machine. Tried the yellow pages etc. Nobody has them for hire in this area. I even started to look at e-bay for a cheap unit. Then, whilst talking to a neighbour who works for an office cleaning company, he said to leave it with him, he could get hold of a high pressure steam unit.

So this Sat. we will see if those poly do-dars stay around after a steam blast at 150 psi.

All good fun. So beware of those tempting gifts. "Or read the label first." Have fun.

Clive Angel Royston 510

*I await the report with interest, I would not have thought steam would have moved it, you will most probably have to grind it off – carefully, Ed*

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Dear Brian,

25th October 2007

Sorry I've not been in touch for such a long time, many things have changed.

My original Kitten, which is still with me, the "Yellow Peril", was taken off the road in 2005, when I acquired an old Robin to get me through the winter.

In the new year of 2006 we, finally, go on the property ladder (hurrah!). "Yellow Peril" was moved to our new house, and I began to repair the bodywork on her. The robin was sold as I had bought a VFR750 to keep my two wheeled passions satisfied.

I am sure that you know all the odd jobs that build up when you move into an old new home, so the Kitten sat for quite some time after that initial flourish. I acquired a Rialto estate to get me through the next winter, it did, just! You can certainly see how the quality dropped over the years!

It was decided that Alison and I would get married, and much of 2007 was taken up with those preparations and the big day – congratulations Kev and Alison -

The Rialto and Kitten are both currently resting, what am I going to do this winter? Ahh, a Kitten on e-bay, ODU 739P was purchased at the weekend a 1976 example with tax and test, so now for my sins I have two of these wonderful creatures, so I thought it was time that I returned to the fold. Cheque enclosed. Keep up the good work.

Kev Barker No. 727 3 from Windsor.

*Kev, thanks for the up-date, great to have you back on board, in all fairness I ought to point out that Alison might provide some ideas for things to do this winter! That said it is good to hear that ODU 739P, Reg Wyatt's old very well maintained car, you all remember that one don't you, the "A-frame man", who used to tow the Kitten behind his camper van? Anyway, great to know that it is still providing good service.*

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## **Grumpy Old Men Go To Mongolia**

After 2 years of planning and preparing our 30 year old Reliant Kitten (Reggie) Terry Farrell and I assembled in Hyde Park on July 22nd. It was a lovely day for the launch of the 2007 Mongol Rally, whose aim is to raise money for charity. Each of the 200 teams has to raise at least £1000 and when they reach Mongolia have the car auctioned for a local charity. Reggie had been in both our families since 1976, as both Terry and I wanted to do something different and raise money for a deserving charity it seemed apt to take Reggie on an adventure. The route we chose was to take us through France, Belgium, Slovakia, Poland, Ukraine, and Russia to Mongolia. We planned it would take 4 weeks. The immediate target was Dave's Place an English bar in Ulan Baatar and an end of trip party. We had already met the minimum sponsorship.

Our respective families and friends came to send us off, champagne was drunk and at 2pm we set off for the Channel Tunnel and the journey eastwards. Two days later we were in Prague after passing through France and Belgium. The rally organisers had organised a party for the participants, however we did not arrive at the party till 11pm and left at 1.30am which for two pensioners is quite an achievement. All the teams were very excited at the thought of the adventures ahead.

By the 27th we were in the Ukraine having crossed the Polish border. This was the first truly memorable road. The border crossing was quite uneventful which did not prepare

us for the road ahead. The Ukrainians are rebuilding the road from Poland to Kiev; it was in parts very bad no tarmacking just an earth surface, traffic was very dense with a large number of lorries and rather erratic car drivers. The rear shock absorber came loose on the way and had to be tie wrapped. Two days later we were in Kiev, which is a lovely city with many beautiful buildings wide avenues and the sight of our first major river. Decided to stay a couple of days and fix all the problems. Spent a good day walking around the city and surprise surprise, ate chicken Kiev, it was delicious.

Going east from Kiev the roads are superior to those in the western Ukraine. One can understand why it was the bread basket of the old Soviet Union. Massive wheat fields that stretch for miles and miles. We were pleasantly surprised that it took only 3 hours going over the Russian border as we had been warned that it could take up to 12. Once in Russia we decided to press on and get as far as we could towards Volgograd (previously Stalingrad). Found a very cheap, £15 per night hotel, lumpy beds, only one light bulb, non existent curtains but an en-suite shower.

