

Reliant Kitten

Register

NEWSLETTER 81

March - April 2008



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

Mewsletter pictures – should be sent to John Pearce

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

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

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A new year and a possible new trend in cover pictures begins to emerge, rear quarter views, with or without the owner? We will need to wait and see. Here we have Don Evans' recently resprayed Fox, prior to its lining which was carried out in March 2008. And very smart it looks too Don, can't wait to see the pictures of it after it's visit to the signwriters. Don lives in Skermesdale, so if you are in that neck of the woods keep your eyes open. I happen to know that Don has a small fairground organ, and I rather think it will just fit in the back of the Fox, all sounds like music to my ears!

Hello again, a number of points, firstly my apologies, after going on at you to complete and return the form about our proposed get-together to Malcolm Rush, I didn't print it off and enclose it – fire the man, that's what I'd do! Poor Moira bore the brunt of that omission, because no sooner had I mailed the magazines than I set off on my adventure south.

Both the Register of unusual Microcar's Rum Car News and George Mitchell's Friends of the Volvo 300 groups great publications come my way on a regular basis, as do a number of others, not least Liege News so ably edited, printed and distributed by John and Mel, they all make really interesting reading, for more details contact :-

Rum Car News: Edited by Tony Marshall 97 Church Street, Wolverton Milton Keynes MK12 5LD
TonyRumCars@aol.com

FOTV300: Contact George M. Mitchell Shirramair House, Sheriffmuir, By DUNBLANE, Perthshire
FK15 0LN 01786 824740

Liege News: Contact John Sawle & Melanie Brown, Beacon Cottage Farm, St. Agnes, Cornwall TR5 0NU
01872 553932 melbrown@ukonline.co.uk

Other matters of interest you should be aware of depending on where your interests lie, are the Tempest get together at Stoneleigh on the weekend of May 4th & 5th Yoland on 01939 261121 or e-mail brownhill@eleventowns.co.uk or Martin on 0208 498 0561 or e-mail mseymour@freenetname.co.uk are the people to talk to for more details about that (I have to say, though it is well covered in their own Mag, that the Liege folk are grouping together there too that weekend,) Oh, and John Melody will be in Exhibition Hall 2 Stand 110 with a Tempest as well, and the, now what collective adjective ought we to use to describe a group of Tandy Campervans? Answers on a postcard, the winner gets a free year's subscription to the Register. That event will take place at the Reliant Owners' Club annual rally at the Shrewsbury Agricultural Showground, Berwick Road, Shrewsbury SY1 2PF from Friday the 23rd of May till Monday the 26th Duncan Bradford would be the man to talk to about that

So, there you go, here endeth my club and events plug for this edition.

Moving on to other things that ought to be included within these pages – bit of a flap on at the moment, this had all been ready before the end of Match, even had the lovely Moira proof read it, I actually made the corrections before being struck down by the flu.

I am sure that many reading this will know how bad that can be, I have been eligible for the 'flu jab' for years, but have never bothered with it – I may take a different view in future. Actually had a house visit from my G.P., the first in over 25 years. As you will have gathered, I, indeed we, had a fright. Worse yet, the mag got delayed. There were, indeed are, a few things still to go in, like Brian Ayres list of parts for sale, I missed the last edition with that advert. O.K. copy the mag into a bigger template and move on – quickly please....

The F.B.H.V.C. wanted some answers, I don't think the questions applied to us, but I will check – more delays - aarrggghhhh!!!!

If only I felt bold enough to cut and run this could get to the printers today – decisions....

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Rebel Round up

The subject of annual mileage cropped up recently for some reason, anyway, Phil Hallam's Rebel covered 180 miles between MOT's and I think Robert Fairfoull managed not much more than 30 in old number three. John Blagburn has done about 5 or 6 thousand, well, the car had done just over 96,000 when he became its custodian a couple of years ago, and by mid February this year it was up to 107,700. How is yours doing on the mileage front Terry? Anyone else with a Rebel on the road care to fill us in please?

I was delighted to hear from Jim Hicks that Nick Peck's Rebel saloon is still on the road in regular use around Eastbourne, sailing through another MOT recently. It fascinates me what people put up with when they don't know any better, that Rebel is powered by a smooth but sluggish engine which I sold to him some time back, it came with what was then my Rebel estate – now owned and run by Ian Johnston – Jim Spence put a more powerful engine in it for me, but Jim reckoned that the old one was much better than the one in Nick's Rebel, and they are still delighted with it some 4 or 5 years further down the line. I reckoned that smooth as it was, it was low compression – makes for an easier life for the battery and starter motor, but probably struggled to put out 20 horsepower – while the pretty good one I replaced it with was giving out 30 odd, possibly approaching 40 thanks to the SU carb we fitted to it.

Still on the Rebel front I would like to say welcome back to David Myers who has re-joined the fold after a couple or three years in the wilderness. David has a very tidy Rebel estate which, if memory serves, (the computer's, not mine!) has not been on the road since the turn of the millennium, a shortcoming which he hopes to rectify during the coming year, good luck David, please keep us informed.

Fred Heath, good to see you again last month at Birmingham, how many miles has your saloon done in the past year?

Still with a Rebel link, though also on Kittens, Dave Allen wrote the following recently :-

Hi Brian I am putting together some chassis codes for Reliant vehicles and a few questions have arisen for the kitten I have 141 rhd saloon 142 rhd estate 143 rhd van. Are the next three codes for the DL version 147 rhd saloon 148 rhd estate 149 rhd van?

The next two are 150 lhd saloon 151 lhd van or estate? Is this a converted van? The next subject is Rebels, would I be correct in saying that a vehicle with an fw prefix to the chassis number is an early 600cc saloon R prefix is a 700cc saloon E prefix is a 700cc estate and that an S94 prefix is a 750cc saloon an E94 prefix is a 750cc estate and a V94 a 750cc van? The same type of codes are used for the scimitar range and I have some Reliant service bulletins to back this up but there are some gaps there is more information contained in the chassis numbers as time goes on I want to make sure the information is correct and hope it will allow people to identify vehicles better The Rebel LRF671K on Page 16 of mewsletter number 80 is this an ex reliant owned vehicle?