On Friday 4th August entering Volgograd we discovered that the city roads are absolutely appalling, the same is true for villages. Is this because the main roads are maintained by central government? Or did our rear coach spring really break in Eastern Ukraine, who knows. On Saturday the first attempt at fixing the coach spring. We decided to go sight seeing on Sunday, firstly visiting a fascinating Battle of Stalingrad museum of which the Russians are justly proud. Outside they have the remains of a large 3 storied building from the battle. It is pockmarked with holes from all forms of weapons. The Volga River is very wide and it must have been tortuous crossing under the German guns. On the outskirts of the city there is a memorial park around Hill 102 which was a strategic target in the battle. Seventy Five Thousand Russian troops lost their lives taking this hill. Atop of Hill 102 is a very impressive 70 metre statue of a female warrior wielding a large sword. Underneath the hill is a domed structure with 7,500 names of soldiers who died in the battle. There is also a beautiful Orthodox Church overlooking the river.

We set off for Saratov early the next day. This drive took us up the Volga River which was a gradual climb. The countryside was pretty without being outstanding; at times some good views of the river. At Saratov we had completed 45% of the distance to Ulan Baatar; this made us feel pretty good. After Samara we crossed the Ural Mountains which consisted of long climbs where Reggie competed with lorries, sometimes he won. In the background all the time Reggie's temperature was on the high side. In the late afternoon we stopped for petrol. To our surprise petrol poured from the rear of Reggie, the rear coach had broken again, moved backwards and holed the rubber inlet pipe. Fixed with gaffer tape. We stayed in a rather downmarket motel. A small café next door sold a wonderful Russian chicken and potato pasty, had three for supper and one for breakfast.

Continued climbing over the Urals, these are heavily wooded, with pine and silver birch trees. Consequently one does not have large vistas just small glimpses of valleys and rivers. On the road into Chelyabinsk we were stopped by a police check point. The policeman was rather young and did not seem to understand that our passports were our identity cards. Two track suited youths sauntered up, a gun toting guard appeared. The policeman looked in the back of Reggie and asked if we had a gun, everybody laughed

(except the policeman). The youths asked if we had English smokes, we gave them all pens, and were off again. By passed Chelyabinsk and stopped at Kurgan in a reasonable hotel. On checking Reggie we found the rear damper brackets had sheared. Next day a garage, welded new brackets and on the road by 11.00am. The scenery had changed now as we had crossed the Urals; this countryside was as flat as the fens or the Netherlands. Very large fields of wheat and sunflowers interspersed with lakes and silver birch woods. These trees seem to be suffering from some sort of disease as many are bared of leaves and branches.

On the way to Omsk we almost entered Kazakhstan by mistake. We came up to a check point. On looking down at our GPS it was obvious that this was a border. Last year by mistake a team did leave Russia without a Kazakhstan visa (like us) it took them four days to escape. So we had to backtrack drive north east around Kazakhstan to Omsk. Our choice of place to stay turned out to be a very small wooden village so we were forced to drive through the night. We had been led to believe that Russians did not drive after dark, this is a myth. The main road was busy with lorries and cars all through the night. At 5.00am on August the 12th we arrived at Omsk tired but glad that Reggie had not let us down.

Omsk was like most Russian cities rambling suburbs with Soviet style apartment blocks, large industrial areas belching smoke and heavy atmosphere. The city centres are an eclectic mixture of modern, Soviet style and pre-revolutionary buildings, not pretty. All the cities have trams whose rails are raised so adding to the bad roads. It seems that these cities have their own power stations that pump hot water to the Soviet style apartments and hotels. The hotel in Omsk had no hot water which is presumably not uncommon in the summer, even when paying 120 euros a night. It rained heavily during our first night in Omsk. From Omsk the route to Krasnoyarsk looked straightforward on our maps. Our maps and GPS indicated that the M51 road went north east out of Omsk. After some 80 miles the tarmac disappeared replaced by mud. Very soon Reggie was up to his axles in mud. Terry was driving so I got out in my sandals and flagged down a Russian 4 X 4 van which pulled us out of the mud. We then limped back into Omsk, Reggie did not like this and again we had a number of mechanical issues to fix. It also seemed sensible to buy a Russian map which illustrated that we were totally on the wrong road.

On Tuesday we set off this time for the right road. Getting out of a Russian city and finding your road is easier said than done. If one can find a sign it will be most likely be a solitary event, generally we found it was possible to navigate ones way out with our GPS, this time it was not possible. So our last resort was to find a taxi driver pay him 100 roubles and follow him through back streets to the main road. It always works when in trouble find a taxi driver whatever your need!! The road out of Omsk was a dream, smooth, flat and fast (for Reggie 60mph). Either side of the road was lakes, small rivers and silver birch woods. As we went east there seemed to be more water everywhere. This drive was interrupted by having to change a head gasket, which solved our overheating problem. Here we met two lads from the rally in a 2CV. If we thought Reggie was in bad condition you should have seen their 2CV. The tyres were shot, suspension collapsed with bits falling off all round. However they were very optimistic. That night we stopped at a truckers halt at about 7.00pm. When going through our checks on Reggie a number of lorry driver came over

and in sign language indicated that they did not like Reggie's collapsed rear coach-spring, they phoned a mechanic who took the whole rear suspension away at 9.00pm came back at 2.00am fixed for \$200. So we were on the road again next day.

Terry and I arrived in Krasnoyarsk on Thursday 16th August. It is on a large river like most major Russian cities this river flowed north to the Arctic circle. It had been raining on and off for some days when we arrived in Krasnoyarsk. The road from Krasnoyarsk across the river towards Irkutsk was to leave the plains and climb over a mountain chain some 5,000 ft high. In the rain we set off on what was to be the worst day of our journey. Climbing up the hills Reggie coughed and spluttered. After some 90 miles we had to turn back with a blocked fuel filter. Had a weekend in Krasnoyarsk which was very pleasant, the weather had improved. We visited a Siberian museum that had a wonderful exhibition on Arctic Eskimo tribes.

On Monday 20/8 departed for the second time for Irkutsk some 500 miles away. Had an uneventful drive over the mountains, could not comment on the view as we both were concentrating on Reggie. We then hit 40 miles of the worst Russian roads with no tarmac large potholes, heavy traffic, and dust and consequently very slow. Saw a German convey of some 40 camper vans heading east, most bizarre, had they taken a wrong turn at some campsite in Spain?

Stayed at a small town that night where we met a 63 year old American who was riding a motorcycle from Vladivostok to Europe via the Mongolian desert. He had fallen off in the Gobi desert, cracked 2 ribs and thought the soft option was to ride through Russia!

We now could sense that Mongolia was going to happen so we hit the road for Irkutsk with high hopes, as we had been told by the motorcyclist that the road was good. Made such good time that we bypassed Irkutsk and made for Lake Baikal. Out of Irkutsk we climbed over mountains, the view when we emerged to see Lake Baikal was quite spectacular. That night we stayed in the worst hotel of our journey. It is difficult to describe except to say the communal bathroom was dirty and smelly with no seats on the toilets, no hot water. All for £17 a night.

Next day we drove along Lake Baikal which was very pretty, a good road that wended its way along the lake with pine forests inland. The villages were all wooden houses some with ornate doors and eaves. Lake Baikal is the largest reservoir of fresh water in the world, not because it is very large in area but because it is very deep over 5,000ft in parts. It is also very high up some 4,500ft. The road winds around the lake and emerges onto a plain in which Ulan Ude is situated.

So on 23rd August we stayed the night in Ulan Ude anticipating that next day we would make the Friday night party in Ulan Baatar. We started out very early, for the Mongolian border some 120 miles away. The journey went well the scenery spectacular and the sun was shining. At the border by 9.30am there we met a number of fellow ralliers, the famous Transit ice cream van and two females in a Nissan Micra. It was good to swap war stories with them. Also 2 German cars were leaving for Germany so it was all going swimmingly. This feeling evaporated at customs, the car documentation was out of date, 2

hours and a 1,500 rouble fine to sort that out, not bad but the party is still on. At immigration our visas are out of date, no exit, and no party! At 9.30pm we were allowed back to Ulan Ude to extend our visas on Monday,

Terry and I had a very relaxing weekend in Ulan Ude. The hotel was situated in the city's main square dominated by the world's largest head of Lenin; I hope his ego wasn't that large. The square is the centre of weddings. It must have been the weekend for weddings as they were queuing up. Just like weddings all over the world the women look beautiful and the men uncomfortable in suits. In Siberia for the photo shoot the man has to go down on bended knee and give his bride a bouquet, very sweet. Ulan Ude is a city to which many dissidents were sent. It was the only city that seemed to keep its original character. A pedestrian main street, a lovely Cathedral and many old wooden houses. These are called lace houses and have carved wooden doors and eaves.