Now I know that I ought to be able to answer such questions off the top of my head, but the top of my head seems to be in the clouds a bit at the moment, so feel free to put in your thoughts and I will do the same for next time, oh and Dave, I realise that I have still to get back to you with a list of prices, if you have not heard from me by the time you read this, don't be shy about reminding me, Ed.

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At the risk of being branded a religious nut, (this being the second mag in a row with some mention of religion, need to take care Brian my lad!) Anyway, an interesting thing happened the other week, Lorna Hood, our minister, who is not adverse to making sure that her congregation are not asleep during her sermons, is known to tell the odd funny story, laughter is heard in our church on most Sundays, well, on most Sundays that I am there at any rate. On this occasion she was telling us the story of a young mother

who was teaching her 3 year old daughter the Lord's Prayer. I shall digress here for two reasons, firstly because when I thought about including this, I realised that I don't think I have ever written (well, O.K., typed) the Lord's Prayer, so for the benefit of the exercise of rectifying that omission, and secondly so that those reading this who may not be familiar with it may become so, if only so as to be able to appreciate the joke, (I could go on here and tell you that Lorna has stopped saying the Lord's prayer at funerals, unless specifically asked to do so, as so few people seem to know it these days, that no one joins in at such services, and she feels really daft saying it alone – can you believe that? I found that more than a little sad, moving on) it goes like this :-

**Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name**

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us – *now we have to digress again because depending on which if any branch of the Church you are involved with we are either trespassing or being in debt here, whatever (I could digress even further and tell you that when I started going out with Moira three and a half decades ago we had to do it both ways because we had been brought up in different churches and we took it week about in each other's churches – used to be the only time my Jowett Javelin got used because I had a company vehicle in those days, and we only used the Javelin on Sundays!) Getting back to the prayer :- trespasses and trespassers or debts and debtors duly forgiven.*

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever.

My goodness, you have no idea how difficult I found it to type that, for all that I chant it repetitively on more Sundays in a year than not, just trying to remember it line by line and type it – hmm, not sure what that proves, anyway, moving back to the point, the mother in our story went through it parrot fashion with her daughter several times, and over the space of a few days graduated to the stage of saying one line at a time, and having her daughter repeat each line after her. Came the big day when the wee one got to go solo, off she went, and was doing fine till we got to the delivery bit, you know, the second last line, you remember “deliver us from evil”, well the youngster had not quite paid proper attention, (either that or she was extremely astute!) and it came out as “deliver us from e-mail” Which Lorna confessed was a sentiment she did have from time to time herself.

Given that I believe that I am a decade or two younger than the average member of our congregation, I was impressed at the amount of laughter that followed that line.

Quite different, but in my mind not that dissimilar to the situation that Michael Bentley created some years back when, after showing a dozen or so of his friends a good old film in his cinema, Arleen and I in the audience, he played the National Anthem, everyone immediately stood up to attention, except Arleen, who had not the faintest idea what was going on – I know, bad parenting - what can I say, other than the fact that, as in our church congregation, in that audience I was a decade or two younger than most, and Arleen would have been about 12 at the time – but it shows you how attitudes are changing through the generations.

Enough nostalgia, Michael, I can't even remember what the film was, but it was a good night, thank you.

Yes I do remember that ‘they’ used to play the National Anthem after every programme shown in the cinema – when did they stop doing that? I guess late 50's or early 60's – anyone know / remember / care?

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REBELLIOUS CONDUCT 10

At the time of writing, we head into the depths of winter. It's wet (very), its cold and its dark. It certainly isn't the time of year to indulge in open air spannerings just for the fun of it. Hopefully, I won't have to but it's been a close run thing. Just when I thought everything was ready for my Rebel, LRF 671K to meet whatever the winter months may have in store, the brakes made yet another plea for attention. Once again, the problem was that of sticking on, only very slightly but by now, I had become very sensitive to this malady. With only 39bhp from its 850cc engine, any small resistance to forward progress is surely going to be noticed, but this time it was rather different. As I braked and just came to rest, I could feel a slight jerk as I released the pedal. (OK I feel a right jerk driving the Rebel anyway!) As I pulled away again, the Rebel ran freely. Clearly, the stickiness in the brakes was both slight and momentary. As I had recently replaced the front brake hoses and clutch slave cylinder hose, I reckoned that the rear brake hose could well be the culprit as the next time expired item. As the useful box of spares that came with the Rebel contained such an item, then it also seemed a logical and cost effective job to do. The hose was easily changed but then things seemed far from well when bleeding the rear brakes. The master cylinder appeared to have a very short effective stroke. Despite unscrewing the bleed nipples far more than I would normally, only a small amount of fluid squirted out at each stroke. Fortunately, it was enough to restore normal services, including the sticking problem that I started with! Clearly, the rear hose was not the reason for the sticksion in the brakes.