On Monday we grabbed a taxi driver (again) and headed for the visa office conveniently situated out of town. Three visits later and 10,000 roubles we had our extended visas, so Mongolia on Tuesday.

No problems going over the Russian side. The Mongolian side was very refreshing, sullen Russian types were replaced by smiling Asiatic Mongols. Paperwork completed we were on the road to Ulan Baatar. Reggie complained for the last time when we had to adjust the contact breaker points. The scenery on the Mongolian side is by far the most spectacular we had seen in the whole journey. This was to me what I had always thought the Hindu Kush looks like. Gradually ascending mountain passes, lakes, grazing sheep, goats, camels and more horses than I have ever seen. Set against a background of hills and mountains, quite breathtaking.

After 38 days, 7,342 miles we arrived at Dave's Place, the bar at the end of the rally. Each car is greeted with much shouting and flowing beer. The 55th car out of 200 and the first Reliant ever to complete the rally, great stuff. Dave's Place is situated in the Genghis Khan Square the centre of the city. A hotel room was found around the corner, a good meal, more beer and a wonderful night's sleep. Next day whilst tidying Reggie up we were offered by a Police Captain \$500 for him, a lower Policeman offered us \$200 for the stereo. After turning these two down we drove Reggie to the secure compound, in which all the rally cars are stored ready for the charity auction. Not one of these cars would ever pass an MOT ever again!

We had intended to stay in Ulan Baatar for some 4 days, however once again fate intervened. Apart from the next day there were no flights to Europe for 2-3 weeks. So we quickly shopped and flew out at 7.00am the next day to Seoul, Prague and Heathrow.

Terry and I believe that Reggie did not totally agree with the objective of this rally. On this adventure Reggie would break 2 wheel nuts, crack a steel wheel, front wheel alignment, a main coach spring, rear damper brackets, shear rear damper bolts, hole the petrol tank rubber inlet pipe, block fuel filter, alternator regulator, replace the radiator cap/contact breakers/ distributor cap/ rotor arm, cylinder head gasket and a continuous battle with the exhaust manifold gasket. As you can imagine it was a journey in which we saw the

inside workings and sat outside many eastern garages, 7 in total, plus many repairs in hotel car parks. The mechanics that work in these garages are very resourceful; no white gloved box changers are they. If something needs to be made they will get it made. They worked for us till late into the evening and in one case overnight. Reggie also taught us that patience and a good book can work wonders whilst waiting.

Team Grumpy Old Men raised £5,810 for the Mercy Corps of Mongolia. Reggie will be auctioned for a local charity and will we are sure provide useful service to some Mongolian family. Thanks to all the people who supported our trip with generous contributions. The Justgiving web site is still open for those that have promised but not yet subscribed, <http://www.justgiving.com/TwoGrumpyOldMen>

Owen O'Brien

*Owen, I really can't follow that, many thanks, both for the article, and for including me on the mailing list of your almost daily diary during the trip ,Ed. I suppose if there is a lesson for the rest of us, it is that Duncan Bradford is quite right, if you are driving about in a car with leaf springs that are over quarter of a century old, it probably is about time that you changed them for new ones – Owen had fitted new front dampers and springs which the Register was , and is, able to supply, but we do have back springs in stock too! (only for the Kitten, Fox ones are under consideration).*

*Memories as they say, are most surely made of such adventures, and while we are sorry to have 'lost' yet another Kitten from these shores, what a way to go, and what a future it might have – well done to you and Terry, Ed.*

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### **More from our readers**

Dear reader,

1st November 2007

My husband had often spoken nostalgically about the Fox he used to own many years ago, so I thought I would buy him one for his birthday this year as a surprise. I had never even seen one, so where to begin? Inspiration struck when I spied a copy of the Reliant Kitten Register's Mewsletter amongst John's motoring magazines – I would send a pleading letter to the Editor.

Brian came up trumps with sound advice and a couple of firm leads, and John had not suspected anything untoward during our clandestine communications. I decided however, that I would afford him the pleasure of selecting his new acquisition (and then he could not blame me for poor choice\!) The secret was out!

Having been to visit one option in the North East which proved to be too complicated, we traversed the Pennines in our Jimny (*A type of modern car, Ed!*) one

Monday morning. East coast to West coast, the M62 traffic was heavy and even queuing around the Manchester area, so I was feeling very apprehensive about driving this unknown quantity back home. The task of driving it fell to me due to motor insurance technicalities.

On inspection of the champagne coloured utility model he was happy to hand over my cash to the charming gentleman (who was obviously another Fox enthusiast) and our adventure really began. Having been bolstered up by a cushion - I took the wheel, and we set off in convoy – me following.