The following week the brake pedal started to feel rather odd, it also felt a bit further away than usual. Although I have never driven a Citroen DS, I imagine that the Rebel brake pedal was transforming itself into Citroen-esqe. It was not so much movement on the pedal but just pressure required to determine the rate of retardation. Smooth braking was becoming pure guesstimation – but at least it did stop! Attention now focused on the master cyinder, and a return of a sticking piston problem that I had thought that I had remedied some time ago. No matter, the box of spares included a new master cylinder so at least that shouldn't take long to swap over – wrong. The spare cylinder had the mounting holes placed on a vertical axis (early Rebel). LRF being a 1972 model, had horizontal mounting holes. So, the Rebel had a day off work whilst I sorted out what to do. Firstly, the sticking piston was very reluctant to come out of the bore. Compressed air failed to move the piston so I tried pumping grease from the outlet pipe connection. This was only partially successful. The piston was nearly out but the non return valve at the reservoir end of the cylinder gave up. Further pumping only forced grease into the reservoir. Only one thing for it, drill and tap a hole in the piston and pull it out with a screw. Well, that worked but the piston would never work again. Removing the piston from the spare cylinder revealed that dimensionally it was identical (other than not having a tapped hole in it) but having an oil blacked surface finish. This had completely vanished from the old piston which displayed just a rusty finish. Upon cleaning up and closely examining the old cylinder, I found the bore to be perfectly serviceable, simple enough then, use the new piston assembly in the old cylinder. The brakes are now fine once again, only the rear wheel cylinders left to give any trouble, hopefully, when the weather is more agreeable. One final thing, when I had both types of brake master cylinders on the bench, I made up an adaptor plate so that the earlier type of cylinder can be fitted to the later type of chassis without any further modifications. The mounting flange of the earlier cylinder is about 5" further back which allows the insertion of an adaptor plate and will still allow the reservoir to sit in the centre of the access hole in the floor. The outlet pipe will also connect up without rebending or replacement. Any further master cylinder problems (hopefully never) then I should have all options covered.

No sooner than the brake pedal resumed normal service, the clutch pedal heads floorwards. Not much, but enough to hamper clean gear changes. This time, the problem was not a hydraulic one, but excess clearance between pushrod and clutch operating fork. Ordinarily, when the clutch plate wears, the operating fingers move rearwards and reduce any clearance at the pushrod. Hence, it is more usual to reduce the length of the pushrod in service as the clutch plate wears. The pushrod is provided with an adjustment thread and nuts for this. For the clearance to increase, then this is indicative of wear in the carbon thrust bearing. Most sensible vehicles use a proper thrust bearing with ball bearings that maintain their dimensions. These carbon thingies can wear quite rapidly, my Sprites are similarly equipped so I am

not in unfamiliar territory here. In Spriteland, there is a conversion available to dispense with the carbon bearing and replace with a proper ball thrust race. For now, I simply adjusted the pushrod to restore the usual good gear change of my Rebel. However, I am concerned that the bearing may be objecting to the heavy daily stop and go traffic conditions that I experience on my way home from work.

I was rather alarmed by a sudden loss of coolant and subsequent frequency of topping up required. I could find no trace of external leaks so directed the radiator overflow pipe into a container. Sure enough, this started to fill. Either a radiator cap or head gasket problem. The engine runs fine, does not overheat, the exhaust is clear when hot, the engine oil is not contaminated, so perhaps it is not the head gasket. Just in case, I purchased a new head gasket set at a local autojumble (£27.50 – not a bargain but needs must) Sure enough, this seems to have cured the problem, which is surprising as it is still wrapped up on the shelf! As quickly as this problem appeared, so it seems to have rectified itself. More likely, the radiator cap must have temporarily lost its grip under pressure. If the problem re-occurs, then a new cap will precede any unwrapping of the new head gasket set. Amazingly, I didn't have a spare radiator cap in one in my many boxes of bits.

Christmas passed, no new radiator cap from Santa, but again a whopping big Trophy from the Classic and Historic Motor Club for the most miles travelled in the past 12 months in a "Club eligible car". The Rebel has always been a good starter but more recently, has proved temperamental. If I fail to engage the choke in exactly the correct position, it protests and can flood. Only once did I make a complete hash of it and squeeze the battery too hard, but this did prompt a near to full investigation. This revealed no apparent faults with the ignition system and proved that there was no shortage of fuel at the plugs. Once cleaned off, it started easily. I rather suspect that the SU carb is suffering wear of the main jet and needle. The needle I replaced some time ago as cruising was something of a jerky affair. I couldn't obtain satisfactory mixture strength throughout the operating range and replacing the needle provided an instant improvement. However, this needle was not a new one and I did not replace the jet as one should of course. Hence, I suspect that a combination of wear in both jet and needle is now allowing a very rich idle mixture. It still runs fine otherwise though. I seemed to remember reading somewhere that the bias needle SU carbs are not very happy with unleaded fuels. The needle rubs against the jet orifice with resulting rapid wear characteristics that were not so much a problem with the earlier fixed (non rubbing) needle versions. Providing that the needle and jet were properly centred that is! The proper and simple answer will be to replace needle and jet but in the meantime, I turn the key and gradually pull the choke out until it runs. The fast idle speed is a further symptom of the problem; this has almost been lost despite giving the fast idle screw a bit of a tweak. I use MILLERS VSP fuel additive, which is reported to work very well in protecting the valve seats, but is this so effective on the brass rubbing antics of the bias needle SU?

Although the cure for this should prove simple, I fear the problems I now have with the gearbox will not be. It jumps out of 3rd gear on the overrun and jumps out of 4th gear under low speed acceleration. These two maladies are predictable and I can usually have my hand on the lever when I am in a high risk situation. However, it does catch me out, increasingly so, so I think some action may be required. It is the 750cc all synchro type gearbox which otherwise, is very good. So, what to do, is it an easy fix or should I replace it? Rebel experts, where are you?

One fault I did fix was the exhaust flange loosening off. Some time ago the pipe broke away from the flange. I re-welded this but subsequently, the flange loosens from the manifold. The engine can shake about quite a lot despite new engine mounting rubbers, the engine transferring its wobbings to the exhaust via the flange joint. I have made up a bracket to connect the exhaust down pipe to the bell housing bolts. The torque is now transmitted through the bracket rather than the vulnerable flange. So at least that is something done over the winter months.

Terry Horler.

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Foxes Den

The following picture shows the very neat appearance of the commercially readily available tail lights that Keith Gittus uses to great effect on his Foxes. Keith has very kindly provided me with a number of pictures of his and Glyn's Foxes which I will share with you over the coming editions, thank you Keith.



Above is what Keith uses for chassis protection now that he has difficulty finding Shell Ensis oil. *Why can't I get text on either side of a picture like that?!?!*

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Liege matters

Very briefly, and don't get excited because it really is not that simple, but the Liege guys have found a roundabout solution to the holy grail – that elusive five speed gearbox – sadly it involves using a different engine – which reminds me that John & Mel asked me to complete and return a form to help with the argument that the 'new' gearbox, a Suzuki SJ 413, has been fitted so far to two Liege, one powered by a Fiat engine, the other by Suzuki, should be recognised by the relevant authorities (the MCC and the ACTC) to enable such equipped Liege to continue to enter competitive events, albeit in a higher class – must do that soon before that bit of paper gets buried – do I stop this and do that now, or press on with this, more decisions..... Keep up the good work guys.

Reader's Letters

Update from Royston

February 2008

Just a quick message to say that after much paint scraping off, rubbing down & star crack sorting. (*and just what technique do you use to achieve that Clive? Ed,*) I finished the kitten body work and took the beastie to the spray shop today.

I found that whilst removing paint from corners (where the mould release agent had not been removed) I counted 4 layers of paint. No wonder the internal corners were such a pig of a job. My finger tips are still very sore. and I also didn't realise just how long it takes to mask off the car ready for spraying.

I enclose two pictures of the beast outside the spray shop having just been removed from the trailer. They reckon 10 days - 2 weeks before I will be able to collect it.

Catch up later, Clive

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Dear Brian,

25th March 2008.

Please accept many, many apologies for the very late renewal of membership. If you think your desk is untidy you should see mine. Things disappear with monotonous regularity once out of sight!

Also please accept the usual compliments on the magazine, always a good read and the technical articles very useful. It's a pity I didn't have the knowledge I have now with my previous kitten (PNT 715R), a car made into a pick-up with a wooden butt made by the previous owner. This vehicle, purchased for £50, always suffered from a tendency to steer to the left and I did wonder what all the welding on the front suspension pillar was for. Now, of course, I realise it was probably rusted through at some point, and re-attached out of line. It did later collapse on me, so I had it re welded and lined up correctly – what a transformation! This car, after having to replace almost everything on it, was eventually sold on to a gentleman from the Lincoln area. This was my first kitten after 3 wheelers, so I had to have another, especially as I did not want to take the full driving test (I have a full motorcycle licence).

By spending a little, or to be more correct, a lot more money, my current car OOA 714R was purchased from Terry Dixon in Melksham last year, incidentally returning the car to Cornwall from whence it came. Since then, I have had almost trouble free motoring mainly due it must be said, to the previous owner's excellent care. Apart from the usual points – condenser etc replaced – it is going well with only the anti-roll bar joint needing replacement (a difficult problem to diagnose as the ball popped back into its socket with no weight on the suspension i.e. when I looked at it).

I have done the inlet manifold mod and can say the mixture distribution is much improved, the choke can go in earlier but no noticeable power increase, however it is a useful modification. All in all OOA 714R is a great car and I now feel a little daunted in trying to keep it that way!

By the way, the Fox camper from Carbis Bay, near St Ives, with the BMC engine featured in the last magazine issue, was bought by a man I worked with last summer at The Grand Casino in Penzance. It is currently parked on Penzance promenade awaiting better weather for alternator repairs.

Again, many thanks for all your efforts and I hope this letter will be of interest to yourself and other members.

All the best, David Nicholson - No. 784 Penzance, Cornwall.

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Dear Brian,

March 2008

Thanks for my first copy of the Mewsletter, I found it very interesting and informative, and look forward to future copies! I joined the Kitten Register after it being recommended by several people on R3W.co.uk. I don't have a Kitten at the moment, but I am looking to buy one sometime in July / August after this year's tour of Europe by bike. I have missed out on buying a local Kitten in Durham, due to it not being the right time, i.e. moving house, holiday to pay for, and my unfinished bike projects taking up all my spare time.... All seven of them!

This year I will hopefully be down to one project, I will keep hold of your green application form to return with the cra details when I finally acquire one. If anyone out there knows of or spots a Kitten for sale in the Cumbria area I could be interested, I might even consider another project, well maybe.

Looking forward to my next Mewsletter.

Kind Regards, Gary Macdonald Penrith No. 824

Welcome Gary, good to have you on board. Several of the guys keep telling me I ought to get involved with the R3W group, the fact is that I have quite enough going on in my life, John & Sue are even dragging me kicking and screaming into an improved web presence for the Register, watch this space. I know several of the R3W guys, they are a helpful and knowledgeable bunch, and I refer folk to them quite frequently, that said it would surprise you to know how many people do not have internet access even in these enlightened times, and I really am not, yet at any rate, prepared to give up any more of my time to instant responses, I really struggle with life a bit these days (ask anyone who has e-mailed me since last autumn!) without yet further demands on my time. You will know when I finally get on top of things! Ed. Meantime a note of your 'phone number might be helpful – those green forms don't just ask about the cars!

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Brian's Diary March 2008

This adventure was made possible thanks to me being again asked to represent the Thistle branch of the Reliant Owners' Club at the National committee meeting in Birmingham, and as normal I set off a couple of days early to tie a number of visits into the trip. Unusually however I was not diving off at the crack of dawn to beat the Glasgow rush hour traffic, but leaving at a somewhat more civilised time – mid morning – ahh joy!

As usual my first port of call, a mile after leaving the house, was to our local bakery to collect a dozen pies, a mixture of apple and rhubarb, though I have to confess that with my eyesight these days, my ability to differentiate this side of having a bite, is a bit poor! The bakery is situated in a one way street, worthy of mention because we only have the one one way street in Renfrew, Queen Street. It happens to be opposite one of the two high schools in the town, so one has to time one's visits carefully if a crush is to be avoided.