The journey commenced falteringly as after a couple of miles I pulled into a supermarket car park and declared – shaking with fear, that I could not continue – the brakes were not working and I could not see anything in the wobbly rear view mirrors! John took it for a spin round the car park and proved to me that the brakes did in fact work, by demonstrating an emergency stop, and once I regained my composure we set off again. Being used to the very responsive handling of my MX5 with its servo assisted disc brakes I had all but forgotten the joys of driving older vehicles that are not so equipped, but once I had accepted the car's eccentricities and gained confidence we joined the M62 Eastward – now thankfully less congested than it had been earlier in the day.

Overtaking drivers were looking twice, no doubt trying to identify the car. The Police followed inquisitively for a while, and I had visions of being pulled over and asked to produce my insurance details etc, but, having had a good laugh, they lost interest and pulled off, I was conscious of smiling now as I, gaining confidence, picked up more speed (70 mph +) and began overtaking, when John detoured into a service station, expecting me to follow, I instead carried on merrily, toot tooting like a carefree Mr Toad, and it took him a while to catch up with me again. We did call in at another service area later for a comfort stop, after which the Fox, which had been running perfectly, refused to start. “Oh, they do that”, John calmly explained – keep trying. Sure enough, it spluttered into life, and I reversed out of the parking space (slowly and carefully as I could not see behind me) and then sped off before it had a chance to stall.

Now safely home, the Fox has been SORN'd until John can source and fit a tow bar and then find a buyer for the Jimny, so he still hasn't had the pleasure of driving Basil, as I have dubbed it. Hmm, I wonder if Brian might find me a tidy Tempest now... Anyone want to buy an MX5? (only joking).

Thanks for your help Brian.

Yours, Mary Metcalfe. a.k.a. the Secret Squirrel

*Mary, what can I say? Thanks for the letter(s) don't feel that you have to stop by the way! As for the Tempest, believe me, if you thought the Fox was a good drive, a Tempest, with an extra 7 inches in the wheelbase and a lower centre of gravity, really is a delight, and I'd wager would have a big grin on your face a lot more often than an MX5 ever could! That said, I have noticed that they do make them (MX5's) with automatic gearboxes.... Ed.*

## **F.B.H.V.C The A.G.M.**

The federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs once again held their AGM on a balmy autumn day in mid October off the A5 at Paulspury. As promised at last year's AGM there would be a move afoot to re-organise their constitution so that there is a board of directors who are in a position due to their knowledge / abilities, of running a federation of clubs that in turn appoint various committee posts / working groups for the hands on stuff. This was duly done this year, as promised via an E.G.M. and went forward without a hitch. Then they voted in various good officers to specific tasks within the Federation. Next came finances, this year wasn't quite as good as last year, which had had a 10k profit, we now had a deficit of £7k, but this year we had the one off expense of £10k with regard to the FIVA survey and analysis. So the underlying trend is still in good order and steady as you go.

This year's EGM / AGM was followed by a short conference 'Start 'em Young', Henry Lawson, newly elected as the director for communications, brought to our attention some facts surrounding the thought that despite our restoring our 'old' vehicles, who will care for these bikes and cars when we are gone?

A very instructive and enthusiastic talk was part of this conference from the Steam Apprentice Club, who told us how the young people from age 'nought', as no one was too young to learn, to 21 years were taken through learning about steam locomotion from polishing to driving, and finally passing as qualified locomotive drivers. These youngsters are given a log book that each lesson / session was logged in, so they progress towards that final goal. Excellent stuff!

David Davies for the Vintage Motorcycle Club gave us details of what they were doing with events aimed at the younger fraternity, while the T.R. register talked about their young driver days.

Some points that came out of last years officers reports were concern over the "Historic Vehicle" tax, as well as being a block of registrations frozen in time and free road tax, they were also ripe to be picked off as 'Historic' vehicles that can be treated / inflicted upon when it comes to legislation. One recent attempt has been as a target for anti pollution / congestion legislation (London potentially being a place in point) So we have to be aware ever still.

Drive it day in April (what do you mean you don't know what I am talking about? The allocated day when we all get our old vehicles out on the road, or at least out from the garage and on display – yes, I know that some of us don't use anything else!) So, while April the 20th seems a long way off just now, please mark the date in your diary, and, come the time, see if you can help with the occasion.