Pies duly collected the low fuel warning light blinked at me on the roundabout leading to the M8, this in spite of very gentle cornering, need to take care of that tray full of pies you see, so my normally brisk approach to roundabouts and corners in general was, for the meantime, curtailed. By the time I passed the Lanark turn off on the A74 the low fuel warning light was on more often than not, I had this Tesco 5p off a litre of fuel voucher you see, and I wanted to get as much benefit from it as possible, so, while not wishing the embarrassment, never mind the expense of running out of fuel on the motorway, (the spare can being buried deep in the lock-up somewhere) I was keen to have the tank as low as possible before filling up at Tesco at Carlisle.

I normally use the B7076 rather than the M74, picking it up just south of Abington services, the Crawford turn off. Junction 14, it is a really good road with very light traffic which enables one to safely cruise at almost any speed you care to mention, in this case 40 to 45 m.p.h. to save fuel. You can pick it up at junction 11, or even junction 9, but I prefer to run further south first. If you need a break you are spoilt for choice in Moffat, and while you can follow the road all the way to Gretna, I usually re-join the motorway either at Lockerbie or Ecclefechan.

Policemen, women and road traffic enforcement people can skip this paragraph – the roundabout where I leave the M74 has 4 exits, but they are not north south east and west, but more in two pairs, and the 3rd exit is somewhere between 1 & 2 o'clock, it has been known for me to take the obvious shortcut, saves two gear changes and 70 yards or so, not to mention maintaining a better average speed, however I only ever do that when there is no other traffic about, and there was a car following me down the slip road from the A74. So, I did the right thing, and do you know what, he took my shortcut! He was 200 yards ahead of me by the time I drove the correct way round the roundabout, not only that, but as I left the roundabout I was doing about 22 M.P.H., (that fragile cargo if you recall,) he was not only way ahead of me up the hill, but going three times as fast too!! By the time I reached the top of the hill he was a tiny spec in the distance, and it was not long before I lost sight of him completely – mind you he was cruising about 50% faster than I wanted to. Just who was it that coined that phrase about the end justifying the means? I know it's not a perfect world, but I did chuckle to myself. Makes you wonder about the economy aspect too mind you, time, distance, number of engine revolutions to cover a (variable depending on route) distance – I console myself with the thought that while rules are made to be broken – safety ought to be a very high priority – I'll bet those pies wish I had taken the easier route!

Once I reached the top of the hill at Beattock the different angle put the warning light out for a few miles, and I was then more confident about my ability to reach the A69 Tesco's without running dry.

The weather was fine and the journey event free. I duly arrived and squeezed just over 62 litres into what claims to be a 54 litre tank – the last of the BX's had a small auxiliary tank fitted to increase their range, but they never changed the handbook or manual!

So, car fuelled to the brim, I set off south on the M6 to the A66, stopped for a coffee at the Little Chef, it still has the picture of the local main street taken in the 1950's which, amongst other vehicles, has an early Jowett Javelin in it. Duly watered I ignored the sat-nav's instructions for a while before allowing it to take me over some narrow twisty roads which, had it not been for my fragile and insecure cargo, I might have enjoyed. It was good to travel by a route I had not traversed before, and the scenery was great, also some lovely, remote, houses too, but listening to those pies sliding from side to side on the baking tray cramped my style more than a little!

I arrived at Preston under Scar long before the daylight faded and spent an enjoyable evening in the company of Michael & Janet Bentley, you remember Michael, he has owned his Rebel saloon from new, it was fitted with one of the last of the factory supplied galvanised chassis when he rebuilt it about 18 years or so back, Michael, just exactly when was it that you did that? I really ought, as Registrar, to be better organised at retaining such information. It has covered less than 100 miles since. Michael had a top rate respray done at the time of the new chassis being fitted. His is one of the 700cc ones which enjoyed colour co-ordinated seats, the ones in his car being blue to match the car (as featured on the cover of edition 47, or was that his other one?). Michael also owns the last Vantique built, John Box tells me it was in fact number 11, not 10 as previously thought! (he has built so many cars and vans that he is losing count! He tells me it depends whether you count the rebuilds as well as the new ones, but when I asked him recently if 30 was a fair estimate, he was quick to point out that it has been rather more than that, but did ask if the number included rebuilds.).

I needed to be off pretty sharply on the Friday morning, and so I was, but I failed to realise that the traffic on the A1 was at a virtual standstill – it turned out to be a broken down bus, but it cost me the best part of an hour. That, coupled with an unexpected lunch invitation at Scoreby east of York, caused me to

re-arrange my day, so, in to see Dennis at Michael's first, Dennis, thanks again for organising the securing of my Citroen's throttle pedal, then to Scoreby for lunch, and then to John Copestake's to collect some bits for Richard Plaxton. I made a mess of that part of the day, because I was intending to rely on the sat-nav, I had concentrated on Postcodes rather than full addresses, just to save space really, but boy was that a bad idea! I had not taken the road name, and, having only been there once before, and that time I was approaching from the west, this time from the east – and to compound things, though I had spoken to John at about mid-day to advise him of my revised e.t.a., I then could not raise him on the phone to help guide me in – my fault again, I had both his mobile and land line telephone numbers, and had not remembered that it was the land line I had got him on at lunch time, and I was now ringing his mobile, which kept going on to message service after a few rings. When I eventually got him on the 'phone it turned out that I was in a side street less than 100 yards from his door!

The next mistake I made was to elect to call in on Alan & Megan Shaw at this point on my travels, I had planned to call in on them on my way home the following week, but I was so close, less than 30 miles away, I however completely failed to realise just how bad the tea time traffic would be, so more time was spent sitting in heavy traffic. At least by this time the stock of pies was down to one layer, and so less prone to sideways movement! Alan & Megan, it was great to see you both again, I will plan things better in future.

The weather had been particularly wet and windy today, and any hope of achieving record breaking miles to the gallon had vanished in the wind and traffic.

Pressing on to the south then I had abandoned plans to see Paul Wheatley, Brian Ayres and our patternmaker, I even skipped Moira's aunt, though I drove within a mile of her door, it was almost 9 in the evening before I arrived at Tom's house in Guildsbrough where I was spending the night, you remember Tom, the chap who kindly rebuilt dad's old model boat for me? By the time we caught up and set the world to rights it was gone midnight, and while I had an easy day on the Saturday, plans to visit Norfolk to see a certain Fox having fallen through, I still needed to be away by 10 in the morning.

Saturday was a much better day weather wise, and with about a third of yesterday's mileage to cover, more relaxed. I called in to see Keith and Glen Gittus, thanks for the update and hospitality. He even had me in his 6 foot deep inspection pit to get some close-up pictures of the underside of his Fox! Keith has used the very reasonably priced electronic ignition kit, and indeed very reasonably priced new distributors, on both of his Foxes, but I will not steal all his thunder, see "Getting Technical" for more details. Glen however completely scuppered any hopes I may have harboured of losing weight that day with her home baking, not to mention her longer term strategy of supplying me with a jar of her home made lemon curd – what chance do I have of ever getting into these 34" waist trousers that Moira got me for Christmas now? On then to drop a rack off to our newest subscriber Richard Prosser at Hurley. His Kitten was once owned by Reliant, run I believe by Ray Wiggin's wife till she had an accident in it. The factory duly repaired it and, eventually, a couple of years ago, Richard became its custodian. Richard has a fascinating collection of cars, and three of them are Reliants, but you don't want to hear about Scimitars (an SE4 I believe) and a very smart Sabre 6 – (chassis number 4 no less) or do you....? Just what possessed me to leave the camera in the glove box I will never know, one day I will learn. Great to meet you Richard, and I am delighted that you have elected to keep the Kitten, it is clearly in good hands.

I then had to call in to collect some parts that Richard Plaxton had put me onto, and that chap, nothing whatever to do with 'our' Reliants, had a split screen Morris Minor from 1959, a BMW with three wheels in mint condition, though the dynastart was giving problems, and a pre-war Morris Minor, their answer to the Austin 7, again in mint condition, so that stop took a lot longer than the 15 minutes I had allocated to it! He is also into old clocks, in particular, though not exclusively, grandfather ones – see the fascinating people you meet... all part of life's rich tapestry I know, fascinating but time consuming, and where do you suppose my camera was?

Still I made it to Tom & Patience Wardley's place in Thurlaston just as the light was failing. Tom still has enough parts to make up I am not sure how many Kittens, he also still has a couple of sets of those

stainless steel cylinderhead retaining studs for the Reliant engine, 01788 810387 is the number if you want to get in touch with him about them. It was great to see you both, and thanks as ever for your hospitality..

Again not too early a start on the Sunday morning to head over to Birmingham for the R.O.C.'s National committee meeting, it is their 50th anniversary this year, so lots to talk about there.

The Sunday evening saw me call in at our front cover man, John Pearce's new residence, good to see you and Sue again John, and then on to Beaconsfield for the night with my mum's cousin, she gets to keep her son's Aston Martin in her garage – I was asked to get them an application form for AMOC, their annual sub is 8 times ours, and given that their cars are only twice as fast, and use three times as much fuel, to say nothing of insurance and servicing costs, and just how common is an Aston Martin compared to a Rebel Kitten or Fox anyway? What a bargain you get is all I can say!

On northward on the Monday towards Wales, I managed to see Andrew Norman and the lovely Angie on my way to meet Yoland and Roger Brown before joining Malcolm and Jan Rush for the night. The Tuesday saw me call in to see Jeff Sharrock who had not been aware of my intentions, but he was not at home, sorry to have missed you Jeff. Then north to see John Melody of Tempest cars fame before arriving at Stable Cottage where a warm welcome awaited me at the Box residence, and by warm I am not just talking about the roaring open fire, John and Jackie, great to see you both again.

See that, one short paragraph to cover two days, completely ignoring how great it was to see Andrew and Angie again, to follow his very tidy Kitten van to his home – to - be, where his Tandy camper lives beside his windmill, yes really, well, it was once, and will be again when Andrew is finished with it – not to mention the derelict cottage he is going to restore beside it, never mind the barn - to – become - workshop, ambitious? Certainly, but Andrew has the confidence, motivation, enthusiasm, and even the planning permission – good luck Andrew, I'm just jealous, makes me realise how slowly I live





my life these days – once upon a time.....

And Yoland and Roger, what a lovely place Ryton XI Towns is, so deeply hidden in the valley that very few mobile networks can penetrate the air, and another car collection. One can forget how narrow some of this country's roads can be, minimal pavements, made me wish I were in a wee Reliant rather than a big Citroen, mind you I do enjoy the smooth ride the hydraulics give you, and the heating and ventilation are really good too – moving swiftly on....

Malcolm, I really need to put you and Andrew in touch. Malcolm built his own garage – there it is, a simple statement of fact, and perfectly true, but, this garage is more like a bungalow in a field, it has room for all his cars and trailers, as well as a workshop, when I asked him how he managed to get the two huge RSJ's that form the main support for the big span of the roof up in place – just knowing he would not have hired a crane, he calmly told me he did it all himself by hand, using long lengths of timber, inching the big "I" beams by hand, clamping one side before moving the other up a foot at a time – such energy, ingenuity and determination, and what a result – I know, the little green monster is coming to the surface again.

Andrew, just thinking out loud here, John (Pearce) has come up trumps with the covers in good time, and for once it is I who am holding things up as far as magazine production goes, so no time to stop and write individual letters, but it occurs to me that, if you felt so inclined, Kevin McCloud would probably deem you and your project an ideal candidate for one of his "Grand Designs" programmes, just a thought.