The F.B.H.V.C. now represents some 420 clubs which between them represent some ¼ of a million vehicle users. In the meantime the Federation continues to have an ear at

Parliament via the Parliamentary at Club. One outcome of the recent FIVA survey proved that historic vehicle usage makes very little difference to the pollution of the environment and these details have been taken to Brussels where they seem to have been taken on board.

So there we are, a snapshot of the workings of the Federation for this year. They are always keen to have your support which they have through your subscribing to the Register. BUT a personal commitment would help them better financially, and give you your own personal copy of their excellent quarterly Newsletter. [www.fbhve.co.uk](http://www.fbhve.co.uk) for details.

Al Osborn 29th October '07

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### **Sales and Wants**

For Sale :- Reliant Rebel Saloon, M.O.T. till June 2008, New master cylinder, previous owner did a lot of restoration work on this road tax exempt model. £475 Contact Jason Briggs.

For Sale :- free to a good home a Kitten Estate Gwilym Pritchard in North Wales

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### **Epilogue**

I've always found large numbers difficult to imagine, 1 is easy, 10 also, 100, sadly just about the number of folk in our church of a Sunday, well perhaps that is closer to 200, a thousand is a lot, 10,000 a lot more, and 100,000 huge, can you actually imagine 100,000 of anything? I have great difficulty. A million however, 1,000,000, now that really is a big number. That is until you put it in context – now I might be needing some help here, but the kitchen, you remember, we just up-dated ours, well, I was trying to work out how many tiles we needed, and, while I was probably just too tired at the time, I kept getting really silly answers. I know that I still tend to think in feet and inches, but am well aware of the metric things, mm, Colin however, son in law to be,(No. 1 slave for the duration of the kitchen up-grade operation) talks metric, but with the decimal place one out, he talks in centimetres but calls them millimetres, so when having discussions with him not only do I have to convert my imperial thinking to metric, but I then have to multiply by 10 to be singing from the same sheet as Colin.

The million thing, well, unless I am mistaken, I can now imagine a number that big - we needed 6 or 7 of them, million square millimetres of tiles, yes there are 1,000,000 square millimetres to a square metre, so now I can, after all these years, imagine what a million is after all! Like so many things in life, it is all about how you perceive things.

Right, it is now mid November, I just discovered an envelope that Peter Loughran sent me asking for details about us, and, like lots of the mail over the past three weeks, it was not given prompt attention, sorry Peter, and Bob Gray, who I have kept waiting a quite unforgivable time for a workshop manual, I am getting back in harness chaps – no more new kitchens, honest – that said I have not enjoyed myself so much since the day I spent playing with a hired digger landscaping my brother's back garden over a decade ago – all those power tools to play with, great fun. More importantly Moira is happy with the results of our efforts, Phil Hallam, you remember Phil, that body off rebuild on his Kitten saloon and the many modifications he did to it, well, let me tell you, he is a dab hand at tiling as well – thanks Phil.

Back to the real world, well, the Reliant one at any rate, speaking about manuals, the Kitten workshop one in particular – this just goes to show how bad my mind is getting these days – there is a well known mistake in it, well known that is to those in the know, to people who are new to Reliants, how are they meant to know that? So it occurred to me that a covering sheet of explanation might be a good idea, except that I can't remember exactly what the mistake is! I am pretty sure it involves a drawing, either of a backplate or hub or brake assembly, I think the rear, help me out here please chaps, what page is it on and is it back to front or upside down or what?

Oh, one thing, an apology, John Metcalfe sent me a letter / article which I had intended to have within these pages – his side of the Secret Squirrel tale on page 34, but lack of space, together with the state of the papers on my desk – yes, again, have prevented me from doing so – so, with apologies to you and John, perhaps next time, if I ever get on top of the paperwork and find his letter!

If I have my act together, your renewal notice – yes, it's that time already! - should be enclosed – please take the time to check and up-date where necessary, the vehicle details section, and PLEASE don't make cheques payable to me, they should be made out to the "Reliant Kitten Register" or even "The Reliant Kitten Register", but not to me personally – thanks.

I hope that 2008 will be kind to you and yours, and the cars, and remember, especially in the winter – Grea.... those ba.. jo...

Merry Christmas.

And to top it all, I now have insufficient space for Al Osborn's Resin Rockets advert, but you know to talk to him about matters electrical and tuning don't you ? A. O. Services, 35 Griston Road, Watton, Thetford IP25 6DN Tel.:- 01953 884681

Talk to you again in 2008.

**Brian**

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