Malcolm and Jan, it was great to see you again, and thanks for the hospitality.

Regular readers will perhaps recall Jeff Sharrock, at the time, probably a decade or so back now, Jeff took me for a spin in his Jensen 541, those soft leather seats were very comfortable, as was the feeling of being pushed back into them by a force that must have been approaching 1g. I quipped at the time that the Jensen was very like the Rebel in performance terms!, Jeff had one of them too back then, the time the engine took to reach maximum revs in both first and second gear was within a second of the time it took the Rebel's engine to achieve the same thing, the only real difference being the gearing, at maximum revs in second the Rebel would be doing close to 30 mph, while the Jensen was up to something over 90 (a three speed automatic), anyway, Jeff and Sue have moved from just outside Wrexham to the delightful village of Threapwood. They were on a very short list of people I would have very much liked to see on my trip, but that would only be possible if I was very lucky and felt I had the time, and so they were not aware of my plans. The thinking was that if they were in that was a bonus, if not, the

fact that they were not expecting me saved me having to contact them to cancel if I was unable to make it. Unlike last Friday, when weather, traffic, and a small change in my plans made me 3 or 4 hours late, and caused me to skip 4 possible visits (that had been insanely ambitious in the first place) today I had time in hand, and elected to make Jeff and Sue a priority over our friendly advertiser (as our advertisers all are) Graham Walker, who are in that general area. In the event there was no one at home, but it was a pleasant drive and a very slight detour from my route. It also gave me a chance to check out the venue of our proposed get-together. It was closed off season, but the area is very nice, the narrow roads more suited to small Reliants than big Citroens, but what I saw looks good, well done Malcolm.

On then, electing to omit Chester, and head north.

John Melody had already been distracted from his work today by a visit from Bob Howell, Bob was the gentleman who had rescued Norman Schofield's Fox, completed the rebuild, and got it on the road, only to discover a problem with insurance which caused him to sell it. That was the one which Mary Metcalfe bought for John's (Metcalf's) birthday if you remember. Well, Bob is one of those fascinating characters with whom one could, and really should, spend many hours. A long career with Borg Warner the automatic transmission people gives him a rare and fascinating perspective into the motoring world, great to finally meet you Bob.

The insurance problem I made passing reference to was exceedingly frustrating, and I really should delve more deeply into it, I am not clear if it only affects Foxes, (with them being classed as commercial vehicles by most insurers) or Rebels and Kittens also, but the main excuse / reason for the problem was the age of the driver. We have a number of readers of this publication who are octogenarians, but in this case the broker, having accepted the deal, suddenly realised that the insurer would not take the risk because of the driver's age, (my understanding is that one insurance company – at least - will not insure drivers over the age of 76!) and so the broker had to phone him and tell him not to drive the vehicle till they found an alternative insurance company, which they did – at something like three times the premium! Which is the only reason Bob sold the Fox. Rob (Spare) we must talk about this sometime to clarify the position, and have the options as clearly defined as possible, Ed.

So, at Tempest Cars, John is well ahead with the build of his second Tempest, showing me in detail the new top ball joints he is going to use, Alan (Shaw) if I have not sent you a sample by the time you read this, please give me a reminder, (it's not the sample that is stopping me, it has been lying on our dining room table for three, now four weeks, it is my temporary inability to print the pictures of the installation from my digital camera – yes, it made it out of the glove box, finally, if only I could get to grips with this modern technology!) and the disc front brakes too, looking good John, keep up the good work.



I know that we have mixed feelings about the wisdom of converting Foxes or Kittens into Tempests, or anything else come to that, but John is one of the good guys, if any of the potential donor cars he finds are in at all reasonable condition, he simply gets them sorted, through an MOT, and sells them, he is not hell bent on destroying every Fox or Kitten he comes across, so you can relax. There are three I know of already that he has saved, two of them found through adverts in this magazine, neither of them on the road when John became their custodian, so he is doing his bit to help keep our wonderful wee cars on the road, as well as some development work. John plans to be at the Stonleigh show that Yoland and Martin are using to gather a storm, oh sorry, gather some Tempests together in May. Look out for him if you are in that neck of the woods on the weekend of 4th and 5th of May. The Liege guys will be there also, I'm almost tempted....

I could have stayed there for a lot longer, but I was very conscious of the fact that Bob and I between us were holding up production, and wonderful as it is to spend time with such inspirational individuals, (I know, I ought to have dragged Bob off to the pub for a blether, one day I'll think of these ideas at the time!) I got off up the road then to the birthplace of the Tempest, Thornleigh Stables, where John and Jackie had their open fire blazing away nicely. I think I am a bit out of my time, two things I like a house to have, that make it feel more like a home, are an open fire (or a wood burning stove) and a piano, no I can't manage better than chopsticks or a few bars of Beethoven's Fur Elise, and I have neither an open fire nor piano at home. Not many of the homes I had stayed at during this trip had a piano, but most of them had a real fire.



Enough with the romantic notions, central heating, double glazing and cavity walls make life at home very comfortable, I do miss the smell of a real fire, but not the dust or the work or expense of keeping one fed mind you! John (Box) had been tidying up some old paperwork – yes dear, I know I ought to do the same – and kindly let me have copies of some early Tempest pictures, I should have asked for a copy of one with both Tempest and Vantiques in the factory, perhaps next time John?

A relaxing evening followed by a good night's sleep and breakfast the following morning, and I was off up the road to Carlisle to drop off those bits for Richard Plaxton, you remember, the ones I had collected from John Copestake? (have you noticed how many John's there were on this trip?) at his folk's place before keeping a lunch appointment in Kirkcudbright, would you believe to exchange Christmas presents! Yes really, poor health at both ends had prevented our usual get-to-gether before Christmas, and with both our friend and neighbour Robert, who is now in hospital, and his (and our) friend Leslie from Kirkcudbright, also currently in hospital in Dumfries, it had just not been possible for them to get together,

so I had lunch with Kirsty, Leslie's wife, at their lovely home in Kirkcudbright (they have a wood burner, an Aga, and an open fire!). then it was off for home by way of the lovely run past Loch Ken, Robert Fairfoull, I must apologise, had I realised before I set off just exactly what my route home would be, I could have brought your bits too and dropped them off at Ayr on my way home from Kirkcudbright (Robert has an open fire as well!) but my forward planning had been left too vague when I departed, and the final few days had not been tied down till after I left, most unusual for me, but there it is.

All in all a good trip, fuel consumption at about 55mpg was not as good as I might have hoped for, down to a combination of the weather and traffic, and safety (it is simply not safe to drive on a motorway or main trunk route at a speed slower than the commercials cruise at, so economy has to be sacrificed for safety) but I had a great time, met some new people, found some new places (well, new to me) saw a number of old friends and relatives, and filled a few pages of this magazine – can't be bad, can it! All that and Moira had a break too, (from me I mean) what I think you call a win win situation, though my incompetence in failing to include a bit of paper with the magazine I had mailed the day before I left, meant that poor Moira had a number of calls to deal with – sorry everyone.

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Getting Technical

Hi Brian,

February 2008

At the end of last year there was talk in the Mewsletter about electronic distributor conversions by grafting parts from an electronic A series distributor to the Reliant one (*that is not exactly my recollection, Ed, but I really do not have the time to look back right now, we were indeed talking about electronic ignition systems, so, moving on*)

I know a simpler way; get in touch with Simon Lawther who deals in Lucas distributors and conversion parts. He will supply you with an electronic conversion kit which fits the 45D4 distributor for £15.00 including p&p, and or a brand new 45D4 electronic distributor for £55.00 inc p&p. No extra electronics required, what you get is all you need. What you will need to do to get these prices is mention the Kitten Register when you enquire.

Contact details are :- Simon Lawther

simon@simonbbc.com

Keith Gittus - No.154 Norton Canes

Having tried to contact Simon just to confirm things, he tells me that there will soon be an improved version – with extra cooling – available, but we are literally hours away from going to print and I have yet to ascertain if the current version will still be available, no change in the price – see how useful a telephone number could be! (which was what I was trying to get for you, but he prefers initial contact to be made by e-mail only).

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Hi Brian,

March 2008

Old age I suppose is catching up .The things not so good when screwing around, soon goes limp and drops down which is a real bind when you're on a bumpy bit and everything's shaking around, trouble is you cannot see what's coming up behind. Thought I had better do something about it before it finally dropped off, this left hand door mirror has been a real pain.

The ball and socket which allows movement on the mirror is held together with a screw and nut which can unscrew leaving the mirror loose. To tighten, remove mirror and drill a 3/8 hole in the bracket below the ball and socket. This allows access for a flat blade screwdriver to tighten up the screw inside. Refit mirror – job done. Keith.

Keith, thanks for the input, I ought to have spoken to you first, but you know how organised I am, and you work during the day! I should have organised a picture or two so that our reader would know exactly where to drill the hole, Ed.

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Sales & Wants

Oh dear, I seem to have lost the plot here, I know that Frank Heil was looking for a good 850 crankcase for the engine he is rebuilding for the Cipher, we did speak in mid March, but I foolishly did not clarify if an advert was needed and it is currently 04:00hrs, see Frank, I may be losing the plot, but at least I am not ringing you in the middle of the night to share my insomnia! Do let me know if you still need one, and if anyone reading this has a good one for sale, give me a ring and I will let Frank know, Ed.

Also, lurking in my computer was an e-mail from Robin Hales and I can't remember if he ever got a seat :-

WANTED Reclining Driver's Seat for Kitten.

Brian Ayres has a list of Kitten parts for sale in Newstead Abbey in the Nottingham area, if I find it in time I will include it on a separate sheet

Now either our wee cars are quite secure in their homes, or I have been even more carless than usual. I am often told that "There's a Kitten for sale on e-bay" and while I am sure that is true from time to time, one hears more horror stories than satisfied folk, well that's the impression I get – so, if you have a vehicle for sale, let me know, and "stand over me" while I type your advert in.

I am told I will be emptying at least one lock-up this summer, no, there is not a catalogue, but let me know if there is anything you need or want and we will try the "list" approach. There are likely to be one or more individuals doing the work while I supervise, so let me know what you want me to look out for and we will see what can be done. 0141 8866117 is the number you require.

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Epilogue

You have heard more than enough from me already this time around, our good friend Robert whom you heard me mention earlier, has been moved from hospital to the hospice in Paisley, and daily visiting takes a lot of time, Moira's in particular. This has led to me being even less organised than usual recently, (if that is possible) and if you are one of the individuals I have let down or kept waiting this year, my apologies, as I am sure you are aware, running the Register is a hobby, and does have to take second, or even third place at times.

I hope this finds you well, looking forward to the summer's motoring, and deriving pleasure from your car. Don't forget to look after it, so that it can look after you!

You may feel, as I think I do, that I have wandered a bit off topic even more than usual in this edition, the Topic being our wonderful Reliant cars, and while I would accept such criticism, I had done the "Brian's Diary" bit before some of your letters arrived, and so the way to look at it is that you have enjoyed – well I hope you have, an extra 4 pages in this edition that were it not for my ramblings you would not have had. Want to have more about the cars in here, fine, so do I, so write to me!

The clocks will have gone forward by the time you are reading this, so, of the longer evenings be taking advantage.

Talk to you again soon. Do I really have to mention lubrication again? Exercise that grease gun please.

Brian

Oh goodness, over a half page to go, bother, never mind, a picture or two will do!



See, I really was in Keith's pit – complete with camera!



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